



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 6 November 2009

ISSN: 1178-9441

This is the 149th 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. Heather McKenzie.....	1
2. The expanding bookshelf (1)	2
3. You Tu	2
4. Festival author to teach IIML masterclass	2
5. Mark Twain and Maoriland	3
6. Last call for Iowa Workshops	3
7. Unhappy news.....	3
8. Nanowrimo	3
9. From the whiteboard.....	3
10. Writers in Wellywood.....	4
11. Good on you, Viggo	4
12. The expanding bookshelf (2)	4
13. The expanding bookshelf (3)	4
14. The magazine rack (1)	4
15. The trophy cabinet.....	5
16. Speculative fiction wanted.....	5
17. The expanding bookshelf (4)	5
18. Poetry entrepreneurs.....	5
19. The magazine rack (2)	6
20. November poetry	6
21. The book as building site.....	6
22. Recent web reading	7
23. Great lists of our time.....	8

1. Heather McKenzie

Everyone we know was shocked and distressed to hear of the sudden death, just a few days ago, of Heather McKenzie. Heather was Publicity Director at Victoria University Press. She was only 44. We knew her well because many of us at the IIML, staff and students, enjoyed her personal and professional support. She became our very good

friend. She was warm and generous and positive. She took our books to the world, talked them up, and at the same time poured us a drink. She had the gift of making us feel proud of what we had written – even those of us whose dearest hope was to publish a book that might, on some far distant day, just about break even. Heather had a rich background in books: over the years she worked in retail, in distribution, and in publishing. Whichever angle you look at our book world from, you will see Heather McKenzie somewhere near the heart of it. Our deep sympathy especially to her partner Neil; to her family; and to Craig and Fergus and Kyleigh, her friends and colleagues at VUP.

Bill Manhire

2. The expanding bookshelf (1)

A small group of friends and colleagues gathered for morning tea at the IIML this week to mark the arrival from the printer of Damien Wilkins' new novel, and to raise a glass to Heather McKenzie – something of a bittersweet occasion. The novel, *Somebody Loves Us All*, was written last year in the south of France while Wilkins was holder of the New Zealand Post Mansfield Prize and features a cover by Ant Sang, better known for his work on *bro'town*. Its title comes from a poem ('Filling Station') by Elizabeth Bishop.

3. You Tu

We heard recently that Patricia Grace's Maori Battalion novel, *Tu*, is to be translated into French, and found ourselves wondering what its title could possibly be in translation. Certainly *Tu* won't do. It is the name of the novel's main character, and also the name of the Maori god of war, Tumatauenga. But in French it is simply the familiar/intimate form of the second person pronoun – 'you'. What will the translators do, we wonder? More important, can any readers think of other novels whose titles cannot translate safely into another language?

4. Festival author to teach IIML masterclass

The line-up of international authors to appear at New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week next March was revealed on Tuesday night when the New Zealand International Arts Festival launched its 2010 programme at the TSB Arena in Wellington. The list of luminaries includes Neil Gaiman, Sarah Waters, Simon Schama, Richard Dawkins, Geoff Dyer and our own Bill Manhire – but the writer of special interest to us here at the Institute is the English poet Glyn Maxwell. Maxwell, whose flair for narrative and dramatic verse goes hand in hand with a ferocious formal virtuosity, will teach the first of our masterclasses for the 2010 MA students while he's in Wellington. The full Festival line-up, including a complete list of international writers, is available [here](#).

5. Mark Twain and Maoriland

We were delighted to see that one of the New Zealand writers featured in the Festival is our 2009 Writer in Residence – and 2010 MA (Script) workshop convenor – David Geary. Not only does Geary return to defend his title as winner of the popular [Once Upon a Deadline](#) writing marathon, but his play [Mark Twain and Me in Maoriland](#), written during his year at Victoria, has its première at the Festival.

2008 MA (Script) graduate Miria George is the co-author (with Jamie McCaskill) of another Festival offering, *He Reo Aroha*, which appears as part of the Festival's new RESTAGE initiative, designed to support productions previously seen on New Zealand stages at their next phase of development.

6. Last call for Iowa Workshops

A reminder to those wanting to recharge their writing this summer that the deadline for our Iowa Workshops in fiction and poetry (CREW 258 and CREW 259) is fast approaching. The application deadline is 9 November, and the courses run during January and February. With different workshop leaders every year, the Iowa Workshops are an ideal opportunity for both emerging and more experienced writers to get a new angle on their craft. Full details are available [here](#).

7. Unhappy news

We were saddened to learn that New Zealand Post has decided to discontinue its sponsorship of the National Schools' Poetry Awards and the National Schools' Poetry Festival. This will make the lives of senior high school students who want to tell stories and use words creatively just a little bit greyer. We hope that other sponsors with a passion for education and the creative imagination may want to get in touch with us. Meantime, there is a record of earlier [awards](#) and [festivals](#) on our website.

8. Nanowrimo

November is National Novel Writing Month, in which both adults and kids anywhere in the world can join up to write a whole novel from scratch in a month. It's already started, but their [young writers' programme](#) includes some resources that might be of interest to students and teachers of creative writing.

9. From the whiteboard

'It's like Scott in the Antarctic. You simply keep walking. Don't look at the horizon — look at your feet. Just keep walking.'

— Peter Temple on writing a novel ([interview with Kim Hill, Radio New Zealand](#))

10. Writers in Wellywood

It is good to see the number of writers involved as finalists in the annual Wellingtonian of the Year promotion. By our count they include Eleanor Catton, Kate De Goldi, Elizabeth Knox, Bill Manhire, and Tom Scott – across at least three categories, Youth, Arts, and Education. But can any of them triumph over the stars of sport and business? Results are announced on November 26. Watch this space.

11. Good on you, Viggo

We sent a note of thanks to Viggo Mortensen for the donation he made to the IIML when he was back in Wellington to promote his film *Good* a little while ago. In his reply he mentioned that he is ‘doing theatre now, and a bit nervous about it, but have been writing a fair amount. It can be a good thing to be out on a limb sometimes.’ We might put that last sentence on the whiteboard next year.

12. The expanding bookshelf (2)

Rachael King’s second novel, *Magpie Hall*, was launched at Mighty Mighty on Cuba Mall in Wellington on Wednesday night (4 November). The blurb describes *Magpie Hall* as a ‘gothic novel inside a ghost story inside a gothic novel’, and Rachael King will appear at Our City O-Tautahi, Oxford Terrace, Christchurch next Tuesday, 10 November, to talk about the book. More details about both book and event are available on Rachael King’s new [website](#).

13. The expanding bookshelf (3)

Dora Malech’s poetry collection [Shore Ordered Ocean](#) is published in America this week by Waywiser Press. Waywiser’s list includes poets such as Anthony Hecht, W. D. Snodgrass and Al Alvarez, and *Shore Ordered Ocean* arrives in the world garlanded with praise from fellow poets J. D. McClatchy, Mary Ruefle and Bill Manhire. We wish it every success. Dora Malech taught the MA workshop in 2007, and we understand she’s just given a reading from the new book in Iowa - with an after-party hosted by Eleanor Catton.

14. The magazine rack (1)

The New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre has just published the eighth issue of [Ka Mate Ka Ora: A New Zealand Journal of Poetry and Poetics](#) edited by Murray Edmond, with assistance from Michele Leggott and Hilary Chung. This issue has a special focus on the work of James K. Baxter, with reviews of recent Baxter books by John Newton and Sam Hunt, and a range of other articles and archival material.

15. The trophy cabinet

Congratulations to Emma Gallagher, 2006 MA (Page) graduate, who won the 'Best Unpublished Writer' category and was second runner up in the Open Category of the 2009 *Sunday Star-Times* Short Story award with 'The Building of Widows'. Another member of the 'class of 2006', Kate Mahony has a story in the latest edition of *Best New Zealand Fiction* (Volume 6) edited by Owen Marshall, and just released by Random House.

And fingers crossed for Eleanor Catton, whose novel *The Rehearsal* has been short-listed for the *Guardian's* [Best First Book Prize](#), along with two other novels, one collection of short stories and a work of reportage. Last year the £10,000 first prize went to Alex Ross's internationally acclaimed tour of twentieth-century music, *The Rest is Noise*.

16. Speculative fiction wanted

Wellington-based small press Random Static is inviting submissions for an anthology of speculative fiction by New Zealand writers. The theme for the anthology is "the future is a foreign country: they do things differently there" - though the future in question doesn't have to be our own. The book will be launched at Au Contraire, the 2010 National SF Convention. Details are [here](#).

17. The expanding bookshelf (4)

The third book in Rebekah Palmer's *Champ the Chopper* series was launched by Weta managing director Richard Taylor at Weta Cave last Sunday. *Good Work Champ* sees the plucky little rescue helicopter brave a forest fire. The series is illustrated by Weta Workshop artists, and aimed at pre-schoolers and early readers. Rebekah Palmer is a graduate of the IIML's MA scriptwriting programme (2006).

18. Poetry entrepreneurs

Following the success of their line of *Poetry Speaks* books, US company Sourcebooks has moved online with the launch this week of their [PoetrySpeaks](#) website. We were interested in the entrepreneurial cast of the language in their release on the subject, as presented in *Publisher's Lunch*:

'While the beta version of the site has just launched, it represents over five years of development work and an estimated \$250,000 of investment from Sourcebooks. As CEO Dominique Racciah says, "When I did *Poetry Speaks* [the book] I honestly didn't know if I was going to sell 2,000, 20,000 or 200,000 copies. What I see as an entrepreneur is that engagement drives sales. And if we get people excited and

participating, we'll find a way to monetize. I know other people have said that, but I've actually done it with poetry. The response we're getting to the site is bigger than anything I've ever gotten in my career. We ought to be smart enough to take that excitement and create a set of viable revenue streams for poets and poetry publishers."

The initial 'revenue paths', says the article, are built around the idea of 'iTunes for poetry', and poets and publishers will receive approximately 40 percent of sales revenue. Poets will also be able to manage their own information, blog if they wish, explain and display their body of work to their own choosing, and post performance schedules. They intend it as a social network for poets and poetry lovers.

As far as New Zealand poetry goes, poems by Bill Manhire, Jenny Bornholdt and Michele Legott - recorded for the first three CDs in the Laureates series - are all being sold as downloads, as well as in [CD format](#). We like hearing the occasional poem pop up when the iPod's in shuffle mode, and hope to hear more New Zealand poets in our earphones in future.

19. The magazine rack (2)

Snorkel 10 was launched on 31 October. Contributors to this issue include David Beach, Medb Charlton, Meredith Wattison Johanna Emeney and Mark Young. Readers may not know that *Snorkel* is co-edited by our regular 'Listlady' Cath Vidler, an IIML graduate now based in Melbourne. *Snorkel* is currently open for submissions for *Snorkel* 11. The closing date for submissions is 15 February 2010. See the [website](#) for further submission details.

20. November poetry

The New Zealand Poetry Society's last event of the year will be held at the Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington, on Monday 16 November, at 7.30pm. The final guest for 2009 is poet, playwright, director and actor Charlotte Simmonds, whose first collection, *The World's Fastest Flower*, was released by Victoria University Press in 2008. The book was a finalist for NZSA Best First Book of Poetry in the 2009 Montana Book Awards. Entry is \$2 and the meeting will start with an open mic.

21. The book as building site

If you're a fan of artists' books, architecture, or interested in fine book production generally, then the upcoming seminar by the University of Sydney's Marian Macken might appeal. Macken is the Visiting Artist-in-Residence at Victoria University's Wai-te-ata Press, and she will be talking on 'The book as a site for architecture' (via a three-dimensional representation of architectural design) at the Stout Research Centre, 12 Wai-te-ata Road on Thursday 19 November from 4.10-5.30pm.

22. Recent web reading

[Elizabeth Knox's tough year](#)

[Elizabeth Knox on *The Angel's Cut*](#)

[Kiwi and Maple](#)

[Hone Tuwhare at Kaka Point](#)

[Lazy songs](#)

[The death of the Man of Letters](#)

[Seidel true or False](#)

[Book reviewing](#)

[Lyricism](#)

[Carry a poem](#)

[Decline of the English Department](#)

[Editing a national literature \(Australian style\)](#)

[The semantic limerick](#)

[Critterati](#)

[Poetry at the White House](#)

[Poetry dress-ups](#)

[Digging up America's dead poets](#)

[Poems about onion bagels](#)

[Paul Durcan interview](#)

[Alasdair Gray interview](#)

[Craig Raine interview](#)

[Author marketing](#)

[Why book publishers love short stories](#)

[Blind text generator](#)

[Like poetry](#)

[Pictures of books](#)

[Swamp 5](#)

[Short story keywords](#)

[The quotations of Leif Segerstam](#)

[The Road Code](#)

[World's biggest Mona Lisa?](#)

[World's biggest foods](#)

[World's largest web-spinning spider](#)

[World's largest schoolbag](#)

Cath Vidler's wind-up corner

[Wind-up novel](#)

[Wind-up car](#)

[Wind-up psychoanalytic pillow](#)

[Wind-up joke](#)

[Wind-up Wikipedia](#)

[Wind-up dictionaries](#)

[Wind-up planet Earth](#)

[Wind-up chicken-and-egg](#)

[Wind-up mobile phone](#)

23. Great lists of our time

24 hours of BONGS from Big Ben's Twitter Page http://twitter.com/big_ben_clock

- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG

- BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG
- BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
- BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG

* * *

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