



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

*Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao*

### Newsletter – 8 July 2008

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This is the 125<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. Writers on Mondays is back!

A new semester, the IIML workshop room is humming again, and Writers on Mondays is back to provide some mid-winter cheer. This year's busy lunchtime programme includes a session with visiting American novelist Richard Powers (recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius award"), and a special summit of NZ poet laureates.

The first event, however, is the annual curtain raiser to Montana Poetry Day, where [contributors](#) to the 2007 *Best New Zealand Poems* read from their work. This year, Montana-shortlisted poet Johanna Aitchison will be reading on 14 July with Angela

Andrews, Sarah Jane Barnett, Geoff Cochrane, Cliff Fell, and Anna Jackson, with Bill Manhire chairing.

A reminder that this year's series is hosted by the National Library of New Zealand. Events take place Mondays 1-2pm in the National Library Auditorium, corner Aitken and Molesworth Streets. Admission is free. [Full programme](#).

## **2. Turbine is back!**

We are now calling for submissions of original poetry, short fiction, and creative nonfiction to be considered for the online journal, *Turbine*. Created in 2001, *Turbine* is designed to showcase new New Zealand writers.

The submission deadline is October 24, 2008. Submission guidelines and past issues are available [here](#).

## **3. Richard Powers is coming!**

Last year's MA students had the great satisfaction of master classes with Richard Ford, Lavinia Greenlaw, Eliot Weinberger, and Linda Voorhees, while this year's have already had a session with poet Michael Palmer. Later this month, novelist Richard Powers – author of *The Gold Bug Variations*, *Galatea 2.2*, and *The Echo Maker* – will be leading a master class for MA fiction students. He will also be making a special presentation in the Writers on Mondays series. Powers is especially notable for the way in which he brings science and the arts together inside powerful narratives.

“After reading Powers,” writes Stephen Burt in *Slate*, “C.P. Snow's once-famous complaint about the ‘two cultures’—scientists and humanists, each unable to listen to the other—melts away. The novelist trained as a physicist himself. No wonder he gets celebrated as a cerebral novelist, as an explainer, as the smartest writer on the block. Yet the interest in Powers as a man of science misses what keeps his characters alive. All his information-rich protagonists—teachers, programmers, professors, singers, accompanists, homemakers, hostages—have to master a vast array of data: All of them make, from that data, refuges, new spaces, kinds of art. All of them (Powers argues) need both the arts and the sciences in order to share a household, a nation, or a world.”

Richard Powers' Writers on Mondays presentation is on 28 July, 1-2pm, National Library Auditorium, and will be chaired by Kim Hill.

## **4. Montana applause**

Amid the recent furore, we must admit that the thing we mostly noticed about the four fiction finalists for this year's Montana New Zealand Book Awards is that exactly half of them are graduates of Victoria's MA in Creative Writing programme.

Congratulations to Laurence Fearnley for *Edwin and Matilda* and to Mary McCallum for [The Blue](#).

One of the three poetry finalists Johanna Aitchison, named for her first collection [A Long Girl Ago](#), is also a Victoria graduate. Well, we say “her first collection”, but there was a small chapbook (a mere 18 pages of text) published back in 1999, so presumably *A Long Girl Ago* isn’t eligible for the Best First Book Award. It looks, though, as if we can already applaud Mary McCallum – one of this year’s Prize in Modern Letters finalists – on winning the Fiction category of the Best First Book Award.

## 5. Endless audacity

2006 Prize in Modern Letters winner Carl Shuker has persuaded the *Listener* to review – under the heading “Endless Audacity” – his web-published fiction *Three Novellas for a Novel*.

We think this may well be a local first – a print magazine, that is, reviewing a book that exists only in digital form. The review, by Sam Finnemore, can be read [here](#). We now look forward to regular *Listener* reviews of the country’s most important annual poetry publication, [Best New Zealand Poems](#).

**Breaking news:** We hear that Carl Shuker has been awarded a JENESYS Artist Residency (administered by the Japan Foundation, in partnership with the Asia New Zealand Foundation), and will spend August and September in Japan. He will be based at the Tokyo Wonder Factory and at the [Contemporary Art Factory](#) near Asakusa.

## 6. Anne Kennedy goes to Scotland

Anne Kennedy has joined Glenn Colquhoun and Bill Manhire on the Scottish Poetry Library’s NZ poetry page. Kirsty Gunn introduces a poem from Kennedy’s fine book *Sing-song* [here](#).

## 7. Southern Cuisine

From Mark Sanderson’s “Literary Life” in the *Telegraph*:

“Duncan Fallowell's latest book, *Going as Far as I Can*, follows in the footsteps of Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh's 1948 tour of New Zealand.

While Down Under, Olivier developed a nasty knee problem that was operated on in Wellington. Imagine Mr Fallowell's surprise when he recently received an email from a reader that includes the following revolting information:

‘the local surgeon was so impressed by the fame of his patient that he placed Olivier's cartilage (removed from knee) in formalin in a little glass jar.

Unfortunately, while it was briefly in the glovebox of his car, his three-year-old son took it out and ate it. As an adult he is still rather proud of this small act of cannibalism.’”

## 8. The expanding bookshelf

Congratulations to [Ellie Catton](#), whose first novel *The Rehearsal* was launched on Friday by Weta Workshop's Richard Taylor. She leaves soon for the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she is this year's Schaeffer Fellow.

Also to Kapka Kassabova, whose *Street without a Name*, a memoir of growing up in Bulgaria has just been published. On the author's [website](#) there are plugs from Jan Morris, Pico Iyer, and Clive James, and Vesna Goldsworthy. And there's a good review in the [Guardian](#).

## 9. From the whiteboard

“What I tend to say at the beginning of the term to my students in poetry workshops is this: I am going to be involved with your *capacities* as writers, but your *destinies* as writers are your own business.”

Seamus Heaney

## 10. Wilkins at the grave of Webb Ellis

We note that Jason Smith in his blog for the journal *Idealog* has posted a [conversation](#) with this year's NZ Post Katherine Mansfield Fellow, Damien Wilkins, recorded by the grave of William Webb Ellis. The Webb Ellis grave is, after Mansfield's Villa Isola Bella, the chief Menton destination for NZ travellers. Smith seems to be interviewing a range of New Zealand writers for a PhD dissertation. His blog also includes a [conversation](#) with London-based novelist Kirsty Gunn.

## 11. Montana Poetry Day

A reminder that Friday 18 July is Montana Poetry Day. The day not only sees the announcement of the Montana New Zealand winner (go, Johanna!) and a wide variety of [events and readings](#), it also provides a platform for book launches. One of the more interesting this year is an anthology from Vintage edited by Andrew Johnston when he was the 2007 J D Stout Fellow at Victoria. The book is *Moonlight: New Zealand Poems on Death and Dying*. Here is the publisher's blurb:

“This intelligent, moving collection taps into the extraordinarily powerful way New Zealand poets address the subject of death, dying and grief. There are 65 poems from poets as diverse as Janet Frame and Glen Colquhoun, James K Baxter and Michael Jackson, drawn together by one of this country's finest mid-career poets, Andrew Johnston. All royalties go to Hospice New Zealand and the book is being launched on Montana Poetry Day 2008 at the Mary Potter Hospice, Wellington. This charitable connection was the editor's plan, as a mark of gratitude for the quality of care given to his late father by hospice several years ago.”

## **12. Losing to Ljubljana**

A news item from the Book Publishers' Association of New Zealand.

“At a meeting in Paris on Wednesday, the Jury of World Book Capital, which includes IPA (publishers), IBF (booksellers), IFLA (librarians), and UNESCO, appointed Ljubljana (Slovenia) as World Book Capital 2010 for the quality of its application, as well as for its diverse and complete programme, widely and enthusiastically supported by all players involved in the book industry.

The call for nominations for World Book Capital 2011 will be circulated later this year. Due to a rotation system put in place 2 years ago, cities from Europe and North America will be excluded from the next call for nominations (given Ljubljana's appointment for 2010).

BPANZ understands that Wellington put forward a very impressive bid for the event and the event had full support of the mayor and council so the result is disappointing. Let's hope there's a bid from NZ for 2011.”

## **13. An Evening with Emily Perkins**

Later this month Emily Perkins will be in conversation with VUP's Fergus Barrowman following from the publication of her critically-acclaimed new book, *Novel About My Wife*.

Tickets are \$10 and are available from the Information Desk, Wellington Central Library, 65 Victoria Street. Ticket sales in person only, no reserves.

6pm, Thursday 24 July, City Gallery Wellington.

## **14. Poetry Studio**

Poetry Studio is a weekly open mic Wellington poetry venue. Established in April 2004, it has happened every Sunday since then. It now runs from 3 til 5 pm at 128 Abel Smith Street. It's a relaxed gathering where you can listen to poetry of all shapes and sizes, or have a go at performing poetry yourself. Come along! Gold coin koha. If you have any queries email [poetrystudio@paradise.net.nz](mailto:poetrystudio@paradise.net.nz).

## **15. Michael King Writers' Centre Short-term Residencies 2008**

The Michael King Writers' Centre is calling for applications for two six-week writers' residencies based at the centre in the historic Signalman's House, Devonport, Auckland.

The residencies are funded jointly by the Michael King Writers' Centre and Creative New Zealand.

Each residency is for a period of six weeks. The successful writers will be able to live at the Michael King Writers' Centre and work in the writer's studio, and will each receive a stipend of \$6,000. The first six-week residency will take place between August and October 2008. The second will be in November and December.

The residencies are open to established authors, working on a project in fiction, non-fiction, drama or poetry.

Applications close on Friday 25 July 2008. There is fuller detail [here](#). (Click on the 13 June "Show Release" link.)

## **16. Awards deadline**

A reminder that applications for the 2008 Copyright Licensing Writers' Awards close on July 15<sup>th</sup>.

The annual CLL Writers' Awards were established in 2002 to provide financial support for New Zealand writers of non-fiction books.

Two awards of \$35,000 will be made in 2008. Full details of these and other CLL awards are [here](#).

## **17. The Not Dead**

This film, directed by Brian Hill and using the poems of Simon Armitage, is screening at this year's Auckland and Wellington International Film Festivals. Says the programme:

“It wasn't as though we wasn't ready to go to war. Everyone was fully prepared. It was coming home that people wasn't ready for.’ So says one of the participants in Brian Hill's intense, poetic portrait of former soldiers afflicted by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The film is poetic in quite a literal way: one of its most striking innovations is that the soldiers' stories have also been rendered as poems by Simon Armitage (Ivor Novello Award and Griffin Poetry Prize winner and Britain's official Millennium Poet), which their subjects read back to camera.”

Check [here](#) for dates and times.

Ken Duncum, the IIML's Michael Hirschfeld Director of Scriptwriting, will also be busy at the Wellington International Film Festival. On Sunday 20 July, 12.00 pm, Penthouse Cinema, he is [in conversation](#) with visiting director Ira Sachs.

## **18. Recent web reading**

[Ulysses for Dummies](#)

[Improbable phrases](#)

[UK short story competitions](#)

[Laughter](#)

[Books by focus groups](#)

[New Janet Frame story](#)

[Billy Collins on poems and comics](#)

[The end of biography?](#)

[Daisy Fried's poetry exercises](#)

[A Kate Clanchy poetry exercise](#)

[Poets in China](#)

[Robin Hyde visits Queenstown, 1937](#)

[Murray Bail profile](#)

[Frank O'Hara](#)

[Bob Cobbing](#)

[Aleksandar Hemon's Lazarus Project](#)

[The \*Lost\* Book Club](#)

[Bad haiku](#)

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

“Also known as...”

Nicknames of recently indicted New York mobsters.

"Elmo"  
"Jerry"  
"Tommy Sneakers"  
"Charlie Canig"  
"Joe Rackets"  
"Lanza"  
"Italian Dom"  
"Dominic"  
"Dom from 18th Avenue"  
"The Greaseball"  
"Joe Marco Polo"  
"JoJo"  
"Miserable"  
"Nicky"  
"Little Nicky"  
"The Doctor"  
"The Little Guy"  
"Seymour"  
"Grandpa"  
"Grandfather"  
"Jackie the Nose"  
"Jackie"  
"Vinny Hot"  
"Lenny"  
"L"  
"The Conductor"  
"Nike"  
"Uncle"  
"Fatso"  
"Vinny"  
"Skinny"  
"Mike"  
"Mikey"  
"Marbles"  
"Bobby the Jew"  
"One Eye"  
"Dead Eye"  
"Russ"  
"Joe Gag"  
"Han"  
"Buckwheat"  
"Ernie"  
"Eyes"  
"Baldy"  
"Stevie I"  
"John"  
"Simon"



"Herman"  
"Alan"  
"Cheeks"  
"Anthony Firehawk"  
"Anthony Nighthawk"  
"Nighthawk"  
"Firehawk"  
"Tony O"  
"Big Guy"  
"Tall Guy"  
"Treetop"  
"Top"  
"Jamesie"  
"Bob"  
"Vinny Basile"  
"Johnny Red Rose"  
"Gino"  
"Fat Richie"  
"Big Richie"  
"Joe"  
"Richie"  
"Rich"  
"John Reeg"  
"Reeg"  
"Ang"  
"Little Ang"  
"Junior"  
"Gus"  
"Gus Boy"  
"Billy"  
"Big Billy"  
"Eddie"  
"Mike the Electrician"  
"Frankie"  
"Big Tara"

\* \* \*

### **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)