



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 31 July 2008

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This is the 127th 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. Powers instructs and delights

Novelist Richard Powers had a busy time in Wellington this week, despite the lashings of bad weather. On Monday a full house at the National Library heard a mesmerising reading from his novel on race, music and genetics *The Time of Our Singing* and a discussion with broadcaster Kim Hill about some of the other big questions that preoccupy him. On Saturday Victoria’s MA students had a chance to get some one-on-one advice on their novels when he presented a masterclass on narrative perspective, beginning with the notion that ‘a description always describes the describer’. Among the variations Powers offered on this theme was a scene from Damien Wilkins’ novel *The Miserables*, in which the main character’s view of Wellington from the deck of the interisland ferry reveals much about his state of mind. Powers himself managed to see a fair bit of Wellington in a short time, including Wilton Bush, Te Papa, City Gallery, Makara, and a side trip to Mt Bruce. His 26 July interview with Kim Hill, in which he discusses neuroscience, Capgras’ delusion, and his novel *The Echo Maker*, can still be heard [here](#).

2. Laureates gather for ‘night of the big sticks’

A laureate summit in Wellington this coming Monday will be a rare chance to hear all New Zealand's living poet laureates read at one event. Current laureate Michele

Leggott is joined by former laureates Jenny Bornholdt, Elizabeth Smither, Brian Turner and Bill Manhire, and Kate Camp introduces the poets. All the laureates will bring their tokotoko—a ceremonial stick carved with details personal to each of them—to this event. The first two were carved from rata (in fact from Te Mata Estate winery's original press block, which dates back to the late 1800s), but subsequent tokotoko are more idiosyncratic: Brian Turner's is made from a hockey stick, Michele Leggott's from a pool cue, and Elizabeth Smither's from a gear lever. The sixth laureate, Hone Tuwhare, will be present in spirit, as his tokotoko is travelling from the Southland Museum for the occasion.

The event will also incorporate the launch of poetry CDs by Wellington laureates Bill Manhire and Jenny Bornholdt, the first in a projected series offering a selection of work that spans each laureate's career. The CDs are released on the joint Jayrem/Braeburn label. [Email](#) for more details.

What: Hand to Hand - Five Laureates

When: 5.30pm Monday 4 August for refreshments (readings from 6pm) Where: National Library foyer, Wellington

3. How to sell a book of poetry

As well as showing us marketing strategies from the 'good' old days of advertising, the television series *Mad Men* (currently screening on Prime) seems to have become a successful sales vehicle in the present day. Leading man Don Draper has apparently been seen reading Frank O'Hara's collection, *Meditations in an Emergency*, in the second series, and actually recites a passage from the poem 'Mayakovsky' – with the result that the book's Amazon ranking leapt to 159 before they ran out of stock. Perhaps our local poetry publishers could follow *Mad Men*'s lead. Van reads Peter Olds' petrolhead poems on *Outrageous Fortune*, perhaps, or Andrew Johnston's new anthology of poems about death and dying, *Moonlight*, thumbed by *Shortland Street*'s Dr Warner?

4. More theatrics

In our last newsletter item on recent film and theatre productions by IIML graduates we failed to note that Donna Banicevich Gera, whose play 'Anton's Women' was produced in Auckland earlier this year, currently has another production on in Auckland. Her play 'Land Without Sundays', written in 2005 while doing her MA in Scriptwriting, is running at the Maidment Theatre's Musgrove Studio until this Saturday, 2 August, so there's still time to catch it (just). It's the second part of a trilogy set in New Zealand's Dalmatian community. The *New Zealand Herald* review is [here](#).

5. From the whiteboard

‘We read to escape ourselves and become someone else, at least for a little while. Fiction is one long sensuous derangement of familiarity through altered point of view.’

Richard Powers

6. New work from Prize in Modern Letters winner

David Beach won this year’s \$65,000 Prize in Modern Letters for just one slim volume of ‘chopped-up prose sonnets’ called *Abandoned Novel*. (He now describes himself as a ‘retired mail sorter’.) This month that book is joined by a second slim volume, fresh off the press from VUP. *The End of Atlantic City* uses the same distinctive form and wry tone to cover territories ranging from Te Aro to Troy, and local icons such as the Bucket Fountain to *The Lord of the Rings*.

7. Recent web reading

[New US poet laureate](#)

[Man-Booker longlist 2008](#)

[Swedish names](#)

[Another Richard Powers interview](#)

[Clock of the long now](#)

8. Great lists of our time

CREATIVE ICE-CREAM

New Zealand Ice-cream Awards 2008, "Open Creative" category (Ice-Cream and Gelato/Sorbet Sections).

CATEGORY 5(a) OPEN CREATIVE - ICE-CREAM

SILVER

Blue River Dairy Products Ltd 100% Pure Sheep's Milk Ice Cream Vanilla Flavor

CIBO Restaurant Spiced Ice Cream

Fonterra Brands (Tip Top) Ltd Custard & Rhubarb

Ginelli's Pumpkin and Maple Ice Cream

Ginelli's Sesame Ice Cream

Kapiti Blueberry Muffin

Kapiti Licorice

Kohu Road Ice Cream Rum and Raisin

New Zealand Natural Pty Ltd Crème Caramel

New Zealand Natural Pty Ltd Licorice Twister

Rush Munro's of NZ Ltd Lavender & Ginger Ice Cream

Zest Gelato Bacon and Egg Ice Cream

GOLD

Fonterra Brands (Tip Top) Ltd Peanut Butter Nutter

CATEGORY 5(b) OPEN CREATIVE - GELATO & SORBET

SILVER

Ginelli's Bacio (Kisses) Gelato

Lick Dessert Bar Basil Gelato with Strawberry and Balsamic Reduction

Lick Dessert Bar Pinot Noir Sorbet

Massey University 4th Year Food Technology Students Group B Black Night Gelato

Massey University 4th Year Food Technology Students Group B Traditional Italiano Tiramisu Gelato

New Zealand Natural Pty Ltd Amues-Me

Sensient Technologies Jasmin Orange with Crystallised Violets Sorbet

Sensient Technologies Sweet Chilli and Lime Sorbet

GOLD

Massey University 4th Year Food Technology Students Group A Cappuccino

Stracciatella with Ganache Nib Ripple Gelato

Massey University 4th Year Food Technology Students Group A Pink Lady Gelato

Prolux Pty Ltd Macadamia and Candied Hazelnut Gelato

OPEN CREATIVE BEST OVERALL from both Ice Cream and Gelato/Sorbet Sections

Fonterra Brands (Tip Top) Ltd, Peanut Butter Nutter Ice Cream

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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, or Diana Meads, Fundraising Manager, Victoria University

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