



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
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Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 20 February 2007

This is the 102nd 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. Fainter and four others in the running

New Zealand writers have a strong presence on the shortlist for this year's Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the South-east Asia and Pacific Region. James George (*Ocean Road*), Lloyd Jones (*Mr Pip*) and the IIML's own Damien Wilkins (*The Fainter*) are contenders for the Best Book category, alongside Australians Peter Carey, Alexis Wright, Margo Lanagan and Deborah Robertson. *Davey Darling* by Paul Shannon and *The Fish & Chip Song* by Carl Nixon of Christchurch are shortlisted in the Best First Book category. The regional winners will be announced on March 12 (or possibly March 15, the website gives both options) and the overall winner of the 21st Commonwealth Writers' Prize will be announced on 27 May at the Calabash International Literary Festival in Jamaica. The complete international shortlist, which includes well-known names such as David Mitchell and Alice Munro is at

<http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/culturediversity/writersprize/2007prize/Shortlist/index.cfm>

2. Commonwealth Short Story Competition

The Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association are now calling for entries for the 2007 Commonwealth Short Story Competition. This competition has helped launch the careers of writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who went on to win the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for *Purple Hibiscus* (and who is also shortlisted for the 2007 prize). Five regional winners are chosen, for Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Canada, Europe and the Pacific, of which one is then selected as the overall winner. Around 20 highly commended stories are also chosen, and all stories will be recorded and broadcast around the world on the radio. The overall winner of the competition receives £2,000, regional winners £500 and each highly commended author £100. Stories must be around 600 words in length, and may be on any theme or subject. Applicants must be citizens of one of the 53 member countries of the Commonwealth. Entries will be accepted until 1 May 2007. For more information, see: <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/culturediversity>

3. Hotere songs

Tomorrow night (Wednesday 21 February) at 6 pm the Adam Art Gallery hosts a discussion of Ralph Hotere and the 1975 'Song Cycle' series, an 'intermedia event' that explored the relationship between sound, movement and light. Composer Jack Body, poet Bill Manhire, pianist Barry Margan and choreographer John Casserley are reunited for the first time since 1975 to discuss the conception, creation and presentation of this significant work, which was ultimately intended to be staged within a set of 20 banners created by Ralph Hotere, one of which features in the gallery's current exhibition.

4. The arrival gate

Things are beginning to hot up for the year at the IIML, and not just because of Wellington's glorious summer weather. We have just farewelled Curtis Sittenfeld and Zach Savich, and now extend a warm welcome to a host of incoming writers. First of all there's a more long-term visitor from the United States, Dora Malech, who is teaching one of the two MA (Page) workshops while Bill Manhire is on classroom leave, courtesy of an Arts Foundation laureate award. 2007 Writer in Residence Dave Armstrong is already hard at work in the building, replacing Bernadette Hall in the writing room, and Susan Pearce takes William Brandt's place as convenor of the short fiction workshop. But things really start cooking next week, when the students who have been accepted for this year's MA programme arrive to start work on 30 new projects for page and script, along with a further 20 who are taking part in workshops on creative non-fiction and short fiction during the first trimester...

5. The expanding bookshelf

The first book resulting from Bernadette Hall's stint as Writer in Residence is launched at Unity Books this evening. *The Ponies* (Victoria University Press) is a collection of poetry that ranges from Antarctica, to the London bombings in 2005 in which her niece Shelley Mather was killed, to contemporary Wellington.

6. Great reviews of our time

'This book isn't an easy read. The sentence structure is bad, with long passages, and I was never sure who was saying what. Shuker uses a lot of Dunedin geography, I would think too much for a stranger to our city. I was somewhat relieved to find it was set in the 1990s as until I realised that, I was determined my son would do a trade if that is the way university sends kids.'

— from a review of Carl Shuker's *The Lazy Boys*, *Otago Daily Times*, 3 February 2007.

7. Theatre opportunities (1)

There's still time (just) to sign up for Playmarket's workshop with Chris Mead, Artistic Director of Playwriting Australia, titled "Damned Writers and Literary Police; lies, traps, anecdotes and crowded houses; a full day to vent, rethink, rebuild & change the world". Chris Mead was Literary Manager of Company B Belvoir St Theatre from 2000-2003, the Literary Manager and Wharf 2LOUD Producer at the Sydney Theatre Company from 2005-2007. The workshop runs at Circa Theatre in Wellington from 10-6 pm on 1 March, and will be relevant for writers and directors interested in new work. Participants are limited to 20 people, with a fee of \$50 for Playmarket clients and Playwright members; \$80 everyone else. Deadline for payment is 22 February, so it might pay to call first (tel 04 382 8462).

8. New Voices

In conjunction with the recently opened 'Prospect' exhibition of new New Zealand art, the IIML and City Gallery combine to present 'New Voices', a selection of fresh literary talent -- including quite a few writers who have emerged from the MA workshop room at the Institute in the last two years. Guests include Adam Prize winners Michele Amas, whose book *After the dance* was recently reviewed in the *Listener*, and Anna Horsley; Schaeffer Fellowship-holder Therese Lloyd; *Dominion Post* journalist Tom Fitzsimons; IIML short fiction workshop coordinator Susan Pearce; and poet David Beach, author of an extraordinary collection of 'chopped up prose sonnets' called *Abandoned Novel* (Victoria University Press, 2006). They will present recent work at City Gallery on Friday 9 March at 1 pm, chaired by Bill Manhire. Admission is free, all welcome.

9. From the whiteboard

'The proper function of writing is to enlarge people. To give them their risk, if possible to give them their divinity, not to cut them down.'

— John Cheever

10. Theatre opportunities (2)

Each year BATS commissions 1, 2 or 3 'boundary-shattering performance works from some of the country's most exciting creative minds' in their STAB season, with the help of Creative New Zealand. The deadline for expressions of interest is Friday 16 March. Contact BATS Theatre for more information: 1 Kent Terrace, Wellington; (04) 802 4176 or bats@bats.co.nz

11. Stationery steam

Auckland's Going West literary festival is famous for its convivial steam-train journey featuring literary (and other) entertainments en route. On 4 March the festival trust is hosting a fundraiser in the form of 'Slow and Steamy', a picnic-style assemblage of poetry, fiction, food and music featuring poets Glenn Colquhoun and Cherie Barford, Slow Food NZ director and chef Alessandra Zecchini, novelist Emily Perkins, pohutukawa and rata historian Philip Simpson and musical offerings from Fiona Ferens, the Lex Pistols, and Linn Lorkin. And yes, there will be a steam engine in attendance: its task will be to cook dinner. The event runs from 4 pm until sundown at Firlong Nurseries in Oratia and tickets (\$75) are available from Gone West Books in Titirangi, tel 09 817 3236 or email gonewest@xtra.co.nz.

12. Freelancers unite

The second national conference for New Zealand freelancers will be held on 2-3 May in Auckland. Keynote speakers at the Bank of New Zealand Freelance 2007 Conference will be Kirsty Cameron, editorial director of women's lifestyle titles at ACP Magazines, Kate Coughlan, editor and publisher of NZ Life and Leisure; and Julian Andrews, a director of Jones Publishing. Representing the freelancers are journalist David Cohen, health specialist Karen Holdom, and fashion editor Stacy Gregg, who recently sold her website runwayreporter.co.nz to ACP Media. Registration (\$75 until 31 March, \$100 after) can be done online at www.freelance2007.co.nz.

13. Recent web reading

Ego-surfing (and other modern maladies)

<http://www.newscientisttech.com/article/mg19225831.200?DCMP=NLC-letter&nsref=mg19225831.200>

Creative non-fiction

<http://www.creativenonfiction.org/brevity/index.htm>

Social disease

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,,2007744,00.html>

Brain gym with Shakespeare

<http://www.physorg.com/news85664210.html>

Advice for Prof. Amis

http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/02/never_drink_the_coffee_advice.html

Great literary pleasures

http://www.observer.com/20070219/20070219_Drew_Friedman_culture_observatory.asp

Genesis footnote

<http://discover.com/issues/jan-07/features/archaeology/?page=2#84>

14. Great lists of our time

‘Allele, anatta, arrear, arrere, bedded, bettee, breere, caccap, ceesse, cobbob, cocoon, deesse, dolool, doodad, effere, emmele, emmene, ennean, essede, feyffe, gaggee, giggit, googol, gregge, hammam, hummum, hubbub, jettee, kokoon, lessee, lessee, mammal, mammee, mossoo, mutuuum, nerrer, ossous, pazazz, pepper, perree, pippin, powwow, reeder, reefer, reeffe, refeff, retree, seasse, secess, seesen, sensse, sessle, settee, sissoo, tattee, tattoo, tedded, teerer, teeter, teethe, terrer, testee, tethee, tetter, tittee, treete, unnung, veerer, weeded, zaarra. Six-letter words with one occurrence of one letter, two occurrences of another letter and three occurrences of another letter. By Christ, I need a woman. I'm 41, but if you've got a pulse, cable TV and a smoothie-maker you'll do. Box no 4290.’

From *They Call Me Naughty Lola: The London Review of Books Personal Ads*, ed David Rose

Current LRB personal ads can be read in their classifieds section:

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/classified/index.php>