



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

*Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao*

### Newsletter – 5 March 2010

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This is the 153<sup>rd</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. Nuptials!

Many IIML graduates and friends will be pleased to hear that our very first administrator, Fiona Wright, is getting married this Saturday, 6 March. The fortunate man is historian Ewan Morris. The ceremony will take place at Victoria University’s Hunter Council Chamber. The Hunter Council Chamber was once Victoria’s Law Library – given that Fiona left the IIML to further a career in Law, that feels appropriate. (Fiona is now an ‘Assistant Parliamentary Counsel’ – that’s to say she

works drafting New Zealand's laws: see [here](#)). Fiona and Ewan will have an entirely new last name: Lincoln.

## **2. A welcome and two 'Au revoirs'**

Thirty new writers have arrived at the IIML this week to start work on a variety of projects, from a film set on Guernsey during World War II to a dystopian novel set in 2040 to poetry and essay collections leaning towards science, surrealism and family history. We have just said au revoir to Ken Duncum, who is en route to Menton and the Mansfield fellowship via San Francisco and London, but David Geary is in the scriptwriting hot seat and already making his mark on the IIML's social culture – this is the first year that the MA welcome party has featured speed dating...

We are also reluctantly farewelling Clare Moleta from her position at the IIML admin office while she goes on parental leave, and steeling ourselves to manage without her. We wish Clare and her partner Leon Davidson a very happy experience as new parents.

## **3. The expanding bookshelf (1)**

Congratulations to Rachel Buchanan, whose *The Parihaka Album: Lest We Forget* has just been published by [Huia](#). Rachel did Victoria's Short Fiction workshop some years ago, and published fiction in magazines such as *Sport*, *Meanjin*, and *Landfall*. She now lectures in Media Studies at Melbourne's [La Trobe University](#).

## **4. The expanding bookshelf (2)**

New poetry collections from Kate Camp, Bill Manhire and Geoff Cochrane will be launched by Victoria University Press next Thursday at New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week. Everyone is invited to the party! It's in the Exchange Atrium, 22 Blair Street, Thursday 11 March at 6 pm.

Earlier the same day Bill Manhire will be in conversation with Steve Braunias at the Embassy Theatre (11 March, 2.15 pm).

## **5. Free readings**

In a bonus for those on tight budgets, this year Writers and Readers Week is offering two free samplers of some of the fiction and poetry talent on offer at the Festival. On Wednesday 10 March at 5.15 pm you can catch the UK poet Glyn Maxwell and Canadian Kevin Connolly reading their work alongside local poets Ian Wedde, Kate Camp and Geoff Cochrane, each of whom has work new to our ears. MA workshop convenor Chris Price will be guiding proceedings.

And on Friday 12 March at 5.15 you can explore the fiction of Joan London (Australia), Lisa Moore (Canada), and Fariba Hachtroudi (Iran/France) alongside New Zealand short story divas Charlotte Grimshaw and Anna Taylor in *Telling Stories*.

There's also the read-off that will decide the winner of [\*Once Upon a Deadline\*](#) a daylong speed-writing marathon featuring five New Zealand writers that takes place in locations all over Wellington on Monday. Competitors include our own David Geary, the 2008 champion, back to defend his title against contenders that include one of his current students, Eli Kent, the writer behind the 2009 Best Theatre win in the NZ Fringe Festival. The other contenders are Pip Hall, the 2009 Bruce Mason Playwriting Award-winner; internationally acclaimed playwright Dianna Fuemana; *Spooks* scriptwriter and novelist Neil Cross; and emerging playwright Lucy O'Brien, who completed an MA at the IIML in 2008. The winner will be decided in a free public read-off at the Wellington Town Hall at 6.30 pm, this Monday 8 March. Expert judges will decide the winner, but audience members also get to vote for their favourite story.

New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week has plenty of other literary riches on offer. It opens on Tuesday night with a gala featuring novelists Audrey Niffenegger, Susanna Moore, Kamila Shamsie and Neil Cross. The full programme is on line [here](#).

## **6. Documentary Edge Festival**

So much to see, so little time. Currently running in Auckland, and starting in Wellington next week, is the [Documentary Edge Festival](#). (Auckland - 27 February to 14 March at Rialto Cinemas Newmarket, Wellington - 13 to 28 March at Reading Cinemas Courtenay) Documentary Edge is screening 56 documentaries from 25 countries.

Tickets for the festival can be purchased from the venue or on line [here](#) (Auckland) or [here](#) (Wellington). For further information call 09 3600329 or [email](#).

## **7. The World in 2050**

Martin Lord Rees is a successor of Sir Isaac Newton and Ernest Lord Rutherford as President of the Royal Society of London, the world's oldest and most prestigious scientific institution. He is also UK's Astronomer Royal and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. As a cosmologist, Lord Rees studies the universe, and tries to understand its evolution on grand timescales of billions of years. But he is also concerned with the much smaller time scale of a human life. In his book *Our Final Century*, he gave our civilization a 50/50 chance of surviving the 21st century. What does he think now, five years on from the publishing of his book and what is his view of how things will stand in 2050?

You can find out when he gives the Rutherford Memorial Lecture marking the 350th year since the founding the Royal Society at the Wellington Town Hall on Tuesday 23

March at 7pm. There is no charge for this lecture but a ticket is required. Tickets are available at [here](#) or by mail from Rutherford Memorial Lecture, Royal Society of New Zealand, PO Box 598, Wellington (please include your postal address). Enquiries by [email](#) or 04 470 5781.

## 8. Macmillan Brown Prize

We were pleased to learn this week that last year's Adam Foundation Prize winner, Ashleigh Young, has also carried off the \$2500 Macmillan Brown Prize offered by Canterbury University for 'an essay, a short story, a poem or group of poems, a short play, or other work in an appropriate form, dealing imaginatively with any theme.' The prize is open to all undergraduates of whatever standing and to all graduates of not more than three years' standing from their first degree, and the deadline for this year's [prize](#) is 31 August. Ashleigh's winning entry was the personal essay 'Absolutely Flying' from her 2009 MA folio.

## 9. From the whiteboard

'Beware of clichés. Not just the clichés that Martin Amis is at war with. There are clichés of response as well as expression. There are clichés of observation and of thought – even of conception. Many novels, even quite few adequately written ones, are clichés of *form* which conform to clichés of expectation.'

— Geoff Dyer

## 10. Writing Asia

At the City University of Hong Kong, they are looking for the top creative writers who want to 'write Asia.' This summer, the University is starting a low-residency MFA in Creative Writing specialising in Asian writing in English, the first programme of its kind in the world. Based in the Department of English, the two-year programme will accept a limited number of students in creative non-fiction, fiction & poetry. The Hong Kong-born author Xu Xi has assisted in the design of the programme and will be their first writer-in-residence on March 1. They anticipate applicants from both Asia and the West.

The first residency is scheduled for summer 2010. The novelist Timothy Mo will be visiting writer and the faculty writers for the 2010 class features an international cast from Hong Kong, India, the U.K, Canada and the U.S., with connections and roots in China, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and elsewhere. The writers include Tina Chang, Marilyn Chin, Luis Francia, Robin Hemley, Justin Hill, Sharmistha Mohanty, James Scudamore, Ravi Shankar, Jess Row and Madeleine Thien. For applications, visit the University's [website](#), [email](#) or call Xu Xi at ++ 852.9175.2839 for further information.

## 11. Short notice for *Swamp*

*Swamp* is an online publication created by and for postgraduate Creative Writers (from Honours students through to PhD candidates), and run from The University of Newcastle, Australia. Submissions for the fifth issue (poetry, fiction, nonfiction or memoir) close today, 5 March. There is a compulsory theme of 'form' for the issue. Prose writers may devise their own interpretation of this — physical forms, genre forms, filling out forms — the editors are open to being surprised. They are hoping for poetry that adheres to more traditional forms, as well as enacting the inversion of said forms. Visit [Swamp](#) for the previous four issues, editorial and publication information, and submission guidelines.

## 12. Propeller

Lucas Bernhard, who taught the IIML's Iowa Workshop in poetry in 2008, is also active in the world of online literature. He's involved with a magazine called *Propeller*, and has dropped us a line to say they have a new issue [here](#).

## 13. Poetry Canterbury

Canterbury Poets are running a readings series marking their 20th anniversary this autumn. The readings include an open mic session and guest readers, and run Wednesdays from 17 March at 6.30 pm, Madras Café Bookshop, 165 Madras St (\$5 entry). The programme, which features both local poets and a selection from other parts of the country, looks like this:

- 17 March: Kay McKenzie Cook, Mary-Jane Grandinetti, David Gregory
- 24 March: Jessica Le Bas, Robert Lumsden, Tom Weston
- 31 March: Chris Price, Marisa Cappetta, Lorraine Ritchie
- 7 April: Michele Leggott, Nick Williamson, Helen Lowe
- 14 April: Rachel Bush, Justine de Spa, Rangī Faith
- 21 April: The Hagley Group with Jeffrey Paparoa Holman and Frankie McMillan. (Compère Morrin Rout.)
- 28 April: Cliff Fell, Alison Denham, Stephanie Grieve
- 5 May: Featuring the Winning Open Mike Poets from the season

## 14. Children's writing with Joy Cowley

There are still a few places left in Joy Cowley's upcoming weekend workshop on writing for children taking place at Wellington Girls College on 20-21 March, mentioned in our last newsletter. If you're interested, contact Paul Maskill by [email](#) or by phone 027 329 5501.

## **15. Calling past *Turbine* and *Best NZ Poems* contributors**

We recently discovered that some of the poetry pages in *Turbine* issues 05 - 09 had lost some formatting, especially stanza-breaks. This was a result of technical 'clean up' work by the NZETC and staff there have now made site-wide updates to correct these errors.

However, we would like to be sure that poems on previous issues of both *Turbine* and *BNZP* are displaying as you intended. We'd be grateful if previous contributors to both collections could check their poems. If you do notice any changes in layout from the version/s you approved, please send a copy of the original text with formatting intact and any explanatory notes needed, so that corrections can be made.

Please send formatting corrections to poems only - not updates to author notes, web links etc. Poem texts should be sent in one of these ways:

- By email as an attached pdf document
- By email as an attached scanned document
- By post in hard copy, if neither electronic option is possible

Unless the change you are requesting is very straightforward, please do NOT send poems in the body of an email, or attached as Word documents or similar, as the formatting in these is not reliable when sent electronically.

Correction requests should be sent to: [jason.darwin@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:jason.darwin@vuw.ac.nz) and cc'd to [modernletters@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:modernletters@vuw.ac.nz)

or by post to:

'Att: BNZP / Turbine corrections'  
IIML  
Victoria University of Wellington  
PO Box 600  
Wellington

Thank you for your help with this.

## **16. Recent web reading**

[Ten rules for writing fiction](#)

[A poet's view of cyclists](#)

[Poetry in America](#)

[Caustic Cover Critic](#)

[Literary food](#)

[Online readings of Radio NZ short stories](#)

[Remembering Salinger](#)

[Glyn Maxwell writes an opera](#)

[Dora Malech interview](#)

[Emily Perkins: Why I Write](#)

[Rachael King: five quick questions](#)

[Five questions for Bill Manhire](#)

[Nigel Cox okays Geoff Cochrane](#)

[Love poetry and body temperature](#)

[Pellegrino false PhD](#)

[Salient on plagiarism](#)

[Commonwealth short story competition](#)

[An e-poem](#)

[What judges read](#)

[Barry Hannah \(1942-2010\)](#)

[Sylvia Plath bake-off](#)

[A Dream Song](#)

**The Cath Vidler corner**

[World's smallest orchid](#)

[World's largest selection of sheet music](#)

[World's smallest spontaneous atomic valentine](#)

[World's smallest tiger](#)

[World's smallest map](#)

[Creative Teapots](#)

[Butch Bakery](#)

[Diamond oceans \(and icebergs\)](#)

[Larkin statue ideas](#)

## 17. Great lists of our time

The *Guardian* recently published a 'compilation list' of many top writers offering their ten tips for writing fiction, in response to Elmore Leonard's famous list of do's and don'ts (see Recent Web Reading, above). It reminded us, very tangentially, about a list of possible reasons 'Why poems about poetry don't often work', written by our very own Listlady Cath Vidler some years ago. We reproduce it here:

*List of possible reasons why poems about poetry don't often work.*

1. The "poem" is the white of the egg. Not nutritious, or central, like the yolk (the poem). The reader is left feeling dissatisfied, and on the periphery.
2. The "poem" was talking to the poem on the telephone, but they got disconnected somewhere along the line.
3. The "poem" is trying to cut the poem's hair in the mirror, when it would have been so much more attractive left just as it was.
4. The "poem" cannot drive (neither can its instructor). Its passenger, the poem, is fully licensed, and knows its starting point, route and destination. If only they could swap seats.
5. The "poem" has hidden the poem in a safe place, but has forgotten where.
6. The "poem" has hidden the poem in a safe place, and doesn't want you, or the reader, to find it.
7. The poem has hidden itself in a safe place (the "poem") and doesn't want to be found.
8. The "poem" is uncertain of its identity, whereas poems can state their full names and addresses to anyone who asks (without prompting).
9. The "poem" has been grown under artificial conditions. The poem is its yearning for natural light.



10. The "poem" is a screen behind which the shadow of a poem may sometimes be seen dancing.

— Cath Vidler

\* \* \*

### **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)