



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 4 Aug 2009

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This is the 144th 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. Dr Anderson, we presume

We hear rumours that novelist and short fiction writer Barbara Anderson is to be awarded an honorary doctorate by a leading university later this month. Anderson's literary career, a shining example to late starters everywhere, began with the short story collection *I think we should go into the jungle*, started when she studied creative writing at Victoria in 1983. Her latest book, the memoir *Getting There*, has been described (by reviewer Kate De Goldi) as 'the best New Zealand autobiography since Janet Frame'. A paperback edition of *Getting There* will be released by Victoria University Press in October.

2. Adamson to direct Mr Pip

According to film blog [ScreenDaily](#), Andrew Adamson, director of the first two *Shrek* and *Chronicles of Narnia* films, has written and will direct an adaptation of Lloyd Jones' novel, *Mister Pip*. Producer Robin Scholes plans to film *Mister Pip* in Australia, post-produce in New Zealand, and complete the sound in the UK. It is likely to be a three-way co-production. 'The overarching theme is the power of the human imagination to be used for both good and evil,' Scholes told ScreenDaily.

3. First at the finish

In the final year of the Montana New Zealand Book Awards, we're pleased to congratulate Victoria creative writing graduates on their success. Emily Perkins (Fiction winner and Montana Medal), Jenny Bornholdt (Poetry winner), and Eleanor Catton (Winner, Best First Book: Fiction). Several other Victoria graduates were shortlisted across a range of categories. We look forward to the energy and flair and coherence that new sponsor New Zealand Post will bring to the future New Zealand book awards. A pdf of the judges' reports can be found [here](#).

4. Turbine needs you

The 2009 edition of the IIML's online literary journal *Turbine* is open for business, and welcoming submissions of poetry, short fiction, and creative non-fiction. Despite the lateness of this call for submissions, we are pleased that writing is already coming in. *Turbine* 09 will be launched online in mid-December, and the deadline for submissions is 23 October. Submission guidelines (and previous issues) can be found [here](#).

5. The expanding bookshelf (1)

Pip Desmond's *Trust: A True Story of Women and Gangs* was launched before a large audience at Te Puni Kokiri in Wellington on 23 July, and has garnered a great deal of media interest, with an 8-page article in the latest *North & South*, and interviews on Nine to Noon and *Close Up*. Publisher Nicola Legat said this was Random House's largest-ever book launch. The book was unveiled by Maori Party co-leader Tariana Turia at an event MC'd by Black Power member Denis O'Reilly. The launch also included a speech from the manager of the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, Heather Henare, and an emotional off-the-cuff response from former MP Marilyn Waring (who was present when some of the women of the trust confronted Black Power members about stopping the practice of gang rape). Pip Desmond helped the women, many of whom were girlfriends of Black Power, Nomads or Mongrel Mob members, to set up the Aroha Trust work collective in the late 1970s, and produced the first draft of *Trust*, which tells their stories, as her 2006 MA (Page) thesis.

6. Scripts for success

IIML scriptwriting students and graduates have scooped the pool in the NZ Writers' Guild Final Draft Short Film Script Competition. Wiremu Grace (2004) won first and third prizes for his scripts 'Burnt' and 'Craving', and second prize went to Amy Rountree, who is completing her MA this year, for 'Intersection'. Also among the finalists was 2005 MA (Page) graduate Mary Ann Bourke.

7. Good things come in threes

The three plays presented by the recent Young & Hungry Festival of New Works were also by writers who have passed through courses at the IIML. Miria George completed the MA (Script) in 2008, Vivienne Plumb was in the MA (Page) workshop of 2002, and Georgina Titheridge enlivened the undergraduate poetry workshop with some snappy dialogue in 2005 en route to becoming a playwright. *Capital Times* theatre critic Lynn Freeman was particularly taken with Titheridge's *Sit On It*: 'It's very funny, rude and at times shocking...one of the most enjoyable Young and Hungry plays I've seen and I've seen all but a handful over the years.'

Young and Hungry has been running in Wellington since 1994, but this year for the first time the plays were also produced and premiered in Auckland by a different creative team, thanks to a new partnership between Playmarket and the Auckland Theatre Company. The season provides young people with the opportunity to work on professional quality scripts written specifically for youth.

8. The expanding bookshelf (2)

Writer Jo Randerson has combined with the artist Seraphine Pick to produce *Through the Door*, an otherworldly fable that adults will enjoy just as much as children – well, probably more than children. The book is published by Wedge Press, who also publish Jo Randerson's earlier collaboration with Vita Cochran, *The Knot*, and a special reprint of the Manhire/Hotere work, *Malady*. Copies (RRP \$25.00) are available at the big Seraphine Pick survey show at the Christchurch Art Gallery, and will also be available at Jo's new [theatre show](#) at Downstage. Very eager readers can email mmcleod@paradise.net.nz, putting 'Through the Door' in the subject line.

9. Big thanks

... from us to Viggo Mortensen. Viggo was in town recently to promote his new movie *Good* and – quietly, without fanfare – left a generous donation to the IIML. Readers will recall that he headlined a sell-out fund-raising poetry reading at Wellington's Paramount Theatre a few years ago, and invited three current MA students to join him: Tusiata Avia, Hinemoana Baker, and Cliff Fell. Since then, all three have gone on to publish much admired books of poetry. In fact, Viggo was so

struck by Hinemoana's poems that he published an American edition of her first book, *matuhi/needle*, through [Perceval Press](#).

10. The laureateship heads south

Poet Cilla McQueen was appointed New Zealand Poet Laureate for 2009 – 2011 at a ceremony in the National Library on 22 July. The National Library administers the award. The Laureate receives a minimum of \$70,000 over two years, and the balance of the fund goes to a two-year programme of Poet Laureate activities to promote poetry, so we can expect to see her venturing out of the deep south a little more frequently over the next two years. McQueen told the *Dominion Post* that she planned to use some of the money to pay the power bills for her 'draughty, freezing' Bluff home.

11. From the whiteboard

'Creative thought, expressed in living poetry, is anathema to people who use the education system to perpetuate a social or political system. To them, education means everybody learning rules by heart and sticking to them. Because poetry can't be confined to rules, it's stamped on very hard when it steps out of line. It's remarkable what nastiness both teachers and literary commentators will resort to in order to quell independent thought.'

— Cilla McQueen

12. Chinese / New Zealand

Chris Tse produced a poetry folio for his 2005 MA thesis, but now he is the winner of the NZ Chinese Association Short Story competition. His story, 'At Two Speeds', is described as 'a fast-paced, drolly humorous story about what happens when two cousins – one from China, one local-born Chinese – head out for a night on the town in Wellington.' It will be published in the *Listener*.

13. The expanding bookshelf (2)

Frankie McMillan's first poetry collection, *Dressing for the Cannibals* (Sudden Valley Press) is to be launched on 20 August as part of the Christchurch City Libraries 150th celebration. Frankie completed the MA in Creative Writing at Victoria in 1998, and has also published a short story collection, *The Bag Lady's Picnic* (Shoal Bay Press, 2001). This year she was the winner of the New Zealand Poetry Society International Poetry Competition, and one of her poems is currently appearing on posters in cities all over New Zealand thanks to the Phantom Billstickers Initiative <http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/features/phantom/index.asp>

14. Reluctant praise of the week

‘A word of warning: do not approach *Relief* with any preconceptions about the buzz surrounding the author and the fact she is the latest hot young thing to emerge from Bill Manhire’s creative writing workshop – your expectations will be confounded. This is no nervous debut or literary confection but a dark powerful book that introduces a genuine new talent.’

— From the August *Metro*’s review of Anna Taylor’s short story collection *Relief* (Victoria University Press)

Another viewpoint appeared in last weekend’s [*Otago Daily Times*](#).

15. The expanding bookshelf (3)

Karen Anderson’s debut volume of poetry, *Punish honey*, has been published by [Carolina Wren Press](#) in the United States. Karen has an MFA from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop and a PhD from Cornell, but in 2002 she also completed an MA in Creative Writing at Victoria University. Karen was a co-editor of the *Spectacular Babies* anthology; she is now an assistant professor at St Mary’s College of Maryland. It is the second poetry collection to come out of the MA workshop that draws inspiration from bees and beekeeping (the first being Emily Dobson’s 2005 collection *A box of bees*).

16. Publishing and writing for children

The Wellington Children's Book Association is running an event featuring Wellington publisher Ann Mallinson and writer Fleur Beale in a conversation about writing, publishing and the art of story from both sides of the children's book industry. They appear at 7 pm on Monday 17 August at Turnbull House, Bowen St, Wellington. Wine and cheese, no door charge, all welcome. A brief AGM will precede the event.

17. Recent web reading

[The future’s not just Free, it’s plagiarized](#)

[New Zealand poetry on screen](#)

[Poetry competition](#)

[Digital Poetry Laboratory:](#)

[The real Raymond Carver](#)

[Great rugby thoughts](#)

[Elizabeth Knox review](#)

[Eleanor Catton interview](#)

[Eleanor Catton profiles
and here](#)

[Eleanor Catton reviews](#)

[Aram Saroyan on Ginsberg and Kerouac](#)

[Mary Cresswell interview](#)

[Anna Livesey and Paula Morris at Prairie Lights](#)

[Vladimir Nabokov discusses Lolita](#)

[Reasons for writing workshops](#)

[Martin Amis teaches writing](#)

[Anagram poems](#)

[The 2009 Bulwer Lytton results](#)

[New David Mitchell story](#)

[A little dog anthology](#)

[Everything you wanted to know about the relationships between Man and Woman but
were afraid to ask](#)

[Sarah Palin's poetry \(wait till the advertisement finishes\)](#)

[Andy Warhol's time capsules](#)

[The Sherlock Holmes time capsule](#)

[The Obama time capsule](#)

[The world's largest time capsule](#)

[Hill-bagging](#)

[Morse Code typo](#)

[Warrior librarians](#)

[Tattooed Texas librarians](#)

[Writers' junk for sale](#)

[Grammatical monkeys](#)

[Staples city](#)

[The world's oldest pot plant](#)

Cath Vidler's Cupcake Corner:

[Nursery rhyme cupcakes](#)

[Beer cupcakes](#)

[Knitted cupcakes](#)

[Cupcake tattoos](#)

[World's largest cupcake](#)

[World's smallest cupcake](#)

[Cupcake holder](#)

Great lists of our time

According to Matilda Battersby at the [Independent](#), 'thirteen out of 20 world-class university websites analysed by Australian spelling software Spellr.us were found to have misspelled the word 'university'. The survey also found that 14 per cent of university web pages contain at least one genuine spelling error, with some of the most prestigious American universities among the worst offenders....The ten most commonly miss-spelled [sic] words on top university websites were:

'accommodation
technology
university
harassment
research
administration
financial
information
association
millennium'

It may have consoled some of the universities concerned that the *Independent's* spellchecker failed to correct (or perhaps created) the words 'miss-spellings' and 'miss-spelled' that appeared in the online version of the article.

* * *

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, or Diana Meads, Fundraising Manager, Victoria University of Wellington Foundation Ph: 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534), Email: diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz