



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

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This is the 137th 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. Epeli Hau'ofa

We were deeply saddened to learn of the recent death of Epeli Hau'ofa, one of the Pacific's great writers and thinkers, though perhaps he would have preferred to be called a citizen of Oceania. He was a writer of fiction as well as a distinguished academic. His two wickedly funny satirical works, *Kisses in the Nederends* and *Tales of the Tikongs*, are not only admired but also enjoyed. He had a rich vision of the Pacific. As a [tribute](#) in the Fiji Times puts it: '... it is the conceptualisation of our place in Oceania, both within and beyond, that made Epeli such a towering figure. He inspired us to rethink and broaden our notions of identity in the context of the ocean that links us all. Not to jettison our heritage, but to enrich it by exploring common points of reference with others.' We will be looking for his recent book, *We Are the Ocean* (University of Hawaii Press, 2008), which brings together thirty years of writing in a range of styles and genres. At the time of his death, Epeli Hau'ofa was Director of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture at the University of the South Pacific.

2. A Commonwealth of writers

The ‘Commonwealth’ as a concept might not have chimed with Epli Hau’ofa’s view of the world (see below), but it still connects diverse literary communities via the annual Commonwealth Writers’ Prize, won in 2007 by Lloyd Jones with his novel set in Bougainville (or Oceania), *Mr Pip*. Three New Zealanders are on the shortlist for the South East Asia and Pacific region this year, and we’re pleased to note that two of them are IIML graduates. Paula Morris is on the Best Book shortlist with her story collection *Forbidden Cities* (Penguin), and Bridget van der Zijpp appears on the Best First Book shortlist with the novel *Misconduct* (Victoria University Press). Also on that shortlist is Asian New Zealander Mo Zhi Hong with his novel *Year of the Shanghai Shark* (Penguin). The full shortlist details appear [here](#).

The winners from each region will be announced on 10 March and will then be invited to tour New Zealand for a series of public events. The overall winner of the 2009 Commonwealth Writers’ Prize will be announced at an awards ceremony as part of the [Auckland Writers and Readers Festival](#) programme in May.

From the whiteboard

‘... I would like to make one point briefly. The issue of what or who is a Pacific Islander would not arise if we considered Oceania as comprising people – as human beings with a common heritage and commitment – rather than as members of diverse nationalities and races. Ocean refers to a world of people connected to each other. The term Pacific Islands Region refers to an official world of states and nationalities. John and Mary cannot just be Pacific Islanders; they have to be Ni-Vanuatu, or Tuvaluan, or Samoan first. As far as I am concerned, anyone who has lived in our region and is committed to Oceania is an Oceanian. This view opens up the possibility of expanding Oceania progressively to cover larger areas and more peoples than is possible under the term Pacific Islands Region. In this formulation, the concepts Pacific Islands Region and Pacific Islanders are as redundant as South Seas and South Sea Islanders. We have to search for appropriate names for common identities that are more accommodating, inclusive, and flexible than what we have today.’

— Epli Hau’ofa, *We are the Ocean*

3. Animated poetry

One of the more bizarre poetry enterprises to surface recently on the web involves the animating of photographs and portraits of poets, roughly in synch with readings of their work.. Thus you can hear a painting of Robbie Burns reading “[Auld Lang Syne](#)”, explore a weird semi-musical version of Blake doing “[London](#)”, or head straight to Edgar Allen Poe’s “[The Raven](#)”.

The truly bizarre moments come when photographs of twentieth-century authors are animated alongside an actual recording of them reading a poem. Some examples:

Yeats: "[The Lake Isle of Innisfree](#)"
TS Eliot: "[Prufrock](#)"
Ezra Pound: "[The year puts on her shining robe](#)"
Robert Frost: "[The Road Not Taken](#)"
Auden: "[Musee des Beaux Arts](#)",
Dylan Thomas: "[And death shall have no dominion](#)"
Sylvia Plath: "[Daddy](#)".

Novelists have their moments, too. Here for example is [Virginia Woolf](#), having her facial features, if not her voice, strangely stretched:

For those who want more, and there seems to be more every day, there's a dedicated You Tube channel [here](#).

4. Push play

It's a big night on the town for poetry in Wellington this Thursday. You can catch four poets unveiling work never before read in public at the Book Council's 'Extended Play' session with James Brown, Jenny Bornholdt, Bill Manhire and Chris Price. It's at one of Wellington's best loved cafés, Caffè L'Affare, 27 College Street from 6.30 pm. The entry price (\$10, \$8 Book Council members) gets you a drink to go with an evening of poems from 'the south side, the lean side, the mean side, the B-side...'

Alternatively, across the other side of town at the National Library, Poet Laureate Michele Leggott, Stout Research Centre Director Lydia Wevers and Robin Hyde's biographer (and son) Derek Challis will be presenting the poems of Robin Hyde in 'Houses by the Sea', starting with a reception at 5.30 followed by readings from 6.15-7.15 pm. Hyde's profile seems to be on the rise: we hear that 1998 MA (Page) graduate Stuart McKenzie is currently working on a screenplay about her life.

5. Play press

On the subject of screenplays, we congratulate Benedict Reid, who came through a field of high-powered competitors to win The Play Press' Live Screenplay Competition 2009 for Best Unfilmed Screenplay. The winning screenplay, *Fun Ride*, was his MA (Script) project at the IIML in 2006. The prize, a professional, public rehearsed reading in a theatre venue (sponsored by Playmarket) will take place later in the year at Circa Theatre, followed by appropriate development support. The other writers on the shortlist were Graeme Tetley, Barbara Else, David Geary, Matthew Saville (MA Script 2004) and Dean Parker. Deadline for the next Live Screenplay Competition is January 31 2010.

6. McSweeney's likes Emily Perkins

While we're in congratulatory mode, we were also pleased to see that Emily Perkins' *Novel About My Wife* appears in [The Believer's 2008 Book Award Shortlist](#).

The Believer is the critical organ of Dave Eggers' influential McSweeney's publishing empire, and as you'd expect, their shortlist covers a wider and more quirky range of titles than is likely to be found in the mainstream international book awards for the year. The winner will be announced in the March/April issue of *The Believer*. Emily Perkins completed the Original Composition course at Victoria in 1993.

7. Liberate your words

Teachers and secondary school students should keep an eye out for details of this year's New Zealand Post National Schools Writing Festival and Poetry Awards, which will be sent to schools during the first week of March. As in the last two Awards, there are two poetry prizes – one for best poem, selected by a leading New Zealand poet, the other for best lyric, which will be chosen by a well-known New Zealand songwriter. All poems submitted will be automatically entered in both categories. What's new in 2009 is that the Poetry Awards will be open to Year 11 as well as year 12 and 13 students. Information packs will go to the HOD English in every secondary school, and students can find out more in the March issue of *Tearaway* magazine. Information on the 2008 Awards and Festival can be found [here](#) and [here](#). (These pages will be updated with 2009 details shortly.)

8. Nadeem Aslam

Nadeem Aslam is the bestselling author of *Maps for Lost Lovers*, a novel focusing on the lives of Pakistani immigrants in England, and *The Wasted Vigil*, which takes place in modern-day Afghanistan. His influences range from James Joyce to *1001 Nights*: 'I grew up looking at Persian paintings, read Urdu ghazals, listened to stories about Muhammad from my mother while falling asleep as a child. The book [*Maps for Lost Lovers*] in many ways is about the classic theme of Islamic literature: the quest for the beloved. The book wouldn't be what it is without *1001 Nights*, the Koran, Bihzad.' He's appearing in Auckland next Wednesday 4 March, 6.30 at The Booklover (127 Hurstmere Road, Takapuna, free admission), and on Thursday 5 March at 6.00pm at St Andrews on the Terrace in Wellington (tickets \$10 on the door, Book Council Members \$8).

9. Viola Beadleton's Compendium

We're advised that *Viola Beadleton's Compendium of Seriously Silly and Astoundingly Amazing Stories* is currently seeking submissions for Volume Three. If you have a fun, frivolous, unusual, or quirky story, poem, or personal essay, it can be emailed to viola@wellingtonwriters.co.nz in the next three months. Detailed submission guidelines are available [here](#) and a recent article about Volume Two of the journal appears on [Scoop](#).

10. Takahe poetry

Poet Siobhan Harvey has taken over the poetry editorship of the long-running New Zealand literary journal. She plans to institute a featured poet slot (by invitation only), but general submissions of poetry remain welcome. They should be addressed to Siobhan Harvey or The Poetry Editor, Takahe Magazine, PO Box 13-335, Christchurch. Contributor guidelines are also available on the [Takahe website](#).

11. Spinning gold

Spinning Gold, the New Zealand Children's Book Writing and Illustration Conference, will take place at Capital House, Melrose, Wellington from 18-20 September this year, 'offering opportunities for emerging and experienced writers and illustrators to learn new skills, network and develop their craft.' The conference includes strands on new technologies, business, marketing and promotion as well as social events and a trip to a mystery location. Spaces are limited to the first 80 people and early bird registrations open in April.. For more information email the Wellington Children's Book Association at the.wcba@gmail.com.

12. Recent web reading

[Paula Morris interview](#)

[Louise Wallace reviews Robert Hass](#)

[US copyright \(in verse\)](#)

[Tony Hancock's poetry evening](#)

[John Clarke and Clive James on WH Auden \(audio\)](#)

[David Brent reads John Betjeman's 'Slough'](#)

[Translating alien languages](#)

[The bone people has a birthday](#)

[David Geary is blogging again](#)

[Physics limericks](#)

[John Updike's marginalia](#)

[Antarctic animation](#)

[The humongous fungus!](#)

[An Asian literary journal](#)

[Jewish literature & culture](#)

13. Great lists of our time

A list of sample topics for science fair projects (from [Newfoundland and Labrador's Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation](#)):

- * A Bell System
- * History of Shells
- * A Chemical Change
- * Types of Fuels
- * A Crystal Radio Set
- * Heat can Produce Electricity
- * Action of a Solenoid
- * Fire Must Have Air to Burn
- * A Door Chime
- * How Electricity is Made
- * Air Currents
- * Climate
- * An Electronic Map of Canada
- * Electric Eye
- * Weaving and Sewing Techniques
- * ElectroMagnetism
- * A Projector
- * Fluorescent Lights
- * Measuring the Ocean Depths
- * Functions of a Camera
- * Measuring Outer Space
- * Glass and its Uses
- * Model Airplanes
- * How to Develop a Picture
- * Molding
- * How Traffic Signals Work
- * Most Liquid contain either Acid or Alkali
- * Inside a Cave
- * Manufacturing Machinery
- * Operation of a Doorbell
- * Mercury
- * Parts of an Electric Motor
- * Minerals: Origin, Distribution
- * The Arc Light
- * A string Pump in action
- * Our Community Planning
- * A Weather Station
- * Our Solar System
- * A Cotton Gin
- * Phases of the Moon

- * A Wheat Elevator
- * Printing and its value to Man
- * Cross Section of a volcano
- * Salt and its Uses
- * Cross Section of an Oil Well
- * Weather and Man
- * Cross Section of the Earth
- * Simple Machines
- * Distillation of Water
- * Sound
- * Power & Food From the Sea
- * Sulfur
- * An ElectroMagnetic
- * Fingerprinting
- * Expansion and Contracting Of Liquids
- * The Telegraph Key
- * Man's Natural Resources
- * Which Metals Conduct Heat?
- * Rotation of Planets
- * The Telephone
- * Sending Messages by Electricity
- * Train Signal
- * Light
- * Water finds its own level
- * Snowflakes
- * Water Supports Heavy Weights
- * Space Travel is Coming
- * An Electromagnetic Crane
- * Space Problems in Gravity
- * Machines and Tools
- * Steam Propulsion
- * Parts of a SailBoat
- * Steam Turbines
- * Parts of a Windmill
- * The Fulcrum and the Lever
- * Polar Constellations
- * The Planets
- * Principles of a Transformer
- * Water is Compound of Hydrogen & Oxygen
- * Products of Oil
- * Jet Propulsion, Natural and Man-Made
- * Working Principles of a Gasoline Engine
- * The Quartz Family
- * Working of a Telegraph
- * A Reed Basket
- * Workings of a Television
- * Camera
- * Workings of an Irrigation Pump
- * Air Pressure in a Mercury Barometer
- * Machines Made Work Easier

- * Astronomy
- * Birth of a Balloon
- * The Blinker Light
- * Causes of the Seasons
- * Bulbs in Series and Parallel
- * The Climate of your own Home
- * Chemurgy
- * Chlorophyll
- * Canals and Locks
- * Contour Mapping
- * Using a Compass
- * Weather Instruments - Forecasting
- * Minerals
- * How Accurate are Homemade Weather Instruments?
- * Water Cycle
- * Rocks
- * How Hard are Various Types of Rocks and Minerals?
- * Mining - coal, iron ore, etc.
- * Petroleum and Oil
- * Erosion - What causes erosion? - How can soil erosion be prevented?
- * Air Pollution - causes and cleanup
- * Water Pollution
- * Forces changing the Earth's Surface
- * Precipitation
- * Water Filtration
- * The City of the Future
- * A Study of a Stream
- * The River
- * Topographic Mapping
- * Tides
- * EarthQuakes and Associated measuring devices
- *Hurricanes
- * Collect and Identify minerals and rocks exposed in local area.
- * Floods

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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