



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 30 June 2005

This is the 71st 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. Dessaix to launch Writers on Mondays series

We're delighted to announce the return of our Writers on Mondays series, which runs from July through to September and features a great line-up of literary figures from New Zealand and further afield. The series moves downtown this year, making it accessible to a wider audience, and will get off to a flying start with an appearance by acclaimed Australian author and broadcaster Robert Dessaix. He will be speaking with Elizabeth Alley about his new book, *Twilight of Love: Travels with Turgenev* at 1 pm, Monday 11 July at City Gallery Wellington, in an event supported by Chen Palmer & Partners. The focus then shifts to poetry, with a series of events presented to coincide with the National Library Gallery's New Zealand poetry exhibition, Main Trunk Lines (opening 22 July). We begin with Adam Prize winner Emily Dobson and end with the Te Mata Estate Poet Laureate Jenny Bornholdt.

Below is a short listing of the first six events in the series: for full details see our website, www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/activities/monday-writers.aspx

- 11 July Twilight of Love: Robert Dessaix
- 18 July Two New Zealand Poets: Emily Dobson & Anna Jackson
- 25 July New Zealand Poetry Abroad: Gregory O'Brien & Jan Lauwereyns
- 1 August The Writer in the House: Stephanie de Montalk
- 8 August Two American Poets: Nick Twemlow & Robyn Schiff
- 15 August Lunch with the Laureate: Jenny Bornholdt

All Writers on Mondays events take place at City Gallery Wellington at 1 pm. They are open to the public and free of charge, but advance bookings are recommended for the Robert Dessaix event (contact Robyn Walker, email robyn.walker@wcc.govt.nz or phone 801 3987).

2. The news from Antwerp

The recent visit of NZ poets to the Antwerp poetry festival *Dichters in het Elzenveld* was a great success, with large audiences attending the two evenings of readings by Vincent O'Sullivan, Tusiata Avia, Jenny Bornholdt and Bill Manhire. The New Zealanders' poems were made available in English and in Flemish versions by Wellington-based poet Jan Lauwereyns in the magazine *Revolver* (<http://www.revolver-literair.be/>). The preceding issue of *Revolver* was given over entirely to New Zealand poetry and arts. Bill Manhire reports that the New Zealanders' appearance at the festival made a start towards breaking down some European misconceptions about Antipodean literature. 'My sense from talking to a number of people is that in many parts of Europe, New Zealand literature is very much masked by Australian literature. There seems to be a belief that if you have read some Australian fiction, then you have somehow read New Zealand fiction, too; or that if you invite an Australian poet to a festival, then you have somehow accommodated New Zealand poetry as well.' After appearing in Antwerp, several of the poets went on to read at a similar festival in Rotterdam, where they were joined by Gregory O'Brien, who with Avia has gone on to Moscow for the launch of an anthology of New Zealand poetry in Russian. The Writers on Mondays event 'New Zealand Poetry Abroad' (see 1., above) will focus on this recent flurry of translating and exporting New Zealand poetry. The July

issue of *North & South* contains a feature on contemporary NZ poetry which stresses its growing international reach, and more on the poets in Europe and background on the Russian anthology is at http://www.leafsalon.co.nz/archives/000696seven_go_lit_in_europe.html#more

3. Radical revision workshop

Writers on Mondays guests Nick Twemlow and Robyn Schiff will also lead a one-day poetry workshop on Saturday 20 August at the IIML. The workshop will foreground the possibilities of the revision process, and actively use workshop participants' poems as generators for new writing. The two poets, who are both graduates of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, plan to 'explore chance operations, pointed research assignments, the investigation of outtakes and omissions, formal challenges, sonic dares and all uppings of the poetic ante that kindle the reinvigoration of the poetic act.' Robyn Schiff's first collection of poems, *Worth*, was recognised with a first book award from the Greenwall Fund by the Academy of American Poets. Nick Twemlow's poems have recently appeared in *Verse, Volt, Gulf Coast and Colorado Review*, and he serves as co-editor of *The Canary*, a poetry annual. Enrolment in the workshop is limited to eight people, and the application deadline is 1 August. For further information contact the IIML (tel 04 463 6854, email modernletters@vuw.ac.nz).

4. Turbine calls for submissions

The International Institute of Modern Letters is calling for submissions of original poetry, short fiction and creative non-fiction to be considered for the 2006 edition of the online literary journal, *Turbine*.

The submission deadline is October 20, 2005. Submission guidelines and past issues are available online at www.vuw.ac.nz/turbine

5. Tuwhare (re)visited

The world has been beating a path to Hone Tuwhare's door in recent weeks. May saw the launch of *Tuwhare*, an album of songs based on his poems by artists ranging from Goldenhorse and Strawpeople to Don McGlashan and Hinemoana Baker. Radio NZ recently ran a three-part series on the making of

the CD, and producer Charlotte Yates has made a short video about the project, which features Hone Tuwhare at home, along with a selection of songs. Then John Campbell made the pilgrimage to South Otago to visit the poet at home. More recently, Tuwhare received an honorary doctor of literature degree from the University of Auckland. He has responded to all the attention with his typical modesty and puzzlement, but seemed most bemused about his second doctorate. 'I don't know why they've given me a second one -- I've already got one [from Otago University in 1998]. Auckland (University)? They're silly buggers, and you can tell them that. Why don't they check their records?'

The 82-year-old isn't resting on his laurels: his new poetry collection *OoooooS!!!* was launched in Kaka Point last weekend by Judith Tizard. The book is described by the publishers as 'an expression of undiminished lust: for women; music; Tangaroa; for the poet's own astonishing life.' You can read more about the *Tuwhare* CD and download the video here: http://www.maoriart.org.nz/noticeboard/general/tuwhare_cd

6. Wendt on camera

Last year's International Film Festival included a documentary on Hone Tuwhare's return to Northland. This year another major New Zealand writer features in the programme. In her latest project Shirley Horrocks, the filmmaker behind *Early Days Yet* (the well-regarded documentary on Allen Curnow), has turned her attention to Albert Wendt. *The New Oceania*, a feature-length documentary was filmed in Samoa (where Wendt was born), New Zealand, Fiji and Hawaii, and documentary traces Wendt's life and career (including his years in Wellington), with vivid dramatisations of his work. It also celebrates the explosion of creative activity by Pacific artists in New Zealand (including writers, actors, painters, singers, dancers, and fashion designers). The Wellington screening of *The New Oceania* will be at Soundings Theatre, Te Papa, Sunday 31 July, 2.15 pm.

7. Vote poetry

The organisers of Montana National Poetry Day are encouraging us all to share a poem on 22 July. In the past they have left no stone unturned in their efforts to bring us the treasures of New Zealand poetry. Among the poems shared on Poetry Day 2004, according to the web page, were offerings by well-known poets Lauris Edmond, Anne Kennedy, Brian Turner and others. A few closet poets were also outed, however. There's an offering from Creative New Zealand chair Peter Biggs, which reads rather like the thoughts

that might pass through the mind of a hopeful artist waiting for the good (or bad) news on their CNZ grant application to arrive. Here is the poem in full:

Looking for the Letter

No word from you
now for days.

Life goes on. Same
old same old.

Rain. Sun. Cloud.
Start from the beginning
again.

I'm not worried
yet.

I know how letters
sometimes go astray.

United Future MP Marc Alexander also contributed a poem in 2004, as did Waitakere mayor Bob Harvey. In this election year, we trust our politicians will not overlook this opportunity to woo the electorate with their poetic musings. A villanelle from Don Brash might make all the difference to the undecided arts voter. Those looking for examples (and information on Poetry Day 2005) should visit www.montananzbookawards.co.nz

8. From the whiteboard

'Life is all confusion and inclusion; Art is all discrimination and selection.'
(Henry James)

9. The expanding bookshelf

War crimes committed by the Japanese army during the Sino-Japanese War last century are one of the central issues explored in Carl Shuker's novel *The Method Actors*, which has just been published in the USA. It was China's accusations that Japanese school textbooks had glossed over events like the 1937 Nanking, massacre, during which at least 300,000 Chinese civilians were killed, that triggered violent anti-Japanese demonstrations in China last

month. *The Method Actors* was begun in 1999 while Shuker was completing the MA in Creative Writing at Victoria University, and finished after he moved to Tokyo. Shuker's Washington-based publishers Shoemaker & Hoard have a list that features a number of distinguished names in both poetry (Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, W. S. Merwin) and prose (Guy Davenport, Robert Dessaix). He hopes *The Method Actors* will be available in New Zealand bookstores in spring. In the meantime, more on the book, and the little-known New Zealand connection to the Tokyo war crimes trials, can be found in the article titled 'Gaijin and war crimes' at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU0505/S00285.htm>

10. Recent web reading

The retiring scriptwriter

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2005/06/06/ftroth06.xml&Sheet=/arts/2005/06/05/bomain.html>

Get your rap together

<http://www.rhymerator.com/>

Tower of Babel revisited

http://www.wired.com/news/20050621_appliedminds.html?tw=wn_tophead_1

A professional writer

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A25176-2005Jan20.html>

Bovary's vanity

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-3-1648189,00.html>

In a Washington bookstore

<http://www.hosted-forum.com/index.php?boardid=amisweb&showtopic=28>

Giants of literature

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/4117974.stm>

Another dispute about writing courses

http://www.mobylikes.com/Almond_MFAs.html

11. Great lists of our time

From the (politically incorrect) songs of yesteryear file: a selection of song titles from 1768's "The Gentleman's Bottle-Companion, Containing a Collection of Curious, Uncommon and Humourous Songs, Most of Which are Originals". List Lady Cath Vidler say she left the 'fs' in for ambience:

As Oyfter Nan fat by her tub
A number of tradfemen one day did combine
As frifky Sue Welfleet was fet in her ftall
Away to the copfe, to the copfe lead away
Beauing Belling Dancing Drinking
Brother soldier! Did you hear the news
Contented I am, and contented I'll be
Fair lady, lay your lovely legs aftride
I'll tell you a ftory of Jack and Nan
I'm a hole tho but narrow, when firft I am try'd
In wine there is all in life you can name
Mifs Kitty she went to her chamber one day
Now Europe enjoys a repofe from the wars
Not far from town a country fquire
Some cobblers turn poets to ferve their good friends
Save women and wine there is nothing in life
Six long years I have fervd my time
To think on one's follies fometime is but right
There was three merry men came from the eaft
You may fay what you will but Belinda's too tall
Ye bucks far and near
Ye frolickfome fparks of the town
Ye priggs who are troubled with confiences qualms

<http://www.immortalia.com/html/books-OCRed/1730s-bog-house-miscellany/part-1-3rd-edition/index.htm>
