



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

*Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao*

### Newsletter – 28 August 2008

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This is the 129<sup>th</sup> 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 . Flotsam and Jetsam and Mrs Potts win School Poetry Awards

Secondary students from Auckland and Hastings have scooped the two top prizes in the 2008 New Zealand Post National Schools Poetry Awards, which were announced at a ceremony in Wellington last Friday night. Manon Revuelta (17), of Epsom Girls Grammar School, was awarded Best Poem for her entry ‘Flotsam and Jetsam’, while Sonya Clark (16), of Karamu High School, Hastings, won Best Lyric Poem for ‘Mrs Potts’.

As Best Poem winner, Manon received a state-of-the-art notebook and a cash prize of \$500. Sonya also received a \$500 cash prize and her poem, 'Mrs Potts' has been adapted and recorded into a song by acclaimed musician Samuel Flynn Scott of The Phoenix Foundation. It has also been produced as a music video and is available on iTunes. The students' school libraries also received \$500 to spend on books.

The role good teachers play in developing the talents of young writers was also recognised at Friday's ceremony. Kerrin Davidson from St Andrews College, Christchurch won a trip to the 2009 Sydney Writers' Festival as Creative Writing Teacher of the Year. The prize was decided on the basis of student nominations.

This is the second year New Zealand Post has supported the National Schools Poetry Awards, which are run by the International Institute of Modern Letters. The Awards are also supported by the New Zealand Book Council, Booksellers New Zealand, the New Zealand Society of Authors, *Tearaway* magazine and the literary magazines, *Sport* and *Landfall*. The winning and shortlisted poems, photos of the ceremony and Paula Green's judge's report can be viewed on our [website](#).

## **2. Schools Writing Festival back in the capital**

Friday's Schools Poetry Awards ceremony was followed over the weekend by the New Zealand Post National Schools Writing Festival, held at Victoria University and attended by 160 Year 12 and 13 students from throughout the country. The students took part in writing workshops and attended panels featuring top New Zealand writers for the page, stage and screen, and judging by the overwhelmingly positive feedback, a good time was had by all. The Festival is back after a two-year hiatus – and we're already thinking about what to do in 2009. A big round of applause to New Zealand Post, who made all of this possible – and of course to Festival and Awards coordinator Kirsten McDougall, who made it all happen so smoothly.

## **3. Turbine 08 needs wordpower**

Writers of all ages are reminded that the 2008 issue of *Turbine*, the Institute's online journal, is calling for submissions of fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction until 24 October. *Turbine* produces one lively issue annually, and welcomes work from writers around New Zealand. You can view submission guidelines and back issues of *Turbine* [here](#).

## **4. A month of New Zealand books**

New Zealand Book Month is launched this Sunday at Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington. The day starts at 10 am with the announcement of the six winners of the third edition of The Six Pack and ends with Greg O'Brien giving the Janet Frame Memorial Lecture at 4 pm. (An extract from the lecture also appears in the latest *Listener*.) In between is a full day of activities and readings for children, and music, theatre and literary performances from some of New Zealand's top writers. There's more information on the launch and the national programme of events [here](#).

## 5. Festivals south and north-west

Two significant writers' festivals fall in New Zealand Book Month, and IIML graduates and staff feature prominently in both. Alongside the impressive line-up of international guests appearing from 4-7 September in the [Christchurch Writers' Festival](#), IIML graduates Tusiata Avia, Hinemoana Baker, Rhian Gallagher and Chris Orsman appear in poetry events – and novelists Elizabeth Knox, Mary McCallum, Rachael King, and current PhD candidate (and already published author) Christine Leunens will also read from and discuss their work. Keep an eye on the Christchurch City Libraries [website](#) for live reporting from the Festival.

Up the other end of the country in Waitakere City, Chris Price delivers a keynote address on the slipperiness of truth and fiction on the opening night of the [Going West](#) literary weekend (19-21 September), and Laurence Fearnley talks about her writing life with publisher Geoff Walker.

## 6. Antarctic dreaming

Bill Manhire will chair a poetry panel at the Christchurch Writers' Festival, but both he and international guest Francis Spufford are also in town to take part in the '[Imagining Antarctica](#)' conference being held at Canterbury University from 4-6 September. Spufford, whose books include *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English imagination*, is the keynote speaker. On Saturday Bill Manhire and Chris Orsman will be talking with Harry Ricketts about Antarcicas of the mind, and on Friday they give a poetry reading along with Bernadette Hall.

## 7. Rhian who?

There's one local poet on the Christchurch Writers' Festival guest-list whose name may be unfamiliar even to some regular New Zealand poetry readers, and that's Timaru poet Rhian Gallagher. Her public profile is on the rise, however, as Gallagher has today been named the recipient of the 2008 Janet Frame Literary Trust Award. She will receive a \$10,000 grant from an endowment fund set up by Janet Frame to benefit New Zealand writers.

Rhian Gallagher was born in Timaru in 1961. After completing Bill Manhire's composition course at Victoria University in 1985, in a workshop that also included other formidable young writers such as Jenny Bornholdt, Ken Duncum and Elizabeth Knox, she moved to London in 1987. Her first poetry collection, *Salt Water Creek*, was published in the UK in 2003, and was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. Gallagher returned to New Zealand in 2005. Bill has described her as 'one of the quiet, astonishing secrets of New Zealand writing'. The secret is now out, and those curious to find out what they've been missing can catch her Christchurch Writers' Festival appearance on 5 September.

## **8. Happy birthday, dear Janet**

The Frame estate times its annual award to commemorate Janet Frame's birthday on 28 August. The estate continues to be active on several fronts, with a second previously unpublished [Frame story](#) having just appeared in the *New Yorker*. And Janet Frame's literary executor now has a more personal Frame-related blog called [Slightly Framous](#). A blogroll of other New Zealand writers and readers – by no means comprehensive - appears as part of Recent Web Reading (below).

## **9. Filling in the Ditch**

One of the Christchurch Writers Festival panels, 'Is the Ditch Too Deep?', brings together two New Zealand and two Australian novelists to chew over the perennial question of why we read so few Australian books in New Zealand, and why the Aussies read so few of ours. This Saturday in Wellington, as part of New Zealand Book Month, Sophie Hamley of the Sydney literary agency [Cameron Creswell](#) will discuss the Australian publishing scene, and answer questions about submitting work to agents there. The International Literary Exchange Luncheon takes place on 30 August at Te Whaea – Studio One, Hutchinson Road, Newtown. A light lunch will be served from 11.45am, discussions start at 12 noon, \$3 contribution at the door.

## **10. The expanding bookshelf**

More good news from abroad. We hear that Arda Collins, who taught the Iowa Workshop at the IIML in the summer of 2006 alongside Dora Malech, has won a prestigious writing prize in America. The Yale Series of Younger Poets champions the most promising new American poets. Awarded since 1919, it's the oldest annual literary award in the United States, and past winners include Muriel Rukeyser, Adrienne Rich, William Meredith, W.S. Merwin, John Ashbery, John Hollander, James Tate, and Carolyn Forché. Arda's manuscript, *It is Daylight*, was chosen by judge Louise Glück, and will be published by Yale University Press in 2009. Arda's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The New Yorker*, *The American Poetry Review*, *A Public Space*, *jubilat*, and the *Canarium*. She is an editor of the online poetry journal *GutCult*, and lives in New York City.

## **11. Iowa reminder**

Which seems as good a moment as any to remind our readers that applications for the 2009 Iowa Writers' Workshops in fiction and poetry are open until 10 November. The workshops are a great opportunity to get some intensive work done on your writing over the summer, running as they do from 6 January to 20 February. Full details [here](#).

## **12. From the whiteboard**

‘A short story is like a motorcycle – very exciting, very fast and dangerous, but I wouldn’t want to ride one across Europe.’

Jonathan Carroll

## **13. The expanded poet**

Poetry may make nothing happen, but most poets do have day jobs - and in Wellington, it’s not surprising that some of them are public servants. Anna Livesey, author of the poetry collection *Good Luck* (VUP, 2003) and holder of an MA in Creative Writing from Victoria University, works as a senior analyst at the Ministry of Economic Development, and is also studying with Victoria University’s School of Government. Last week she was awarded the Prime Minister’s Prize for Public Policy, which recognises all-round academic performance in that area. We can safely assume that Anna Livesey relies on something much more practical than good luck in her day job, although no doubt creativity comes in there somewhere.

## **14. Script graduate wins children’s book award**

In a week of many congratulations, we have some more – this time to Mandy Hager (MA Script 2004), who has won the Esther Glen Award for her young adult fiction book, *Smashed* (Random House). The Esther Glen award is New Zealand’s oldest book award, established in 1944 and given to the author who is considered to have made the most distinguished contribution to literature for children. *Smashed* was described by the judges as ‘a stand-out story about seeking the truth, with characters that are believable, strong and still in our minds long after we close the covers.’

## **15. Jack Lasenby Award**

Writers from the Wellington region are invited to submit a children's story for the Jack Lasenby Award, a biennial award offered by the Wellington Children's Book Association. There’s a prize of \$500, and entries close on 31 October. Email [the.wcba@gmail.com](mailto:the.wcba@gmail.com) for an entry form or pick one up from the Children's Bookshop, Kilbirnie.

## **16. The versatile Mr Wilkins**

IIML staff member Damien Wilkins has written short fiction, television scripts, essays and poetry alongside the novels he’s best known for. Next month marks his theatrical debut, as Circa Theatre presents *Drinking Games*, a play centring on a group of thirty-something males behaving badly. Damien will be experiencing the traditional opening night nerves from afar, however, since he remains in Menton as

this year's New Zealand Post Mansfield Prize winner. The play opens on 27 September; bookings at [Circa](#), ph 801 7992.

## **17. Recent web reading**

[Airini Beautrais in Scoop](#)

[The blogging Orwell](#)

[My life as a fake](#)

[Sestina Bob](#)

[World's lowest Volkswagen bus](#)

[Movie dialogue](#)

[Poetry brothel](#)

[Handy Latin](#)

[Banjo Paterson poems found in old diary](#)

[Big Basque poetry slam](#)

[Desire paths](#)

[The mini-cow](#)

[Eggcorns](#)

[Ray Bradbury and prunes](#)

[Sunday Star-Times Short Story Competition](#)

And a blogroll of New Zealand writers and readers for New Zealand Book Month:

[Graham Beattie](#)

[Craig Cliff](#)

[Joan Druett](#)

[Martin Edmond](#)

[Slightly Framous](#)

[Janis Freegard](#)

[Tim Jones](#)

[Rachael King](#)

[LeafSalon](#)

[Michele Leggott](#)

[Mary McCallum](#)

[Kay McKenzie Cooke](#)

[New Zealand Book Month](#)

[Paula Morris](#)

[Scoop Review of Books](#)

[Helen Rickerby](#)

[Vanda Symon](#)

[Denis Welch](#)

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

List of rules for The [World Worm Charming Championships](#), thanks as ever to the indefatigable Listlady:

- 1 Each competitor to operate in a 3 x 3 metre plot.
- 2 Lots to be drawn to allocate plots.
3. Duration of competition to be 30 minutes, starting at about 2pm.
4. Worms may not be dug from the ground. Vibrations only to be used.
5. No drugs to be used! Water is considered to be a drug/stimulant.
6. Any form of music may be used to charm the worms out of the earth.
7. A garden fork of normal type may be stuck into the ground and vibrated by any manual means to encourage worms to the surface.
8. Garden forks to be suitably covered to prevent possible injury when being transported to and from the competition. No accidents please!
9. Each competitor to leave his/her fork in allocated plot on arrival.
10. A piece of wood, smooth or notched may be used to strike or 'fiddle' the handle of the garden fork to assist vibration.
11. Competitors who do not wish to handle worms may appoint a second to do so. The second shall be known as a 'Gillie'.
12. Each competitor may collect worms from his/her own plot only.
13. Worms to be handled carefully and collected in damp peat and placed in a suitable, named container provided by the organising committee.
14. A handbell to be rung about five minutes before the start of the competition.

15. Competitors to keep clear of competition plots until given the instruction "Get to your Plots".
16. The competitor who 'charms' the most worms to be the winner.
17. In the event of a tie, the winner to be decided by a further five minutes charming.
18. Charmed worms to be released after the birds have gone to roost on the evening of the event.

\* \* \*

### **Supporting the IIML**

The International Institute of Modern Letters was established at Victoria University in 2001 to promote and foster contemporary imaginative writing.

Our founder, philanthropist Glenn Schaeffer, continues to contribute to IIML activities, including his assistance for an annual fellowship exchange programme with the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

While not everyone is able to match Glenn's level of support, we value all those who have helped us to foster the development of emerging writers. We would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about continuing your support for the IIML, for example through a gift in your will.

All gifts are managed by the Victoria University Foundation, a registered charitable trust established to raise funds in areas of strategic importance to the University, such as the IIML.

For further information on how you can provide philanthropic support to the IIML, please contact our Director, Bill Manhire, Ph: 04 463 6808, Email: [bill.manhire@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:bill.manhire@vuw.ac.nz), or Diana Meads, Fundraising Manager, Victoria University of Wellington Foundation Ph: 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534), Email: [diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz)