



**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
MODERN LETTERS**

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 19 September 2007

This is the 114th 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. Awards season (1): Bill's big night

Heartiest congratulations from everyone at the IIML to our director Bill Manhire, who was last night announced winner of the 2007 Prime Minister's Award for Poetry at Premier House in Wellington. Fiona Farrell was the recipient of the award for Fiction, and historian Dick Scott took the Non-Fiction Award. It was an evening of generous and well-crafted acceptance speeches: Scott (author of ground-breaking books on Parihaka, the 1951 waterfront lockout and other topics) took the chance to recommend VUW/CNZ Writer in Residence Dave Armstrong's contribution to *The Six Pack* (a story called 'Foodbanquet') as a salutary portrayal of how bad things can get when 'money-only' people are in control. Relating that her Irish ancestors were refugees from the potato famine in the slums of Dundee and her great-grandmother was unable to write, Fiona Farrell acknowledged the role of the welfare state in her family's progress from illiteracy to her own current good fortune.

Bill Manhire is overseas at present (see item 3, below), but sent a video acceptance message in which he thanked publisher Fergus Barrowman (who accepted the award on his behalf), and drew attention to the role of imagination as the underpinning of all spheres of activity by quoting Einstein's statement that 'Imagination is more important than knowledge'. MC for the evening Ray Henwood, who has played both Einstein and Ernest Rutherford on stage, then glossed the Einstein quote with one attributed to Rutherford: 'We don't have the money, so we have to think.' We trust that that the \$60,000 prize each of the writers received will in no way impede the quality or quantity of their thought.

Bill was also a winner at the Apra Silver Scroll Awards last night. He was commissioned by Plunket to write the words for Eve De Castro Robinson's composition 'These arms to hold you', which was premiered by the NZSO in May to mark Plunket's 100th anniversary. The piece received this year's Sounz Award for best contemporary classical composition.

2. From the whiteboard

Voice shouldn't be confused with originality, another of those big ideas like inspiration and sincerity. We all learn to speak by mimicking the adult figures around us. We hear a noise and copy it. We are shown approval, or not. When we grow up we can hear our parents inside the sounds we make, and yet we are still ourselves — distinctive, and distinctively different from the voices which shaped us. The writing voice is like this too.

— Bill Manhire, *Mutes and Earthquakes*

3. Manhire, Shuker, Smail and Stead

Bill Manhire's poetry collection *Lifted* is published in the UK this year, and he will be making some appearances there shortly alongside other New Zealand writers. On 30 September both he and C. K. Stead are guests at the King's Lynn Poetry Festival, in a session that will conclude with a tasting of wines from Marlborough. In October the Manchester Literature Festival has an event featuring Manhire along with poet Anna Smail and novelist and 2006 Prize in Modern Letters winner Carl Shuker (both MA graduates of the IIML). Other festival guests include Rose Tremain, Carol Ann Duffy, Patricia Duncker, Roddy Doyle and Galway Kinnell. The NZ event takes place under the auspices of the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester, where the newly appointed Professor of Creative Writing is Martin Amis. On 24 September, in the lead-up to the Festival, Amis will be joined by John Banville and Will Self for a debate on writing in the 21st century. It's not part of the Festival programme, but it should draw a crowd, if the organisers are correct in anticipating 'spirited discussion, contrasting views - and possibly fireworks!' Those in the neighbourhood can find more details here:

<http://manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/>

<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/newwriting/>

4. Awards season (2): Lauris Edmond Memorial

Our congratulations also go to Dinah Hawken, who found herself the recipient of an unexpected honour when she was a guest at Christchurch Writers' Day earlier this month. Dinah received the Lauris Edmond Memorial Award for Poetry, an initiative of the Canterbury Poets Collective and the New Zealand Poetry Society. The award is for excellence in, and substantial contribution to, New Zealand poetry. It is presented biennially at the Five New Zealand Poets reading in Christchurch, and the inaugural recipient was Bill Sewell. Dinah Hawken convenes the Institute's Writing the Landscape workshop, which runs in the first trimester of 2008.

<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/creative-writing/undergrad.aspx>

5. Next generation Gee

It seems there are some advantages to being the child of a writer. Emily Gee, daughter of Maurice, writes about her background in storytelling:

'Every day Dad would go down to the little room he'd built under the house and work on his latest book. If he was writing a children's fantasy, he'd read the manuscript aloud to my sister and me. Those were marvellous evenings — curled up on the sofa listening to another chapter.'

Marvellous or not, she goes on to say 'I had no intention of becoming a writer. Ever.' And indeed she appears to have spent a long time avoiding that fate, having worked as 'a rehabilitation instructor, a library assistant, a postie, a waitress on the Isle of Skye, and even (briefly) a field assistant in Antarctica'. However, Emily Gee has at last capitulated to destiny and published a novel of her own. *Thief with no Shadow* has been released in the United States, UK and Canada, and the author describes it as 'a fantasy – with sheep.' (Is she perhaps friends with Jonathan King, director of *Black Sheep* and the child of another famous NZ writer?) We assume her book will make its way to NZ at some point, if it's not here already, but for now a first chapter is available on her website:

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

6. Meet the politicians

Members of the writing and publishing community are invited to meet with the spokespeople on the arts from the political parties represented in Parliament. The meeting, organised by the NZSA, will be at 7.30 on 15 October 2007 at Turnbull House on Bowen Street, Wellington. Each spokesperson is given a chance to say what their party will do for writers if they are elected into government (or remain in government). The spokespeople will then address a series of pre-announced questions about issues of concern from writers and writing organizations, and take questions from the floor.

RSVP to Kevin Cudby, phone 04 938 1103, or email wired@kevincudby.com if you wish to attend. The evenings are recorded and transcripts are subsequently posted at <http://www.authors.org.nz/>.

7. Turbine reminder

Don't forget that online journal *Turbine* is also on the hunt for new New Zealand writing, and the deadline for submissions is 23 October. *Turbine* 07 will be launched in December, and we hope to present new work by many of the writers who have just appeared in our two 'Next Page' events at City Gallery, as well as established and emerging talent from all over NZ. For submission guidelines, see <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/turbine/>.

8. Export your work to Austin, Texas

Bat City Review is an annual journal of poetry and fiction edited by graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin. Past issues have featured work from Patrick McGrath, Helena Maria Viramontes, Aimee Bender, George Saunders, James Tate, Naomi Shihab Nye, Thomas Sayers Ellis, Eamon Grennan, and many notable others. The *Review* is currently looking for work to include in its forthcoming issue, and editor Jaime de Blanc, a follower of New Zealand fiction and former resident of Wellington, would be delighted to receive submissions from writers associated with the IIML. Writers can submit fiction up to 25 pages in length to fiction.batcityreview@gmail.com and poetry (up to six poems) to poetry.batcityreview@gmail.com. Work that has been published previously in NZ or Australia remains eligible for publication in the journal.

9. A lyrical critic

Andrew Johnston's Writers on Mondays session earlier this month drew a near full house. Those who went away wanting to hear more of his views on contemporary New Zealand poetry, or who couldn't make it to his Monday session, might want to catch his seminar titled 'Critical Lyric: Contemporary New Zealand Poetry' at the Stout Research Centre (where Johnston is 2007 J D Stout Fellow). The seminar promises to explore the way New Zealand poetry tests and extends the limits of the lyric. It takes place on Wednesday 3 October, 4.10-5.30 (tea & coffee from 3.45) at the Stout Research Centre, 12 Waiteata Rd.

10. Awards season (3): Pikihuia winners

The winners of this year's Pikihuia Awards for Maori writers were announced on Saturday at an awards ceremony held at Te Papa as part of the Festival of Maori Writers. The published collections of the stories by the winners and finalists, *Huia*

Short Stories 7 and *Nga Pakiwaitara a Huia 4*, were also launched. And the winners (with apologies for the absence of macrons, which have vanished in transmission) are:

Te Pakiwaitara i te Reo Maori Award for best short story in Maori: Uenuku Fairhall for *He Rongo Kino*, Rotorua (Te Arawa and Ngai te Rangi)

New Zealand Film Commission Award for best script for a short film: Ranui Taiapa for *Road Warrior*, Wellington (Ngati Porou)

Huia Publishers Short Story Award for best short story in English: Royna Ngahuia Fifield for *Secrets of the Heart*, Palmerston North (Maniapoto, Tuwharetoa)

Te Puni Kokiri Award for best novel extract in English: Anahera Gildea for *Morehu*, Wellington (Ngati Raukawa ki te Tonga).

Award winners in the secondary schools short story categories were Te Teira Maxwell (best short story in Maori) and Danielle Cavey (best short story in English).

<http://www.huia.co.nz/>.

11. A novel sponsorship

We pass on this message from the enterprising Bianca Zander, MA (Script) graduate and now novelist-in-progress:

Dear book-lover

Earlier this year, I took visiting writer Curtis Sittenfeld's wonderful Iowa workshop *Starting and Building a Novel*. Well, the workshop worked. I'm now almost 60,000 words into the first draft of my novel. It's going well, it's exciting. It's what I've always wanted to do ... But juggling work and writing is proving to be difficult. Okay, impossible. I really want to get a first draft finished by the end of the year, which means writing full-time or else ... !

So I've come up with the idea of asking people to sponsor me to write – a page, a paragraph or a sentence.

Details of how to sponsor and an extract from the novel are on my website –

<http://sponsormynovel.wordpress.com/>

I'd really appreciate it if you'd take a moment to look.

Oh, and please pass this on to all your book-loving friends.

Kind regards

Bianca Zander

12. Little box of oblivion

A new season of student-directed plays starts tonight at Studio 77. The season, collectively titled Little Box of Oblivion, features plays dealing with vastly different issues, although they are united by a strong surrealist and avant garde notion. *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee, directed by Alexandra Lodge, has tendencies towards the absurdist. Christopher Durang's *Identity Crisis*, directed by Brigid Costello, tackles the eternal question of defining identity. The season finishes with Harold Pinter's *Party Time*, directed by Ralph McCubbin Howell. It runs at Studio 77, 77 Fairlie Terrace, Kelburn, from Wednesday 19 – Saturday 22 September. Performances start at 7pm with tickets \$12 waged and \$8 unwaged. For bookings and further information, contact Theatre & Film Administrator on (04) 463 5221 or theatre@vuw.ac.nz or the Temporary Events Co-ordinator on (04) 463 5221.

13. New writing from Asia and the Pacific

An initiative to support new creative writing from Asia and the Pacific brings together academics and literati from Australia, Asia, the Pacific islands and beyond to launch the Asia Pacific New Writing Partnership at the 2007 Ubud Writers' Festival in Bali on 27 September. The Partnership 'supports diversity of cultural expression, and literature that crosses borders. It champions the notion that literature enhances understanding between cultures and seeks to create stronger international interest in new writing from the region.' While the Partnership has had a small presence at literary events in Asia and Australia for the past 18 months, its launch marks the start of a more focused collaborative effort. Board members come from Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, the United States and the UK (but not, we notice, New Zealand). The board hopes to initiate collaborative research projects, develop mentorship, writing programmes and writers centres, establish events and offer strategies to encourage national and regional arts and cultural bodies to provide greater support and incentives for excellence in writing. For more information, contact Jane Camens via email jcamens@bigpond.net.au or telephone (61) 2 66859886.

14. Recent web reading

Why writers disappear

<http://www.calendarlive.com/printedition/calendar/cl-ca-recluse2sep02,0,1298412.story?coll=cl-calendar>

Rollercoaster shopping

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHSReZgFn3o>

Talking with James Laughlin

<http://www.jackspade.com/shop/home.php>

Lots of poems to memorize

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/17111>

Lloyd Jones and others digested – and a Booker judge's theory about Jones & Coetzee
<http://books.guardian.co.uk/manbooker2007/story/0,,2164255,00.html>

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,2169283,00.html>

Jo Randerson dreams

<http://www.joranderson.com/dreams.htm>

Node

<http://node.tumblr.com/>

Cronenberg and Mortensen have a good tiff

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070915.wtiff0915/BNStory/tiff2007/home>

Tess Gallagher in Glasgow

http://www.sundayherald.com/arts/arts/display.var.1691633.0.tess_gallagher_living_p roof_of_the_power_of_poetry.php

Bird brains

<http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/09/16/eggheads/>

Computer poetry

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/09/070912094045.htm>

15. Great lists of our time

Scented bookmarks available for purchase at The Bookmark Shop
(www.thebookmarkshop.com)

Waterfall Splash

Freshly Baked Bread

Tropical Beach

Orchard Harvest

Lavender Fields

Spring Blossom

Riverside Stroll

Rose Petals

Late Summer Vineyard

Home Sweet Home

<http://thelistserver.blogspot.com/>