



**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
MODERN LETTERS**

*Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao*

**Newsletter – 8 February 2008**

This is the 119th 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](mailto:modernletters@vuw.ac.nz)

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**1. Coming and goings**

It's a new academic year. Arriving to start classes on 25 February are 30 MA students, while departing at about the same time are this year's Schaeffer Fellows, Monica Bergers and Sam Reed, who have been teaching our Iowa Workshops over the summer. Also leaving the IIML – but not, we hope, Wellington – is 2007 Writer in Residence Dave Armstrong. We are going to miss his generous friendship and energy and talent.

And in late March we say au revoir to Damien Wilkins, who takes up the Katherine Mansfield Fellowship (now sponsored by New Zealand Post) in Menton, France. Chris Price is also leaving us for a while (see 3 below). Arriving to co-convene the MA (Page) with Bill Manhire is *Breakwater* novelist Kate Duignan. Last year our MA students were privileged to have masterclasses with Lavinia Greenlaw, Eliot Weinberger, Richard Ford, and Linda Voorhees. This year, visiting writers will include the poet Michael Palmer and the novelist Richard Powers. Watch this space.

## 2. Hone Tuwhare 1922-2008

Like many others, we were saddened by Hone Tuwhare's passing, but are pleased that he lived so well for so long. He sometimes described himself as a bridge – between the working-class left and the different arts communities, between the untaught and the educated, between Maori and Pakeha – and many of us are glad he made such bridgings possible. Among the tributes to his work, we especially enjoyed what they have done at Unity Books in Wellington where a small heap of mussel shells is placed beside an open copy of one of his books. Online tributes include Peter Kitchin's obituary in the *Dominion Post*, Iain Sharp's fine commentary in the *Sunday Star-Times*, Denis Welch's thoughts in the *New Zealand Listener*, and a range of memories and links on the new NZ Poet Laureate site. Several of Hone's poems can be read on the Hone Tuwhare website.

IIML director Bill Manhire recalls Hone Tuwhare's hospitality. "Hone had a great gift for friendship. I interviewed him for *Landfall* back in the late 80s. We talked in his little cottage in Dundas Street. It was a Saturday, and I had brought a couple of bottles of red wine, just to help things along. After a couple of hours of very good talk, there was a smell of burning from the kitchen. 'Cripes!' cried Hone, and raced to open the oven door. After the smoke had cleared, two well charred shoulders of lamb were sitting forlornly on the oven tray. He had cooked one for each of us."

A forthcoming issue of the electronic journal *Ka Mate Ka Ora*, edited by the poet Robert Sullivan, will be devoted to Hone Tuwhare's contribution to New Zealand and Maori literature and the arts.

And the Palmerston North City Library is hosting a free event with Glenn Colquhoun, Angela Andrews, Helen Lehndorf, Renee Liang, and Tim Upperton, 2-4 pm on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February. "Members of the public are invited to share poems/personal recollections of Hone and to chat over coffee tea and cake with the poets afterwards."

[Poet who was big in head and heart \(Dom Post\)](#)

[Obituary \(Sunday Star Times\)](#)

[Oh, yes, indeedy \(Listener\)](#)

[Remembering Hone Tuwhare \(NZ Poet Laureate\)](#)

[Hone Tuwhare homepage](#)

[Video profile \(TVNZ Review\)](#)

## 3. Appointments

Congratulations to IIML lecturer Chris Price who has been appointed Writer in Residence at the Michael King Writers' Centre – a position jointly funded by the University of Auckland, Creative New Zealand, and the Michael King Writers' Centre. During her residency, Chris plans to complete a new collection of poems, *The Blind Singer*, and to lay the groundwork for another major project — a full-length work of creative non-fiction that will blend biography, travel, memoir, history and

essay. *Death's Jest-Book* will re-imagine the life of the eccentric English poet, anatomist and suicide Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849) for a modern audience.

Congratulations also to novelist and Victoria MA graduate Paula Morris - currently domiciled in New Orleans – who shares this year's Buddle Findlay Sargeson Fellowship with Brigid Lowry. Paula takes up her part of the fellowship in August, and will work on her fourth novel, *Rangatira*, inspired by the life of her ancestor, Paratene Te Manu.

#### **4. Roo-burger**

We were sad to hear of another loss this year. Australia's weekly current affairs magazine, *The Bulletin*, has been closed down. Once upon a time it was an important place of publication for New Zealand writers – back when the Tasman was a much narrower stretch of water, culturally speaking, than it is now. There is a fine note on *The Bulletin* and its significance on Chris Bourke's blog:

[Chris Bourke's blogspot](#)

#### **5. Prize in Modern Letters**

May we, ahem, draw your attention to a major event at the upcoming New Zealand Post Writers and Readers Week. "Winning Words" will see all six shortlisted writers for the 2008 Prize in Modern Letters presenting their work on the Embassy stage. The judge of this biennial award is Brigid Hughes, editor of the New York journal *A Public Space* and ex-editor of *The Paris Review*. Brigid will announce the winner and present the \$65,000 cheque at the end of the 75-minute session. The Prize in Modern Letters is personally funded by IIML patron Glenn Schaeffer and is one of the most valuable literary awards in the world.

The shortlisted writers are Michele Amas, David Beach, Mary McCallum, Jo Randerson, Anna Sanderson and Louise Wareham Leonard.

Venue: Embassy Theatre

Date and time: March 15th, 5.15 pm

Chair: Bill Manhire

#### **6. Once Upon a Deadline**

Our 2008 Writer in Residence, David Geary, will be taking part in this full-day Writers and Readers event. He is one of six writers who, armed with wireless laptops, will each be writing a story in the course of a day moving around as yet unannounced Wellington locations. At the end of the day the stories will be presented and the winner decided at the Pacific Blue Festival Club. The five other intrepid writers joining David are Jo Randerson, Carl Nixon, Sarah Laing, Ellie Catton, and Briar Grace-Smith.

Among the many other IIML associates contributing to Writers and Readers are 1997 Writer in Residence Dave Armstrong, whose adaptation of Sia Fiegel's *Where We Once Belonged* will run 8-16 March, Damien Wilkins (a solo session chaired by Emily Perkins on March 12<sup>th</sup>), Harry Ricketts who with Richard Davenport-Hines will be discussing the art of biography with chair Jane Stafford, Susan Pearce (convener of our short fiction workshop) who will be in conversation with Sia Fiegel, plus Chris Price and Bill Manhire who are chairing or introducing individual sessions.

The full Writers and Readers programme is online [here](#).

## 7. How to teach creative writing

It has been reported from various quarters that Martin Amis earns about NZ\$8,000 an hour in his new part-time job as a professor of creative writing. Here he is – as reported in *The Independent* – discussing his students and how he sets about teaching creative writing.

“They're nice. Very appealing. It's been really nice. It's not really a heavy load. I don't look at any of their creative stuff. All I do is teach great books, from the very authorial point of view; don't identify with Mr Darcy or Elizabeth, identify with Jane Austen, that's the way we sort of do it, which is the way you should do it anyway. I very much enjoyed having this sort of study in my life, you know back doing some studying, because you may set yourself, but you don't complete these reading projects you have, but if you have to read these books, you do, and then you reread them, because you realise you read them in the summer and that's no good to you now, and it's been one night a fortnight, two classes.”

More here:

[Martin Amis interview with Johann Hari \(The Independent\)](#)

And here:

[The two faces of Amis \(The Independent\)](#)

## 8. The expanding bookshelf (1)

Year 2000 MA graduate James McNaughton returns to NZ after a long absence and launches his second book *I Want More Sugar* (Steele Roberts) at 6pm on Friday 15 February at the Blarney Stone room, upstairs at Molly Malone's (cnr Taranaki St. and Courtenay Place. Wellington). All welcome. Here's the blurb:

“Seven years in the making, after the critically acclaimed and controversial cosmic cult classic *The Stepmother Tree* (Darius Press 2001), comes the long-awaited thesis to that dark antithesis: *I Want More Sugar*. Where once McNaughton sought to expand the boundaries of the real through depth-charges to the subconscious, he now animates a political and personal landscape charged by the lightning rods of Neruda, Lorca and William Blake. McNaughton shows us a vivid mosaic stretching from the

occident to the orient and back again; from the shadows cast by international politics and consumer culture to light and colour and their metaphysical origins.”

## 9. Science fiction: its trials and tribulations

We liked this recent contribution to a Guardian books blog on the topic of science fiction by the splendidly named “Obooki”:

“In my forthcoming work, a man is given the chance to go back in time and kill any major figure he likes. He chooses Gene Roddenberry. Afterwards, he returns to a future where science fiction is a respected art-form and is discussed every week on Newsnight Review by people specifically chosen for their ignorance and complete lack of interest in the subject.”

## 10 The expanding bookshelf (2)

Kevin Rabalais’s first novel, *The Landscape of Desire*, will be launched in Melbourne by Alex Miller on 28 February. The book reimagines the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition into the Australian outback. David Malouf writes of it: “A bold performance. Lyrical, precise, mysterious. The retelling of a familiar story that gets less and less familiar as we read.” Kevin still has many friends in Wellington from his time here in 2001, and we will all be visiting the website of his publisher [Scribe](#) to see how we can buy ourselves a copy.

## 11. Prizes

Congratulations to 2006 MA graduate Sue Orr, who has received the \$3,000 Lilian Ida Smith Award. The award aims to assist a writer over 35 with a writing project in non-fiction, fiction, poetry or drama. Sue’s first book – a short fiction collection – will appear from Random House later this year.

Meantime Elizabeth Knox has won the prestigious Michael Printz Honour Award at the American Library Association's annual awards for *Dreamquake*, the second volume in her young-adult *Dreamhunter* duet.

The ALA awards are known as the “Academy Awards” of children's publishing. See: [Paper Cuts: a blog about books](#)

## 12. Sweeping the stage

Congratulations to Victoria MA graduate Branwen Millar, whose play *Armslength* has been getting rave reviews from all directions. They are all conveniently gathered together on John Smythe’s valuable [Theatreview](#) website.

Vivienne Plumb's coming-of-age tale *The Cape* (a huge success last year in Wellington) opens at Auckland's Herald Theatre this weekend and runs until March 1, while later in the year Damien Wilkins steps on to the stage at Circa – or his characters do – with the play *Drinking Games*.

At least two of our MA graduates have plays coming up in the Fringe.

Ellie Smith's first play, *Ruthie Bird and the King of Hearts*, is at BATS, 29 February – 8 March. It stars Irene Wood, Carol Smith, Jeremy Randerson and Anna Wooles.

Philip Brathwaite's *Hail to the Thief* is also at BATS, 1 March – 8 March.

For further information, check out **Coming Soon** file at [BATS](#).

And a reminder that Playmarket's [Playwrights' Studio](#) is looking for new writers who would like to see their scripts workshopped. The application deadline is February 16.

### **13. From the whiteboard**

Some useful advice from the visual arts . . .

“. . . a big part of painting is getting used to things not looking good while you work on them” — John Currin

### **14. A Utopian editor**

*Landfall* 216 (November 2008), will be edited by Victoria graduate and Adam Prize-winner Tim Corballis, and is on the theme of Utopias. “Our past is scattered with visions of an ideal future - what is left of them? How do they look now? Is our present made of the various, contradictory, failed efforts to realise them? And have we really given up on the hope of leaving something radically new to the future?” Utopian and dystopian fiction, poetry and essays should be sent to Tim at [utopias@timcorballis.mailc.net](mailto:utopias@timcorballis.mailc.net) by, or preferably well before, the end of June. (*Landfall* 216 is also a *Landfall* Essay Competition issue. For details, see [Landfall essay competition](#))

### **15. Recent web reading**

[The hardest test in the world?](#)

[Five minutes with John Clarke](#)

[A contentious list](#)

[How fiction lost the plot](#)

[A poetry discussion](#)

[Drive-by poetry](#)

[Making money from poems](#)

[Creative writing in the UK](#)

[Filth](#)

[2007: the cultural year](#)

[David Geary: the Mark Twain plot](#)

[Indexes](#)

[Katherine Mansfield takes you funny places](#)

[Bibliotherapy](#)

[A chat with Angela Andrews](#)

[Laurence Fearnley interview](#)

[Jenny Pattrick profile](#)

[Lots of lipograms](#)

[Publishing that first novel](#)

[Opoutere memorial](#)

## **16. Great lists of our time**

### 33 NAMES OF THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW HAD NAMES

**AGLET** - The plain or ornamental covering on the end of a shoelace.

**ARMSAYE** - The armhole in clothing.

**CHANKING** - Spat-out food, such as rinds or pits.

**COLUMELLA NASI** - The bottom part of the nose between the nostrils.

**DRAGÉES** - Small beadlike pieces of candy, usually silver-coloured, used for decorating cookies, cakes and sundaes.

**FEAT** - A dangling curl of hair.

**FERRULE** - The metal band on a pencil that holds the eraser in place.

**HARP** - The small metal hoop that supports a lampshade.

**HEMIDEMISEMIQUAVER** - A 64th note. (A 32nd is a demisemi-quaver, and a 16th note is a semi-quaver.)

**JARNS, NITTLES, GRAWLIX, and QUIMP** - Various squiggles used to denote

cussing in comic books.

**KEEPER** - The loop on a belt that keeps the end in place after it has passed through the buckle.

**KICK** or **PUNT** - The indentation at the bottom of some wine bottles. It gives added strength to the bottle but lessens its holding capacity.

**LIRIPIPE** - The long tail on a graduate's academic hood.

**MINIMUS** - The little finger or toe.

**NEF** - An ornamental stand in the shape of a ship.

**OBDORMITION** - The numbness caused by pressure on a nerve; when a limb is 'asleep'.

**OCTOTHORPE** - The symbol '#' on a telephone handset. Bell Labs' engineer Don Macpherson created the word in the 1960s by combining octo-, as in eight, with the name of one of his favourite athletes, 1912 Olympic decathlon champion Jim Thorpe.

**OPHRYON** - The space between the eyebrows on a line with the top of the eye sockets.

**PEEN** - The end of a hammer head opposite the striking face.

**PHOSPHENES** - The lights you see when you close your eyes hard. Technically the luminous impressions are due to the excitation of the retina caused by pressure on the eyeball.

**PURLICUE** - The space between the thumb and extended forefinger.

**RASCETA** - Creases on the inside of the wrist.

**ROWEL** - The revolving star on the back of a cowboy's spurs.

**SADDLE** - The rounded part on the top of a matchbook.

**SCROOP** - The rustle of silk.**SNORKEL BOX** - A mailbox with a protruding receiver to allow people to deposit mail without leaving their cars.

**SPRAINTS** - Otter dung.

**TANG** - The projecting prong on a tool or instrument.

**WAMBLE** - Stomach rumbling.

**ZARF** - A holder for a handleless coffee cup.

From [Canongate Books](#)