



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 21 December 2009

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This is the 151st in a series of occasional newsletters from the Victoria University centre of the International Institute of Modern Letters, and the last for 2009. For more information about any of the items, please email modernletters@vuw.ac.nz.

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1. Exploration of awkwardness wins Adam award

For the first time in its history, the Adam Foundation Prize in Creative Writing has been awarded to a work of creative non-fiction. Ashleigh Young has won the award for her personal essay collection *Can you tolerate this?* *Mr Pip* author Lloyd Jones was external examiner for the folio – a work that explores the ways in which people cope with physical or social awkwardness. He praised the author's talent for finding big subject matter so close to home and her unfaltering narrative control, calling the folio 'an outstanding debut'.

Ashleigh Young is a published poet who lives in Wellington, where she works as an editor for Learning Media. In November her essay 'Wolf Man' received the 2009 *Landfall* Essay Prize.

Among the work submitted for final assessment by the twenty MA students, we felt there were several books worthy of winning the Adam Prize, and a number of this year's fiction writers and poets are sure to figure in our literature in the future. Previous Adam Prize recipients include acclaimed authors Catherine Chidgey, Paula Morris, William Brandt and Eleanor Catton. Supported by Wellingtonians Denis and Verna Adam through the Victoria University Foundation, the \$3000 prize is awarded annually to an outstanding student in the Masters in Creative Writing programme in the International Institute of Modern Letters.

2. Turbine 09 generates imaginative energy

The 2009 issue of online literary journal [*Turbine*](#) is now live. It includes the title essay from Adam Foundation Prize winner Ashleigh Young's folio, along with work from other members of the 2009 MA (Page) workshops at the IIML. There's also new work from 2009 Montana Best First Book of Poetry recipient, Sam Sampson, award-winning ex-pat New Zealand writer Kirsty Gunn and leading UK poet Christopher Reid.

Creative New Zealand/Victoria University 2009 Writer in Residence Paula Boock discusses the year behind her and what's to come. There's fiction and poetry by writers from the renowned Iowa Writers Workshop, who will be teaching at Victoria University over the summer months. In some cases audio files bring the words to the ear as well as the eye. The Reading Room delves into the mind of the emerging writer with excerpts from the journals of the 2009 MA intake.

[*Turbine*](#) 09 is published by the International Institute of Modern Letters, hosted by the New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, and has been edited by Claire Brunette and Bill Nelson. We're grateful to all concerned for their energy and efficiency.

3. Bill gets Biggs

Turbine editor Bill Nelson is the winner of the Biggs Poetry Prize 2009. Since 2006, this prize of \$3000 has been awarded annually to recognise the potential of a graduating poet. Bill's folio is titled 'The Wolf Market' and was described by examiners as 'sophisticated, playful and unafraid'. Bill has an Advanced Diploma in Creative Writing from Whitireia Polytechnic, and his work has appeared in a number of online journals, including the *Lumiere Reader* and *Blackmail Press*; however, in accordance with our policy that *Turbine* editors do not publish themselves, his poems do not appear in *Turbine* 09.

The prize is funded by Peter and Mary Biggs, and previous winners are Amy Brown, Joan Fleming and Louise Wallace.

4. From the whiteboard

‘If good poetry is to be written, enormous amounts of bad poetry must be written too, if only because it is important for a serious poet to know what it is she/he is trying not to do.’

— Germaine Greer

5. Tale of island life brings scriptwriting prize

Film writer Colin Hodson has won the annual David Carson-Parker Embassy Trust Prize for his feature film script set on an unnamed island in the Arctic, which traces the changing life of the only indigenous inhabitant and his clash with a community of scientists trying to clear the island of introduced species. He was presented with the \$2000 award by the new CEO of the NZ Film Commission, Graeme Mason, at a function at the Embassy Theatre last week.

Victoria Scriptwriting Programme Director Ken Duncum says Mr. Hodson’s script ‘immerses us in the daily life of a memorable central character, both a loner and lonely, curmudgeonly but also capable of friendship and love.’ Funded through the Victoria University Foundation, the prize was first established by the Embassy Theatre Trust and is now funded by arts philanthropist David Carson-Parker.

6. A job in Nelson

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology is seeking a tutor to join the creative writing teaching team in their School of Arts and Media. Responsibilities will include curriculum development and teaching fiction writing on the degree programme. This is a one-year, limited tenure position that will be reviewed in 2010 with a view to establishing full tenure. Find more details and apply [online](#). Applications close 4pm Monday 21 December 2009.

7. Bub Bridger 1924-2009

Bub Bridger died last week. Wherever she was living (latterly Granity, on the West Coast), she usually rang us up about this time each year – just to say Merry Christmas and check how things were going. Bub was best known as a poet, and particularly one who read her own work brilliantly. She was one of the mainstays of the 90s feminist show Hens’ Teeth, particularly when she read aloud her raunchy performance pieces addressed to younger men – e.g. the poet Ian Wedde, or the All Black Whetton brothers:

I want a Whetton for Christmas!
Either Alan or Gary would do . . .

I'd l-o-o-o-o-ve a Whetton for Christmas
For some frolicsome festival woo
But – they tell me that Gary is married
Still . . . Alan is there to be plucked
And his eyes and his thighs are s-o-o-o-o sexy
And his body just made to be . . . admired.

(from 'A Christmas Wish')

Bub was one of the very first writers to get her start at Victoria University. She attended a creative writing course with Michael King here in 1974, and always credited him as 'the one who showed me the way'. For those who have missed her work – both poems and short stories – the best place to make its acquaintance is in the 2005 collection *Wild Daisies: the Best of Bub Bridger*, which contains over 100 pages of writing, plus a CD of Bub herself reading a selection of poems. On Boxing Day between 8 and 10 am National Radio will replay Kim Hill's 2005 interview with the poet, alongside an interview with Sam Hunt.

8. Louise St John (1949-2009)

We were very sad to hear of the recent death of Louise St John. As Louise White, she was a member of the formidable 2000 MA workshop here at Victoria. She was a poet and editor and free-lance writer – and a gardener. She edited the *Penguin Book of New Zealand Letters*, published in 2003, and co-edited with Gregory O'Brien the best-selling and much-imitated poetry anthology *Big Weather*. Louise was at the IIML earlier this year, reading in our library for new poems for the updated version of *Big Weather*. Her own poems are published in journals on both sides of the Tasman, and in the anthology *Spectacular Babies*.

Louise was too ill to attend the launch of *Big Weather* at Mallinson Rendell's celebratory party at Circa Theatre on 20 July, but here is the message – a thank-you message – that Bill Manhire read for her on that occasion:

'Reading again this new enlarged edition of *Big Weather*, reminds me of my garden in the early spring. When the red stems of my rows of peonies push up through the still cold ground into the sometimes reluctant early sunlight there's the thrill of seeing again something now so familiar combined with the excitement that always accompanies a new season.

Working on an enlarged edition of *Big Weather* has been a joyful project. Initially we talked of 'revision', but when the secateurs (to continue the garden image) came out, there was very little that could obviously be cut back, and seemingly no dead wood to be removed. So, with the great good will of Mallinson Rendell we embarked on a process of enlargement. (If there is a gardener out there who doesn't want to push out beyond existing boundaries I've yet to meet him/her.)

Initially we read independently, using our own judgment about what to discard on the one hand, piling possibility on top of possibility on the other. We compared notes; sometimes - but not often - arguing the case for a particular poem (for inclusion

or discard). Generally we found, as we had the first time, that particular poems just kept pushing up to the top of the pile.

This then is the new work which I hope will give readers as much pleasure as it has Greg and me. My thanks to Cochran and Norman for enhancing Anne Noble's fine cover photograph and honoring the poets with this beautiful production. And to all the poets - and in particular to those whose work is included in *Big Weather* for the first time – my thanks for such a bounteous crop.'

9. Poets and playwrights

Massey University, The Palmerston North City Council and Palmerston North City Library have announced the 2010 Manawatu International Poetry for Performance and One-Act Play competitions. Winning writers will have their poems and plays developed and presented at the Biennial Manawatu Festival of New Arts in Palmerston North in October 2010, and there are cash prizes. They are looking for 'poetry that not only reads well, but also crosses the boundary between page and stage,' and takes 2-5 minutes to perform. Poets must submit an overview of their performance concept in up to 200 words; which should communicate their vision, but leave room for directorial interpretation. Plays should be a minimum of 10 minutes and a maximum of 20 minutes playing time, with 2-6 characters. Entries must explore the Festival's theme, 'Back to the Earth'. There is a \$20 entry fee; the submission deadline is 5pm Friday, 19 March 2010. For further information email Carol Seelye: C.A.Seelye@massey.ac.nz or visit [Massey's website](#).

10. 2010 residencies announced...

2009 MA (Page) workshop member Pat White will be the New Zealand writer in residence at Wellington's Randell Cottage for 2010. Pat White is a poet, essayist and artist whose work reflects his passion for the natural environment and an exploration of the way individuals relate to the land. He will use the six months in the cottage to research and write a biography of West Coast writer, teacher and fellow environmentalist Peter Hooper (1919 – 1991).

Dr John Newton has been appointed the 2010 JD Stout Fellow. Poet, critic and academic, John is the author of the highly-acclaimed book, *The Double Rainbow: James K. Baxter, Ngati Hau and the Jerusalem Commune*, published earlier this year by Victoria University Press. While at the Stout Centre, John will be working on a book about the influence of World War Two immigration on New Zealand culture. War-time immigrants, who included Jewish refugees from Hitler's Germany, played a key role in the growth of national culture from the mid-1930s and the late-1960s. The research aims to address the under-recognised contribution of these mostly non-Anglophone cultures to New Zealand's cultural development.

Canterbury University's Ursula Bethell Residency in Creative Writing in 2010 has been awarded to Tusiata Avia, and, as previously announced, the 2010 Creative New

Zealand/Victoria University Writer in Residence is poet Jenny Bornholdt. Both poets are Victoria creative writing graduates.

11. Residencies still up for grabs

There are still at least two 2010 residencies accepting applications. The University of Auckland and the Michael King Writers' Centre are now calling for applications for a joint six-month writer's residency from July to December 2010, with a stipend of \$30,000. The residency is open to New Zealand authors working in any form of creative writing, including fiction, poetry, drama and non-fiction. Applications close on Friday 26 February 2010.

The Michael King Writers' Centre is also calling for applications for their first Maori writer's residency. The residency, which comes with a stipend of \$8000 and includes accommodation at the Centre, is available for eight weeks from 14 May next year. It is open to emerging and established authors working on a project in fiction, non-fiction, drama, or poetry. Applications close on 12 February 2010.

Detailed information about eligibility, terms and conditions for both residencies can be viewed at the [Michael King Writers' Centre website](#) or email the administrator, Karren Beanland: administrator@writerscentre.org.nz.

12. Cathay Pacific Travel Media Awards 2010

A reminder that entries are still open for the annual [Cathay Pacific Travel Media Awards](#). Emerging writers may be particularly interested in the AA Directions Magazine Best New Travel Writer of the Year Award. The winner receives \$1000 and will be sent on an assignment to write a story that will be published in AA *Directions* magazine. The deadline is 12 February: for full details about the Awards visit [Travcom's website](#) or email the administrator, Helen Davies: helen.davies@clear.net.nz.

13. Ka Mate Ka Ora #9

For its ninth issue, *Ka Mate Ka Ora* is calling for articles, essays, and creative considerations that address questions of Antipodean interactions with American poetry. 'After 1956,' the editors contend, 'American poetry, like rock 'n roll, seized centre stage, not just in the English-speaking world, but right round the globe. The impact on New Zealand poetry was profound, as it also was in Australia.' But they're more interested in 'what was added to American poetry by these local elaborations. How much was the American poetic moment a matter of external energies feeding back to U.S cultural scenes?' Email submissions by 12 March 2010 to Murray Edmond, Editor: m.edmond@auckland.ac.nz.

14. Thank you

As this is our final newsletter for 2009, we'd like to thank all the writers, publishers and organisations that have contributed to this year's MA programme, including Dave Armstrong, Fergus Barrowman, Paula Boock, Andrew Bovell, William Brandt, James Brown, Rachel Bush, Brian Castro, Craig Cliff, Geoff Cochrane, Kate De Goldi, Kate Duignan, Martin Edmond, Fiona Farrell, Cliff Fell, The Film School, Catherine Fitzgerald, Briar Grace-Smith, David Geary, Caroline Grose, Bernadette Hall, Dinah Hawken, Eirlys Hunter, Lloyd Jones, Elizabeth Knox, Donna Malane, Paula Morris, NZ College of Performing Arts, Carl Nixon, Sue Orr, Jane Parkin, Emily Perkins, Christopher Reid, Carl Shuker, Mike Smith, Elizabeth Smither, Paul Swadel, Anna Taylor, Graeme Tetley, Heidi Thompson, Toi Whakaari, Brian Turner, Jude Turner and Te Papa, Kathryn Walls, Peter Whiteford and Susan Wilson.

As ever, we're extremely grateful to our indefatigable administrators Katie Hardwick-Smith and Clare Moleta, and to the unstoppable Listlady, Cath Vidler, who keeps us supplied with more great lists than we can pass on.

Victoria University is now closed for the year, and reopens on 5 January. We look forward to meeting the writers who'll be joining our workshops in 2010.

15. Seasonal reading

To keep us all going over the summer, Christchurch City Libraries have put together a useful page of ['best reads of 2009'](#), which also includes links to many other best books pages both in New Zealand and elsewhere. We of course would like to draw your attention to recent books by our own staff and graduates. Perfect stuff for the beach. For example:

Damien Wilkins's [*Somebody Loves Us All*](#)
(the Sunday Star Times's 'New Zealand Novel of the Year')

Chris Price's [*The Blind Singer*](#)

Dora Malech's [*Shore Ordered Ocean*](#)

Vana Manasiadis's [*Ithaca Island Bay Leaves*](#)

Louise Wallace's [*Since June*](#)

Rachael King's [*Magpie Hall*](#)

Anna Taylor's [*Relief*](#)

Elizabeth Knox's [*The Angel's Cut*](#)

Tusiata Avia's [*Bloodclot*](#)

Stephanie de Montalk's [*Vivid Familiar*](#)

Lynn Davidson's [*How to Live by the Sea*](#)

Jo Randerson's [*Through the Door*](#)

Laurence Fearnley's [*Mother's Day*](#)

Pip Desmond's [*Trust: A True Story of Women and Gangs*](#)

Saradha Koirala's [*Wit of the Staircase*](#)

Paula Morris's [*Ruined*](#)

Mandy Hager's [*The Crossing*](#)

Sarah Laing's [*Dead People's Music*](#)

Barbara Anderson's [*Getting There*](#)

Jenny Bornholdt's [*The Rocky Shore*](#)
(2009 Montana Poetry Award winner)

Emily Perkins's [*Novel About My Wife*](#)
(2009 Montana Medal winner)

Eleanor Catton's [*The Rehearsal*](#)
(‘2009’s most exciting new voice’ – *The Guardian*)

For online reading, we think of Martin Amis’s ruthlessly funny parallel-world reversal story, in which poets live the high life, flying in and out of Hollywood as they develop fresh projects, while screenwriters live in damp cottages and send their latest screenplays off to little magazines, which only deign to reply some twelve months later. We gave a copy of the Amis story to all our MA students in the first year that the scriptwriting workshop was convened alongside the page-writing workshop. But in fact anyone in the whole wide world can read the story [here](#).

Or you might just like to browse the [Unity Books website](#) and find out what writers like Emily Perkins and Bill Manhire have by their bedsides.

16. Recent web reading

[The Emily Dickinson random epigram machine](#)

[The Samuel Beckett bridge](#)

[The Gulliver jungle gym](#)

[A book launch](#)

[Blackmail](#)

[NZ poetry reconfigured](#)

[Poetry and rhyme](#)

[The Tiger](#)

[A brief history of erasure](#)

[The Vintner's Luck discussed](#)

[Home town girl](#)

[The Philip Larkin trail](#)

[Ranking Philip Larkin](#)

[Captain Scott's weblog](#)

[Paul Muldoon interview](#)

[Bill Manhire goes Irish](#)

[Best Canadian poetry](#)

[The Edwin Morgan treasure box](#)

[Ronald Johnson's *The Book of the Green Man*](#)

[evil penguin](#)

[World's oldest musical instrument](#)

[Museum of Unworkable Devices](#)

[Bird poetry](#)

[Pizza poetry](#)

[Phone-box library](#)

[Seasons Greetings from Robert Frost](#)

[Cath Vidler's database corner](#)

[Database of Legumes](#)

[Database of Bottled Beer](#)

[Database of Periodic Tables](#)

[Database of Bigfoot Sightings](#)
[Database of Macromolecular Movements](#)
[Database of Icelandic Sagas](#)
[Database of Wind Characteristics](#)
[Database of Violin Iconography](#)

17. Great lists of our time

[Top 20 smells which make Brits happy](#)

1. Freshly baked bread
2. Clean sheets
3. Freshly mown grass
4. Fresh flowers
5. Freshly ground coffee
6. Fresh air after rain fall
7. Vanilla
8. Chocolate
9. Fish and chips
10. Bacon frying
11. Roast dinner
12. Babies
13. Lemon zest
14. Lavender
15. Petrol
16. Apple and blackberry crumble in the oven
17. A freshly lit match
18. Roses
19. Party poppers
20. Rubber tyres

* * *

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 in a range of ways.

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 – for example through scholarships, prizes, and grants. 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