



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 17 September 2008

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This is the 130th 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

1. Six pack success	1
2. State of the nation?	2
3. Spot the impostors	2
4. Write here next year	2
5. Words on film	3
6. ... or science, art, and poetry	3
7. The best words in the best order?	3
8. The expanding bookshelf (1)	3
9. Go west this weekend	4
10. Sonnet judge announced	4
11. Readings at Massey	4
12. Prime Minister's Awards	4
13. MPs who read	5
14. Scripts for success (1)	5
15. Scripts for success (2)	6
16. The expanding bookshelf (2)	6
17. Butoh poetry	6
18. Oskar gets a new Tin Drum	7
20. Literary horseplay	7
21. From the whiteboard	7
22. Young (and not so young) playwrights gear up	8
23. Pulp fiction	8
24. Randell Cottage residency 2009	8
25. Recent web reading	8
26. Great lists of our time	9

1. Six pack success

We're pleased to note that two International Institute of Modern Letters staff members have won \$5000 and a large readership in the 2008 Six Pack competition. MA workshop convenor Kate Duignan and Victoria University Writer in Residence David Geary between them make up one third of this year's winners. The Six Pack anthology is a key element in New Zealand Book Month's quest to get more people reading New Zealand writers. As well as a large print run that sells at \$6 a copy, 15,000 copies are given away to libraries, Women's Refuge, the Salvation Army, new Kiwis and adult literacy students. The Six Pack winners were announced at Te Papa on 31 August, marking the start of New Zealand Book Month, and at the time of writing the Six Pack was sitting at number 1 on the New Zealand fiction bestseller list. Kate and David are both [blogging](#) for New Zealand Book Month at present.

2. State of the nation?

The [2008 Janet Frame Memorial Lecture](#), delivered by Gregory O'Brien, ended the day of Book Month launch activities. We recommend it to those who couldn't be there in person as a reminder that the conversation around New Zealand Book Month, and New Zealand literature in general, shouldn't be exclusively about commerce. The lecture has also kicked the somewhat fitful [LeafSalon](#) website into action again, with a debate on 'Literature for the literary?'

3. Spot the impostors

Of course commerce is not a bad thing in itself. One quirky example in support of New Zealand Book Month comes from Original Composition graduate Louise Wrightson, owner of the webshop [New Zealand Books Abroad](#). She has planted five fictitious titles among the genuine books listed on her site. To enter the competition, send a list of the phoneys to info@nzbooksabroad.com before 30 September with your name. All the correct entries will go in a draw to win all 25 finalists in this year's Montana Book Awards.

4. Write here next year

It's time to be thinking about getting those applications in – not just for the IIML's full-year MA workshop (applications close on 1 November), but also the 2009 undergraduate writing workshops. Harry Ricketts' workshop on Creative Non-fiction will run in the first trimester, and the application deadline for that course is 2 February. The Short Fiction workshop taught by Susan Pearce is also in the first trimester, with an earlier application deadline of 10 December. And if you're thinking of getting in some concentrated writing over the summer, there's still time to apply for the Iowa fiction and poetry workshops, which run during the summer trimester in January and February – the deadline for these is 10 November. Both the Poetry and Writing the Landscape workshops will be offered in the second trimester. Full details on our [website](#).

5. Words on film ...

This week brings a chance to hear from Wellington-based novelist and screenwriter Neil Cross, who will be speaking at public forums in Auckland and Wellington this week. Cross was nominated for a Man Booker Prize with his 2004 book *Always The Sun* and is a writer for the BBC drama *Spooks*. Sessions will be chaired in Auckland by producer Phillipa Campbell, and in Wellington by David Geary. The sessions will look to uncover what makes good screenwriting, how the process of translating a book to screen works, how to spot a good novel with film rights potential and the minefield of film rights selling. The Auckland event takes place tonight (Wednesday) at the Classic Theatre from 7pm. The Wellington event takes place tomorrow night, 18 September, at the NZ Film and TV Archives auditorium, 84 Taranaki St. Door and bar opens at 6.30pm, entry by koha.

6. ... or science, art, and poetry

Two other events on in Wellington tomorrow (Thursday 18 September) make for a big night on the town for literature. At the Paramount Theatre from 5.30-7.30pm, Kim Hill will be launching the Awa Book of New Zealand Science with the help of journalist and birdwatcher Steve Braunias, physics professor Phil Butler, palaeontologist James Crampton, medical researcher Jane Crampton, poet Chris Orsman and Te Papa's marine mammal expert, Anton van Helden. RSVP to celebrate@awapress.co.nz or tel 385 0740 if you wish to attend.

If a combination of poetry and art is more to your taste, Jenny Bornholdt and Greg O'Brien read poetry by Rita Angus's contemporaries in an event titled 'Rita In Writing: Reading For Rita' at Te Papa Marae, Level 4, from 6-8.30 pm. Entry is free.

7. The best words in the best order?

Ezra Pound said poetry was 'the best words in the best order'. Editor James Brown is currently looking for the best poems published in New Zealand this year for the 2008 edition of the online anthology [Best New Zealand Poems](#). This is a reminder to writers, publishers and editors to send work they wish to be considered for the anthology to the IIML by 22 December 2008. Poems need to have been published in the 2008 calendar year, and may have appeared in books, journals or online publications (editions of selected poems will not be considered). We recommend that writers check with their publisher before sending books in, to avoid double-ups. Work should be addressed to 'BNZP Editor, c/- International Institute of Modern Letters, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington.'

8. The expanding bookshelf (1)

New Zealand Book Month sees the release of a new and expanded edition of a classic anthology. *Some Other Country: New Zealand's Best Short Fiction* edited by Bill

Manhire and Marion McLeod, was first published back in 1984 and has been reprinted several times since. It includes well-known stories by major writers including Vincent O'Sullivan, Joy Cowley, C. K. Stead, Owen Marshall and Keri Hulme, but the new edition brings us up to date with stories by writers who have come into prominence in the last 20 years, such as Barbara Anderson, Fiona Farrell, Emily Perkins, Damien Wilkins and Alice Tawhai.

9. Go west this weekend

Polynation's poets, Hamish Keith's native wit, Peter Peryer's photographs, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's moko, Fiona Kidman's memories, Nigel Cox's vapour novels, Laurence Fearnley's deep South... a reminder that all this and more is on offer at the small but perfectly formed [Going West Books and Writers Festival](#) in the Titirangi Memorial Hall, Waitakere City this weekend. The Festival opens on Friday night with Karlo Mila giving the Curnow Reading, a keynote address on the shifting boundaries between fiction and non-fiction from Chris Price, and the nine Pasifika poets of Polynation in performance.

10. Sonnet judge announced

Entries are still open for the Wellington Sonnet competition, and poet, biographer and Creative Non-Fiction workshop leader Harry Ricketts will be the judge. 'Any fourteen-line of poem about Wellington will qualify,' he says, 'because the sonnet is a still evolving form that I find fascinating. Poems submitted to the competition need not have a traditional rhyming scheme, although formal sonnets will also be welcome.' Poets will be in to win a \$1000 first prize, \$500 second prize, \$250 third prize or one of the ten highly commended prizes of \$50. The closing date is 22 September and entrants can download forms and conditions [here](#).

11. Readings at Massey

James George's first novel, *Wooden Horses*, was published in 2000, and his novels *Hummingbird* and *Ocean Roads* were both finalists in the fiction category of the Montana Book Awards. A fourth novel, *Theme from an Imaginary Western*, will be published late this year. James George will read from and discuss his work at Massey University's Wellington Campus next Thursday, 25 September, 6-7 pm, with refreshments to follow. The event is in 5D16 (Wellington Campus, Wallace Street, Entrance A, Block 5 (access through "The Pyramid"), Level D, Room 16). RSVP: to wgtnevents@massey.ac.nz or 04 801 5799 ext 6696 by Wednesday 24 September. Upcoming events at Massey include a Student Reading (Wednesday 16 October, 12 pm, 5D16) and a Staff Reading (Wednesday 12 November, 12 pm, in The Boardroom).

12. Prime Minister's Awards

Our congratulations to the winners of this year's Prime Minister's Awards for Literary Achievement, which were announced and presented by Helen Clark at Premier House last week. These awards recognise outstanding New Zealand writers in the three genres of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, with each writer receiving \$60,000 in recognition of their significant contribution to New Zealand literature. The 2008 recipients are Elizabeth Smither (poetry), Lloyd Jones (fiction) and W. H. Oliver (non-fiction). A profile of Bill Oliver appears in the current *Listener* (September 20-26), but won't be online until early October.

13. MPs who read

Apparently we have an historian to thank for the New Zealand Authors' Fund that recompenses writers for the use of their books in libraries - although which one deserves the credit (Keith Sinclair or Michael Bassett?) has been subject to debate in Parliament lately, while the new Public Lending Right Bill passes through the House. The Bill is designed replace the Authors' Fund, which has been struggling to keep up with the number of books published in New Zealand in recent years, and while our MPs generally seem to be in favour, that doesn't mean the passage of the Bill has been free from the usual political point-scoring (Chris Finlayson: 'Labour cannot even define an author or a book!').

But the debate also provides an insight into the reading habits of our politicians. New Zealand First MP Dail Jones cites a long list of successful New Zealand authors, including 'the poet Witi Ihimaera, whom my son studied at school, and, of course, Bill Manhire, who wrote *Dawn/Water*', but notes that 'the most boring histories ever written are those written by academic historians.' Sandra Goudie wonders if a book such as Ian Wishart's *Absolute Power* would meet the Lending Right's criteria. The MPs are also recommending books to one another: Allan Peachey suggests that Clayton Cosgrove check out '*Simple on a Soapbox* by John A Lee so he can find out about one of his predecessors, a former Labour member of Parliament. Lee was a decent member and the Labour Party threw him out. The Labour Party threw that great author out.'

Links to the full transcripts can be found in Recent Web Reading (item 24 below).

14. Scripts for success (1)

A number of MA (Script) graduates from Ken Duncum's workshop have been getting their work seen and heard in the world of theatre, film and television this year. Peter Cox, who devised the popular *Insider's Guide to Happiness* TV series during his MA, has a new series, *The Pretender*, starting on TV One this Sunday at 10. *The Pretender* is a political drama which Cox (in today's *Dominion Post*) says is 'supposed to provide a comical insight into the daily grind that is "the misery of life as an MP".'

Two of last year's graduates, Catherine Bisley and Tim Worrall, had the scripts they wrote for their MA selected for the NZ Film Commission's First Writers Initiative.

They were two of six writers chosen from a large number of applications to have their scripts workshopped, with the chance of making it into the final three who will be funded for further development.

Branwen Millar is coming to the end of her residency at the Robert Lord Cottage, and Lynda Chanwai-Earle has a new play, *Heat*, scheduled to premiere at Bats in November. Edwin McCrae has been racking up some script and story editor miles at *Shortland Street*.

Last but by no means least, Bianca Zander has just had a short film script made on 35mm. *The Handover*, directed by David Stubbs, is currently in post-production. But for her latest production she has been joined – in holy matrimony – by fellow-graduate Matt Saville. The pair, who met on the MA course in 2004, were married in August. We wish them a fine romance.

15. Scripts for success (2)

Write Out Loud at Circa 2 on the weekend of October 11 and 12 will see four new plays by Wellington playwrights presented by teams of Wellington's finest theatre practitioners, together with informal discussion around the future of Wellington theatre. The IIML's MA (Script) programme is well represented here too: three of the four selected plays are by graduates. Vanessa Rhodes, Lucy O'Brien and Gavin McGibbon. all have work featured in this series, which is presented by Playmarket, and the weekend wraps up with a performance of MA (Page) workshop convenor Damien Wilkins' first play, *Drinking Games*. Here's the schedule:

Saturday October 11: 2pm, *Where Are You My Only One?* by Vanessa Rhodes; 4pm, *Meat* by Geraldine Brophy.

Sunday October 12: 12pm, *Postal* by Lucy O'Brien; 2pm *Under the Hood* by Gavin McGibbon; 2.30pm, Barstools (drinks with the playwrights); 4.30pm *Drinking Games* Damien Wilkins

Further information about this and the 'Readings in the Buffs' series, [here](#).

16. The expanding bookshelf (2)

MA Script graduate Rebekah Palmer is soon to publish her second children's book featuring the character Champ the Chopper, a little rescue helicopter. The new picture book is illustrated by Daniel Falconer of the award-winning Weta special effects workshop. The book will be launched at the Weta Cave in Camperdown Rd, Miramar, Wellington, on Saturday 11 October at 2pm. ([Directions and details](#).) An animated television series based on the characters is currently in development. [More information](#).

17. Butoh poetry

2007 MA (Page) Workshop member Joan Fleming will be doing a butoh & poetry performance with Andrea Peterson at the next Howltearua event (Southern Cross, Abel Smith Street, Wellington Monday 6 October, at 7.30pm). Butoh is a dance form that evokes playful and grotesque imagery, in full white-body makeup. It began in Japan after World War II as a way to subvert conventional notions of dance. All welcome, free entry.

18. Oskar gets a new Tin Drum

Professor Breon Mitchell has retranslated Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum* —one of the best-known works of contemporary German literature — in time for worldwide celebrations of the book's 50th anniversary in 2009. But how does a translator take into account five decades of scholarship, a new edition of the German text, and over 3,500 issues raised by Grass himself in a page-by-page examination of the novel? Breon Mitchell will talk about the process and challenges of re-translating a classic on Wednesday 8 October, 6.30pm in Lecture Theatre 3, Pipitea campus, Government Buildings, 15 Lambton Quay. Refreshments will be served before the lecture.

19. Moleta talks to the mountain

In 2006 and 2007, Wellington-born, Australian-domiciled author, publisher, translator and cultural historian Vincent Moleta presented talks on the poetry of Umberto Saba and Michelangelo at the International Institute of Modern Letters and City Gallery. In mid-October he returns to the Institute of Modern Letters to talk about another Italian poetic luminary, Dante Alighieri, and to read and discuss his *Purgatorio*, canto II in original and translation. His talk, titled 'Preparing to climb the mountain: a reading of *Purgatorio*, canto II', will be presented at the Institute (16 Waiteata Road, Kelburn) on Wednesday 15 October from 5.30-6.30 pm, with refreshments to follow. All welcome - RSVP requested to modernletters@vuw.ac.nz.

20. Literary horseplay

The title of an upcoming literature conference caught our attention recently. 'Flogging a Dead Horse: Are National Literatures Finished?' will be held at Victoria University from 11-13 December 2008. We couldn't help thinking that Ken Duncum's *Horseplay*, in which James K Baxter and Ronald Hugh Morrieson meet over a dead horse, might make the perfect conference entertainment. Professor Leela Gandhi from the University of Chicago will open the conference on Wednesday 10 December with a public lecture at 6pm. Registrations received before 30 September receive an earlybird discount. For further information about this event, contact the Stout Research Centre (tel 04 463 5305) or visit the [SRC website](#).

21. From the whiteboard

‘New Zealand literature craves an intelligent critical environment far more than it craves a Montana Book Award. Literature, without a responsive critical climate, is like rugby without a referee.’

Gregory O’Brien

22. Young (and not so young) playwrights gear up

If you're aged between 16 and 24 (on 1 December 2008) then write this date in your diaries... the deadline for the tenth New Zealand Young Playwrights Competition is 1 December 2008. This is the only opportunity for young playwrights to have their work professionally workshopped and profiled in Auckland. Last year three of the winners were current or former IIML students. Visit Playmarket's [website](#) and look under Opportunities for full details.

If you've already got your playscript sorted and want to stage it yourself, it's time to register for the 2009 New Zealand Fringe Festival, and/ or apply for their Kakano funding. Forms, info packs and fact sheets can be downloaded from the [Fringe website](#). The closing date for Fringe Registration and Kakano Applications is 5pm, 17 October.

23. Pulp fiction

[Pulp magazine](#) invites submissions for a summer fiction special. They are looking for ‘compelling short stories suitable for a pop culture/fashion magazine with a key readership of 18-35 year olds.’ Work should be no more than 1000 words, original and unpublished, and the submission deadline is 31 October. To submit work or for more information, email editor@pulpmagazine.co.nz.

24. Randell Cottage residency 2009

Applications are now open for the Creative New Zealand Randell Cottage Writers Residency, March 2009 – September 2009. Applicants must be New Zealand citizens, or New Zealand residents, and should be writers whose work has already been published and well received. The project proposal submitted by the writer may be in any genre. The Randell Cottage has two bedrooms and a separate writing studio and is located in historic Thorndon in Wellington. It is within walking distance of the National and Turnbull Libraries. The residency includes a monthly stipend plus accommodation. The closing date for applications is 14 November; application forms and further information are available [here](#).

25. Recent web reading

[MPs who read](#)

[More MPs who read](#)

[Janet Frame Memorial Lecture](#)

[The seven deadly words of book reviewing](#)

[Andrew Motion on the Poetry Archive](#)

[David Geary marks Greg McGee](#)

[Mad scientists](#)

[Twine-a-thon...](#)

[Poems in the schools \(UK style\)](#)

[Sue Orr reviewed](#)

[Curried Rushdie](#)

[Hudson Review archive](#)

[The life of a laureate](#)

[The \\$1.3 billion poem](#)

[Sam Scott on life and theatre](#)

[Manukau films wanted](#)

[Maori writers' hui](#)

26. Great lists of our time

How to teach an Ocker bird to talk: a list of tracks on Volume 6 of [Feathered Phonics'](#) Audio CD Collection (Teach your Bird to Speak and Sing in over Eight Languages: The Australian Outback Edition!)

1. Beauty
2. Beauty mate
3. Feathered Phonics
4. Feathered Phonics worked for me
5. Flat out like a lizard drinking
6. Get out of here you old trout
7. Good bye
8. Good day love
9. Good day mate
10. Good girl

11. Gorgeous
12. Hello
13. Here kitty kitty kitty
14. Hey Sheila
15. I love you
16. I'm a pretty bird
17. Koo we Cobber
18. Like a wombat...
19. My name is:
20. Pretty Bird
21. Pretty Cocky
22. She'll be right
23. She's a butler
24. She's a ripper
25. Tell me when you're ready to go
26. Throw some shrimp on the Barbee
27. Welcome to the Outback!
28. What are you looking at Mate?
29. What do I look like, a koala?
30. What ya doin love?
31. Where's the bloody cat?
32. Who ate the bloody cat?
33. Yeah mate
34. Yeah mate beauty!
35. Yeah!
36. You're a good boy
37. You're a good girl

* * *

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 of Wellington Foundation Ph: 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534), Email: diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz