



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 11 August 2005

This is the 73rd 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. **Writers on Mondays: Lunch with the Laureate**

2005 Te Mata Estate Poet Laureate Jenny Bornholdt is the owner of a poetic voice that mesmerises and enchants, both on the page and on stage. It's a voice which UK critic Michael Hulse dubs 'a straight one, sophisticated but natural, streetwise at times but never sly,' and it has made her one of New Zealand's most widely appreciated poets. She reads from and discusses her work with Damien Wilkins at City Gallery Wellington this Monday, 15 August at 1 pm. Admission free.

2. **The writing of the future**

Secondary students from Fiordland to Northland will descend on Victoria University on the weekend of 20-21 August for an injection of inspiration at the third Bell Gully National Schools Writing Festival. Students will take part in two intensive writing workshops and attend panel discussions featuring well known New Zealand writers including 2005 Montana Book Award shortlisted novelists Nigel Cox and Fiona

Farrell, and poets Bernadette Hall, Nick Ascroft and Jenny Bornholdt. In an acknowledgment that great teachers play a part in making great writers, the Ministry of Education supports the participation of teachers in the Festival. They too take part in creative writing workshops, as well as participating in a forum about teaching creative writing and going to the writer panels alongside students. The IIML website, which includes writer advice, links and judges' reports from previous festivals, is gradually building into a useful resource for teachers and emerging writers, even if they can't get to the Festival:

<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/activities/resources.aspx>

3. Poetry the winner on the day

The winner of the Bell Gully National Schools Poetry Award, judged by Bernadette Hall, will be presented with their prize on Friday 19 August in an event that also includes readings by poets Bill Manhire, Bernadette Hall, Nick Ascroft and Jenny Bornholdt. The event takes place at City Gallery Wellington on Friday 19 August at 5.30 pm. It is open to the public, and admission is free.

Back in July we heard from last year's award winner, Lower Hutt student Poppy Haynes. She wrote that winning the award had 'catalysed so many other opportunities ... I'm sure if the competition hadn't existed I wouldn't have had great mentoring or the chance to be published (I had a poem in the March edition of *North & South* magazine and my dolphin poem, that won last year's competition, is going to be published in the 'fall' edition of *World Literature Today* - it's all very exciting!' Poppy is now studying at Otago University, where she's been taking courses in playwriting and fiction. The judge of last year's competition, Glenn Colquhoun, also helps her with 'a bit of editing' from time to time. 'I know if he swears that something's either really good or really terrible!' she says.

4. The expanding bookshelf

The publication of playscripts is a rare event in New Zealand, but a trio of plays by Ken Duncum, Michael Hirschfeld Director of Scriptwriting at the IIML, has just appeared from Victoria University Press. *Plays 1: Small Towns and Sea* assembles *Horseplay*, the story of a hypothetical meeting between Ronald Hugh Morrieson and James K. Baxter over a horse in Hawera; *Flipside*, based on the story of the men who spent 119 days adrift in the *Rose-Noëlle*; and *Trick of the Light*, which tackles the aftermath of the Arthur Allan Thomas case. *Trick of the Light* won Best New Zealand Play at the Chapman Tripp Awards in 2002, and the author's note for *Small Towns and Sea* concludes with a line from that play which recalls the Australian novelist Patrick White's relish for what he called 'New Zealandy' murders: 'Know your murders, Clare. It's our heritage in this country.' Ken Duncum has been writing for theatre and television for nearly twenty years, and has a record three plays in the all-time 'Top 30' list of New Zealand plays (as voted by theatre professionals).

5. Play drinking games at Downstage

MA (Page) coordinator Damien Wilkins has also ventured into theatrical territory this year, and the result, *Drinking Games*, is one of four plays to be selected by Playmarket and Downstage for the 2005 Adam Play Reading series. *Drinking Games* will be presented in a rehearsed reading by top professional actors and a director on Sunday 21 August, 3 pm at Downstage. According to the programme notes, it is 'about four old school friends who meet regularly to play tennis, and to drink. Now the things that brought the men together seem less potent than the things driving them apart. The play looks at male friendship – its rituals, pleasures, failures and intimacies.' Subsequent readings will feature plays by Michael Nicholas Williams (*Lonely Heart*, 28 August), Nigel Waters (*Hymn*, 4 September) and Vanessa Rhodes (*Bright Sea*, 11 September), who completed her MA in Scriptwriting at the IIML in 2003. The readings will be followed by a talkback session with the audience. Tickets \$6.00 from Downstage, tel 801 6946.

6. From the whiteboard

'I believe playwrights are poets disguised as architects.' - Jeffrey Hatcher

7. Prize in Modern Letter shortlist announcement

The shortlist for the third Prize in Modern Letters will now be announced on 1 November, instead of 14 October. The shortlisting judges are broadcaster Elizabeth Alley, *Dominion Post* Books Editor Guy Somerset, Bill Manhire and Damien Wilkins. They'll be reading solidly until then.

8. Rough poetry

The Rough Guide to New Zealand might be good on geography and back-packers' hostels, but it's less reliable when it comes to books. In a section devoted to interesting books they recommend *Deep River Song*, a book by the writer Hone Tinwhare, which has, they say, been translated into English by Frank Stewart. Frank Stewart is an American poet who teaches at the University of Hawaii, where he edits the literary journal *Manoa*. He did indeed write an introduction to the US edition of *Deep River Song*. But the poet wrote his own poems in the English language. *The Rough Guide* seems to have a good sense of his work, though. 'Tinwhare,' we are told, 'is a respected and established Maori poet with a bawdy sense of humour.'

When it comes to travel guides, we naturally find ourselves preferring the literary

wisdom of Lonely Planet's *New Zealand*: 'The centre of New Zealand's literary universe now is undoubtedly [the] creative writing course at Victoria University, which has produced most of the country's prominent writers in the past decade.'

9. Tinwhare and others go west

Auckland's Going West literary festival turns 10 this year, and the organisers seem to have pulled out all the stops to create a larger-than-usual event that features music, films, humour, art, theatre and youth performance, as well as the usual steam train journey (25 September) and weekend of writer events (9-11 September). Guests include Emily Perkins, Nigel Cox, Stephanie Johnson, and Bill Manhire, who will give this year's Curnow Reading. There's also an evening devoted to Hone Tuwhare. Going West has always focused primarily on New Zealand writing, but this year's dash of international colour is provided by Australian novelist Delia Falconer. The full programme is now online at

<http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/artcul/ae/goingwest/index.asp>

10. Insider award winner

The television series that had its inception on the MA (Script) programme in 2003 took seven awards at the New Zealand Screen Awards on 27 July. *The Insiders Guide to Happiness* scooped the awards for best drama series - Dave Gibson, Donna Malane and Jan Haynes; best actor - Will Hall; best supporting actress - Denise O'Connell; best supporting actor - Jason Whyte; best script - David Brechin-Smith (episode six); drama/comedy director - Mark Beesley; original music - David Long. Although Peter Cox, the playwright who dreamed up the Insiders idea, took no awards himself, he did take up residence last month as a Buddle Findlay Sargeson fellow in Auckland. Filming of a 'prequel', *The Insiders Guide to Love*, has started. *In My Father's Den*, adapted from a novel by Maurice Gee, was the big winner in the film category of the Screen Awards, taking 10 prizes including best picture, best director, and best actor and actress.

11. Word Festival in Wellington

Wellingtonians' appetite for literary festivals and events shows no sign of diminishing. The third annual Word Festival opens at Thistle Hall (cnr Cuba and Arthur Street) on 18 August. It includes a WordArt exhibition (14 - 20 August), a workshop on event management, and one in which writers including Cleve Cameron, Jane Bowron, Duncan Sarkies and Hinemoana Baker share their personal insights into the publishing world (19 August). There are three opportunities for writers to share their work and ideas (19 and 20 August), and the Festival concludes with an event bearing the Ginsberg-inspired title of 'Howltearora'. The full programme will be available at the opening, or email wordcollective@gmail.com for further details.

12. Recent web reading

The Emily Dickinson cake

<http://www.poetrysociety.org/journal/articles/dickinson-cake.html>

Bad meat and critics

http://www.thebookstandard.com/bookstandard/community/commentary_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000991819

Wellington Writers' Walk

<http://www.catherinegriffiths.co.nz/01%203.WWW1.html>

The death of the editor

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,6000,1543308,00.html>

L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E magazine

<http://www.princeton.edu/eclipse/projects/LANGUAGE/language.html>

The coming thing

<http://rhubarbissusan.blogspot.com/2005/06/chicago-modern-american-poetry-2150.html>

Literary pick-ups

<http://www.opiummagazine.com/storybarringerpickup.html>

Mr Earbrass Writes a Novel

<http://www.infinity-bound.net/TUH/tuh00.html>

Talking about Thomas Pynchon

<http://www.bookforum.com/pynchon.html>

August Kleinzahler

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/02/books/02poet.html?pagewanted=print>
<http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/speeches.php?t=2>

Chaucer Rap

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4721073.stm

Rappin around wit Davey Cohen

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/columnist/story/0,9826,1541639,00.html>

Carl Shuker

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/31/books/review/31GORDONL.html>
<http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/austnz/shukerc.htm>

Cutting and pasting

<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.07/gibson.html>

How to be Hamlet

<http://www.jasperforde.com/hamlet.html>

Elizabeth Knox

<http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/books/interviews/article304356.ece>

Booker longlist

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/4139182.stm>

13. Great lists of our time

List Lady Cath Vidler suggests reciting this as a percussive poem:

AKA AKA (rural district near Auckland, New Zealand),
BADEN-BADEN (in Germany),
BELLA BELLA (coastal town in British Columbia, Canada),
BORA BORA (an island in French Polynesia),
BUBUBUBU (a stream in the Democratic Republic of the Congo),
BUDGE BUDGE (a suburb of Calcutta),
DUM DUM (another suburb of Calcutta),
FOFO FOFO (a town in Papua),
GOONOO GOONOO (Australia),
GRONG GRONG (a town in Australia),
KIRAKIRA (Solomon Islands),
KURRI KURRI (Australia),
LOMALOMA (Fiji),
MITTA MITTA (Australia),
NENGONENGO (Fr. Polynesia),
NGORO NGORO (a crater in Tanzania),
PAGO PAGO (Am. Samoa),
PAOPAO (Fr. Polynesia),
PUAPUA (W. Samoa),
PUEPUE (Solomon Islands),
PUKAPUKA (Cook Islands),
RABA RABA (Papua New Guinea),
REKAREKA (Fr. Polynesia),
SAVUSAVU (Fiji),
SOMOSOMO (Fiji),
WALLA WALLA (U. S.),
WALLAN WALLAN (Australia),
WAGGA WAGGA (Australia),
WOY WOY (Australia).

<http://members.aol.com/gulhigh2/words2.html>