



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

*Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao*

### Newsletter – 15 April 2009

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This is the 139<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).

1. Dispatches from the front lines of New Zealand poetry.....	1
2. Calling teachers and student writers.....	2
3. Work on your words.....	2
4. Finding the next KM.....	3
5. Your work here? .....	3
6. The expanding bookshelf (1).....	3
7. Writers in residence (1) .....	4
8. Luminous poetry wanted.....	4
9. From the whiteboard .....	4
10. Writers in residence (2) .....	4
11. The expanding bookshelf (2).....	5
12. New anthology-land .....	5
13. Talk/write.....	5
14. Last words.....	6
15. Recent web reading.....	6
16. Great lists of our time .....	6
17. Writers in residence (3) .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

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#### 1. Dispatches from the front lines of New Zealand poetry

Last week saw the launch of [Best New Zealand Poems 2008](#), providing a snapshot of our recent poetic practice as seen through the lens of Wellington writer and editor James Brown. Brown did his best to read every poem published by a New Zealand writer last year, arriving at his personal ‘top-25’ by sifting through a large and healthy crop. In his Introduction, he remarks that ‘It’ll be a tough year for the Montana judges: I could have chosen more than one poem from many of the poets represented here with poems sourced from books.’

While *Best New Zealand Poems 2008* features many established names of New Zealand poetry – Jenny Bornholdt, Peter Bland, Sam Hunt, Bernadette Hall and

current Poet Laureate Michele Leggott all put in an appearance – its meritocracy also makes room for work by emerging writers, such as Lynn Jenner and Emma Barnes, who have yet to publish a book. There are a number of long poems, including the title sequence of Amy Brown's *The Propaganda Poster Girl*, Bornholdt's 'Fitter Turner', and Richard von Sturmer's quirky assemblage 'After Arp'.

*Best New Zealand Poems 2008* is published with the support of Creative New Zealand, and hosted by the New Zealand Electronic Text Centre at Victoria University.

## **2. Calling teachers and student writers**

Meanwhile the search is on for the best of the next generation of New Zealand poets, as entries for the New Zealand Post National Schools Poetry Awards are now open. Jenny Bornholdt will judge the Best Poem category and Jason Kerrison of the band OpShop will judge the Best Lyric category. Both winners will receive a cash prize of \$500, plus a \$500 book grant for their school library. In addition, the winner of the Best Poem category will receive a weekend for two at the New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week 2010, and the Best Lyric winner will have their poem adapted into a song by Jason Kerrison.

This year the Awards have been opened up to Year 11 as well as Year 12 and 13 students – and for the first time, entries may be submitted online, as well as by post. The deadline is 15 June, so there's still time for teachers to inspire their students to get writing and revising. Full details about how to enter the Poetry Awards are [here](#), along with previously short-listed poems and judges' reports.

You can watch the video and hear the song created by Samuel Flynn Scott with words by last year's Best Lyric winner, Sonya Clark, [here](#). The winner of the 2008 Best Poem category, Manon Revuelta, continues to write, and had a poem published in *turbine* late last year.

Finally, don't forget that the 2009 New Zealand Post National Schools Writing Festival (for Year 12 and 13 students) runs at the end of August in Wellington: go [here](#) for further information.

## **3. Work on your words**

Applications for all second-trimester writing workshops at the Institute of Modern Letters are currently open. In 2009 these include workshops in Children's Writing with Eirlys Hunter, Poetry with James Brown, and Writing the Landscape with Dinah Hawken. Our workshops aim to develop the imaginative capacity and individual literary skills of emerging writers in a stimulating workshop environment, and may be taken independently or credited towards a Bachelor of Arts or Graduate Diploma. The application deadline for second-trimester workshops is 3 June; details on all undergraduate courses are available [here](#).

#### 4. Finding the next KM

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Katherine Mansfield Fellowship, the Association France Nouvelle-Zélande is organising a short-story competition for students under 30 years of age who are enrolled in a French or New Zealand university or those holding a student visa.

The chosen theme of the competition is The Antipodes. The first prize is a return ticket New Zealand - France. The deadline for submitting manuscripts is June 30th, 2009. Further information about the competition is available [here](#).

#### 5. Your work here?

We can't help wondering if the late and highly esteemed editor [Robin Dudding](#), who left *Landfall* after a disagreement with its then publisher Caxton to set up his rival journal *Islands* in the early 1970s, would have approved of the marriage of the two journal titles being celebrated under *Landfall* guest editor David Eggleton this year. *Landfall* 218, titled 'Islands', seeks to set New Zealand in its Polynesian context, as 'part of an oceanic scatter of islands' and 'a nation characterised by dual settlement - Polynesian, then European - which more recently has welcomed a global diversity of new migrants and settlers.' The issue aims to celebrate the bicultural and the multicultural, and while submissions are being actively sought from contributors of Maori and Pacific Island heritage, "Islands" also implies communities, villages, self-contained entities, and even margins moving into the mainstream, the world currents of culture. Consequently the issue flings the net wide and keeps the definition broad.' This issue will also publish the winner/s of the *Landfall* Essay Competition 2009. The deadline for submissions (fiction, poetry, personal essays and other non-fiction) is 10 June 2009. Send work to: *Landfall*, Otago University Press, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand. Email correspondence (no submissions) to: [landfall@otago.ac.nz](mailto:landfall@otago.ac.nz).

#### 6. The expanding bookshelf (1)

Sarah Laing's first novel, *Dead People's Music* (Vintage) was launched in Auckland last week, and has already received favourable reviews on [National Radio](#) and in the [NZ Listener](#).

We're pleased to note that *Dead People's Music* had its beginnings in the [Iowa Workshop](#) on 'Starting and Building a Novel' workshop taught by US novelist Curtis Sittenfeld at the IIML a few years ago. Sarah Laing also completed the IIML's Short Fiction workshop in 2001, and participated in the memoir masterclass with US poet Mark Doty in 2004. Her first book, a collection of stories titled *Coming Up Roses*, appeared in 2007.

[Curtis Sittenfeld](#) has also been productive in recent times. Her latest novel, *American Wife*, is the story of a fictional First Lady bearing a strong resemblance to Laura Bush. It was released during the run-up to last year's US presidential elections, in which the

true-life story of current First Lady Michele Obama (about whom Sittenfeld also wrote for [Time magazine](#) came to the fore, and got a lot of attention both within and outside the world of books. Curtis's latest production is a baby daughter, born around five weeks ago. Our congratulations to all concerned.

## 7. Writers in residence (1)

2008 MA graduate Kelly Joseph (Ngati Maniapoto) will be Kapiti Island's resident writer during Matariki (Maori New Year) later this year. She will use the two-month residency to make a start on short film scripts, and says characters she created in her short stories during last year's MA workshop may re-appear in these.

Other young writers wondering when their turn at a residency might come are directed to the newly established Lavinia Fellowship for writers under 30, donated to the [New Pacific Studio](#) in memory of Lavinia Ngawhira Winter, who died in May 2006. It is open to New Zealand artists and writers under the age of 30, and provides the fellow with a two-week free residency at the New Pacific Studio in the Wairarapa, in order to pursue their creative work. The application deadline is 31 May - for further details contact the Director, New Pacific Studio Mt Bruce, RD1 Masterton; tel 06 375-8441, or email [newpacificstudio@xtra.co.nz](mailto:newpacificstudio@xtra.co.nz).

## 8. Luminous poetry wanted

Auckland writer Renée Liang tells us there's a Chinese New Year tradition of writing poems on homemade paper lanterns and hanging them outside the houses – 'in some villages, used by young men to impress girls!' Liang's play, [Lantern](#), which tells the story of a Kiwi-Chinese family who are preparing for Chinese New Year, is coming to BATS in Wellington from 21 April – 2 May, and Liang is inviting poets to send her some couplets to be written on tiny paper lanterns and installed in the Pit Bar at BATS during the play's season. Contributions 'have to be small (a couplet would be ideal),' she notes, 'and preferably about family or loved ones'. Couplets can be emailed to Renee Liang at [docrnz@gmail.com](mailto:docrnz@gmail.com), dropped off at BATS or added as a posting to the NZ Poetry Society's Facebook page.

## 9. From the whiteboard

'There is a road from the eye to the heart that does not go through the intellect.'

— G. K. Chesterton

## 10. Writers in residence (2)

Readers who have been following the progress of Wellington's Cuba Street Garret may be pleased to learn that it will open its doors on 17 April, when any and all

comers are invited to help celebrate. Instigator Doug Wilkins says the Garret is intended to produce 'a combination of solitude and community for the toner-stained wretches we know as writers.' Located in the Watkins Building (corner of Cuba and Vivian Streets), the Garret is being outfitted with offices so that writers can move in and get to work. Heat, Internet, and cleaning services will be provided, and rent will be \$80 per week (possibly less once the fourteen offices are filled).

Doug Wilkins says, 'The Cuba Street Garret has a progenitor of a sort back in San Francisco, The [Sanchez Grotto Annex](#). Those offices now have a waiting list, and we expect to have the same level of participation in Wellington.' The Garret's open house celebration, 'The Welcome Interruption I,' runs from 5.30-8.30 pm this Friday, 17 April. Writers who wish to learn more, or view The Garret at other times, can contact Doug Wilkins: [dbwilkins@gmail.com](mailto:dbwilkins@gmail.com) and/or 021-138-5050.

## 11. The expanding bookshelf (2)

*It is Daylight* is the first book by US poet Arda Collins, who taught an Iowa Workshop at the IIML a few summers ago. It's just been released in America, and arrives garlanded with praise from Louise Glück, who selected it for the Yale Younger Poets series. In her Foreword, Glück observes, 'I know no poet whose sense of fraud, the inflated emptiness that substitutes for feeling, is more acute.' She calls Collins' volume 'savagely, desolate, brutally ironic . . . a book of astonishing originality and intensity, unprecedented, unrepeatable.'

## 12. New anthology-land

Readers who are wondering what became of Chris Price's poetry conversation with Bryan Crump, which our previous newsletter noted was to air on National Radio on 8 April, are advised that the conversation will in fact air tonight (Wednesday 15 April) instead. The discussion will cover three recent New Zealand poetry anthologies: *Twenty Contemporary New Zealand Poets* (VUP), *Moonlight: New Zealand poems on death and dying* (Random House) and *Best New Zealand Poems 2008* (see item 1).

On the subject of anthologies, our Australian correspondent Cath Vidler recently directed our attention to a review (in the [Medical Journal of Australia](#)) of an anthology that had hitherto escaped our notice. *Verbal medicine: twenty-one contemporary clinician-poets of Australia and New Zealand* was edited by Tim Metcalf, and published by Canberra's Ginninderra Press in 2006. It won the ACT Writing And Publishing Award (Poetry) for 2007. It arrived in the world too early to include work published by New Zealand doctor-poets Angela Andrews and Rae Varcoe in 2007, but as you'd expect there are contributions from Glenn Colquhoun. We can only guess whether the 'Harlow' listed among the contributors on the editor's website is the Canterbury poet and Jungian analyst Michael Harlow.

## 13. Talk/write

Writers may be interested in a socio-linguistics lecture by Professor Douglas Biber of Northern Arizona University, who is the recipient of the Ian Gordon Fellowship for 2009. The public lecture, titled 'Speech and Writing: Are there any real differences?', takes place at 6pm on Thursday 7 May in HULT323 at Victoria University.

#### 14. Last words

In honour of the 200th anniversary of Haydn's death, Chamber Music New Zealand is currently touring a performance of his 'Seven Last Words from the Cross' with a contemporary New Zealand inflection. Written in 1786 as music to accompany a Good Friday service for the Cathedral of Cadiz, the work is presented in a musical interpretation by the New Zealand String Quartet with words written and performed by poet Dinah Hawken, and the images of artist Nigel Brown. The production is directed by Sara Brodie (*The Kreutzer, The Opera Ball, Kia Ora Khalid*), with video designer Andrew Brettel. It was performed in Auckland last night, and [the tour](#) continues throughout both North and South Island centres until 5 May. You can read a [preview](#) in the current *Listener*, or hear Dinah Hawken and Sara Brodie talking about the production with Radio New Zealand Concert's Eva Radich [here](#). Wellington audiences can catch it on 23 April at 7.30 pm in the Opera House. Bookings at Ticketek, ph 0800 TICKETEK (842 538).

#### 15. Recent web reading

Jenny Bornholdt's [skirt](#) ([and poems](#)) in Scotland

NZ poets [podcast](#) from UK

[A memory for poetry](#)

The misery of [proofs](#)

[Short stories new, old, and great](#)

[Song/poetry from the Kapiti Coast](#)

#### 16. Great lists of our time

[When insults had class](#)

"He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire."  
Winston Churchill

"A modest little person, with much to be modest about."  
Winston Churchill

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure."

Clarence Darrow

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary."  
William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway)

"Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words?"  
Ernest Hemingway (about William Faulkner)

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."  
Moses Hadas

"He can compress the most words into the smallest idea of any man I know."  
Abraham Lincoln

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it."  
Groucho Marx

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it."  
Mark Twain

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends."  
Oscar Wilde

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play, bring a friend... if you have one."  
George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... if there is one."  
Winston Churchill, in response

"I feel so miserable without you, it's almost like having you here."  
Stephen Bishop

"He is a self-made man and worships his creator."  
John Bright

"I've just learned about his illness. Let's hope it's nothing trivial."  
Irvin S. Cobb

"He is not only dull himself, he is the cause of dullness in others."  
Samuel Johnson

"He is simply a shiver looking for a spine to run up."  
Paul Keating

"He had delusions of adequacy."  
Walter Kerr

"There's nothing wrong with you that reincarnation won't cure."  
Jack E. Leonard

"He has the attention span of a lightning bolt."  
Robert Redford

"They never open their mouths without subtracting from the sum of human knowledge."  
Thomas Brackett Reed

"He inherited some good instincts from his Quaker forebears, but by diligent hard work, he overcame them."  
James Reston (about Richard Nixon)

"In order to avoid being called a flirt, she always yielded easily."  
Charles, Count Talleyrand

"He loves nature in spite of what it did to him."  
Forrest Tucker

"Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?"  
Mark Twain

"His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork."  
Mae West

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."  
Oscar Wilde

"He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lamp-posts... for support rather than illumination."  
Andrew Lang (1844-1912)

"He has Van Gogh's ear for music."  
Billy Wilder

\* \* \*

### **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 in a range of ways.

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 – for example through scholarships, prizes, and grants. 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)