



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 28 March 2008

This is the 121st 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. We have a winner!

Congratulations to David Beach, who has been awarded the \$65,000 Prize In Modern Letters for his book of poems, *Abandoned Novel*. The announcement was made during New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week, at the close of an event where all shortlisted writers read from their work. Mr Beach made a number of notable comments. One was: "That a book of poems can win a \$65,000 prize makes me feel as if I've stumbled into a parallel universe where poetry is considered important." And in reply to a journalist's question, "Why do you write poetry," he rocked on his heels for a moment or two before replying in a puzzled but moderately cheerful voice, "What else *would* you do?"

The Prize in Modern Letters is New Zealand's richest literary prize, and one of the most valuable in the world for an emerging artist. It is funded by arts philanthropist Glenn Schaeffer.

There is more on the award event [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

2. Life across the Tasman

Speaking of Writers and Readers Week, it looks as if it will have a richer afterlife on Australian radio than here on Radio New Zealand. Ramona Koval, who runs the ABC's Book Show, chaired sessions at the Wellington festival and also made a whole range of recordings which will be broadcast – and sometimes posted as transcriptions – in the weeks and months to come. On the show's website already are interviews with Damien Wilkins, David Mitchell (a recording of the wonderful opening session at Writers and Readers), and Paul Muldoon. Go [here](#) and hunt around.

3. Muldooniana

Irish poet Paul Muldoon was a generous presence at Writers and Readers Week. His own session is reported on by Joan Fleming for [Lumiere Reader](#), but he was also frequently to be seen in the audience at other writers' sessions. He was even spotted lining up after the Prize in Modern Letters readings for David Beach's signature on a copy of *Abandoned Novel*.

Muldoon was teased a number of times for his comments during the gala opening, where he praised the week's sponsors, New Zealand Post, under the mistaken impression they were a newspaper. Hence the following letter in the *Dominion Post* on 18.3.08:

You're absolutely right to take me to task for thinking that New Zealand Post must be a newspaper. Even if the postal service were known as NZ Mail, I'd probably have taken the phrase to refer to a newspaper...How refreshing to find not only that the *Dominion Post* carries a poem once a week but that NZ Post is such a staunch supporter of the Writers and Readers Festival, so flawlessly organised by Laura Kroetsch and her magnificent team. It's been a pleasure to spend a week in your enlightened, and enlightening, country.

PAUL THE "OTHER" MULDOON

Princeton, New Jersey

4. A Spanish story

Some overseas guests at writers' festivals are less willing to mix it with the locals. Bill Manhire returned from Adelaide Writers' Week recently with a story told by the Australian writer Brian Matthews. In 1988 Matthews had just published his first book, a groundbreaking biography of Louisa Lawson, and the excited, nervous new author was introduced to the well-known English biographer Victoria Glendinning, a fellow guest at that year's Adelaide Writers' Week. "Oh, hello," said Victoria Glendinning: "We were just talking about Spain, and I should rather like to continue talking about Spain." Then she turned away.

5. And still on the subject of writers' festivals . . .

The full and most impressive 2008 Auckland Writers & Readers Festival Programme is now available [here](#).

6. Newsflash

We hear that Wellington has made a strong bid to UNESCO to be made World Book Capital in 2010. Other bidding cities include Melbourne and Kuala Lumpur. The World Book Capital programme has been in place since 2001, when Madrid was declared the first such city. The current World Book Capital is Amsterdam.

7. Best New Zealand Poems

Paula Green's rich selection of 25 poems from 2007 will be online next week. We will be sending out a message to all newlist subscribers when the site goes live. Meantime, we are pleased to announce that the editor for BNZP 2008 is [James Brown](#). James will be reading widely on his own account, but is happy to receive suggestions, website tips, and copies of published books and magazines for consideration. All work must be published between 1 January and 31 December 2008 and the reading period closes at the end of the year. Please post to James Brown, BNZP 2008, Institute of Modern Letters, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington.

8. From the whiteboard

"I suppose my effort has been a consistent one – I just keep trying to make something out of words that you'd think couldn't be made out of words." Deborah Eisenberg

9. Writing on the run

Congratulations to our 2008 Writer in Residence, David Geary, who won the *Once Upon a Deadline* competition which was organised as a curtain-raiser to New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week, and to Ellie Catton, who won the People's Choice category. A full report can be read [here](#).

10. Online pioneers

A special issue of the online journal [Kotare](#) contains important biographical essays on early NZ women writers. As Jane Stafford notes in her introduction, "The essays in this collection are, in many cases, the first sustained discussion of the writers and their

work, much of it resulting from primary research in rare book collections and local and overseas archives.” The writers discussed are Lady Barker, Louisa Alice Baker, Edith Searle Grossman, GB Lancaster, Jane Mander, Nelle Scanlan, Katherine Mansfield, Jean Devanny, Ngaio Marsh, Robin Hyde, Elsie Locke, and Sylvia Ashton-Warner. We note with pride that the essay on Sylvia Ashton-Warner is by poet and IIML Schaeffer Fellow Emily Dobson.

11. The expanding bookshelf

Emma Neale’s new collection of poems, *Spark*, has just appeared from Steele Roberts. Say the publishers: “[*Spark*] will enchant and provoke, comfort and delight. From the hilarious ‘True Pregnancy Tales’ to the more sobering ‘The First Stone’, in which the author recounts her small child grappling with the adult concepts of war and revenge, Neale crosses between storytelling and quiet reflection with confidence and charm.”

And novelist Jenny Patrick also has a new novel, *Landings*, set on the Whanganui River at the turn of the twentieth century, to be published by Random House on 4 April. The author writes: “I had no personal connection with the Whanganui River apart from having canoed down it for five days 15 years ago. The river stayed with me in my mind...so beautifully remote and when you pass down it all you see is spectacular scenery. We came in from Taumaranui and canoed south and we didn’t see any cars, houses, roads or settlements until we came out five days later at Pipiriki...I was fascinated by the history of the river. It was New Zealand’s premier tourist route. It was marketed all over the world as New Zealand’s Grand Canyon and ‘the Rhine of Maoriland’ and people came from all over the world to travel that route.”

12. Hone Tuwhare

A couple of addenda to our 8 February note on Hone Tuwhare. There is a fine [obituary](#) in *The Guardian* by Alistair Te Ariki Campbell. The Palmerston North tribute readings can now be heard [online](#).

13. Robert Lord Writer’s Cottage

Applications from writers are sought for rent-free residencies at the Robert Lord Writer’s Cottage in Dunedin for: August and September 2008 (2 month slot) and December 2008 to March 2009 (4 month slot). Applications need to include an outline of the writing project you propose to undertake; your writing cv and contact details; a summary of the reason you wish to undertake the project in Dunedin; your preferred timeslot and whether you have flexibility about dates. Closing date for both slots Monday 14 April 2008 .

Send to Mark Amery, Director, Playmarket, Box 9767, Wellington, or by [email](#).

Further information [here](#).

14. A few new litblogs

The Australian poet Laurie Duggan has a [blog](#), as does New Zealand writer and IIML graduate [Whiti Hereaka](#). Guy Somerset has taken the *Listener's* Culture Vulture column [online](#). And [LeafSalon](#) is back, sort of.

15. Recent web reading

[Rachael King profile](#)

[Bill Manhire profile](#)

[The state-of-the-nation novel](#)

[Encyclopedia novels](#)

[Novelists' strike makes no headway](#)

[Triple Canopy](#)

[Duende](#)

[Interviews with Penguin authors](#) (eg: Maurice Gee, Mary McCallum, Laurence Fearnley, Paula Morris)

[Sheep spelling](#)

[Booklamp](#)

[Delete Key Awards](#)

[Metonymy](#)

[Poetry and city kids](#)

[Angela Andrews review](#)

[Owen Marshall on Fiona Kidman](#)

[Trees and Torpedoes](#)

16. Great lists of our time

A nice wee list of Scottish bumblebees from the Biological

Recording in Scotland (BRISC) [Bumblebee Identification page](#)

Red or Orange tailed bumblebees

Red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*)

Red-shanked carder bee (*Bombus ruderarius*)

Early bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*)

Bilberry bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*)

Yellow and Black striped bumblebees

Buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)

White-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*)

Garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*)

Heath bumblebee (*Bombus jonellus*)

Broken belted bumblebee (*Bombus soroeensis*)

Foxy bumblebees

Common carder bee (*Bombus pascuorum*)

Scarce carder bee (*Bombus muscorum*)

Great yellow bumblebee (*Bombus distinguendus*)

Cuckoo bees

Gypsy cuckoo bee (*Bombus bohemicus*)

Barbut's cuckoo bee (*Bombus barbutellus*)

Four-coloured cuckoo bee (*Bombus sylvestris*)

Field cuckoo bee (*Bombus campestris*)