



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 1 May 2009

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This is the 140th 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. Writing Lives: A Biographer and her Family

Distinguished biographer Ann Thwaite has written lives of Frances Hodgson Burnett, Edmund Gosse (Duff Cooper Award winner), A. A. Milne (Whitbread Biography Award), Emily Tennyson, and Philip Gosse, the naturalist and fundamentalist at the heart of the Victorian conflict between science and religion. She spent the war years in New Zealand, and her new book *Passageways* tells the story of her New Zealand family, which arrived here in the 1850s. In this one-off Writers on Mondays session at Te Papa (Level 4, Marae) on 11 May, 1-2 pm, she talks with Harry Ricketts about her biographies and her own family's history. Admission free, all welcome.

Writers on Mondays 2009 is presented by the International Institute of Modern Letters with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

2. Scripts for success

Two of the three winners of the tenth New Zealand Young Playwrights Competition are recent graduates of Ken Duncum's scriptwriting MA at the IIML. Kate Morris (whose script *Sketch* already has interest from Circa and ATC) and Martha Hardy-Ward completed the MA (Script) in 2007 and 2008 respectively. The third winner is newcomer Harry Meech. This bi-annual national event has established itself as an important stepping-stone in the development of new writers for theatre. The three winners, all from Wellington, will work with dramaturg Murray Lynch, film producer and dramaturg Catherine Fitzgerald, and leading playwright David Geary to present their work at a conference and presentation in Auckland, 3-7 September at The Edge. All three playwrights are now busy working towards their second draft for the workshop in September. More information [here](#).

3. The magazine rack

Featuring literary contributions from both sides of the Anzac ditch, online journal *Snorkel 9* was launched last night with new work by Ingrid Horrocks, Adrian Wiggins, Joan Fleming, Elizabeth Allen, Stu Hatton and Louise Wallace. *Snorkel* was started up by IIML graduate (and Listlady extraordinaire) Cath Vidler. The closing date for submissions to *Snorkel 10* is August 15. Submission details may be found on the [website](#).

Literary/art journal *Hue & Cry* is a project started by IIML graduate Chloe Lane. The third issue is launched tonight (Friday 1 May) in Wellington, at Enjoy Public Art Gallery, 147 Cuba Street at 6pm, with readings from IIML alumnus Airini Beautrais and current workshop member Bill Nelson along with John Summers, followed by a performance by Raised By Wolves. The journal will be available to purchase for \$10 on the night. Issue Three: Good Times, Bad Times includes new fiction by Anna Taylor and Pip Adam, essays by Richard Meros, John Summers, and Tahī Moore, and poetry by Airini Beautrais, Johanna Aitchison, Charlotte Simmonds, and Amy Brown. There's also a discussion of the 2008 Ronald Hugh Morrieson Festival in Hawera and new art by Amit Charan, Kerry Ann Lee, Kate Newby, Joanna Langford, and Patrick Lundberg.

4. Literary expertise

Perhaps demonstrating that things have moved on in Queensland since the days of the somewhat infamous Premier (and export from New Zealand) Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the current Premier Anna Bligh this week announced that New Zealand poet and musician (and IIML graduate) Hinemoana Baker will take up the post of [2009 Queensland Poet in Residence](#), from July to September. The poet in residence's schedule includes a visit to an outback town called Blackall (which allegedly has

some impressive shearing history), workshopping with indigenous students, and a steam-train trip to outlying areas in the state. She will have a key role at literary events including the Queensland Poetry Festival and the Brisbane Writers Festival, and take part activities at the Queensland Writers Centre.

Queensland celebrates its sesquicentenary as a state this year, and the Bligh Government provides \$50,000 for the 2009 Poet-in-Residence programme, which is administered by Queensland Writers Centre in partnership with the Queensland Poetry Festival, Brisbane Writers Festival and the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts.

Meanwhile, back in Wellington, Hinemoana Baker will launch a new album, *Snap Happy*, as one half of music duo [Taniwha](#). The launch takes place from 7.30 pm on 23 May at the Adam Concert Room on Victoria University's Kelburn campus (doors open 7 pm, entry by koha).

5. The world where we are

We continue to be surprised by the lack of interest shown by local media in the award to Patricia Grace of the 2008 Neustadt International Prize for Literature, which is generally agreed to be the most prestigious such award after the Nobel. Patricia Grace led a field of nominees who included Michael Ondaatje, Haruki Murakami, and E L Doctorow. Her readers will be pleased to know that her acceptance lecture, 'The World Where You Are', can be found [here](#).

6. Songs of my life

Is there a Leonard Cohen of the South Pacific in the making? Jazz pianist and teacher Norman Meehan has collaborated with singer Hannah Griffin and saxophonist Colin Hemmingsen to produce settings of poems by Bill Manhire, including purpose-written lyrics with intriguing titles such as 'Pacific Raft' and 'Buddhist Rain'. The show goes on at the Massey Conservatorium of Music Concert Hall (Mt Cook Campus), at 12 noon on 15 May.

7. Triple Baxter

There seems to be an upsurge of interest in the Baxter family at present. On Anzac Day BATS Theatre presented a reading of a new play by Michael Galvin, inspired by *We Will Not Cease*, Archibald Baxter's memoir of being a conscientious objector in World War I. John Newton's social history *The Double Rainbow: James K. Baxter, Ngati Hau and the Jerusalem Commune* (Victoria University Press) was launched with due ceremony to a large crowd at Unity Books on Wednesday. And last night at Downstage saw the opening of a re-written and re-developed version of Eli Kent's play *The Intricate Art of Actually Caring* as part of the 'Pick of the Fringe' season which runs from 29 April - 7 May at 9pm. Originally presented in the playwright's

bedroom, the play is performed by Eli Kent himself and Jack Shadbolt. In it, they recount how the death of a friend sparks a journey to Jerusalem, and the bedroom becomes a car, the North Island, and James. K Baxter's grave. Book at [Downstage](#).

8. You're in time to enter...

... the Commonwealth Short Story Competition. Each year 26 winning and highly commended stories from the different regions of the Commonwealth are recorded on to CDs and broadcast on radio stations across the Commonwealth. The winner receives a prize of £2,000 and there are regional prizes of £500. The deadline for entries is 11 May 2009. Full information on how to enter can be found [here](#).

...the Harper-Wood Studentship for English Poetry and Literature at St John's College, Cambridge. The purpose of the studentship is to encourage a project of creative writing by making it possible for the holder to engage in relevant, project-related travel and study, and candidates must be graduates of any University of Great Britain, Ireland, the Commonwealth or the United States of America (so the competition could be stiff). The studentship is tenable for one year beginning in October and the deadline for applications is 12 May – more information is [here](#).

... the 50th BNZ Katherine Mansfield Short Story Awards 2009. The winner of the Premier Award will net a cool \$10,000, the Novice award (unpublished writers) receives \$1,500, and secondary school students entering the Young Writers category win \$1,4000 for the student, and their school receives \$1,500 and a creative writing workshop with a New Zealand writer. Entries open on 1 May, the deadline is 30 June, and entry criteria are available [here](#).

Writers of already 'proven merit' are also in time to apply for the CLL Writers' Awards, which support non-fiction projects with two research grants of \$35,000. This year CLL are also offering two additional awards that will provide funds for research for a fiction or non-fiction project. The deadline is 15 July and full details can be found [here](#).

9. But you're too late for . . .

... the Queen Mother Memorial Poetry Competition (format: 3 verses; 3 lines per verse; 10 words per line). Kumbi Johnson set up the competition (first prize: £50.00 and a certificate) after she met the Queen Mother at Clarence House 'as a Writer and as a Poet'. The [website](#) explains that 'Kumbi found the Queen Mother really nice and refreshing and down to earth and Kumbi was very impressed by the Queen Mother that she immediately knew that she wanted to set up something to honour the Queen Mother. It was not until after she died that Kumbi immediately thought a poetry competition would be fitting.' This year's competition closed on 30 March, and has already been won by Mrs J A Drake with her poem 'Release'. Still, this means you have nearly a year to get to work on something for the next round.

10. Show your own

'Cinema Projection for Beginners' is a two-day course designed to teach participants the basic process of projecting theatrical quality cinema. The course will take place at the Academy Cinemas in Auckland 13-14 June from 9am to 1pm, and costs \$500. It will be run by experienced projectionist and technician Phil Greig. The course is designed to be interesting and useful to people already working in the film industry, those that would like to, and to anyone who simply has an interest in the mysterious workings behind the magic of movies. The course has only six places. To book or find out more contact Gina on 021 427 553 or email gina@academycinemas.co.nz for an application form.

11. Theatre space

An exhibition of set models by leading New Zealand theatre designer Raymond Boyce goes on display in Wellington this weekend. 'Raymond Boyce: Sculpting the Empty Space' runs from Sunday 3 May – Sat 9 May, 2.30-5.30pm at [Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School](#), 11 Hutchison Road, Newtown. Boyce has long been considered the leading theatre designer in New Zealand, and there is almost no aspect of New Zealand stage that he has not touched upon since he arrived from England in 1953.

12. The expanding bookshelf

Anna Taylor's short-story collection *Relief* is launched next Wednesday, 6 May at Unity Books in Wellington. Taylor completed her MA at the IIML in 2006, when the manuscript that forms the basis of this collection won the Adam Prize for best folo. There's a profile in the current [Listener](#).

13. Auckland Writers and Readers

In an event featuring a line-up of IIML graduates who have published their first books in the last year, Anna Taylor appears alongside Bridget van der Zijpp, Sue Orr and Eleanor Catton as part of the impending [Auckland Writers and Readers Festival](#), running 13-17 May. Among the many literary events on offer, the Festival will present the award ceremony for the [Commonwealth Writers Prize](#) on 16 May, but for those who can't get to Auckland, some of the finalists will also make appearances in Wellington earlier in the week. Marina Endicott, Mandla Langa, Christos Tsiolkas, Joan Thomas, Mo Zhi Hong, Uwem Akpan and Mohammed Hanif appear on Tuesday 12 May at the Te Papa Marae from 6.30-8.30pm; and on Wednesday 13 May, Endicott, Tsiolkas, Thomas and New Zealand's own Mo Zhi Hong appear at the The New Dowse in Lower Hutt from 11am-12.30pm. Both events are free – no booking required.

14. No heirs for Burns?

The haggis hit the fan at the recent StAnza Festival during a panel on the dearth of younger Scottish poets. Well, not so much during the festival as subsequently in the Scottish litblogosphere. Some of the discussion can be read [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

15. From the whiteboard

‘A bad novel is better than an unwritten novel, because a bad novel can be improved; an unwritten novel is defeat without a battle.’

—Paul Johnson

16. Recent web reading

[J G Ballard RIP](#)

[Michele Leggott on life as a laureate](#)

[Dora Malech poem](#)

[Turning text to music](#)

[A nice wee poem from Scotland](#)

[Library of Congress poetry webcasts](#)

[John Ashbery Resource Centre](#)

[What Viggo’s doing](#)

[August Kleinzahler \(and cat\)](#)

[Poets’ tattoos](#)

[Poetry in movies](#)

[William Gass interview](#)

[Witi reworks Witi](#)

[Australian language](#)

[Sally Potter masterclass](#)

Seamus Heaney's birthday [here](#) and [here](#)

[A new New Zealand literary journal](#)

[Joe Cocker goes mondegreen](#)

[Facebook poetry](#)

[A British eye on NZ poetry](#)

[Close calls with nonsense](#)

[Savage criticism](#)

[Alan Loney is blogging](#)

[Harvey McQueen is blogging](#)

[Sci-fi Penguins](#)

[5-star dating programme](#)

[Zombie Austen](#)

17. Great lists of our time

In belated celebration of the 445th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth on 23 April....

[How to talk like Shakespeare](#)

1. Instead of you, say thou. Instead of y'all, say thee.
2. Rhymed couplets are all the rage.
3. Men are Sirrah, ladies are Mistress, and your friends are all called Cousin.
4. Instead of cursing, try calling your tormenters jackanapes or canker-blossoms or poisonous bunch-back'd toads.
5. Don't waste time saying "it," just use the letter "t" ('tis, t'll, I'll do't).
6. Verse for lovers, prose for ruffians, songs for clowns.
7. When in doubt, add the letters "eth" to the end of verbs (he runneth, he trippeth, he falleth).
8. To add weight to your opinions, try starting them with methinks, mayhaps, in sooth or wherefore.
9. When wooing ladies: try comparing her to a summer's day. If that fails, say "Get thee to a nunnery!"
10. When wooing lads: try dressing up like a man. If that fails, throw him in the Tower, banish his friends and claim the throne.

* * *

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