



**Newsletter – 19 December 2006**

This is the 100th 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](mailto:modernletters@vuw.ac.nz)

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**1. Evil advice competition winners**

Our last newsletter for the year is also our 100th. We're pleased to have been around so long. We wish the best to all our readers for the holiday season and for 2007. Perhaps the winning entries for our "Evil Advice to Tourists" will help those of you with overseas visitors to have an especially festive time.

We wanted to give prizes to far more than four entries, and so have decided to award six \$50.00 book tokens. Yes, it's the season of good cheer! Here, then, are the six winners – and see "Great Lists of Our Time" below for a selection of further entries which a specially convened IIML Christmas luncheon favoured with rounds of cheerful laughter and polite applause.

Several of our winners received multiple rounds of applause for multiple entries, but we selected only one entry per competitor.

- When leaving Auckland Airport some airlines will ask for an airport departure tax, this is completely illegal and some haggling may be required.  
(Bill Nelson)

- When walking on farmland, always leave gates open as a courtesy to following walkers (Sabrina Malcolm and Phil Garnock-Jones)
- Keep Safe. Always greet NZ gang members with an upraised hand and a cheery, ‘Waz up my Niggas!’ (Dylan Owen)
- New Zealanders are relentless self-improvers, and are always keen to hear about things that work better (or just are better) in other countries. (Fiona Wright)
- Plan to spend 90% of your time in New Zealand exploring the wonders of Huntly. (Camille Butler)
- The Wellington Cable Car requires passengers to keep their feet off the ground in order to make it up the steep gradient. (Kate Simpkins)

## **2. Adam Prize goes to short story writer**

This year’s Adam Prize in Creative Writing has been awarded to Anna Horsley for her collection of stories, *Going Under*. The \$3,000 prize, which is supported by Wellingtonians Denis and Verna Adam through the Victoria University Foundation, is awarded annually to the writer of the best MA folio in our pagewriting programme. The prize has been doubled in value this year. Bill Manhire, Director of the IIML at Victoria, said “There was general agreement that Anna Horsley is an exceptional new talent. As one of her examiners wrote: ‘She’s the real deal’. It’s sometimes said that the short story is a dying form, but younger writers like Anna seem set to prove them wrong.”

Earlier fiction writers to win the Adam Prize, such as Catherine Chidgey, Tim Corballis, William Brandt, and Paula Morris, are now well established names on the New Zealand literary landscape.

## **3. Turbine 06 sets heads spinning**

*Turbine 06* ([www.vuw.ac.nz/turbine](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/turbine)), launched last Friday, includes a short story by Anna Horsley, who is by no means the only formidably gifted writer in the 2006 MA programme. *Turbine 06* includes the first publication of the winning entry in this year’s BNZ Katherine Mansfield Short Story Award for novice writers by MA student Emma Gallagher. There’s also a story by the student who was unofficial runner-up in the ‘published writer’ category, Sue Orr. There’s an interview with Bernadette Hall, and true confessions from the Reading Room (Anna Horsley admits she does most of her writing in bed).

Work by three US writers who will be living, working, and giving public readings in Wellington during 2007 provides a foretaste of the literary year to come. US novelist [Curtis Sittenfeld](#) (author of the bestselling novels *Prep* and *The Man of My Dreams*, which are being translated into twenty-five languages) offers a piece titled ‘I was Sylvia Plath-ish’. Poets Zach Savich and Dora Malech complete the trio of imports –

all of whom have passed through the famed Iowa Writers' Workshop. Both Zach Savich and Curtis Sittenfeld will give public readings in Wellington in mid-February – watch this space for details.

#### **4. Landfall essay competition winner**

Our congratulations to Anna Sanderson, who has followed up the August publication of *Brainpark* (Victoria University Press), the book of personal essays written for her 2005 MA folio, by winning the 2006 *Landfall* Essay Competition. Her winning entry, which describes a visit to a suburban acupuncturist, is classified in *Landfall* as 'half short-story, half essay-memoir'. The competition was judged by Simon During, who describes Sanderson's essay as connecting 'knowledge to imagination'.

#### **5. Creative Science Writing Award**

The success of the Are Angels OK? project

<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/vup/recenttitles/areangelsok.htm>

has been followed by news of a creative science writing award to be sponsored by The Royal Society of New Zealand. We understand that there will be both fiction and non-fiction categories, each with a prize of \$2,500, and that winning entries will be published in the *NZ Listener*. The competition will be held for the first time next year, and we will post more detailed information in the newsletter when it comes to hand.

#### **6. The expanding bookshelf**

Last week at Victoria University's School of Nursing and Midwifery Rachel Bush launched a chapbook of poems written as a result of her 2004 stint as poet in residence at Wellington Hospital, part of a Poets in Workplaces scheme initiated by the NZ Poetry Society. The author found her research at the hospital acquired an unanticipated depth when she was admitted as a patient on the day she was due to take up the residency. Her book, titled *All Patients Report Here*, also features photographs by Alan Knowles. It is published by Wai-te-ata Press.

#### **7. Full time for A P Gaskell (1919-2006)**

Alec Pickard, known to readers as A P Gaskell, died last week in Hamilton. He was the first New Zealand fiction writer to write about rugby – and we believe he attended every Writers and Readers Week in Wellington since its inception. According to the *Southland Times* obituary by Jim Valli, 'His first story appeared in the New Zealand Free Lance in March, 1939, and a few years later he was being hailed as the next Frank Sargeson. But he laid down his pen when in his prime and his last story was published in 1962. "I don't know why I stopped. Perhaps I thought I had said all I had to say," he said in an interview on National Radio in 1999. "Teaching, coaching cricket and rugby and helping with this and that, there wasn't the time." Thirteen of

the Gaskell stories were published by Caxton Press in *The Big Game and Other Stories* in 1947 and those 13 and six others appeared in *All Part of the Game* in 1978. RA Copland, who edited the second book, said: "The stories attain a level of mastery rarely surpassed in this country." '

## **8. Creative New Zealand offers three writing opportunities**

Established New Zealand writers across all genres are invited to apply to Creative New Zealand for three writing opportunities in 2007: the Creative New Zealand Michael King Writers' Fellowship, and residencies in Berlin and Iowa.

The \$100,000 Creative New Zealand Michael King Writers' Fellowship is the largest writing fellowship in New Zealand and supports writers wishing to work on a major project over two or more years. It is open to established writers who have published a significant body of work. Applications close on Friday 23 March 2007.

The biennial Creative New Zealand Berlin Writers' Residency is available to a writer to work on an approved project during the eleven-month residency. It covers the rental cost of an apartment situated in the heart of Berlin, a monthly stipend of \$3000 and a travel allowance. The 2007 recipient must be able to undertake the residency between August 2007 and July 2008. Applications close on Friday 9 February 2007.

A three-month residency, participating in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, is also available to a New Zealand writer. The residency runs between August and November 2007, and includes travel costs and accommodation in Iowa House on the university campus. Creative New Zealand supports the residency with a \$10,000 grant through the Arts Board. Applications close on Friday 23 February 2007.

Application guidelines are available on <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/>

## **9. Snorkel calling for submissions**

*Snorkel* # 5 is now seeking submissions from New Zealand and Australian writers of fiction and poetry. The deadline is 15 February: email [snorkel@snorkel.org.au](mailto:snorkel@snorkel.org.au)

## **10. Recent web reading**

Christ on toast

<http://www.chrizontoast.com/2006/week33/index.html>

The Fantastic Library

<http://fantastic.library.cornell.edu/index.php>

Asteroids Alive

<http://www.mathes.sjsu.edu/faculty/rucker/asteroids/asteroids.jar.html>

The homeless simulator

[http://www.believermag.com/issues/200612/?read=article\\_topol](http://www.believermag.com/issues/200612/?read=article_topol)

Ask an optimist!

[http://www.newyorker.com/shouts/content/articles/061218sh\\_shouts](http://www.newyorker.com/shouts/content/articles/061218sh_shouts)

An untrue Pynchon story

<http://www.theonion.com/content/node/31366>

You get a name, you're called "Thomas Bernhard", and it stays that way for the rest of your life

<http://www.signandsight.com/features/1090.html>

A Bee Stung Me So I Killed all the Fish

<http://www.inpersuasionnation.com/art/swag/chapbook/chapbookflat.pdf>

Rudy Rucker goes to New Zealand

<http://www.rudyrucker.com/blog/index.php?m=12=06=08>

Overrated (and underrated) books of the year

[http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article\\_details.php?id=8173](http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=8173)

A virtual literary festival

[http://blog.susan-hill.com/blog/\\_archives/2006/12/13/2570914.html](http://blog.susan-hill.com/blog/_archives/2006/12/13/2570914.html)

Spamming the classics

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/10/magazine/10Section2b.t-1.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/10/magazine/10Section2b.t-1.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

More Cowboy Dog

[http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/archives/001100the\\_cowboy\\_dog.html#more](http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/archives/001100the_cowboy_dog.html#more)

Learning English with the Browns

<http://www.publicaddress.net/default,3774.sm#post3774>

Poetry, Texas

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/PP/hrp47.html>

A stupid knife

<http://lifeandhealth.guardian.co.uk/consumer/story/0,,1965050,00.html>

A Christmas tree

[http://www.poetryfoundation.org/dispatches/downloads/starbuck\\_sonnet.pdf](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/dispatches/downloads/starbuck_sonnet.pdf)

SST holiday book picks

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/3902285a6619.html>

The Sam Hunt Essay Helper

[http://www.essaytown.com/authors/sam\\_hunt\\_essays\\_papers.html](http://www.essaytown.com/authors/sam_hunt_essays_papers.html)

Seeger's Law

[http://www.therestisnoise.com/2006/12/seegers\\_law.html](http://www.therestisnoise.com/2006/12/seegers_law.html)

## **11. Thank you very much**

Many people and partners help us with our work, especially with such projects as the Writers on Mondays presentations at City Gallery, the Bell Gully National Schools' Poetry Award, the Prize in Modern Letters, and our recent fundraising activities. Mr Glenn Schaeffer continues to support what we do in generous and active ways.

The powerhouse of our work, though, is to be found in our MA and undergraduate workshops. Here is a list – quite possibly in alphabetical order – of those who have contributed to this year's workshops in a whole range of ways. Our thanks to everyone!

Mark Amery, Fergus Barrowman, Jean Betts, Paula Boock, William Brandt, James Brown, Rachel Bush, Margaret Cahill, Katrina Chandra, Catherine Chidgey, Arda Collins, Jason Daniel, John Davidson, Kate De Goldi, Kate Duignan, Ken Duncum, Barbara Else, Fiona Farrell, Catherine Fitzgerald, Anna Funder, Mark Geard, Craig Geenty, Briar Grace-Smith, Paula Green, Kim Griggs, Bernadette Hall, Katie Hardwick-Smith, Tanea Heke, David Hill, Loren Horsley, Eirlys Hunter, Lynne Jacket, Andrew Johnston, Lloyd Jones, Anne Kennedy, Elizabeth Knox, Hone Kouka, Hari Kunzru, Barbara Larson, Abby Letteri, Bevin Linkhorn, Adam Macaulay, Heather McKenzie, Dora Malech, Bill Manhire, Don McGlashan, Rosemary McLeod, Cilla McQueen, Clare Moleta, Stephanie de Montalk, Paula Morris, Danny Mulheron, Donna Malane, Marion Nancarrow, Emma Neale, Conrad Newport, James Norcliffe, Tim O'Brien, Jane Parkin, Susan Pearce, Emily Perkins, Chris Price, Harry Ricketts, Tom Scott, Iain Sharp, Sydney Shep, Vaughn Slinn, Guy Somerset, Graeme Tetley, Heidi Thomson, Jane Tolerton, Simon Vincent, Janie Walker, Kathryn Walls, Peter Whiteford, Damien Wilkins

And a special thank-you from the Newsletter to our List Lady, Cath Vidler.

## **12. Great lists of our time**

We had about 100 entries for the 'Evil Advice to Tourists' competition. Here are some more of our favourites.

The Maori people take their Marae (meeting house) ceremonies very seriously. If you offend a member of the tribe they may try and covertly headbutt you as you shake hands. Follow the lead of the other members of the tour group and be prepared to duck the blow. Don't forget to remind them that you successfully parried their strike, this is a sign of great respect and all will be forgiven with smiles and further handshakes.

Never look a sheep in the eye.

Driving along Farewell Spit is a delightful way of reaching Wellington.

When coming to Wellington, be sure to wear a sun hat.

When the Australian Wallabies rugby team is playing in New Zealand, it is considered good manners to cheer loudly for the visitors - particularly in cafes and bars.

When hiking in New Zealand forests, you may encounter weka, extremely shy native birds. You can encourage them by leaving your boots, or other belongings that carry your scent, outside the hut or tent overnight.

New Zealanders and Australians are very close, and revel in one another's achievements; ask any New Zealander about great Australian icons Phar Lap, Sir Edmund Hillary and Russell Crowe.

When driving, if you find a New Zealand opossum injured on the road, take it with all possible speed and care to the local veterinarian.

If you encounter a flock of sheep while driving on a rural road, the recommended procedure is to race your engine and travel through the flock as quickly as possible.

Department of Conservation rangers are happy to guide tourists to colonies of yellow-eyed penguins; the eggs furnish a hearty meal.

A sure-fire conversational gambit, when drinking with New Zealanders and Australians together, is any mention of the Chappell brothers: it will ensure much friendly banter.

Although New Zealand restaurants do not generally list it on their menus, it is worth asking for the national delicacy of kakapo thigh in beer batter.

A much-loved national pastime, in season, is whitebaiting. To ensure a good catch of this marine delicacy, place your net as close as possible to that of another whitebaiter.

The staff of the Cook Strait ferries are known pranksters; they will sometimes, as a joke, instruct car-owners to leave their handbrakes on and their cars in gear while the ship is in passage. Do not under any circumstances fall for this ruse.

The bubbling mud pools in Rotorua are wonderful for bathing in. The boundary fences have only been put up by those who don't want the secret to get out.

Whenever you are greeted by a traditional Maori challenge, you must turn and bare your buttocks.

It is offensive to call a New Zealander a 'kiwi' - so much better to call him/her a pukeko, which is a much friendlier bird.

Seafood abounds in limitless quantities - take as much fish or shellfish as you like.

Bus drivers are happy to drop you off at any requested point between stops.

Official tourist police are easily recognisable by their distinctive facial tattoos and Harley-Davidsons.

Recommended retail prices are indicative only. The locals enjoy haggling.

An iconic New Zealand toy to take home to the family is the Buzzy Beaver.

There is no seating allocation on internal air routes.

To show appreciation for a service well done, it is customary to perform an impromptu haka.

Ask for protective gear before entering the Beehive.

Taxi drivers like to be addressed by the Maori term of respect, "Don Brash".

A pick-up line much in favour with Kiwi men is, "You remind me of Helen Clark".

It is a New Zealand cultural tradition to list and exaggerate your achievements when you meet new people – follow this practice when introducing yourself to locals, and you will make friends easily.

If you plan to hitchhike, don't use your thumb - in New Zealand, that's the equivalent of a wave to say that everything is OK. Hold up two fingers instead, and drivers will certainly pull over.

To signal one of Wellington's trolley buses, step out in front of it.

Please feel free to scrawl your own religious message across a McCahon painting.

It is customary to spit on barbeque food just before serving.

To initiate conversation mention you are here to construct a nuclear reactor. This will always break the ice.

Gay and Christian? A warm welcome awaits you at any Destiny church service.

Ideal gifts to present your New Zealand hosts with include; side arms, whale meat and Asian chickens.

Kiwis love a good joke. Mentioning you have Foot and Mouth on arrival will ensure a speedy and jovial trip through customs.



Kiwis are very proud of their fresh local produce, so be sure to visit a pea factory. If you hear that there's one in your area, just drop in at any time; someone will be delighted to show you around.

The native New Zealand sand-fly is considered endangered, so do your best to protect its welfare.

The sloped floor of the Wellington Cable Car is an ideal surface for racing fruit, a common pastime in much of New Zealand. The public love to be challenged by foreigners.

Public toilets are hard to find in Wellington but as our admired All Black players regularly urinate on camera, urination in public places has become acceptable. Same goes for spitting.

The Beehive is named after beehive matches. It is the only public building where you are permitted to smoke inside.

Our most world famous New Zealand novelist is Keri Hulme who won the Booker prize 20 years ago. But don't ask for her second novel, as an innovative writer she has chosen to write her latest work on line on [www.leafsalon.co.nz/forum](http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/forum). It is a novel in progress based on a literary chat forum with brilliantly etched real New Zealand characters: Mark Hubbard, a procrastinating accountant from sleepy Geraldine, the ever-ready-with-information, mother-of-three Mary Mac from the capital city and Diane Brown the writing tutor and hater of emoticons from Dunedin. It is believed that the character, 'Islander' is largely autobiographical. For other New Zealand authors go to the Warehouse.

We are very proud of the film-maker Peter Jackson and most Wellingtonians were in his movies. If you see someone short and plump they will have undoubtedly been a hobbit in the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Ask them about it. All people over six foot will have been warriors in battle scenes.

Once outside of the main centres make sure you try the local rural pub. Don't be put off by their relaxed dress, farmers are amongst the wealthiest people in New Zealand – buy a stray bloke a cocktail – a dry martini with an olive – then he'll just open up and you can ask him for his latest sheep joke. We love sheep.

'Help yourself' has long been a Kiwi motto. The abundance of agriculture and relatively sparse population has led to a custom by which locals help themselves to as much horticultural produce as they want. From December through May, you'll see groups of people doing this in any number of orchards and market gardens. Sometimes there'll even be a sign saying 'Pick your own'. Feel free to join in. Winter visitors, please note: from mid-August through September, the 'help yourself rule' also applies to the pastoral sector. Lambs are free 'off the paddock', to anyone who can catch them.

As a mark of respect to visitors and in gratitude to the 'tourist dollar,' don't forget that you, as a tourist, are given automatic priority in any Post-Shop, bank, bus, air or ferry queue.

New Zealanders pride themselves on the country's similarity to England in the 50s. You can make no higher compliment than drawing such a comparison.

Much as Bavarians also see themselves as Germans, and the English are also British, New Zealanders consider themselves to be Australians.

New Zealanders from north to south are justifiably proud of their biggest city. Be sure to speak admiringly of Auckland as you travel the country.