



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 18 April 2008

This is the 122nd 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. Some doctoring

We're delighted to learn that mystery man of New Zealand literature, Robin Dudding, is to be awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Auckland on April 23, which is UNESCO World Book Day and (some say) Shakespeare's birthday. Robin Dudding's contribution to New Zealand writing can hardly be over-estimated. As an editor at *Mate*, at *Landfall*, and – most remarkably – at *Islands*, he had catholic tastes but a vigorous sense of quality control. And, admirably, he was a non-writing editor – journals like *Islands* never became vehicles for his own work or that of his very best friends. There is a recent discussion of Dudding and *Islands* at [LeafSalon](#), with interesting contributions from *Sport* editor Fergus Barrowman and what we can only

presume to be the ghost of Pat Lawlor. The future Dr Dudding will be in very good company on April 23 – Vincent O’Sullivan is to be honoured at the same ceremony.

2. Michael Palmer

Each year we offer our MA students master classes with leading international writers. In 2007 they had memorable classes with novelist Richard Ford, poet Lavinia Greenlaw, screen writer Linda Voorhees, and essayist Eliot Weinberger.

The first international visitor for 2008 is legendary San Francisco poet Michael Palmer. As well as his MA master class, he will give one public presentation in Wellington.

Michael Palmer is associated with a generation of poets which includes Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Clark Coolidge – “poets working in the dark, and at the margins” – and with the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets. Even more, he is celebrated for his own expressive lyrics. His poems are among the most beautiful written in the last 50 years – both resisting meaning and seeking new ways to bring it into being. He is also well known as a translator from French, Russian and Portuguese, and for major collaborations with dancers and artists.

At City Gallery, he will read from his work and be in conversation with Bill Manhire.

Date: Monday May 5

Time: 1.00 – 2.00

Place: City Gallery

3. Like Like Like...

Jeweller Stella Chrysostomou has developed an exhibition project, LIKE, with Nelson’s Suter Gallery which tracks various processes of change and translation. The poet Bill Manhire was given an object and asked to describe it in verse. Artists were then invited to translate the poem into a range of objects. “The objects are both similar and wildly different,” writes Chrysostomou, “raising questions about perception, interpretation and the process of making.” Jewellers from New Zealand and elsewhere who rose to the challenge were Fran Allison, Andrea Daly, Peter Deckers, Karl Fritsch, Caroline Gore, Gavin Hitchings, Erik Kuiper, Sean O’Connell, and Lisa Walker. Text and object images are on the LIKE [website](#).

Associated events include a workshop led by Stella Chrysostomou on 11 May, and a performance by Cliff Fell’s writing students at NMIT, who will translate the jewellery pieces back into words (21 May). More information on the Suter’s [website](#).

4. Another scoop

Good luck to New Zealand's latest books website, the [Scoop Review of Books](#), which launched a week or two ago. We like the fact that they are generating content, and like many others we were taken by their piece on the reception of *Mr Pip* in Bougainville [here](#).

5. Kiriyama queries

On the subject of *Mr Pip*, congratulations to Lloyd Jones on co-winning the Kiriyama Prize. Yet while we are pleased for Lloyd – and for Patricia Grace, an earlier winner – this is an award that troubles us. There are two things. One is that the prize is not for authors but for subject matter. Winning authors may reside anywhere – Moscow or Manchester or Montpellier – but a book's content “must relate in some significant way to the Pacific Rim or South Asia, to a particular culture or part(s) of these regions, or to people from these regions.”

More troubling is what the organisers call the award's “publishing parameters”. “Eligible books must be published in Canada and/or the United States. They may have been published in another country or countries previously.” This means that books can only be entered if they have been published in North America. This is a happy stipulation for books by Canadian and American authors. But what about – just to think locally – recent novels by Fiona Farrell, Damien Wilkins, Laurence Fearnley, Maurice Gee . . . ?

6. Not cricket

New Zealand poet Jenny Bornholdt has a poem in the Prose Sculpture anthology, now on-line as part of the 31st [Anglo-French Poetry Festival](#). For this web festival, poets sculpt new work out of contemporary prose texts that have caught their eye. Jenny Bornholdt's is based on a piece of sports writing from Wellington's *Dominion Post*. Read it [here](#). A page listing all of this year's contributors is [here](#).

7. The road between ay and och ay

New Zealand poets are suddenly getting some attention in Edinburgh. The Scottish Poetry Library has begun to boost its holdings of New Zealand poetry, has some electronic NZ poetry postcards online, and is to present poets Andrew Johnston and Gerrie Fellows reading their work on May 29th this year ([More details](#)). And later in the year the SPL will launch a section on their website where Scottish poets write about the work of their New Zealand counterparts. Andrew Johnston and Gerrie Fellows will also be reading on Wednesday 28 May, 7.00 pm, at New Zealand House, London.

8. Congratulations

To Victoria MA students Peter Kemp (class of 2007) and Heather MacKenzie (class of 2008). Heather is winner of the \$1,000 *AA Directions Magazine* Best New Travel Writer of the Year Award for “A Room with a View”, and Peter is one of two runners-up for “History Deluxe”. Read their entries [here](#).

And to Heidi North who has just won the 1,000 Euro first prize in the Adult English section of the 2007 [International Féile Filíochta Poetry Competition](#) in Ireland, and who went to Dublin last weekend to read her poem and accept her prize. You can read Heidi’s winning poem [here](#).

9. Writers and Readers’ afterlife

We’re pleased to learn that Radio New Zealand has recorded five panel discussions from the recent New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week. Broadcasts begin on 11 May, with “The Costs of Iraq”, in which John Campbell moderates a discussion between Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, cartoonist Garry Trudeau, novelist and journalist James Meek, and theatre director Nigel Jamieson.

Even better, RNZ now has a [download site](#) where it archives audio from NZ Writers’ Festivals.

Full details of all panels and broadcast times are at the foot of this newsletter.

10. Wellylit4kids

The Wellington Children's Book Association now has a noticeboard blog, [Wellylit4kids](#), where you can find events and news for Children’s Literature in the Wellington area.

Coming up very soon is: “How (not) to Get Published” Tues April 29th @ 7.30pm, Turnbull House, Bowen St, Wellington — an entertaining evening panel discussion with those in the know on what (not) to do to get your manuscript seen and sold. Wine and cheese provided. \$8 adults \$5 members and students. [e-mail](#) for more information or print a flyer off the blog.

11. The expanding bookshelf

Bridget van der Zijpp’s debut novel *Misconduct* will be launched at Unity Books, Wellington, on Wednesday 30 April, from 6.00 pm. All welcome. [More information](#).

Carl Shuker, winner of the 2006 Prize in Modern Letters, is planning to publish a new work of fiction *Three Novellas for a Novel* for a limited time on-line. We understand the novellas will be posted serially during May. [Check here](#) for current information.

12. Good advice

The *Lumiere Reader* has lately been running interviews with some of the writers who were in Wellington for NZ Post Writers and Readers Week. We especially liked David Mitchells' advice to aspiring writers:

“One excellent metaphor per page is much much better than eight fairly good metaphors on a page. Watch out for adverbs, don't use them too much. Don't write a character according to your first thought about how the character should be, because that's probably a cliché. Take the cliché and turn it round. A bank robber shouldn't be tough, mean and scarred, they should be gay and Welsh. That's a good fresh bank robber. Sam Goldwyn said, “What we need here are some brand new clichés!” Invent brand new clichés.”

Read the full *Lumiere* interview [here](#) and see also interviews with [Craig Sherborne](#) , [Paula Green](#) (editor of the 2007 Best New Zealand Poems), and [Brigid Hughes](#) (judge of the 2008 Prize in Modern Letters).

David Mitchell's Writers and Readers session is available at the ABC's [Book Show](#).

13. From the whiteboard

“Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.” Scott Adams, cartoonist.

14. Jennifer Compton

Australian based writer Jennifer Compton has taken up a six-month residency at the Randell Cottage in Thorndon, Wellington. New Zealand born, Compton is an award winning poet and playwright who has lived in Australia since 1972. As a result, she is now probably better known across the Tasman, despite her early success as a young writer in New Zealand.

The Creative New Zealand Randell Cottage Residency alternates between New Zealand and French writers. The six month residency in a historic cottage in Thorndon, Wellington, carries a monthly stipend of \$2,500. To find out more about the Randell Cottage, [email](#) or visit the [website](#).

15. Upcoming readings

You can hear Jennifer Compton reading at this month's NZ Poetry Society meeting: Monday 21 April, 7.00 pm, The Greta Fernie Room, Leuven Belgian Beer Cafe, cnr Featherston and Johnston Sts, Wellington CBD.

As part of this week's [Exploring Antarctic Festival](#), you can hear writers Margaret Mahy, Bill Manhire, and Chris Orsman, with Kate De Goldi chairing, reading at the New Dowse this Sunday 20th April, 3-5pm. All three writers have travelled to Antarctica and written extensively about their experience there. The Dowse is also showing an Antarctic-related exhibition, Sinfonia Antarctica. [Details here](#).

And a rare treat: Geoff Cochrane will be the guest poet at 4.00 pm, April 27th at Lembas café in Raumati South.

16. A message from Viola Beadleton

“We are looking for submissions to Wellington's newest literary magazine: Viola Beadleton's Compendium of Seriously Silly and Astoundingly Amazing Stories. I'm sure all of you will be familiar with Issue One of the Compendium, released late last year. Of course it is still available from Magnetix (by Midland Park), Kwanaza the African Store (116 Manners St), and Graphic (106 Cuba Mall) for people who may have missed out. For those of you who wish to become a part of making history right here in Wellington, send your submission for Issue Two off to Viola today! You can reach her [by email](#).

And feel free to visit Viola's [website](#) if you need more information:

Have a happy day!

Yours with Warmth and Sincerity,

Viola”

17. Hawai’ian residency

Fulbright New Zealand and Creative New Zealand invite applications for the 2008 Fulbright-Creative New Zealand Pacific Writers’ Residency, an award which offers a New Zealand writer the opportunity to work for three months on a creative writing project exploring Pacific identity, culture or history at the University of Hawai’i.

Valued at NZ\$30,000, the residency includes return airfares to Hawai’i, accommodation costs and an artist stipend. It is open to writers across all genres, including playwrights, fiction and non-fiction writers, poets and screen writers. Previous recipients have been filmmaker Sima Urale, performance poet Tusiata Avia, playwright Victor Rodger and children’s author Sarona Aiono-Iosefa.

The three month residency is available from mid-August 2008. The closing date for applications to Creative New Zealand is 2 May 2008. [More information](#).

18. Recent web reading

[Poetry and politicians in the UK](#)

[More poetry and politicians in the UK](#)

[Poetry and politicians in New Zealand](#)

[Cover star](#)

[Bob's brain](#)

[The Ruminator](#)

[Dudley Benson](#)

[Final Draft Short Film Competition](#)

[Writing the future: Maori screenwriting](#)

[Werner Herzog interview](#)

[Japanese residency](#)

[Love Poetry Hate Racism](#)

[Poets from Zimbabwe](#)

[US Poetry Month](#)

[More US Poetry Month](#)

[New issue of Ka Mate Ka Ora](#)

[The charms of Wikipedia](#)

[Lydia Davis on translation](#)

[World's best bookshop?](#)

[Potiki goes to the UK](#)

[Inscription copies](#)

[Open Yale courses: modern poetry](#)

[The world's longest poem?](#)

[Anne Carson reading](#)

[Charles Simic and Charles Wright reading](#)

[Irish poetry](#)

[Finnish policing](#)

[Meg Campbell RIP](#)

[Ruth Dallas RIP](#)

19. Great lists of our time

A list of 15 of Tasmania's Islands (Tasmania has a total of 334 islands!). Found by our Swedish correspondent on Tasmania's IslandCare [website](#):

Chicken
Sloping
CoffeePot
Ironpot
Courts
Diamond
Flat Witch
Little Spectacle
Little Christmas
Round Top
Wild Wind Islets
Sugarloaf
Friars
Betsey
East Pyramids

2008 New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week: the Radio New Zealand broadcast schedule

2008 New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week 1/5

4.06pm Sunday 11th May 2008
9.06pm Tuesday 13th May 2008

The Costs of Iraq

According to the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, the war in Iraq will become the world's first three trillion dollar war. He joins cartoonist Garry Trudeau, novelist and journalist James Meek and theatre director Nigel Jamieson, to discuss the true costs of Iraq with John Campbell.

A long-time critic of the war, Stiglitz has very recently published *The Three Trillion Dollar War*. Trudeau, in his celebrated comic *Doonesbury*, has taken up the task of not only berating the Bush administration, but acknowledging the costs paid by

American men and women in uniform. Meek covered the war in Afghanistan, has written indictments of Guantanamo Bay and more recently published *We Are Now Beginning Our Descent*, a novel that deals with the aftermath of 9/11. Jamieson has brought the plight of David Hicks and other Guantanamo detainees to life in the theatre work *Honour Bound*.

Chair: John Campbell

Panellists: Joseph Stiglitz, Garry Trudeau, James Meek, Nigel Jamieson

2008 New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week 2/5

4.06pm Sunday 18th May 2008

9.06pm Tuesday 20th May 2008

Writing 9/11

"After a couple of hours at their desks, on September 12, 2001, all the writers on earth were reluctantly considering a change of occupation" (Martin Amis).

In this programme three very different fiction writers talk about their 9/11 stories.

Patrick McGrath, a British expatriate and long-time resident of New York, tells three stories of the city in *Ghost Town: Tales of Manhattan Then and Now*, each of which explores the revolutionary violence that has shaped a nation. The British journalist and war correspondent James Meek negotiates the fury and impotence of those covering the war in *We Are Now Beginning Our Descent*. Mohsin Hamid was resident in New York when the planes hit. The main character in his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* whispers a love story from a café in Lahore.

Together these three writers talk to Paul Diamond about how 9/11 has changed the world and the literary landscape, and explain why it is they felt compelled to tell 9/11 stories.

Chair: Paul Diamond

Panellists: Patrick McGrath, James Meek, Mohsin Hamid

2008 New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week 3/5

4.06pm Sunday 25th May 2008

9.06pm Tuesday 27th May 2008

Don't Mention The War

"Two World Wars and one World Cup," chant English football supporters at their German counterparts. On the pitch and elsewhere, the repercussions of World War II continue. In this programme three award-winning novelists - one English, one German, one New Zealander - discuss how the war has affected them, their writing and their respective countries.

In the novels of Ian McEwan, including *Black Dogs* and *Atonement*, the conflict's legacy is frequently brought to bear on relationships, pressuring them into unexpected shapes and spaces.

For Uwe Timm the spectre of Nazism casts a lingering pall over his family and his country. In *My Brother's Shadow*, based around the diary of his brother who was a soldier in the Waffen SS, attempts to understand his nation's commitment to duty, honour and obedience. These themes are echoed in *The Invention of Curried Sausage*, a delightful love story, and *Midsummer Night*, a macabre quest through post-reunification Berlin.

For CK Stead the war is in part an absence as well as a presence. In *Talking About O'Dwyer* he examines the legacy of the Battle of Crete, and in *The Secret Life of Modernism* he explores young Antipodeans' post-war experiences in London.

Chair: Kate Camp

Panellists: Ian McEwan, Uwe Timm, CK Stead

2008 New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week 4/5

4.06pm Sunday 1st June 2008

9.06pm Tuesday 3rd June 2008

The Big Questions

What is the difference between a story and a scientific explanation? How do the two fit together, and how can we use both in our attempt to make sense of the world? These are the big questions preoccupying award-winning novelist and teacher Bernard Beckett in *Falling for Science*. Zoologist and filmmaker Lloyd Spencer Davis repeatedly asks "What the hell am I doing here?" - in the scientific, religious and personal senses - in *Looking for Darwin*, an account of his globetrotting journey in search of his hero. Palaeontologist Hamish Campbell has spent many years searching for explanations for New Zealand's unique physical and geological past and he offers a different theory of what might have happened in *In Search of Ancient New Zealand*. Three men with a passion for science reflect on life after Darwin and explore the usefulness and the limits of scientific stories in unravelling life's mysteries and meaning with one of New Zealand's most enquiring minds, Kim Hill.

Chair: Kim Hill

Panellists: Bernard Beckett, Lloyd Spencer Davis and Hamish Campbell

2008 New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week 5/5

4.06pm Sunday 8th June 2008

9.06pm Tuesday 10th June 2008

Timelords

Patricia Grace, winner of the 2007 Neustadt International Prize, once wrote "there's a way the older people have of telling a story, a way where the beginning is not the beginning, the end is not the end." Her writing demonstrates that a story need not proceed in a straight line. David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* opens with what purports to be the Pacific journal of a gentleman traveller in the age of exploration, but its ambition to explode time results in a tale that ripples out through a series of textual wormholes. Writing *Carpentaria*, Alexis Wright challenged herself to escape linear time and embrace all times. In this epic novel she says, "Time is represented by the resilience of ancient beliefs overlaying the inherited colonial experience."

Together with Jane Stafford these three writers explore how differing concepts of fictional and historical time underpin their work.

Chair: Jane Stafford

Panellists: Patricia Grace, David Mitchell, Alexis Wright