



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF

MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 30 May 2006

This is the 87th 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. Are Angels OK?

Since Einstein's time the world of physics has become a strange, fantastic and sometimes disturbing place. The 2005 International Year of Physics prompted the Royal Society to set up 'an extraordinary blind date between New Zealand writers and physicists', and the resulting book is launched this Wednesday at the Paramount Theatre. The ten writers, joined by project editors Paul Callaghan and Bill Manhire and chaired by Kim Hill, will serve up some of the insights they've gained during their visit to the 'parallel universe' of physicists. The line-up, which features Catherine Chidgey, Glenn Colquhoun, Dylan Horrocks, Witi Ihimaera, Lloyd Jones, Elizabeth Knox, Margaret Mahy, Vincent O'Sullivan, Chris Price and Jo Randerson, should offer something for science and literature buffs alike. Next month, Witi Ihimaera, Jo Randerson, Paul Callaghan and Kim Hill will present the project to the Cheltenham Science Festival as well as to audiences in Cambridge and London. Are Angels OK?, 7.30pm, 31 May, Paramount Theatre, Wellington - see www.paramount.co.nz. Tickets \$12 (including a glass of wine) from the Paramount box office, 04 384 4080.

2. The sands of time are drawing all too rapidly to a close

A hopelessly mixed metaphor to remind interested newsletter readers that applications for our second-half-year workshops close on Thursday. We are pleased to be able to offer workshops in Children's Writing, Poetry, and Creative Nonfiction. These serve as independent introductions to their genres, but many graduates go on to complete Victoria's MA in Creative Writing, and subsequently to publication. Writers attend a three-hour weekly workshop over a period of about three months. You can find out more on our website, where you will also find downloadable application forms. See www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters

3. Is poetry the new black?

Readers may remember that, back in March, a Wellington gallery featured an exhibition of Gregory O'Brien's poems that incorporated clothing by fashion designer Doris De Pont, printed with his words. Now Doris De Pont is returning the favour by selling the poet's books in her new Auckland boutique at the corner of Williamson Ave and Ponsonby Road. O'Brien will be reading this Thursday at the launching of the store, where his poems appear not only on the clothes but also on the changing room curtains. A recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald (see below) suggests that book designers are being influenced by fashion. Perhaps this is the beginning of a new cross-marketing trend. If so, who will be the Zambesi poet? The World poet? The Nom D poet? Nominations should be submitted to your designer of choice. www.smh.com.au/news/arts/book-design-echoes-fashions-love-of-embellishment/2006/05/22/1148150184758.html

4. Deep South

Online journal Deep South is emerging from several years of hibernation. It is currently inviting submissions of original poetry, short fiction, critical essays, extracts from work in progress, reviews, and work by artists and photographers. Submissions can be made by email to deep.south@stonebow.otago.ac.nz or by mail to *Deep South*, Department of English, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin. The journal can be viewed at www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/index.html

5. Script to Screen

Script to Screen is the new name of the organisation formerly known as The New Zealand Writers Foundation. On 7 June the fresh face of the script writers' organisation will be launched with a new programme, including a public event series called 'The Writer's Room', which offers 'an opportunity for both experienced and emerging writers to meet regularly to discuss their craft and hot industry topics.' Script to Screen will continue with its work developing the local screenwriting culture. Previous projects include script workshops for Brad McGann's *In My Father's Den* and the forthcoming features *Eagle vs Shark* by Taika Waititi, and

Black Sheep by Jonathan King, as well as UK scholarships for New Zealand screenwriters (in partnership with the British Council).

6. Friends and whanau

We enjoyed the 'Family Ties' item in the June issue of *North & South*. Graham Brazier (of Hello Sailor fame) and his 90-year-old bookseller mother, Christine are profiled. Christine read Graham poems when he was young, and he remembers, aged 13, writing a poem for her for her birthday:

Sweet dream Christine, what colour are your eyes
The colour of the grey seas, the colour of the skies
Sweet dream Christine, most wondrous of faces
Take this \$5, dear, and win some at the races

Graham Brazier is a contributor to the recent *Tuwhare* CD. His version of the poem 'Friend' is rumoured to be the poet's favourite track.

7. The expanding bookshelf

New novels are out this month from Dunedin-based Emma Neale and Edinburgh-based Kirsty Gunn, both graduates of Victoria University's Original Composition course. Neale's *Relative Strangers* (Random House) is reviewed in the current *Listener*, and Gunn's novel *The Boy and the Sea* (Faber) is reviewed in the *Guardian*:
www.listener.co.nz/issue/3446/artsbooks/6145.html
<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1773734,00.html>

8. The groaning bookshelf

Although Britain has a population one-fifth the size of the United States, more new books were published there than in America last year, according to Reuters. UK publishers released 206,000 new books in 2005 compared with 172,000 in the United States, which saw an 18 percent drop in production. The data was compiled by research firm Bowker, where a consultant hinted that a 'market correction' was to be expected: 'Common sense will tell you that when you produce 200,000 new products -- more than any other industry -- the market can't digest all of them.' Of course W. B. Yeats, although he could not have envisaged the staggering numbers of new books vying for attention in the twenty-first century, said it first: 'None of us can say who will succeed, or even who has or has not talent. The only thing certain about us is that we are too many.' For a poet's take on this remark, see Albert Goldbarth's 'Locust Song': www.poems.com/locusgol.htm

9. Apprentice knife throwers

Two former members of the IIML's Poetry Workshop are staging a poetry reading and zine release at Happy, corner of Tory and Vivian St, on Saturday 3 June. Cameron Hockly and Annabel Henderson Morrell are launching zines titled *The Lunchtime Runner* and *The Knife Thrower's Apprentice*. Readings begin at 8 pm, entry by koha.

10. From the whiteboard

Just as appetite comes by eating so work brings inspiration. (Igor Stravinsky)

11. Recent web reading

Tarzan poet

<http://jacketmagazine.com/30/fl-tarzan.html>

Stanley Kunitz (RIP)

http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/030901fa_fact

A heroic computer

http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/030901fa_fact

The dragon's den of literature

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/17/AR2006051702329.html>

Lots of Donald Barthelme

<http://www.eskimo.com/~jessamyn/barth/>

Anthony McCarten

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/05/24/features/playwright.php>

In praise of paper...

<http://insidehighered.com/views/2006/05/09/golub>

... and digitisation...

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/14/magazine/14publishing.html?ex=1147838400&en=e5359b8aa2308790&ei=5087%0A>

...but Updike disagrees

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/21/AR2006052101349.html>

Guy lit

<http://chronicle.com/temp/reprint.php?id=wfk1jj8xk9k7d38kcmb1w22zh83tff6b>

Writing communities

<http://chronicle.com/temp/reprint.php?id=wfk1jj8xk9k7d38kcmb1w22zh83tff6b>

Les Murray website
<http://www.lesmurray.org/>

12. Great lists of our time: silent onomatopoeia?

List-Lady and *Snorkel* editor Cath Vidler writes: ‘A while ago I sent in a list of Japanese onomatopoeia and it got me thinking. In regular onomatopoeia words imitate the sounds that they represent, but there seem to be other onomatopoeias too, where words imitate other qualities (besides sound) of the phenomena they represent, but with the same onomatopoeic flair, like movement (squeeze) appearance (shimmer) emotion (awkward) or smell (reek) or even something more amorphous such as the somehow "silver" quality that seems to me to reside in/emanate from the word "silver". Anyway, here's my list so far. I'm sure others could think of more...’

Newsletter readers are invited to send us words they think could belong on this list (just press the reply button to email us): if we receive enough, we'll consider putting out a ‘readers’ choice’ list in future.

Awkward
Shimmer
Sway
Grip
Gallop
Squeeze
Amaze
Reek
Ellipsis
Sliver
Silver
Wobble
Lanky
Wiggle
Dawdle
Blunt