



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 24 March 2006

This is the 83rd 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. Congratulations

To Carl Shuker, who is winging his way to London \$65,000 richer after accepting the Prize in Modern Letters from book collector Rick Gekoski at the Embassy Theatre last Saturday night. The unanimous decision was made by a panel of American judges – novelist and poet Stephen Dobyns, New Directions editor Barbara Epler and novelist Geoffrey Wolff – who hailed his novel *The Method Actors* as a ‘first-rate pyrotechnic display’. Shuker’s next book, *The Lazy Boys*, will appear from US publisher Shoemaker & Hoard later this year. Judging by Louise Wareham’s account of the afterparties on the LeafSalon website, his fellow shortlistees remained in good spirits and celebrated just as vigorously as Mr Shuker himself. LeafSalon, meanwhile, has taken up the question of what to call the film of finalist William Brandt’s *The Book of the Film of the Story of My Life* that was posed at the pre-award readings last Saturday. It’s running a competition to come up with the best idea. Details (down the bottom) at:

http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/archives/000929shuker_and_after_weary_wareham_word_s.html

2. Laurie Duggan on Monday

For those whose appetite for writer events remains undiminished by the riches of Writers and Readers Week, a reminder that Australian poet Laurie Duggan will read at City Gallery Wellington this Monday, 27 March at 12.10pm, in a taster for the Writers on Mondays series scheduled to begin in July. Gregory O'Brien, who will chair the event, says, 'As well as being one of the hippest and liveliest of contemporary poets, Duggan is also a consummate technician, producing epigrams, odes and a classic meditation on Australian regional history, the epic poem *The Ash Range*. ' When writing last week, he added: 'PS: do encourage those young poets to get down to the reading. Impress upon them how much they NEED Laurie.' Admission is free, all welcome.

3. Kinetic poetry fashion

Poetry was definitely hip at Bowen Galleries last week with the launch of fashion designer Doris de Pont's winter collection, which features clothes printed with poems by the aforementioned Gregory O'Brien. The event also served to open his exhibition 'Lunar and Arthur'. The poems incorporated into these works are largely taken from his two most recent collections, *Winter I Was* and *Afternoon of an Evening Train*. The fashionistas have been and gone, but the exhibition remains on show at Bowen Galleries, 35 Ghuznee St, until 1 April. For a rundown, see http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/archives/000914artlitfashion_where_will_you_be.html#more

4. Spit collectable

While Jo Randerson, another Prize in Modern Letters finalist, was on stage reading from her work prior to the big announcement last weekend, Victoria University Press received an enquiry about her book *The Spit Children*. The enquirer, who believed the book to be out of print, had spotted a copy on sale in America for US\$331. He was delighted to be told copies were still available from VUP at NZ\$19.95.

5. Landfall essay competition

The *Landfall* Essay Competition is being held again in 2006. The competition 'encourages writers to think aloud about New Zealand culture, and aims to sustain the tradition of vivid, contentious and creative essay writing that has appeared in *Landfall's* pages.' Writers are free to choose a topic of their interest, and it is anticipated that entries will provide commentary on a wide range of issues. Essays are to be original and fully developed works no more than 6000 words long. The prize is \$2500 and a year's subscription to *Landfall*. The winning essay will appear in *Landfall* 212, published in November 2006.

Former winners have been Gregory O'Brien (1997), C.K. Stead and Peter Wells (1999), Patrick Evans and Kapka Kassabova (2002), and Tze Ming Mok and Martin

Edmond (2004). Otago University Press, Landfall's publisher and the competition's sponsor, will accept entries from 1 May to 16 June 2006. Conditions of entry can be found here: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/press/landfall/essaycompetition.html>

6. Pacific Writers Residency

Creative New Zealand and Fulbright New Zealand are calling for applications to their international residency for New Zealand writers wishing to work on a project exploring Pacific identity, culture or history. Based at the Centre for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai'i, the residency runs for three months from mid August 2006, and applications close on 3 April. Open to writers across all genres, including playwrights, fiction and non-fiction writers, poets and screen writers, the residency includes return airfares, accommodation costs and an artist stipend of NZ\$6000 per month. Previous recipients are filmmaker Sima Urale and performance poet (and yet another finalist for this year's Prize in Modern Letters) Tusiata Avia. Interested writers can download an application form from Creative New Zealand's website:

www.creativenz.govt.nz/resources/forms-guidelines/pacific-writers-res.doc

7. Kia ora begorrah

Bill Manhire has just flown off to Ireland to read his work and teach a masterclass at the Poetry Now Festival in Dún Laoghaire, joining an international guest list that includes Yusef Komunyakaa, James Fenton, Robin Robertson, Adam Zagajewski, Yang Lian and Alice Oswald, as well as many well-known Irish writers. Anyone close enough to Ireland to consider dropping by can find festival information at http://www.dlrcoco.ie/arts/festival_pn_2006.htm

8. From the whiteboard

Poetry is an instant of lucidity in which the entire organism participates. (Charles Simic)

9. Playwrights Conference

Playmarket is accepting applications for the Aotearoa Playwrights Conference 2006 until 28 April. The residential conference will be held from 17-24 June as part of the FUEL Festival of New Zealand Theatre in Hamilton. Alongside keynote speakers, festival performances and social opportunities, organisers are promising 'one-on-one sessions with leading dramaturgs and other practitioners, playreadings of your work, and work sessions on your play in facilitated group sessions, as well as on-the-workshop-floor exploration and presentation (if desired) sessions allowing you to get excerpts from your work or ideas up on their feet in collaboration with other practitioners. ' To discuss your application, apply, or submit

your ideas, email scripts@playmarket.org.nz, phone 04 282 8462 or mail PO Box 9767 Te Aro, Wellington.

10. Recent web reading

Time and the paperback

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/03/opinion/03fri4.html?th=th>

Good punctuation = bad writing?

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1724431,00.html>

Atwood launches long pen

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,1724405,00.html>

Boycott google?

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1721946,00.html>

Head of Macmillan on NZ booksellers

<http://charkinblog.macmillan.com/PermaLink,guid,62bea425-5232-48ee-ae31-270ff405d681.aspx>

Dangerous food

<http://www.rahoi.com/2006/03/may-i-take-your-order.php>

Journalists in Antarctica

http://www.boingboing.net/2006/03/10/job_ad_du_jour_rayth.html

11. Great lists of our time

This list was recorded by Giorgio de Sepibus (fl. 1678), Kircher's 'assistant in making machines', in *Musaeum Kircherianum*.

For more details, see <http://shl.stanford.edu:16080/Eyes/machines/>

1. An organ, driven by an automatic drum, playing a concert of every kind of birdsong, and sustaining in mid-air a spherical globe, continually buffeted by the force of the wind.
2. A hydrostatic-magnetic machine, representing the hours, zodiac, planets and the whole fabric of the heavens. The hours are described by means of a very simple motion, in which images of the Sun and Moon alternately ascend and descend vertically. The divisions of the hour are marked by the sympathetic motion of the flight of small birds.
3. A magnetic-hydraulic machine displaying the time all over the world, as well as the astronomical, Italian, Babylonian and ancient hours.
4. A little fountain moving the globe weighing down on the head of

Atlas in a circle by hidden movements.

5. A fountain lifts a genie fixed in the water up and down, with a perpetual motion of tossing about and turning.
6. A fountain in which the Goddess Isis, contained in a crystalline sphere, is sustained, and greets guests by spraying water everywhere.
7. A hydraulic machine that apes perpetual motion, recently invented by the Author, consisting of a clepsydra that flows out when it is inverted, and again when it is turned the right way up, wetting a watery heaven with its spray.
8. A hydraulic machine most skilfully representing the Primum Mobile, and violently impelling a brass snake resting on top of the water in twists and turns by water.
9. A water-vomiting hydraulic machine, at the top of which stands a figure vomiting up various liquids for guests to drink.
10. A hydraulic clock urging or carrying globes or genies up and down inside crystal tubes of five palms in height, indicating the different times.
11. A hydraulic machine, which supports a crystal goblet, from one side of which a thirsty bird drinks up water, that a snake revomits from the other side while opening its mouth
12. A hydrotectonic machine moving armed knights from one place and a crowd returning from another by means of continual drops.
13. A two-headed Imperial Eagle, vomiting water copiously from the depths of its gullets.
14. A crowd of dancing genies driven by the silent approach of water
15. The dove of Archytas reaching towards a crystalline rotunda and indicating the hours by its free flight.
16. The catoptric theatre, completely filled with a treasure of all sorts of delicacies, fruits, and precious ornaments
17. An architectural perspective representing the arrangement of the rooms inside a magnificent palace.
18. A perpetual screw, the invention of Archimedes, by which it is an easy matter to lift 125 pounds with the strength of a very weak small boy.
19. A large crystalline globe full of water representing the resurrection of the Saviour in the midst of the waters.