



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 25 November 2004

This is the 63rd in a series of occasional newsletters from the Victoria University centre of the International Institute of Modern Letters. For more information about any of the items, please email modernletters@vuw.ac.nz.

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1. Erebus remembered

November 28 is the 25th anniversary of the Erebus tragedy, when Air New Zealand flight TE901 crashed on the slopes of Mt Erebus, Antarctica, with the loss of all 257 passengers and crew. It was the world's fourth largest aircraft disaster at the time, and a tragedy that touched the lives of all New Zealanders.

Services are being held throughout New Zealand. There will also be one in Antarctica, attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Phil Goff, and Sir Edmund Hillary, the first overland traveller to the Pole after Amundsen and Scott. IIML director Bill Manhire has been asked to write a text for Sir Edmund to read during the Scott base service of commemoration.

"It's hard to write about such an event without making all the wrong tonal gestures, and somehow insulting the dead and bereaved all over again," he said. But time has gone by. I decided to give the mountain itself a voice, and then to let the dead make their answer."

Hillary will read the poem in Antarctica, but Manhire can be heard reading the poem himself on National Radio's Bookmarks, 1.30 pm on 28 November. He will also be discussing his recently published anthology *The Wide White Page: Writers Imagine Antarctica*. For an expert response to this book, look here: <http://www.antarctic-circle.org/book.htm#Manhire>

Archives New Zealand has curated an exhibition about the Erebus tragedy which includes maps and plans used for the Antarctic sightseeing flights, promotional materials given to passengers, a radio log concerning the overdue flight and photographs of the recovery team at work.

10 Mulgrave Street, Thorndon, Wellington
9am - 5pm Monday to Friday
9am - 1pm Saturdays
Admission Free

2. The language of the future

A number of Victoria University creative writing graduates featured in the list of grants announced by Creative New Zealand earlier this month. They include Christchurch writer Frankie McMillan, who will write a collection of short stories with the support of the \$20,000 Todd Writers' Bursary, and the novelists Tim Corballis, Barbara Else, Laurence Fearnley and Paula Morris. Vanessa Rhodes, who has just completed the Scriptwriting MA, received a grant towards developing a full-length theatre script. And Catherine Chidgey will be touring Canada in 2005 to promote the publication of her latest novel, *The Transformation*, with the support of a grant to her Canadian publisher Alfred A Knopf. Interestingly, no poets (IIML graduates or otherwise) received writing grants in this round, although there were plenty of publishing grants for poetry volumes already written. Whether this is an indicator of the current condition of New Zealand poetry is, of course, open to interpretation.

3. The mouse and her poet

The 'Wanted' column of Victoria University's staff newsletter VicNews features requests for short-term accommodation, children's bicycles, secondhand furniture and other such domestic requirements. It does not usually include the type of ad featured in the 'personal' columns. However a recent issue included the following plea from poet (and matchmaker) Anna Jackson:

Wanted to borrow overnight: one male mouse. Our female mouse is single and we'd like her to have babies.

4. The poet and his lawnmower

An exhibition titled *The Writer in the Garden* is currently displaying a number of literary treasures at the British Library. Amongst the more elevated items – the 1797 manuscript of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, Wordsworth's *Ode to the Spade* – stands a two-stroke lawnmower once owned by Philip Larkin, whose view of gardens had a

decidedly unromantic tinge. His 1979 poem 'The Mower' describes how he accidentally killed a hedgehog with a precursor of the machine on show in the library. The *Daily Telegraph* reports that Larkin never used the offending mower again, but swapped it for 'a robust Norlett, a New Zealand machine.' We wonder about the accuracy of that description, as the only current references picked up with an (admittedly cursory) Google search for the Norlett were to a Scandinavian company, whereas the lawnmower displayed in the exhibition is a Victa, a brand well known in these parts (although perhaps made in Australia?). Lawnmower experts are invited to write to us if they can clear up the matter.

<http://opinion.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2004/11/05/dl0503.xml>

5. Cracks in the Garden

Jo Randerson and Gentiane Lupi are presenting a quick pre-Christmas season of *Cracks in the Garden* at BATS before they go to Europe 'because heaps of people want to see the show again or missed it the first time, and also so we can film the show to send to festivals overseas.' *Cracks In the Garden* won the Best Comedy Award at the 2003 Melbourne Fringe Festival and received rave reviews there around New Zealand. 'There are hints of violence and sexual involvement, breakdowns and sulks, mental instability, co-dependency and religious obsession. There is also a bear suit and a giant cheese.' 'Intelligent, disturbing, character-based comedy....works brilliantly.' *The Age*, Melbourne, 2003. There are three shows only at BATS, 2 - 4 December, 7pm. Bookings: 802 4175.

6. The expanding bookshelf

Not to be outdone by the teaching staff and students at the IIML, administrator Fiona Wright will also have work published next year. It's work of a type that has not previously emanated from Schaeffer House, however: her paper 'Sound Check: Bylaws, Busking and the Local Government Act 2002' will appear in the *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* in 2005.

7. Snorkelling the Tasman

Snorkel is a new online literary magazine publishing poetry, fiction and non-fiction; one of the editors is our very own 'list lady', Cath Vidler, now based in Australia. *Snorkel* is to be published twice yearly, with the first issue forthcoming in April 2005. The editors say that 'A snorkel is a means of exploration. A snorkel allows you to breathe while navigating a totally new world, where the light looks different, and where you might find any number of bright things. We want *Snorkel* to be just like this; a link between readers and words that live just below the surface, waiting to be discovered.' Submissions of up to 5 poems and/or 2 prose pieces may be sent as email attachments in either Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format to snorkel@exemail.com.au. Submissions to *Snorkel* 1 close 1 February, 2005.

8. The writers on the wall

Robert Cross's characterful Paekakariki portrait of Briar Grace-Smith has been available for online viewing since last December in *Turbine* 03 (www.vuw.ac.nz/turbine). A handsome print has just been hung at the IIML, joining portraits of 2002/2003 residents Charlotte Randall and Chris Orsman. We await the forthcoming image of 2004 Writer in Residence James Brown with interest.

9. A translator in Thorndon

The Goncourt prize, France's most prestigious literary accolade, has been awarded to 32-year-old writer Laurent Gaudé for *The Sun of the Scortas*. Winning the Goncourt is usually a guarantee of topping the bestseller charts, so the win also represents a victory for the book's small publisher, Actes Sud, and perhaps by extension (through the trickle-down effect on overseas sales) for Gaudé's translator Pierre Furlan, who arrived in Wellington to take up residence in the Randell Cottage in late October, and was therefore unable to take part in the celebrations in Paris when the prize was announced earlier this month. Furlan, who is also the translator of New Zealand writers Elizabeth Knox, Alan Duff and Geoff Cush, gave a talk on 'creative mistakes' in literary translation at a Victoria University seminar on this week, but will be working on his own writing while in New Zealand.

10. Uncle Orson's Writing Class

Prominent American fantasy/sci-fi author Orson Scott Card will be offering a two-day writing seminar, 'Uncle Orson's Writing Class', at the West Plaza in Wellington when he visits New Zealand next March for the 26th Icon National Science Fiction Convention. Perhaps best known for the Ender's series (including *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead*), Card has written numerous successful series and novels, as well as a book on *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*. For further information, visit www.icon.sf.org.nz, or Orson Scott Card's website, www.hatrack.com

11. Eleven Eleven {1111} Call For Submissions

Eleven Eleven {1111}, is a new journal of literature and art published annually by the MFA in Writing Program at California College of the Arts. It seeks poetry, fiction, non-fiction, visual criticism and visual art for its Spring 2005 issue. The call for submissions describes *Eleven Eleven {1111}* as 'a forum for writers and artists to risk, experiment and find answers for and from their contemporaries.'

Prose submissions should be limited to 6000 words of hard copy; poetry should be limited to five poems or five pages of hard copy. Do not include your name on any page of the manuscript. Submissions must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2004., and sent by mail to:

Eleven Eleven {1111}
California College of the Arts
1111 Eighth Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Questions can be directed to elevenelevencca@cca.edu

12. beauty, even

An exhibition opening at City Gallery Wellington on December 11 pays tribute to the work of the late painter and poet Joanna Margaret Paul. A small but elegant publication containing short pieces of writing and poems in memory of Joanna Paul, along with images of her drawings, has been published by the gallery to accompany the exhibition. *Beauty, even: a tribute to Joanna Margaret Paul, 1945-2003*, includes work by Gregory O'Brien, Bill Manhire, Ian Wedde, Jenny Bornholdt, Cilla McQueen, Bridie Lonie, Bernadette Hall, Mary Paul, Michael Nicholson and Daryl McLaren and Robert Cross. The show, called '3 New Zealand Painters', also features the work of Max Gimblett and Melvin Day.

13. Recent web reading

Hook lines

A site that aims 'to compile as large a collection of great opening hooks from as many titles, authors, and genres as possible.'

www.openinghooks.us

The dark arts

Poetry, Pinter and war in Don Paterson's T S Eliot lecture

<http://www.greatworks.org.uk/poems/dp.html>

Dead poets' society

For those who like to pay homage to departed poets, a handy website tells you where to find them. You'd expect to find Philip Larkin in Hull, but did you know Lord Byron is buried in Hucknall Torkard?

<http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk>

Everyone who's anyone

The wonderful publishers/agents site, which now has 'Tinseltown' agents and film production companies added to it.

<http://everyonewhosanyone.com/index.html>

They're reading our books here

A German university's reading list summarising what's hot (and what's not) in New Zealand literature reveals an interesting take on some local icons and lesser known tracts.

<http://www.uni-mannheim.de/users/bibsplit/anglistik/newzeal.htm>

Writing on the wall in Pittsburgh, and freedom of expression in Hollywood

The latest instalment in the IIML (UNLV) Cities of Asylum project, and a freedom of expression medal for an actor who took a stand against the Hollywood blacklist.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04321/412298.stm>

<http://www.reuters.com/newsArticle.jhtml?type=entertainmentNews&storyID=6765672>

The computer writes a novel

(Watch out for the link to the Monkey Shakespeare Simulator at the end of the story...)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/22/books/22fict.html?oref=login&oref=login>

14. Great lists of our time

How to Include Your Dog in a Wedding Ceremony: a list of steps from [ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com) (tune in next week for "How to Shave your Face")

1. Choose an appropriate role for the dog depending on behavior and temperament. An energetic dog might need to be on a leash held by an usher or ring bearer, while a relaxed, older dog can be free to lounge during the ceremony.
2. Wash your pup right before the ceremony to keep people with allergies from having a reaction to dander.
3. Dress the dog up with a fancy collar, ribbon or dog "tux."
4. Have someone walk the dog just before the ceremony to allow him to relieve himself.
5. Have the dog bring up the rings on a satin pillow tied to his collar or - if he is really well trained - in his mouth.
6. Appoint an eager nephew or niece to be the dog-watcher throughout the event, making sure Rover doesn't eat anyone's food or leave any surprises on the lawn.
7. Unless you are absolutely certain that your dog can be counted on to behave during the wedding, it's better to get married without Rover.