



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

*Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao*

### Newsletter – 15 April 2010

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This is the 154<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).

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## 1. Second trimester writing courses at the IIML

If you're interested in developing your skills in poetry, creative non-fiction or children's writing, or having a shot at 'writing the landscape', now's the time to be thinking about getting into the supportive writing environment of an IIML workshop over the winter months. Workshops begin in mid-July, and last twelve weeks. Each is taught by a highly regarded writer in the field: James Brown (poetry), Harry Ricketts (creative non-fiction), Eirlys Hunter (children's writing) and Dinah Hawken (writing the landscape) are the workshop leaders. The application deadline for all second-trimester workshops is 5 June: you can find out more [here](#).

## 2. Our first PhD

We're delighted to congratulate Marian Evans on becoming the first person to be awarded a PhD in Creative Writing from Victoria University, with a thesis titled 'Development: Opening space for New Zealand women's participation in scriptwriting for feature films?' Having found that New Zealand women writers 'and directors' participation in feature filmmaking is very low, Marian is using her thesis screenplay – *Development* – to test an alternative feature film production pathway. She hopes that this project, when completed, will provide a useful model for other women storytellers. Marian will be one of the guests in the annual Writers on Mondays series, which starts on 12 July (full details to be announced next month). You can read Marian's wrap-up of her experiences with supervisor Ken Duncum and the IIML on her blog, [Wellywood Woman](#).

## 3. *Legend of a suicide author to appear in Wellington*

US writer David Vann is best known for *Legend of a Suicide*, a remarkable book of stories set around his father's suicide. This genre-defying work - a fictionalised memoir - has been named in numerous Best Books of the Year lists in the UK, US and Australia. It is a bestseller in France, and has been translated into many languages. American writer Lorrie Moore praised the book for its 'luminous narrative art'. David has also written two other memoirs connected with his disastrous adventures as a sailor. Most recently, his account of the Northern University of Illinois shooter, Steven Kazmierczak, who killed five students, won the 2009 AWP Non-Fiction Prize. His novel *Caribou Island* will be published next year.

In May David Vann will teach a masterclass for the 2010 MA (Page) students during which he will discuss the prose style of writers such as Cormac McCarthy, Annie Proulx, and Marilynne Robinson in the context of linguistics, Old English, Middle English, and Latin. While here he will also make a public appearance in a special event presented by the IIML at City Gallery, Wednesday 26 May at 6 pm. The event is free, and all are welcome: early arrival is recommended to secure a place.

#### **4. The Godfather comes to town**

Another significant American writer arrives to teach a masterclass at the IIML in the first week of June. [Lee Gutkind](#) is widely known as the ‘godfather of creative non-fiction’. ‘Creative nonfiction stories,’ in Gutkind’s definition, ‘are dramatic, true stories that use scene, dialogue and close, detailed descriptions – techniques usually employed by poets and fiction writers – to examine and explore a variety of subjects: politics, economics, sports, race relations, family relations, the arts and sciences and more.’ He travels widely throughout the world giving workshops and readings, explaining the craft and the mission of the genre.

Lee Gutkind is the founding editor of *Creative Nonfiction* magazine and prize-winning author or editor of more than a dozen books, the most recent of which is *Almost Human: Making Robots Think*. His forthcoming book is a memoir, *Truckin’ with Sam*, co-written with his son. He appears in conversation with the IIML’s Creative Nonfiction workshop leader Harry Ricketts on Thursday 3 June at City Gallery, 6 pm. This event is also free and open to the public.

#### **5. From the whiteboard**

‘A fact is not a truth until you love it.’

— John Keats

#### **6. Glyn Maxwell’s masterclass**

MA (Page) students at the IIML were lucky enough to take part in a masterclass with UK poet Glyn Maxwell at the end of their first week in the building. Maxwell unpacked poems by Edward Thomas and W H Auden with the students in the morning, and spent the afternoon on exercises based on the first lines of poems, and on revision of biographical prose anecdotes through the lens of cinema and the medium of poetry. He was a generous and convivial guest, and we also enjoyed his appearances at New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week. Maxwell’s appearance at the International Arts Festival was supported by both the IIML and New Zealand Post.

#### **7. This and That**

*This:*

We liked this sign spotted recently on a pew in a disused church in Lumsden, Northern Southland:

Warning

Please note

These seats are not fixed to the ground  
so they could tip if not careful

The Church notifies you that it cannot  
afford to compensate for any injury,  
mental, physical, or spiritual  
that occurs from use of them.

*That:*

We were also intrigued to learn of the interesting new, alcohol-related medical condition, psoriasis of the liver, referred to by a panelist on National Radio's [Afternoons with Jim Mora](#) last Tuesday.

## **8. Racing colours**

Among its many fine contributions, the latest edition of *Best New Zealand Poems* includes a poem about [Dylan Thomas in his incarnation as a racehorse](#). After *Best New Zealand Poems 09* was launched on 31 March, we were pleased to receive an update from author Gregory O'Brien. He informs us:

'The poem has been embroidered onto a fine horse blanket by Noel McKenna and will be worn by a racehorse later this month at Noel's exhibition opening in the Hunter Valley, north of Sydney. Unfortunately it won't be Dylan Thomas wearing the poem on this forthcoming occasion. D. T. is presently busy at stud in Ireland and won't be back in Australia until September. So a similar horse, of some eighteen hands in height, will be wearing the custom-built blanket. Tale of a Cat (which also appears in the poem) was second choice, but I've yet to hear which stallion is lined up for the important task. Further photographs and, I'm told, a short film, will document the next phase of the poem's life, in situ, On The Horse.

'As we bookies like to say, "the smart money is moving...."'

## **9. New Zealand poetry goes Deutsch**

Last Friday the Goethe Institute in Wellington hosted an evening with New Zealand poets on the occasion of the book launch of Dieter Riemenschneider's *Wildes Licht (Wild Light)*, a bilingual (English-German) anthology of poems from New Zealand. *Wildes Licht* features poems published over the last three decades organized into thematic sections by editor and translator Dieter Riemenschneider. The editors are taking the anthology south for a launch in the Governors Bay Hotel, Governors Bay on Tuesday 27 April at 6pm. Poets Tusiata Avia, James Norcliffe, John O'Connor and Andrew Paul Wood will read their poems while Dieter Riemenschneider and Jan Kemp will read the German translations.

## 10. Phantom poetry

Jim Wilson of Phantom Billstickers has been having him a good time lately posting New Zealand poems around the USA. Here he is working his way around the [Mississippi Delta](#). Other North American poster runs are, well, posted on the [Phantom blog](#). A new set of New Zealand posters gets launched in Auckland on 28 April.

## 11. Making something happen

Newsletter readers may be familiar with the much-quoted phrase that ‘poetry makes nothing happen’, which comes from W H Auden’s elegy ‘In Memory of W. B. Yeats’. That notion seems satisfyingly contradicted by last week’s news story (which ran in the national press and on TV3 news) of the [Chilean government’s apology](#) to the father of Sacha Macfarlane, the young New Zealand woman who was killed in 1984 in a head-on crash caused by a Chilean diplomat driving under the influence. The diplomat was whisked out of the country on diplomatic immunity without facing charges.

A poem expressing the family’s ongoing grief was sent to Chile’s ambassador to New Zealand, and to its Foreign Affairs Ministry on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sacha’s death. The country that once counted Pablo Neruda among its diplomats responded with an apology which Sacha’s father, Kester Macfarlane, described as ‘beautiful ‘ and ‘genuine’. The poem was part of the folio produced by 2009 MA workshop member Carol Cromie, Kester Macfarlane’s partner. A memorial service was hosted by the Chilean government in Wellington last Wednesday: these lines from Auden’s elegy for Yeats are perhaps more apt for the circumstances:

With the farming of a verse  
Make a vineyard of the curse,  
Sing of human unsuccess  
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart  
Let the healing fountain start...

## 12. Welcome back

Spotted in the morning staff meeting at Unity Books Wellington last week: manager Tilly Lloyd, making a welcome return to the shop floor after a worrying illness and extended convalescence. While glad to be back, she says she is also looking forward to ‘not being the boss’ for a while.

### **13. Not just for the birds**

A reminder that the IIML is now tweeting! You can follow us on the Twitter site by going [here](#).

### **14. David Geary walks into a bar...**

The NZSA's guest writer for April is 2010 MA (Script) workshop convenor David Geary. He tells us he will be 'discussing my "Allroundedness" - theatre, TV, fiction, film, poetry and teaching - how they feed each other. And how to have plenty of horses to ride so you don't flog a dead one. ' (Could this be a cryptic reference to Ken Duncum's *Horseplay*?) He'll also be debuting new poems 'Te Rauparaha Walks Into a Bar...' and 'The Trial of Lambton Quay', 'showcasing the importance of my Haiku Twitters', and sharing a few useful writing exercises at the Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave Street, Wellington on Monday 26 April, 7.30 pm.

### **15. Poetry on Tuesdays**

Novelist and MA (Page) graduate Mary McCallum has been doing her bit for poetry in the blogosphere. The [Tuesday Poem](#) is an initiative that creates a kind of open-mike session in cyberspace each Tuesday morning. Poets post poems first thing in the morning (or last thing Monday night) then link to each other and 'pop in and out of each other's poems all day', as Mary describes it, as well as being visited by other readers. Mary's inviting other poets to join in: [email](#) to find out how.

### **16. Radio with poetry**

We're glad to hear that poet Cliff Fell (MA graduate and Adam Prize winner of 2002) is now occupying the chair vacated by Chris Price, who provided conversations about poetry for National Radio listeners on Bryan Crump's Nights programme during 2009. You'll need to be paying attention to catch him, however: the poetry conversation happens at 8.45 pm on a Wednesday night at five-weekly intervals. The most recent one was last week: by our calculation, that means Cliff will next be on air on Wednesday 12 May.

### **17. Sylvia, Ted and Owen**

An item in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 2 April alerts us to the appearance of a new CD of Sylvia Plath's work in the British Library's Spoken Word series. According to the *TLS*, the most interesting thing on the CD is 'a twenty-minute interview conducted by the BBC's Owen Leeming, with Plath and Ted Hughes together... broadcast in 1961.' Drama producer Owen Leeming (1930- ) is a New Zealander who published poems in various periodicals, and a single collection of poetry called *Venus is Rising* (1972) in this country, and worked for the NZBC and in

Australian as well as UK broadcasting. He was the very first Mansfield Fellow (in 1970), and subsequently lived for many years in France. There's an interesting [account of the assistance he gave Margaret Scott](#) in visiting both Count Potocki de Montalk and Menton in Scott's book *Recollecting Mansfield*, available on the NZETC website.

## 18. Reel Earth / real pictures

The IIML's 2010 MA cohort are wasting no time getting their work noticed. MA (Script) workshop member Maya Hammarsal's film *Man with the Seasons* has been chosen from among 200 entries from 35 countries for 'Official Selection' in the Reel Earth film festival, which commences with a gala opening in Palmerston North on 22 May. Set in the Jersey Islands, *Man with the Seasons* is about one man's response to the challenges of peak oil and climate change, and asks whether we want to be part of the problem or part of the solution.

And MA (Page) workshop member Aaron Smale picked up the Cathay Pacific Travel Photographer of the Year Award at the travel media awards on 23 March. Aaron trained as a journalist then expanded his skills, upgraded his equipment and re-launched himself as a freelance photographer and writer, contributing to magazines like *NZ Geographic* and *Mana*. His prize is a trip for two to Johannesburg, travelling with Cathay Pacific, \$500 travel expenses, plus a seven-day Makutsi Safari Springs package, which involves 'staying at rondavels surrounded by thousands of hectares of raw African bush and only one hour's drive from the famous Kruger National Park.' You can view some of Aaron's pictures [here](#).

## 19. Scripts for success

MA (Script) graduates have been a busy bunch too. Peter Griffin, who completed an MA in Scriptwriting in 2005, has just won the 2010 Playmarket Live Screenplay competition for best unfilmed screenplay with *Doodlebug*, and a professional, public rehearsed reading will take place in November at Circa Theatre, plus development support, if/as appropriate. MA (Script) graduates Matthew Saville and Matthew Nagel were also shortlisted for this award.

*Te Kaupoi* by Whiti Hereaka (MA 2002) has received the award for Best Play by a Maori Playwright in the [2010 Adam New Zealand Play Award](#), which is open to any new and unproduced New Zealand Play. Winner of the main award was Stuart Hoar, for *Pasefika*. The deadline for the next Award is 3 December 2010.

Martha Hardy Ward (MA 2008) has been writing on *Reservoir Hill*, an online web-drama created by Krafthaus Flow Media which aired on the TVNZ website at the end of last year. *Reservoir Hill* is an interactive series for teenagers in which audience members can interact with the main character via text and directly influence the plot, and this week it won an International Digital Emmy in the Children and Young Persons Section. More details can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

With help from mentor Jo Randerson, 2005 Embassy Trust Prize winner Lucy O'Brien is currently rewriting *Katydid*, which she produced during her year at the IIML. The play will be performed at Bats in August.

## **20. *Skin* back on stage**

Stuart McKenzie and Miranda Harcourt's play [\*Biography Of My Skin\*](#) is having a return season at Downstage from 9 - 24 April. After its first season last year the play was nominated for Best New NZ Play at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards, and won Outstanding Female Performance for Miranda Harcourt and Best Director for Tim Spite. Reviewer John Smythe described the play as 'funny, insightful, shocking, poignant, extraordinarily personal and finally generous. A gift... ' Stuart McKenzie completed an MA in creative writing at Victoria in 1998.

## **21. In other news...**

Some scriptwriting graduates are busy with projects in other branches of the writing world. Mandy Hager's novel *The Crossing* (Random House), the first of a trilogy, has been shortlisted for the 2010 NZ Post Book Awards in the YA category and been named by the Storylines Trust as a Notable Book. She has just launched the second book, *Into The Wilderness*, and is half way through writing the third instalment, *Resurrection*. Mandy currently teaches the novel course at Whitireia Community Polytechnic. She completed a scriptwriting MA in 2004.

Sophie Jerram took the inaugural Scriptwriting MA with Ken Duncum in 2002 and has predominantly worked in the visual arts. She recently completed a video project for the first environmental art project at Tawharanui Open Sanctuary in March this year. Now she has curated, alongside composer and Victoria University lecturer, Dugal McKinnon, a series of discussions entitled Dialogues with Tomorrow, an entirely cross-disciplinary approach to climate change, which Sophie describes as a kind of 'cerebral theatre'. The series begins at Downstage this Thursday, 15 April at 5.45 pm with a conversation between photographer Anne Noble and geologist Peter Barrett on how art can offer new understandings of our relationship to Antarctica, and continues on Thursday evenings until 3 June: a full programme can be found [here](#).

## **22. Retreating playwrights**

Ten playwrights are being offered the opportunity to spend eight days in a quiet, distraction-free atmosphere working on a project. The retreat takes place in Otaki from 19-26 July 2010. A room and all food will be provided, and there may be some assistance with travel costs for writers travelling from further afield. Playwrights will be free to design their retreat week in any way they like. The deadline for applications is 14 May: for information on how to apply, visit the [Playmarket](http://www.playmarket.org.nz/opportunities/playwrights%27_retreat) website [http://www.playmarket.org.nz/opportunities/playwrights%27\\_retreat](http://www.playmarket.org.nz/opportunities/playwrights%27_retreat), or [contact](#) with

queries.

### **23. Incubating Maori writing**

Te Papa Tupu is a new programme aimed at nurturing Maori writers. It will offer six writers a living allowance to work full-time on their writing for six months, and a mentor. For more details about the competition and the incubator programme visit [Huia Publishing's](#) website. Entries close 5pm, Friday 14 May 2010.

### **24. Writing at MIT**

The creative writing courses on offer in New Zealand just keep proliferating. While John Cranna's AUT course has wound up, he has since begun teaching privately. And now Albert Wendt, Witi Ihimaera, Robert Sullivan and Ken Larsen have joined forces to teach creative writing at the [Manukau Institute of Technology](#) in Auckland later this year.

### **25. Whiteness or white mess?**

A 'critical' gathering titled 'Whiteness/Whitemess: Creative Disorders and Hope', to be held in Wellington on the weekend of 15-16 May 2010, aims to provide a forum 'for artists, writers, theatre makers, performance artists, dancers, musicians, activists and academics who are using their various disciplines and mediums to examine Pakeha relationships to historic and current colonisation, in particular exploring ideas from the slippery fields of critical whiteness studies.' IIML PhD student Michalia Arathimos is among the participants. Visit [here](#) for full details of the programme, and to register (deadline 1 May).

### **26. Writers in Auckland**

We note that a number of staff and graduates of the IIML are putting in an appearance at the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival this year, including Damien Wilkins and Emily Perkins (appearing in conversation together), Paula Morris and Rachael King (also in conversation), Nick Ward and Alison Wong. Victoria University Press publisher Fergus Barrowman appears in an event called 'Lit Crit Mag Eds' alongside the editors of *Granta* and *The Monthly*. And then of course there's the lively and varied line-up of international literary stars... The full [programme is online](#).

### **27. Your work here?**

The International Literary Quarterly has just published its 10th issue. Invite only, its list of contributors over the years includes Charles Bernstein, Alain de Botton, Eavan Boland, Junot Diaz, Ariel Dorfman, Rita Dove, Tibor Fischer, Julie Kristeva, Ruth

Padel, Caryl Philips and Robert Pinsky. The ILQ is edited by poet Peter Robertson and deputy editor, novelist Jill Dawson. As it happens, Dawson is one of the guests at the upcoming [Auckland Writers and Readers Festival](#). For the new issue, which includes work by Siobhan Harvey and Kapka Kassabova, see [here](#).

The International Literary Quarterly has decided to publish a [special feature issue](#) showcasing work in any genre (poetry, fiction and non-fiction) by New Zealand writers. For this issue, the editors have decided to forgo their 'invite only' status: any New Zealand writer wishing to have work considered to this special issue should send a maximum of 6 poems, 2 short stories or 2 pieces of non-fiction as an email attachment - in Word or rtf format - and send by email to editor [Peter Robertson](#), making it clear in the email that you're sending in work for consideration in the New Zealand writers feature issue.

### **28. Or here?**

The Australian Association of Writing Programs seeks submissions for its 2010 anthology, showcasing the best new writing from Australian and New Zealand universities. Contributors must be enrolled in an Australian or New Zealand institution at the time of submission. As the full submission guidelines were inaccessible on the web at the time of writing, we summarise them here.

Only one piece of writing (fiction, non-fiction or poetry) per contributor will be considered, and contributors must supply their institutional affiliation and student number with the submission, along with full contact details and a 30-word bio. All documents to be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point on numbered pages, and submitted by email as a Microsoft Word .doc file (not .docx) to [Dr Kevin Brophy](#) of the University of Melbourne with the subject line: "Anthology submission". There is a 5000-word limit, and the deadline for submissions is Friday 30 April 2010.

### **29. Poetry Society reading**

This Monday in Wellington the New Zealand Poetry Society presents New Zealand-born Australian poet, Jennifer Compton, who is currently Writer-in-Residence at Massey University. She will read at the New Zealand Poetry Society's monthly meeting on 19 April at The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington. The event is open to the public, and starts at 7.30pm with an open mic. There is a \$5 entry fee (\$3 for members).

### **30. Recent web reading**

[Wonderful typewriters](#)

[Lloyd Jones's Bougainville Library project](#)

[Lydia Wevers goes to Georgetown](#)

[Margo Lanagan enjoys New Zealand \(19 March and before\)](#)

[\*Victims of Lightning\* reviewed](#)

[Writers and Readers Week reviewed](#)

[\*Somebody Loves Us All\* reviewed](#)

[Life imitates art \(see \*Somebody Loves Us All\*\)](#)

[Eleanor Catton on Orange longlist](#)

[Twittering Atwood](#)

[Blackmail Press 27: The Spirit Mediums Issue](#)

[Best New Zealand Poems 09 blogged](#)

[New Zealand poetry for the Kiwi diaspora](#)

['Daddy Drops a Line': a Vincent O'Sullivan short story](#)

[Pamela Gordon on Janet Frame](#)

[Ian Wedde on David Mitchell](#)

[Tusiata Avia's new book](#)

[Roo Borson: 'Baxter's Grave'](#)

[Writing advice from Lester Dent](#)

[Songwriter workshops](#)

[Geoff Dyer's disastrous joke](#)

[Jim Crace's last book?](#)

[More fun with Philip Larkin](#)

[Wynton Marsalis reads W B Yeats](#)

[Manhire goes to Mossburn](#)

[And \[here\]\(#\)](#)

[Travel writing in the age of YouTube](#)

[Bite-Size Edits](#)

[Advice for the badly reviewed \(registration required\)](#)

[Personalised Classics](#)

[50 Years of stupid grammar advice](#)

[Wrestling poetry](#)

[Poetry cupcakes](#)

[National Poetry Competition \(UK\) – international submissions welcome](#)

[Nina Katchadourian rearranges the world](#)

[Sassy gay friend: Hamlet](#)

[Creepy old abandoned houses \(Facebook\)](#)

[Warning: quite bad taste](#)

[Top 100 April Fool's Day hoaxes](#)

Catherine Vidler's cruise ship corner

[Crafty cruising](#)

[Contortionist cruising](#)

[Middle-Earth cruising](#)

[World's largest cruise-ship](#)

[World's smallest cruise-ship](#)

[World's smallest cruise-ship \(too\)](#)

[Cruise-ship cupcake](#)

[Cruise-ship cupcake \(too\)](#)

### **31. Great lists of our time**

In anticipation of the 'reassembly' of the racehorse Phar Lap: [a list \(of lists\)](#) of the names of Phar Lap's Parents, Grandparents, Great-Grandparents, and Great-Great-Grandparents (compiled using Phar Lap's pedigree chart).

Parents:

Night Raid

Entreaty

Grandparents:

Radium  
Sentiment  
Winkie  
Prayer Wheel

Great-Grandparents:

Bend Or  
Taia  
Spearmint  
Flair  
William The Third  
Conjure  
Pilgrim's Progress  
Catherine Wheel

Great-Great-Grandparents:

Doncaster  
Rouge Rose  
Donovan  
Eira  
Carbine  
Maid of the Mint  
St Frusquin  
Glare  
St Simon  
Gravity  
Juggler  
Connie  
Isonomy  
Pilgrimage  
Maxim  
Miss Kate

\* \* \*

### **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)