



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 2 February 2007

This is the 101st 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. American writers on show in February

Wellington audiences have a chance to hear the two American writers who are teaching at the Institute of Modern Letters this summer when they appear at City Gallery on Friday 16 February. Novelist Curtis Sittenfeld appears from 12noon-1 pm, and poet Zach Savich takes the floor from 1.30-2.30 pm. Admission is free. Both writers have work online in *Turbine* 06 (www.vuw.ac.nz/turbine/).

Curtis Sittenfeld (www.curtissittenfeld.com) is the author of the bestselling novels *Prep* and *The Man of My Dreams*, which are being translated into 25 languages. *Prep* was chosen as one of the Ten Best Books of 2005 by *The New York Times*, nominated for Britain's Orange Prize, and optioned by Paramount Pictures. Set in an exclusive American boarding school, *Prep* is an insightful, achingly funny coming-of-age story as well as a brilliant dissection of class, race, and gender that earned its author comparisons with Sylvia Plath (see *Turbine* 06 for her response to this), Salinger and Fitzgerald. *The Man of My Dreams* turns its attention to the energy we expend on relationships, in a piercingly honest yet sympathetic portrayal of a young woman's fantasies of family and love as they collide with the challenges and realities of adult life and the fraught world of dating. This session will be chaired by Susan Pearce.

Zach Savich is a rising star on the American poetry scene. His current workshop at the Institute focuses on magic, stupidity, love, and humour, all qualities his own

writing explores. He believes reading a poem should be at least as interesting as taking a walk, and is interested in poetry ‘that one can read when sick of books’. Goofiness, indirection and sleight of hand are all strategies he favours in order to arrive at a result that, in his words, resembles ‘a solar eclipse caught in a shoebox diorama’.” Savich’s work has been widely published in respected United States literary journals, and he is the recipient of numerous honours and fellowships. He plans to include a visual element in his session, which is chaired by US poet and 2006 MA workshop convenor Dora Malech.

2. Booked Out in Auckland and Wellington

The New Zealand Book Council has announced an extensive season of events in Auckland and Wellington from February to June. It features local and international authors including Marina Lewycka (*A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*), Conn Iggulden (*The Dangerous Book for Boys*), Bill Bryson, Lloyd Jones, Damien Wilkins, Carrie Tiffany and many more. For the full programme visit www.bookcouncil.org.nz.

3. Competitive poetry

A new international competition aims to raise the profile of the sonnet in contemporary poetry. The judging panel of the International Sonnet Competition comprises Susan Bassnett (UK academic & poet), Jacqueline Osherow (USA poet) and Don Paterson (Scottish poet). They are looking for innovation and creative use of the medium, while recognising that a well-crafted poem will always stand out. ‘The aim of the competition is to see what can be done with, to, by and for the sonnet in the 21st century. That’s why the only formal stipulation for entries is 14 lines. After that “rule” it’s a free for all; new ideas are most welcome.’ First prize is £1400, and entries close on 31 October 2007. Full details and on-line entry form can be found at www.sonnetcompetition.com.

And a reminder that entries for The New Zealand Poetry Society's annual International Verse and Haiku Competition close on 30 May. Entry forms and instructions are on the website www.poetrysociety.org.nz, or email competition@poetrysociety.org.nz.

4. Transverse

Transverse, a graduate literary journal of the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto, invites submissions of essays, literary reviews, and creative writing (short stories, poetry, short plays) for the next issue, to be published in Spring 2007. *Transverse* is a paper-based journal with a pdf version available online at www.chass.utoronto.ca/complit/journal.htm.

They will consider a range of contributions in various languages (contact them via email for language-specific requirements). Submissions are limited to either four

poems or eight pages of prose. Submissions may be submitted by e-mail to transversejournal@gmail.com, or posted (in duplicate) to *Transverse*, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Toronto, 93 Charles Street West, 3rd floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1K9, Canada.

5. Trout out

Writers Anne Kennedy and Robert Sullivan survived the 2006 earthquake in Hawai'i and still managed to keep up with writing produced in this part of the Pacific. The pair co-edited the new issue of *Trout*, and have also selected the work that will appear in the 2006 edition of *Best New Zealand Poems*, due online at the end of March. *Trout* 14 features a substantial interview with J C Sturm, whose book *The Glass House* was published by Steele Roberts late last year, and includes new poems by a range of New Zealand and Pacific writers including Tusiata Avia, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, Michael Harlow, Bill Manhire, Chris Price, Elizabeth Smither, and many more.

www.trout.auckland.ac.nz/journal/14
www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/bnzp

6. From the whiteboard

Writing fiction is like remembering what never happened. (Siri Hustvedt)

7. Recent web reading

Zadie Smith on failure

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1988887,00.html>

An Icelandic buffet

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Eorramatur>

Literary napkins

<http://www.esquire.com/napkinproject/>

Names

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/section/0,,32809,00.html>

Polti's 36 dramatic situations

<http://thepulp.net/PulpCompanion/03summer/polti.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thirty-Six_Dramatic_Situations

Significant literary debate in the UK

http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/iain_macwhirter/2007/01/burns_would_probably_have_been.html

Some penguin covers

<http://www.penguin.co.uk/static/cs/uk/0/minisites/mypenguin/index.html#gallery>

A lot of Chekhov

<http://chekhov2.tripod.com/>

A lot of little webzines

<http://www.coconutpoetry.org/links1.htm>

One billion mazes

<http://www.onebillionmazes.com/>

Optimism at The Edge

http://www.edge.org/q2007/q07_index.html

Handy tips

<http://environment.guardian.co.uk/ethicaliving/story/0,,1983350,00.html>

A walk on the wild side

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2007/01/11/1168105088674.html>

You'll get over that

<http://www.powells.com/blog/?p=1651>

ice sounds

<http://www.secretsounds.dk/ministry/analys.sounds.htm>

Unfinished stories

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type2250.html>

How to teach poetry

<http://www.le.ac.uk/engassoc/poetry.html>

APRIL (Australian Poetry Resources Internet Library)

<http://www.austlit.com/a/>

I am of the opinion

<http://iamoftheopinion.blogspot.com/>

A single sentence for the future

<http://cosmicvariance.com/2006/12/21/one-sentence-challenge/>

Neil Gaiman interview

<http://www.raintaxi.com/online/2006winter/gaiman.shtml>

A virtual literary festival

http://blog.susan-hill.com/blog/_archives/2006/12/13/2570914.html

Hotel St George

<http://www.hotelstgeorgepress.com/>

Punctuation

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/bookclub/story/0,,1979953,00.html>

Knox online and Bill's tips

<http://www.ourmeridian.co.nz/katherinemansfieldfellowship/home/>

<http://www.meridianenergy.co.nz/yourhome/frequently+asked+questions/meridiancurrentssummer06.pdf>

True history of the villanelle

http://depts.washington.edu/mlq/publications/pub_abstract_64.html#kane

Brief Lives

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/3864489a14336.html>

<http://www.beattiesbookblog.blogspot.com/> (23 Jan)

Bill's birthday book blogged

<http://www.beattiesbookblog.blogspot.com/> (30 Jan)

<http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/> (3 Jan)

8. Great lists of our time

Nobel Literature Laureates: An Index (as at September 2006)

From *Nobel Lectures From the Literature Laureates, 1986 to 2005* (Melbourne University Press, 2006)

Number of literature prizes awarded since 1901: 102

Percentage of laureates from Europe: 73

Percentage of laureates from Oceania: 0.92

Number of laureates from France: 13

Number of laureates from China: 1

Number won by women: 10

Percentage of prizes won by women: 0.09

Percentage of prizes won by Scandinavian countries: 0.13

Number who declined the prize: 1

Number forced by authorities to decline the prize: 1

Number won by Australians: 1

Age of Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, the oldest living laureate: 88

Age of Theodor Mommsen, the oldest laureate when he received the prize:
85

Age of Rudyard Kipling, the youngest laureate when he received the
prize: 42

Number of living laureates: 18

Number of laureates, the most awarded language: 13

Number of nominations for the prize in 1901: 25

Number of nominations today: over 200

Prize amount in 1901: 150,792 kronor (SEK)

Prize amount in 2005: 10,000,000 kronor (SEK)