



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 16 October 2008

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This is the 132nd 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. Double Mansfield.....	1
2. Bella Italia.....	2
3. Spring awakening.....	2
4. The expanding bookshelf.....	2
5. From the whiteboard.....	3
6. The amended bookshelf.....	3
7. Creative writing across the Tasman.....	3
8. Looking for friends.....	4
9. Awards and residencies.....	4
10. Writing space for one more at the Pohutukawa Garret.....	4
11. Ink on skin.....	5
12. Recent web reading.....	5
13. Great lists of our time.....	6

1. Double Mansfield

2002 MA (Page) graduate Julian Novitz and serial undergraduate workshop member Joseph Ryan were announced winners of the Premier and Novice writer categories in the BNZ Katherine Mansfield Short Story Awards at a ceremony in Wellington on 2 October. Peter Wells, who judged the premier category, said Novitz's winning story, 'Three couples', has 'the qualities of an excellent short story - self contained, yet showing all the world "in a grain of sand".' Julian Novitz won the Hubert Church Award for best first book of fiction for *My Real Life and Other Stories* in 2005, and has also published a novel, *Holocaust Tours*. He is completing a PhD in literary studies and creative writing at the University of Melbourne and working on his second novel. The Award nets him \$10,000. We hear that stories by two other recent MA (Page) graduates were among the top ten selected by Peter Wells.

Novice Award winner Joseph Ryan completed the Short Fiction workshop at the IIML this year, and has also been a member of the Children's Writing and Iowa workshops. Judge Elspeth Sandys said that while his story 'skirts territory which in less capable hands, could have resulted in prurience or sentimentality, the author's grip on his highly sensitive material never falters.' Ryan wins \$1,500 for his story 'Stranger than Beautiful'. The Young Writer Award, judged by Bernard Beckett, went to Clare Tanton of Taikura Rudolf Steiner School in Hawke's Bay. The winning stories can be read [here](#).

2. Bella Italia

On the same day the Mansfield Awards were announced we heard that Sam Kelly, currently working on his MA (Script) at the IIML, has won the third Cathay Pacific Italian Film Festival Scholarship. The scholarship sends Sam to Italy in the second half of 2009, where he will attend the Venice and Rome film festivals, and undertake a period of internship at an Italian film production house and at the National Museum of Cinema in Turin. Travel and accommodation are covered by Cathay Pacific and Rialto Cinemas. Sam already has several short films under his belt, including three consecutive winners in the 48HOURS filmmaking contest, and he also studied film at Victoria. Two of his films will screen in the [Show Me Shorts](#) festival in Auckland next month.

If his win incites envy, then take note: the application period for the 2009 Italian Film festival scholarship opens on 20 October, and closes on 28 February 2009. The application form is available [here](#).

The winner of the fourth scholarship will be announced at the opening of the 2009 festival.

3. Spring awakening

We know that spring has sprung here at the IIML when the flowering cherry by the front door bursts into prolific bloom. This generally occurs about two weeks before the applications from a fresh crop of writers hoping to gain entry to the following year's MA Page and Script workshops pour in. This is by way of a final reminder that 1 November is the due date for all [MA applications](#), which need to include a 10 to 20-page writing sample in the genre or medium in which you intend to specialise. The Page stream offers 20 places in two separate workshop groups, and the Scriptwriting MA has 10 places. The outcome will be notified before Christmas.

The Glenn Schaeffer Fellowship provides the opportunity for a graduate of the Page stream to go on to grant-aided study at the Institute's North American co-centre, the Iowa Writers' Workshop. In addition, MA in Creative Writing students may apply for one of six [project scholarships](#) at the end of the course.

4. The expanding bookshelf

Last week at Unity Books in Auckland the 2008 Buddle Finlay Sargeson fellow Paula Morris launched her fourth book, six years to the day since the launch of her first, *Queen of Beauty*, winner of the 2001 Adam Prize. *Forbidden Cities* is a short story collection with settings that reflect its author's multi-national lifestyle — New Zealand, New Orleans, New York, Shanghai... Paula was the IIML's Schaeffer Fellow to the Iowa Writers' Workshop in 2002/2003, and stayed on to complete the MFA there, studying with Frank Conroy, Ethan Canin, and Jim McPherson. Her thesis supervisor was Marilynne Robinson, and many of the stories in *Forbidden Cities* were in that thesis. There's an interview with Paula about *Forbidden Cities* [here](#).

5. From the whiteboard

'Fiction seeks out truth. Granted, it seeks a poetic kind of truth, universals not easily translated into moral codes. But part of our interest as we read is in learning how the world works; how the conflicts we share with the writer and all other human beings can be resolved, if at all; what values we can affirm and, in general, what the moral risks are. The writer who can't distinguish truth from a peanut butter sandwich can never write good fiction.'

John Gardner

6. The amended bookshelf

We had a small geographical confusion when announcing news that Alison Wong's novel had been sold to Penguin (NZ) and Picador (UK) in our last newsletter. Alison tells us her agent Toby Eady came to see her in Wellington after he attended the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival (not the Christchurch Festival). Her novel, *As the Earth Turns Silver*, will be published next year by Picador in Australia and Asia as well as the UK.

7. Creative writing across the Tasman

Whereas New Zealand universities classify staff members' creative output (such as published novels or poetry collections) as 'research' for academic purposes, this is not the case in Australia, where teachers of creative writing in some universities seem to be suffering from exhaustion and low morale as a result. [More here](#). Next week in Sydney, Bill Manhire will join a panel of speakers on 'creative writing in the academy' at the State Library of New South Wales. The panel, which also features teachers of creative writing from Macquarie University, the University of Newcastle, the University of Technology, Sydney and the University of Western Sydney, will discuss the legitimacy of the creative writing PhD or DCA, the senses in which it might be regarded as 'research', its contribution to knowledge, the criteria appropriate to its evaluation, and its scholarly and public uses. The panel, titled 'Creative Scholarship', takes place on Wednesday 22 October from 6 pm in the Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library of NSW.

8. Looking for friends

Barbara Else is looking for stories to include in the latest of a series of anthologies for children that includes *Weird and Wonderful*, *Claws and Jaws*, *Mischief and Mayhem*, *Hideous and Hilarious*, *Dare & Double-dare* and *Showtime!*, all published by Random House. Stories of 400 to 1200 words aimed at the 7-10 age group and focusing on friendship will be considered (no poems, plays or non-fiction). She writes, 'Whether the main characters are human, animal or imaginary, they'll be involved in something that illustrates the significance of friendship to this age group. I expect the final collection to include realistic tales but there are also exciting possibilities for fantasy stories and experimentation.' Barbara Else will consider both new and already published work and recommends writers look at previous anthologies to see what kind of story works for this series. For detailed submission requirements contact Barbara Else, PO Box 46-031, Park Avenue, Lower Hutt 5044. The submission deadline is 31 January 2009.

9. Awards and residencies

Applications close on 31 October for the 2008 NZSA Janet Frame Memorial Award for Literature, offered by The Janet Frame Literary Trust to support a mid-career or established author to further their literary career. The award (which is to be run biannually) is for \$3,000, and may be used for travel or for purchasing computer equipment, as well as to buy time to write. The award is open to authors of literary or imaginative fiction, as well as poetry, who are members of the New Zealand Society of Authors. For further information, email: programmes@nzauthors.org.nz

Applications are also being sought for the position of University of Waikato/Creative New Zealand Writer in Residence 2009. The position is open to poets, novelists, short story writers, dramatists, and writers of serious non-fiction. The appointment will be made on the basis of a record of publications of high quality. Enquiries can be made to Dr Sarah Shieff, telephone 07 8562889 ext 8425, email sshieff@waikato.ac.nz. Applications close on 10 November, and should be made on the University of Waikato Application Form available [here](#) or tel 07 838 4003, fax 07 856 0135.

10. Writing space for one more at the Pohutukawa Garret

The next meeting of the Pohutukawa Garret (a proposed writers' colony) and friends will be on Thursday 30 October at Simply Paris (Cuba St, Wellington) at 1pm. Doug Wilkins writes:

'The Garret remains one leetle author away from breaking figurative ground. I have things pretty well lined up in all other categories (office construction, office chairs, wireless network, heat pumps, cleaning services, plumber, electrician, financing for initial purchase, et cetera), so it's just a matter of meeting and getting a thumbs up from a sixth writer. Tell your friends who have ambitions as writers that we would

welcome them with open arms, and offices, and so forth.’ For further information contact dbwilkins@gmail.com.

11. Ink on skin

The Dutch communications agency [KesselsKramer](#) — which produces books, films, music videos, magazines and exhibitions as well as design and advertising — is looking for stories to be compiled in a book called INK. Writers are asked to find a person with a tattoo and turn the story of why they got that tattoo into fiction. ‘The stories [should] all take a real tattoo and the real reasons for getting that tattoo as their inspiration and weave fiction around them. This fiction may stay close to the original tattoo and its reasons, or it may stray very far from it. Whichever, the story must be a story, not an interview or piece of journalism.’ The stories may be 1000 to 4000 words in length, and they will be illustrated by Swedish design firm [Happy Pets](#). Each writer will receive copies of the book and be fully credited, but we’re advised that it is not currently possible to pay a fee — although if and when the published book turns a profit they will offer a one-off payment. There is a possibility that a short film and exhibition will also be created to publicise the book. The deadline for submissions is 10 November; stories may be sent to Marium Bilal (mariam.bilal@kayasystems.com).

12. Recent web reading

[Chris Price](#) on truth and truthiness: Going West keynote address (link at foot of page)

[Vincent O’Sullivan \(and other Kiwis\) in the Scottish Poetry Library](#)

[White Tiger wins Booker](#)

[15 Questions for Seamus Heaney](#)

[Antarctic animation](#)

[Schiller won't pay](#)

[Literature vs television](#)

[Revenge of the rejectee](#)

[Anthony McCarten movie](#)

[Family life](#)

Sue Orr reviewed [here](#) and [here](#)

Burns Fellows in Dunedin [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)

13. Great lists of our time

An 'Excerpt from The Offutt Guide to Literary Terms,' by Chris Offutt, originally published in *Seneca Review* and recently republished in [Harper's](#).

Nonfiction: Prose that is factual, except for newspapers.

Creative nonfiction: Prose that is true, except in the case of memoir.

Memoir: From the Latin *memoria*, meaning "memory," a popular form in which the writer remembers entire passages of dialogue from the past, with the ultimate goal of blaming the writer's parents for his current psychological challenges.

Novel: A quaint, longer form that fell out of fashion with the advent of the memoir.

Short story: An essay written to conceal the truth and protect the writer's family.

Novel-in-stories: A term invented solely to hoodwink the novel-reading public into inadvertently purchasing a collection of short fiction.

Clandestine science fiction novel: A work set in the future that receives a strong reception from the literary world as long as no one mentions that it is, in fact, science fiction; for example, *The Road*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

Plot: A device, the lack of which denotes seriousness on the part of writers.

Chick lit: A patriarchal term of oppression for heterosexual female writing; also, a marketing means to phenomenal readership and prominent bookstore space.

Personal essay: Characterized by 51 percent or more of its sentences beginning with the personal pronoun "I"; traditional narrative strategy entails doing one thing while thinking about another.

Literary essay: Akin to the personal essay, only with bigger words and more profound content intended to demonstrate that the essayist is smarter than all readers, writers, teachers, and Europeans.

Lyric essay: An essay with pretty language.

Nature essay: An essay written by a person claiming to have a closer relationship with the natural world than anyone else does; traditional subject matter is sex, death, and how everything was better in the past.

Pop culture essay: An essay written by someone who prefers to shop or watch television.

Academic essay: Alas, an unread form required for tenure.

Composition writing: An academic development in response to the economic needs of recently graduated MFA students.

Experimental writing: The result of supreme artistic courage when a writer is willing to sacrifice structure, character, plot, insight, wisdom, social commentary, context, precedent, and punctuation.

Poem: Prose scraps.

Prose poem: Either a poem with no line breaks or a lyric essay with no indentation. No one knows.

Deconstructionism: A moderately successful attempt by the French to avenge the loss of Paris as the global center of literature.

Anxiety of influence: A term popularized by Harold Bloom to suppress poets and elevate the role of critics.

Text: A term used by critics to conceal ignorance of precise definitions.

* * *

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