



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 1 October 2008

ISSN: 1178-9441

This is the 131st 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. You can also read this newsletter [online](#). (We recommend this to Mac users who may find that the email version does not display well.)

1. Branwen and Bruce	1
2. Sonya and Sam	2
3. Writers on Mondays	2
4. Special MA Scholarship in 2009	2
5. The expanding bookshelf (1)	3
6. Writers at Toi Poneke	3
7. Turbine deadline.....	3
8. New Manchester Review	3
9. The expanding bookshelf (2)	3
10. Scripts for success.....	4
11. From the whiteboard.....	4
12. The expanding bookshelf (3)	4
13. Last chance for a Buckwhipping.....	4
14. David Foster Wallace: an appreciation by Carl Shuker	5
15. Recent web reading	6
16. Great lists of our time.....	6

1. Branwen and Bruce

Branwen Millar, 2006 MA (Script) graduate, is one of five writers to be shortlisted for this year's Bruce Mason Playwriting Award. Branwen Millar's *Armslength* premiered to strong notices at Circa Theatre in January 2008, after winning an award in the Playmarket New Zealand Young Playwrights Competition in 2007. It was followed by a commission for Young and Hungry Arts Trust, *Swansong*, which premiered at BATS in June 2008. The other emerging playwrights to be shortlisted for the 2008 Mason Award are Geraldine Brophy, Ross Gumbley, Paul Rothwell and Thomas Sainsbury. The award and nominations are decided through voting by a

panel of ten leading directors and play developers throughout New Zealand, and the winner receives a \$10,000 full-length play commission. The award will be presented at Downstage Theatre on November 21. Previous winners include many of this country's most celebrated writers, including Briar Grace Smith, David Geary and Toa Fraser.

2. Sonya and Sam

Sonya Clark of Hastings High School was the winner of the Lyric Prize in the New Zealand Post National Schools Poetry Awards, and had the experience of watching her poem 'Mrs Potts' being turned into a song and recorded by Phoenix Foundation, Bunnies on Ponies and Fly My Pretties musician Samuel Flynn Scott. Excerpts from the video were broadcast on TVOne and TV3 News, alongside interviews with Sam and Sonya. The video and mp3 of the song went up on the Loop Recordings website a while back, and can be viewed [here](#).

3. Writers on Mondays

This week saw the last of our 2008 Writers on Mondays events with strong scripts from Miria George, Leilani Unasa, Martha Hardy-Ward, Hannah McKie and Sam Kelly rounding out a lively season of conversations and performances. We'd like to send out a big thank you the National Library for hosting the series this year, and to thank all the writers and chairpeople who appeared in it, including Johanna Aitchison, Sarah Jane Barnett, Jenny Bornholdt, Geoff Cochrane, Cliff Fell, Anna Jackson, Mary McCallum, Susan Pearce, Kate Duignan, Richard Powers, Kim Hill, Bill Manhire, Brian Turner, Michele Leggott, Elizabeth Smither, Kate Camp, David Geary, Mark Amery, Graeme Tetley, Geoff Page, Gregory O'Brien, Jennifer Compton, as well as the 30 emerging writers whose work was profiled in the Next Page and Short Sharp Script, and actors Brianne Ward, Phil Peleton, Patrick Powdrell, Sophie Hambleton, and director Rachel More. All being well, the series will return in July next year.

4. Special MA Scholarship in 2009

Intending applicants for our MA in Creative Writing will be pleased to know that there is a new scholarship which can be applied for to support study during 2009. The Dominion Post intends to fund up to three Masters research scholarships in the areas of Communications Studies, Media Studies, Creative Writing or Information Management. The scholarships pay domestic tuition fees and an honorarium of \$15,000. Applications close on 31 October. Please note that the Dominion Post Research Masters Scholarships must be applied for separately from the Victoria Masters (by thesis) Scholarships. More information [here](#).

5. The expanding bookshelf (1)

This month sees the publication of new poetry collections from Victoria creative writing graduates Jenny Bornholdt and Cliff Fell. *The Rocky Shore* is a collection of ‘longish poems’ about ‘love, death, children, illness, breadmaking and the garden’ from former poet laureate and Arts Foundation laureate Jenny Bornholdt. Cliff Fell’s *Beauty of the Badlands* ranges from the Moutere hills to the mountains and deserts of the US southwest, offering poems that are ‘engaged, shot through with images from science and religion and fiercely unafraid of speaking their mind.’ Both titles are published by Victoria University Press.

6. Writers at Toi Poneke

Fiona Kidman, 2008 Creative New Zealand Michael King Fellow, will be talking about the fusion of fiction and memoir at Toi Poneke Wellington Arts Centre (61-69 Abel Smith Street) next Monday, 6 October at 7.30 pm, in an event organised by the NZSA (entry \$3 members, \$5 non-members). Later this month playwright and VUW Writer in Residence David Geary appears at Toi Poneke in his poetic incarnation to give a reading for the New Zealand Poetry Society at 7.30 pm on 23 October. Geary’s poems appear in [Turbine 06 and 07](#). His current blog for NZ Book Month is also worth a look for his account of a hectic nine days in September (plus one in August), see [here](#).

7. Turbine deadline

If you have work you’re thinking of submitting to this year’s edition of the IIML’s online journal *Turbine*, now’s the time to get it to us — the deadline is three weeks away on 23 October. We’re looking for fresh new poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction – for full submission guidelines visit [here](#).

8. New Manchester Review

John Banville, Paul Muldoon, Bill Manhire M J Hyland and Kirsty Gunn are among the writers on an enviably high-powered contributors list for the inaugural issue of [The Manchester Review](#), produced by The Centre for New Writing at Manchester University, due to launch at the beginning of this month. The review will publish two issues each year, and will feature videos and music as well as new writing. There’s an option to print it out, for those who’d rather read on paper.

9. The expanding bookshelf (2)

Children's and YA writer Kate De Goldi launched her new novel *The 10pm Question* (Longacre) at Unity Books in Wellington last night. Kate taught the Children's Writing workshop at the IIML until 2006.

10. Scripts for success

Tim Worrall's script *Piki Whara*, completed during his MA last year, has been selected for the eQuinox script lab in Germany, and he's off to Munich in a couple of weeks.

2008 MA students Martha Hardy-Ward and Hannah McKie, whose work was performed at the National Library on Monday, have had their 15-minute radio scripts selected for production in this year's Radio NZ short play competition. The competition is open to writers from various New Zealand scriptwriting courses, and only three plays are chosen for production.

11. From the whiteboard

'I write because I would like to live forever. The fact of my future death offends me. Part of this derives from my sense of my own insignificance in the universe. My life and death are a barely momentary flicker. I would like to become more than that. That the people and things I love will die wounds me as well. I seek to immortalize the world I have found and made for myself, even knowing that I won't be there to witness that immortality, mine or my work's, that by definition I will never know whether my endeavour has been successful. But when has impossibility ever deterred anyone from a cherished goal? As the brilliant poet and teacher Alvin Feinstein once said to me, "Poetry is always close kin to the impossible, isn't it?"'

Reginald Shepherd (1963-2008)

12. The expanding bookshelf (3)

We hear that Alison Wong's long-awaited first novel has been sold to Picador UK and Penguin NZ by UK agent Toby Eady, whom Wong met at the Christchurch Writers' Festival. It's scheduled for publication in 2009. Alison studied Original Composition with Damien Wilkins at Victoria University.

13. Last chance for a Buckwhipping

Some of our readers may have heard a rather satirical Olympic anthem on Kim Hill's Saturday programme a few weeks back, when all eyes were on Beijing. The song was performed by The Lonesome Buckwhips (whose lineup includes IIML MA Script 2006 graduate Ben Hutchison) and it also features in their Charity Gala, currently running at Downstage – well, it's the last night tonight, so be in quick if you want to

catch this and other country comedy hits such as 'Ode to Christchurch', 'Please Don't Take My Benefit Away' and 'Santa: King of the Jews'. Bookings 04 801 6946 or [here](#).

14. David Foster Wallace: an appreciation by Carl Shuker

David Foster Wallace, the novelist whom Richard Powers has called 'the best of our generation', died on 12 September, an apparent suicide. We asked one of his biggest New Zealand fans to reflect on what the writer meant to him. Carl Shuker, author of *The Method Actors* and *The Lazy Boys*, and Prize in Modern Letters winner, writes:

'I was one of the lucky ones who discovered *Infinite Jest* in 1996, the year it was published and before it developed its really hardcore reputation and ability to inspire a grimace or platitude in the unread by its very mention. Someone had a subscription to TIME and an overheated, both condescending and admiring piece therein (the fence-sitting of reviewers without time or word count to get something that important and that big under their belts [cf. Jack Green's "Fire the Bastards!" on the first critics of Gaddis' *The Recognitions*]) along with a picture of a young unshaven dfw in bandanna and white turtleneck did it for me. I was only 22. In a used bookstore in Christchurch (Smith's, anyone?) I found *IJ* dustjacketless for six dollars; a pretty good buy—a dollar a month for the time I spent reading and re-reading it to the exclusion of all else while on the nightshift doing laundry at St. George's Hospital. To the exclusion of the actual job as well—parts of the book are coloured with the sounds of the buzzers of untended three-ton washing machines at the ends of their cycles; coloured too with memories of falsifying the wash logs, memories of finding pieces of umbilical cord cooked in the near-boiling water, and coloured too with a red, semitransparent, gelatinous, congealed material I found repeatedly and stared at raptly and nicknamed "people jelly". I mention this stuff only because discovering this writer changes the time in which you discover him like a first love affair changes utterly a new city. I have read everything he wrote. A dollar a month for the avalanche, for the hair blown back. For being moved to tears and for cracking up laughing aloud, cackling at a page, page after page. For laughter; for sadness; for wonder. Dollar a month for wisdom. For a kind of education. For curiosity. Dollar a month for the knowledge that the novel can still do *anything*.

'I quote him internally, to amuse myself, to calm myself, to inspire. I wrote to him; he wrote me back. During long periods of composition of novels, re-reading him gives me back the desire, the hunger, and the fun. He's written on this: an essay, "On the Nature of the Fun," examining why authors author when it's so hard, there seem so few rewards and the price so high. We do it because it's fun. All the fans seem to write of the same feeling—he was mine. The book was *mine*. He speaks to *me*. How he got me through the depression, the death of my brother, they remember. Fans all report reporting on the book to baffled friends and relatives, trying to explain the characters, the Incandenzas: Hal, Himself, Orin, Mario and the Moms; trying to give some hint of the depths those names now connote; and the brilliance, not only the jokes but the embeds (it's now a noun, dfw, surely; can I use it?), the hints and mysteries, the throwaway arias, the perfectly controlled and structured pieces within pieces; elaborating the scenarios, the acronyms (PGOAT, as in *the* PGOAT—Prettiest Girl Of All Time; plus another throwaway: an AA-splinter self-help group called WHINERS—Wounded, Hurting, Inadequately Nurtured but Ever-Recovering

Survivors); paraphrasing breathlessly the cyanide-laced-Quik-suicide-and-hasty-and-ill-thought-out-five-subsequent-death-familial-CPR-lethal-Quik-still-extant-on-dead-lips-kertwang scene; just trying to give some hint of how good it is—friends and relatives who I guess get a couple of the jokes but are mostly just really, really patient with these feverish and probably cultish-seeming babblers. I emailed London friends with the news of his suicide, and one confessed and rabidly practising *IJ*-hater/fearer responded, “Did he try to read his own book?” The shock, the disbelief I felt, the horror of this death, this special kind of death, at age 46 of not only the most important American writer of the last thirty years but the most personally important writer to me... It’s too much. I guess now I think maybe dfw would have laughed. I sort of laughed. I loved him. I have no words for this. It’s just too damn sad.’

15. Recent web reading

[UNESCO creative writing bursaries](#)

[Patricia Grace receives Neustadt Prize in Oklahoma](#)

[Drinking Games reviewed](#)

[The world’s biggest trousers](#)

[Poetry bailout](#)

[The joys of rejection](#)

[Wellington Writers' Walk](#)

[Janet Frame on Poetry Daily](#)

[Johnny Depp reads Kerouac](#)

[Screen reading](#)

[The end of publishing](#)

[Johanna Knox on children's literature and literary fiction](#)

[Philip Roth: the cartoon review](#)

[Emily Perkins interview](#)

[Dave Armstrong’s new play](#)

16. Great lists of our time

Physicians' digestion table (a delectable list of lists) showing the time required for the

digestion of the ordinary articles of food. From [Burroughs' Encyclopaedia of Astounding Facts and Useful Information, 1889.](#)

Soups.--Chicken, 3 hours; mutton, 3-1/2 hours; oyster, 3-1/2 hours; vegetable, 4 hours.

Fish.--Bass, broiled, 3 hours; codfish, boiled, 2 hours; oysters, raw, 3 hours; oysters, roasted, 3-1/4 hours; oysters, stewed, 3-1/2 hours; salmon (fresh), boiled, 1-3/4 hours; trout, fried, 1-1/2 hours.

Meats.--Beef, roasted, 3 hours; beefsteak, broiled, 3 hours; beef (corned), boiled, 4-1/4 hours; lamb, roast, 2-1/2 hours; lamb, boiled, 3 hours; meat, hashed, 2-1/2 hours; mutton, broiled, 3 hours; mutton, roast, 3-1/4 hours; pig's feet, soused, 1 hour; pork, roast, 5-1/4 hours; pork, boiled, 4-1/2 hours; pork, fried, 4-1/4 hours; pork, broiled, 3-1/4 hours; sausage, fried, 4 hours; veal, broiled, 4 hours; veal, roast, 4-1/2 hours.

Poultry and game.--Chicken, fricasseed, 3-3/4 hours; duck (tame), roasted, 4 hours; duck (wild), roasted, 4-3/4 hours; fowls (domestic), roasted or boiled, 4 hours; goose (wild), roasted, 2-1/2 hours; goose (tame), roasted, 2-1/4 hours; turkey, boiled or roasted, 2-1/2 hours; venison, broiled or roasted, 1-1/2 hours.

Vegetables.--Asparagus, boiled, 2-1/2 hours; beans (Lima), boiled, 2-1/2 hours, beans (string), boiled, 3 hours; beans, baked (with pork), 4-1/2 hours; beets (young), boiled, 3-3/4 hours; beets (old) boiled, 4 hours; cabbage, raw, 2 hours; cabbage, boiled, 4-1/2 hours; cauliflower, boiled, 2-1/2 hours; corn (green), boiled, 4 hours; onions, boiled, 3 hours; parsnips, boiled, 3 hours; potatoes, boiled or baked, 3-1/2 hours; rice, boiled, 1 hour; spinach, boiled, 2-1/2 hours; tomatoes, raw or stewed, 2-1/2 hours; turnips, boiled, 3-1/2 hours.

Bread, Eggs, Milk, etc.--Bread, corn, 3-1/4 hours; bread, wheat, 3-1/2 hours; eggs, raw, 2 hours; cheese, 3-1/2 hours; custard, 2-3/4 hours; eggs, soft-boiled, 3 hours; eggs, hard-boiled or fried, 3-1/2 hours; gelatine, 2-1/2 hours; tapioca, 2 hours.

* * *

Supporting the IIML

The International Institute of Modern Letters was established at Victoria University in 2001 to promote and foster contemporary imaginative writing.

Our founder, philanthropist Glenn Schaeffer, continues to contribute to IIML activities, including his assistance for an annual fellowship exchange programme with the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

While not everyone is able to match Glenn's level of support, we value all those who have helped us to foster the development of emerging writers. We would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about continuing your support for the IIML, for example through a gift in your will.

All gifts are managed by the Victoria University Foundation, a registered charitable trust established to raise funds in areas of strategic importance to the University, such as the IIML.

For further information on how you can provide philanthropic support to the IIML, please contact our Director, Bill Manhire, Ph: 04 463 6808, Email: bill.manhire@vuw.ac.nz, or Diana Meads, Fundraising Manager, Victoria University of Wellington Foundation Ph: 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534), Email: diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz