



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 16 September 2005

This is the 74th 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: Short/Sharp/Script 2

The second round of scripts from the IIML's MA (Scriptwriting) programme will be brought to you this Monday, 19 September, 1 pm at City Gallery. Actors Phil Grieve, Brian Hotter, Amy Tarleton, Dena Kennedy, Kathy McCrae and Kevin Keys appear in rehearsed readings under the direction of Kerry Palmer. Scripts featured this week are:

Nothing to Declare by Donna Banicevich-Gera

Out of Africa into a rainy Wellington evening. Six travellers in an airport shuttle.

Frances has been observing chimpanzees - but are her fellow passengers that different?

It's No Picnic by Desiree Gezentsvey

Miri and Sam are sisters - with a lot of boundary issues. How far is too far over the line? The easement for the water is only the beginning.

Special Features by Leonie Reynolds

Commentaries, outtakes, rehearsal footage, actor interviews - it's the all-new interactive way to see a play. DVD-style extras come to theatre!

Eleven Metres in Half an Hour by Jessica Fletcher

A flood traps a family on the roof. At least now they'll have to talk to each other.

Der Koch (The Cook) by Lynda Chanwai-Earle

Germany. Leon Gottschalk is being interviewed by the police about the disappearance of Niklas Engel. Leon freely admits he had Niklas round for dinner, it's all on the video ...

Admission to Writers on Mondays events is free – all welcome.

2. Literary spam alert

On 26 September Damien Wilkins and Fergus Barrowman will be discussing the literary magazine *Sport* in the final event of our Writers on Mondays series. The occasion for the event is the forthcoming publication of an anthology culled from *Sport's* pages over the last 17 years, titled *Great Sporting Moments*. We hear that a number of anthology contributors immediately trashed the publisher's permissions request emails on receipt. The subject heading, Great Sporting Moments, had produced a somewhat alarming combination alongside the name of the sender – Victoria University Press's new office manager, one Craig Gamble.

3. More than just a desk

Many of our visitors and students have passed by (and sat at) the Janet Frame desk, where photos of Frame and her sometime benefactor Charles Brasch look down benignly from the wall on emerging writers in search of inspiration. It's recently been announced, however, that Frame's literary legacy will be helping to support writers in a more direct manner. Each year, some of the proceeds of her writings will go to a poet, a fiction writer and an organisation that supports New Zealand writers, in grants totalling \$30,000 annually. This year's inaugural grants of \$10,000 go to Dunedin poet Peter Olds, Northland novelist Kelly Ana Morey, and, we're very happy to report, the IIML's writing scholarship fund, which is designed to support promising writers after they graduate. It also contributes towards the Glenn Schaeffer challenge gift fundraising effort (more on that subject at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3387927a10,00.html>). Frame's desire to help other writers goes back a long way. Niece Pamela Gordon writes (on the LeafSalon website) 'Janet received many fellowships, awards and prizes, and it was always a welcome boost. The money is of course especially useful to writers who are located

right at the bottom of the food chain, but she was also encouraged and inspired by the recognition of her colleagues in the literary world. She resolved that if she ever had money to leave, she would give it for the benefit of other writers, and included that instruction in each new will she made from as early as the 1950s.'

http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/archives/000756janet_frame_lit_trust_rewards_writers.html#more

4. Writers on campus

Frame beneficiary Kelly Ana Morey was shortlisted for this year's Kiriyaama Fiction Prize for her second novel, *Grace is Gone*, and won the Best First Book prize in the Montana Book Awards 2004. She will be reading on campus at Victoria University alongside poet, songwriter and IIML graduate Hinemoana Baker (*matuhi / needle*) later this month. Baker has been busy lately, appearing at Going West last weekend, and attending the APRA Silver Scroll Awards, where the title track of her album *Puawai* was shortlisted for the Maioha (te reo Maori) Award. The two writers will appear as part of this year's Maori Writers Festival (28 September -1 October) at Te Herenga Waka Marae on Kelburn Parade at 12.30 pm, Friday 30 September. Other Maori Writers Festival events include 'Speed Dating with the Writers', 'Maori on the Web' and 'Beyond the Piu Piu and Poi', a look at Maori characters in film. Programme brochures should be available from the New Zealand Book Council or Huia Publishing, or in locations around town.

5. Your name here?

The number of student places available in the MA in Creative Writing for the Page expanded to 20 for the first time in 2005. We're pleased to again be able to offer 20 writers the chance to work on their fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction manuscripts under the guidance of Bill Manhire and Damien Wilkins in 2006. Another 10 writers will have the opportunity to take the Scriptwriting MA, which includes 80 hours of industry placement along with the requirement to produce a full-length script to third-draft standard, with Ken Duncum. The deadline for all MA applications is 1 November. For further information contact us at modernletters@vuw.ac.nz, or you can download the application form here: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/documents/application-postgraduate.pdf>

6. Flora Poetica

September 27 is Poets' Day in the Botanic Garden's annual Spring Festival. Staff and students from the IIML will give a lunchtime poetry reading in the Begonia House as part of the festival. Jenny Bornholdt, the Te Mata Estate Poet Laureate, will be a guest reader, and she will also launch a small book of *Garden Poems* by Dinah Hawken, written while she was poet-in-residence in the Botanic Garden and Otari-Wilton's Bush during 2004, under the NZ Poetry Society's Poets in Workplaces

scheme. Stephanie de Montalk, Chris Price, Diana Bridge and students from the IIML will follow by reading poems about plants, gardens and the natural world. *Flora Poetica* takes place from 12.10 - 1.30, Tuesday September 27 in the Begonia House, Lady Norwood Rose Garden.

7. Iowa: Fiction

Two fresh Iowa writing workshops are on offer at the IIML this summer. The Fiction Stream will focus on short fiction from a variety of literary traditions as a way to explore the form of this genre, and to expand the notion of what is possible in a story. Readings will include work by Gogol, Flaubert, John Cheever, Katherine Mansfield, and Jhumpa Lahiri, among others. Students will submit two short stories for workshop, as well as critiques and exercises for discussion. Course dates are 5 December – 10 February, and the workshop will meet Mondays and Thursdays, 1.30 – 4.30pm) The convenor of this stream is Arda Collins, who holds an MFA from the University of Iowa Writers Workshop, where she received the Glenn Schaeffer Fellowship in poetry. Her poems have appeared in the *American Poetry Review* and *GutCult*, and are forthcoming in *n+1*. She is a contributing editor for *GutCult* and lives in New York City.

8. Iowa: Poetry

The Poetry Stream of the Iowa workshop will focus ‘on “undomesticating” our sensibilities as poets—finding our feral minds and loosening our grip on notions of how a poem should sound or appear or behave’. Through discussion of assigned readings, in-class exercises, and critique of their own poems, participants will explore how language can wed the cerebral with the physical, creating poems that can be experienced not simply on the page, but in our mouths, ears and bodies. Readings will include poets from the UK, the US, New Zealand and elsewhere. The course dates are 4 January – 17 February and the workshop will meet on Wednesday 4 January (10-1pm), then Mondays and Thursdays (10-1pm) The workshop convenor is Dora Malech, Schaeffer Award Winner in 2005. Her work has appeared in journals in the U.S. including *Black Warrior Review* and *American Letters & Commentary*.

The deadline for both Iowa workshop applications is 11 November. For further information and the application form, email modernletters@vuw.ac.nz

9. From the whiteboard

One to ponder in election week, from scriptwriting guru Robert McKee:

‘The function of structure is to provide progressively building pressures that force the characters into more and more difficult dilemmas where they must make more and

more difficult risk-taking choices and actions, gradually revealing their true natures, even down to the unconscious self.'

10. Tusiata goes to Honolulu

Since Tusiata Avia completed her MA at the IIML back in 2003, she has hardly stayed still for a moment. She has performed her one-woman show, *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*, (based on her book of the same name) throughout New Zealand and in American Samoa, Germany, Austria and Hawai'i. Earlier this year, Avia was an artist-in-residence at the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies in Christchurch, and since then she has attended poetry festivals in the Netherlands, Belgium, Moscow and Morocco. Now her globe-trotting is set to continue with the assistance of Fulbright and Creative New Zealand. She has been awarded this year's \$40,000 Pacific Writers' Residency at the University of Hawai'i, where she plans to work on a collection of poetry and a new theatre work.

http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/archives/000747aloha_avia.html#more

11. The expanding bookshelf

Poet Vivienne Plumb's new collection *Scarab: a poetic documentary* was launched by Miranda Harcourt at the Wellington Arts Centre Gallery on Friday 26 August, Daffodil Day. The collection, published by small Wellington publisher Seraph Press (seraphpress@paradise.net.nz), documents her son's 10-year struggle with cancer, assembling a selection of previously published poems as well as some new and unpublished ones. Vivienne Plumb completed both the Original Composition course and the MA in Creative Writing at Victoria University. Also new on the shelves this month is Jill Harris's *Sil*, published by Longacre Press. Harris, who was a member of the IIML's poetry workshop in 2002, jumps the tracks to children's writing with her first book, which features a tui particularly gifted in song. *Sil* was launched by Stephanie de Montalk, who taught the 2002 poetry workshop, at The Children's Bookshop in Kilbirnie at the beginning of September. Longacre have described it as 'a New Zealand classic in the making.'

12. Texts and letters

We enjoyed David Orr's recent *New Yorks Times* piece about poets' letters – especially his text-message version of Keats's famous account (in a letter to his brothers George and Thomas) of the poetic gift of 'negative capability':

JKEATS1: Iz tryN 2 dev mor neg cap

G&TKEATS: watz dat?

JKEATS1: dats bn N uncertainties -- misteries -- doubts w/o NE irritable reachN aftr fact & reasN : -)

G&TKEATS: kewl

See further

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/28/books/review/28ORRL.html?pagewanted=all>

13. Recent web reading

John Banville interview

http://marksarvas.blogs.com/elegvar/2005/09/the_longawaited.html

Nigel Cox goes West

http://frontseat.co.nz/exclusive/passenger_seat/blog.php?id=13

ratemyprofessors.com

http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/sunday/commentary/la-op-ratemyprof11sep11_0_6035512.story?coll=la-sunday-commentary

Writers and films

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,923-1760518,00.html>

George Saunders interview

<http://maudnewton.com/blog/?p=5610#more-5610>

Carl Shuker review

<http://www.thelistener.co.nz/default,4681.sm>

Murray Bail on translation

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,1566408,00.html>

Being Raymond Carver

<http://www.pindeldyboz.com/gacarver.htm>

Richard Ford on New Orleans

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,6109,1562179,00.html>

A creative writing conference

http://www.poetrymagazine.org/magazine/0705/comment_171211.html

Literary hoaxes

<http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2005/08/14/gotcha/?page=full>

Law and poetry

http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/September-October-2005/review_skeel_sepoct05.msp

Arts, poetry, typography
<http://www.stephenraw.com/>

Graham Lindsay interview
<http://www.defectperfection.net/?cat=4>

Celebrating the short story
http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=7025&issue=509&category=&author=133&AuthKey=5d590f974ca7f21c9b4c5e727caea538

Tips for writers
<http://www.mcsweeneys.net/2003/06/04rounder.html>

Leonard Cohen: The Book of Longing
http://www.macleans.ca/culture/music/article.jsp?content=20050822_110882_110882

Beowulf goes to Hollywood
http://dogmatika.com/dm/more.php?id=444_0_1_0_M

Altering the text
<http://www.logolalia.com/alterredbooks/>

College life
<http://www.nysun.com/article/18869>

Nobel's nemesis
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/news/story/0,11711,1564739,00.html>

Houllebecq rap
<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,6109,1562391,00.html>

Winterson meets Duffy
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-1461-1760445-1461,00.html>

Director's choice
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/critic/feature/0,1169,1563209,00.html>

14. Your name here?

<http://cgi3.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewUserPage=auctioncause>
<<http://cgi3.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewUserPage&userid=auctioncause>>

15. Great lists of our time

Some winning sentences that would nonetheless be unlikely to win their writers a

place in the MA in Creative Writing (at least here at the IIML), courtesy of the annual Bulwer-Lytton competition, "a whimsical literary competition that challenges entrants to compose the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novels." (Those who feel they have what it takes to enter the competition, on the other hand, should go to <http://www.bulwer-lytton.com/#The%20rules>):

As the fading light of a dying day filtered through the window blinds, Roger stood over his victim with a smoking .45, surprised at the serenity that filled him after pumping six slugs into the bloodless tyrant that mocked him day after day, and then he shuffled out of the office with one last look back at the shattered computer terminal lying there like a silicon armadillo left to rot on the information superhighway.

--Larry Brill, Austin, Texas (1994 Winner)

Paul Revere had just discovered that someone in Boston was a spy for the British, and when he saw the young woman believed to be the spy's girlfriend in an Italian restaurant he said to the waiter, "Hold the spumoni--I'm going to follow the chick an' catch a Tory."

--John L. Ashman, Houston, Texas (1995 Winner)

"Ace, watch your head!" hissed Wanda urgently, yet somehow provocatively, through red, full, sensuous lips, but he couldn't you know, since nobody can actually watch more than part of his nose or a little cheek or lips if he really tries, but he appreciated her warning.

--Janice Estey, Aspen, Colorado (1996 Winner)

The moment he laid eyes on the lifeless body of the nude socialite sprawled across the bathroom floor, Detective Leary knew she had committed suicide by grasping the cap on the tamper-proof bottle, pushing down and twisting while she kept her thumb firmly pressed against the spot the arrow pointed to, until she hit the exact spot where the tab clicks into place, allowing her to remove the cap and swallow the entire contents of the bottle, thus ending her life.

-- Artie Kalemeris, Fairfax, Virginia (1997 Winner)

The corpse exuded the irresistible aroma of a piquant, ancho chili glaze enticingly enhanced with a hint of fresh cilantro as it lay before him, coyly garnished by a garland of variegated radicchio and caramelized onions, and impishly drizzled with glistening rivulets of vintage balsamic vinegar and roasted garlic oil; yes, as he surveyed the body of the slain food critic slumped on the floor of the cozy, but nearly empty, bistro, a quick inventory of his senses told corpulent Inspector Moreau that this was, in all likelihood, an inside job.

--Bob Perry, Milton, Massachusetts (1998 Winner)

Through the gathering gloom of a late-October afternoon, along the greasy, cracked paving-stones slick from the sputum of the sky,

Stanley Ruddlethorp wearily trudged up the hill from the cemetery where his wife, sister, brother, and three children were all buried, and forced open the door of his decaying house, blissfully unaware of the catastrophe that was soon to devastate his life.

--Dr. David Chuter, Kingston, Surrey, ENGLAND (1999 Winner)

The heather-encrusted Headlands, veiled in fog as thick as smoke in a crowded pub, hunched precariously over the moors, their rocky elbows slipping off land's end, their bulbous, craggy noses thrust into the thick foam of the North Sea like bearded old men falling asleep in their pints.

--Gary Dahl, Los Gatos, CA (2000 Winner)

A small assortment of astonishingly loud brass instruments raced each other lustily to the respective ends of their distinct musical choices as the gates flew open to release a torrent of tawny fur comprised of angry yapping bullets that nipped at Desdemona's ankles, causing her to reflect once again (as blood filled her sneakers and she fought her way through the panicking crowd) that the annual Running of the Pomeranians in Liechtenstein was a stupid idea.

Sera Kirk, Vancouver, BC (2001 Winner)

On reflection, Angela perceived that her relationship with Tom had always been rocky, not quite a roller-coaster ride but more like when the toilet-paper roll gets a little squashed so it hangs crooked and every time you pull some off you can hear the rest going bumpity-bumpity in its holder until you go nuts and push it back into shape, a degree of annoyance that Angela had now almost attained.

Rephah Berg, Oakland CA (2002 Winner)

They had but one last remaining night together, so they embraced each other as tightly as that two-flavor entwined string cheese that is orange and yellowish-white, the orange probably being a bland Cheddar and the white . . . Mozzarella, although it could possibly be Provolone or just plain American, as it really doesn't taste distinctly dissimilar from the orange, yet they would have you believe it does by coloring it differently.

Mariann Simms, Wetumpka, AL (2003 Winner)

She resolved to end the love affair with Ramon tonight . . . summarily, like Martha Stewart ripping the sand vein out of a shrimp's tail . . . though the term "love affair" now struck her as a ridiculous euphemism . . . not unlike "sand vein," which is after all an intestine, not a vein . . . and that tarry substance inside certainly isn't sand . . . and that brought her back to Ramon.

Dave Zobel, Manhattan Beach, CA (2004 Winner)