



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 27 November 2009

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This is the 150th 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. Welly done

The staff at the IIML raised a toast last night to our director Bill Manhire, who was announced as the Education category winner at the Wellingtonian of the Year Awards dinner. Today's story in the [Dominion Post](#) describes the Institute of Modern Letters as 'the Southern Hemisphere centre for new and emerging writers', adding that 'Wellington has developed a powerful creative writing culture which [Bill] has led, putting us on a map which operates globally.' In his acceptance speech Bill gave all credit to the students who have been the engine of this 'imaginative vehicle'. He did reserve some credit for the staff, however – and it seems the students agree, for we've just heard that the Post-Graduate Students' Association has voted Damien Wilkins the Best Lecturer of a taught postgraduate course for the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences this year (an honour that went to Ken Duncum in 2008).

We were also delighted to celebrate novelist Elizabeth Knox's win in the Arts category. While there was a time, she said last night, when she wanted to flee the capital, a few years ago she realised that there was no other place she'd rather be. We are happy to report that no tears were shed during the acceptance of this award. And a few smiles were raised at the IIML by this week's Jitterati cartoon in *Capital Times* in which Elizabeth, Bill and MA (Script) lecturer Ken Duncum all get a mention.

2. Winning non-fictions

Our congratulations to 2008 MA graduate Tina Makereti, winner of the non-fiction category of the 2009 [Royal Society Manhire Science Prize for Creative Science Writing](#). The theme of this year's competition was 'the place of human beings in the universe' and judge Rebecca Priestley said Makereti's winning piece, 'Twitch', 'skilfully wove Maori beliefs about the universe and its creation with current scientific interpretations'. Makereti takes home \$2500, and her essay will appear in the *Listener*.

We also congratulate 2009 MA workshop member Ashleigh Young, whose essay 'Wolf Man' has won the [Landfall Essay Competition](#). Judge David Eggleton praised 'Wolf Man' as 'an accomplished, subtle, stand-alone piece of writing' and 'an exemplary deconstruction of the eternal verities of beauty'. The prize is \$3000, and the essay is published in the latest issue of *Landfall* along with the runner up (John Newton's 'Becoming Pakeha') and a highly commended piece by Henry Feltham.

3. Your work here?

[Landfall 219: The NZ Music Issue](#) will be guest edited by writer and musician Bill Direen, who is soliciting 'work that demonstrates the essential cultural value of music and ways of making it in New Zealand,' along with 'publications on New Zealand music for review, reviews of performances and readings, and writings related to the experience of listening, and especially writing that may consider the role of NZ music and ways of making it in a wider context.' The submission deadline is 10 January 2010, and work may be sent to *Landfall*, Otago University Press, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand. Email correspondence (no submissions) to: landfall@otago.ac.nz

4. Last call for applications...

... for our 2010 undergraduate workshops in Short Fiction (convened by Kate Duignan) and Creative Non-Fiction (convened by Harry Ricketts). Applications are due by 10 December: for more information on courses and how to apply, visit our [website](#).

5. The expanding bookshelf (1)

Two new poetry collections will be launched upon the world in quick succession next week. Wednesday 2 December sees the launch of *Ithaca Island Bay Leaves: a mythistorima* ([Seraph Press](#)) by Vana Manasiadis, a collection begun during the MA workshop of 2005 Damien Wilkins will do the honours at the Adam Art Gallery, 6.30 pm. The following night, 3 December, sees the launch of Louise Wallace's collection *Since June* ([Victoria University Press](#)). The collection is based on Louise Wallace's 2008 MA folio, which won the Biggs Poetry Prize, and will be launched by Jenny Bornholdt at Unity Books, 6 pm.

6. Writer in Residence announced for 2010

We're pleased to announce that Jenny Bornholdt will be our 2010 Creative New Zealand Victoria University Writer in Residence. Earlier this year she won the Montana New Zealand Book Award for Poetry for her latest collection *The Rocky Shore*, a book that was hailed by the Montana judges both as a breakthrough in Bornholdt's own work and more generally as something significantly new in New Zealand poetry. 'She uses speech as we know it in everyday life, not lifted into the poetic, but made poetry by all that it is allowed to contain.'

Jenny Bornholdt plans to work on a new volume of poetry while she is at Victoria, and also to compile an anthology of short poems by New Zealand writers.

7. Script for success

Still more congratulations, this time to 2005 MA (Script) graduate Donna Banicevich Gera, who has won first prize in the PANZ playwriting competition with her new play 'Tarara Child'. As we understand it, 'Tarara' is the Maori nickname for Dalmatian or Croatian settlers, as well as those of mixed Croatian and Maori heritage. We don't know if the play is due to be staged any time soon, but you can find out more about Tarara in a Spectrum documentary on [Radio New Zealand's website](#).

8. The expanding bookshelf (2)

The University of Iowa Press has just published *Full Catastrophe Living*, by Zach Savich, who led the Iowa Workshop at the IIML in 2007. The collection was winner of the Iowa Poetry Prize, and the blurb describes a book that merges 'the spirits of Don Quixote, Shakespearean fools, Theodore Roethke, Frank O'Hara, James Merrill, and the Marx Brothers'.

9. In development

Marian Evans submitted her Creative Writing PhD thesis last month—our first. Now she and Erica Duthie are producing her thesis screenplay ‘[Development](#)’. The core cast includes IIML MA graduates Lynda Chanwai-Earle and Michele Amas, alongside other writer-actors Keri Kaa, Loren Horsley, Madeline Macnamara and Pinky Agnew as well as Nancy Coory, who inspired the story. Jane Campion and poet Laureate Cilla McQueen support this project and you’re warmly invited to join them, to adopt an actor, to help find locations like an apartment overlooking Oriental Bay beach and a container ship, to become a [Facebook](#) fan. Marian and Erica are working with urgency, to complete one cast member’s scenes before she leaves for nine months in the south of France, in February. You can also follow progress via [blog](#): and Twitter.

10. Your work ici?

Cerise Press is a new international online journal based in the United States and France that aims to build cross-cultural bridges by featuring artists and writers in English and translations, with an emphasis on French and Francophone works. Published three times per year, each issue includes poetry, translations, art, prose, interviews, reviews and photography. Guidelines are on their [website](#) , and the most recent issue can be viewed [here](#).

11. Best New Zealand Poems 09 – deadline change

For publishers and writers still planning to submit poems published this year for consideration by *Best New Zealand Poems 09* editor Robyn Marsack, a note that the deadline for submissions will fall a little earlier than previously indicated, as Victoria University’s management has decided to close the university for Christmas on 18 December. Submissions will therefore need to be received by that date. Please remember that only published work can be considered for the journal.

12. It’s Not about You: the Art of Brian Castro

In late September the IIML was delighted to host Brian Castro, a leading Australian novelist, essayist, and currently Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Adelaide. This visit was part of our annual Masterclass series, which over past years has seen prominent international writers, including Richard Ford, Richard Powers, Lavinia Greenlaw, Mark Doty, Eliot Weinberger and Michael Palmer take part in readings, lectures and discussions with our Masters students and at public events.

Brian Castro’s novels have won several major literary awards, including the Victorian Premier’s Award, the New South Wales Premier’s Award, the Australian/ Vogel Award, and the Christina Stead Fiction Prize. His work has been translated into Chinese, French and German.

In the first part of a day-long masterclass with our current MA students, Brian presented a paper, written especially for the occasion, titled: ‘It’s Not About You: the Art of Fuguing’. One of Brian’s recent areas of research is the fugue, both as musical form but also as a kind of imaginative template for creating literary work. Part of his argument is that being in a ‘fugue state’, or melancholic, is the writer’s natural condition, and that this form of ‘sadness’, different from depression and its accompanying diagnostic apparatus, can be a vital source of creativity. The writer doesn’t need a drug regime to ‘get better’, since one’s fiction always requires a strong element of disaffection.

Brian talked about his own career in this regard, providing a refreshingly frank account of both his methods and his reactions to the way his work has been seen in Australia. The tags of ‘elitist’ and ‘high art’ he happily claimed back from his critics. He also talked about the current publishing scene—its hostility to ‘difficulty’— and the importance of following a singular path.

For the afternoon session, Brian convened a workshop, attended by our fiction students, in which we read and discussed extracts from their writing.

The second part of Brian’s visit was a forum organised at the IIML that brought together twenty creative writing teachers from around the region, including Dr Thom Conroy, from Massey, Pip Byrne, Director of the Diploma in Creative Writing at Whitireia, tutors from Massey’s Wellington campus and teachers from Whitireia’s programme, as well as staff from the IIML, including Professor Bill Manhire.

Brian Castro led off the forum with an account of his role at Adelaide, where he supervises twenty-six PhD students. There followed general discussion about the PhD in both Australia and New Zealand. (In developing our PhD, the IIML looked to Adelaide as one of our models.) Presentations were then made by both Massey and Whitireia. Topics covered included the role of Ethics Committees within the creative disciplines, and the impact of digital repository requirements on recruitment and imaginative freedom.

13. From the whiteboard

Three maxims from Brian Castro:

1. Reading is superior to writing.
2. Just because it’s true doesn’t mean it’s good.
3. All writing is re-writing under the test of time.

14. Recent web reading

[The bone people revisited](#)

[Damien Wilkins](#)

[Barbara Anderson interview](#)

[Sam Hunt interview](#)

[Robert Louis Stevenson online](#)

[New writing from Whitireia](#)

[Washington poetry tour](#)

[The Cockney alphabet](#)

[How to write a great novel](#)

[The real Alan Bennett](#)

[Keep your copyrights](#)

[Glenn Colquhoun on ache](#)

[Belgian haiku](#)

[Walt Whitman pulls on his Levi's](#)

[Films about writers](#)

[Noveller](#)

[Impact indicators](#)

[We like lists because we don't want to die](#)

[The Nauru Elegies](#)

[Gallery of book trade labels](#)

[First World War poetry digital archive](#)

[A free-style beard success](#)

[Palindromes](#)

[The world's first gadgets](#)

Cath Vidler's Bert and Ernie corner:

[Google Bert and Ernie](#)

[Role-reversal Bert and Ernie](#)

[Ringling Bert and Ernie](#)

[Singing Bert and Ernie](#)

[Academic Bert and Ernie](#)

[Poetic Bert and Ernie](#)

[More poetry from Ernie](#)

[Pumpkin Bert and Ernie](#)

[Bookworm Bert](#)

15. Great lists of our time

A list of Doctor Who items (for descriptions of the items, and the contexts in which they appear, see the [Wikipedia page](#)):

3-D glasses
500 year diary
900 year diary
Anti-plastic
Anti-Regeneration Gun
Archangel Network
Astral Map
Banana
Bazoolium
Ball Bearings
Black Scrolls of Rassilon
Biodamper
Blue crystal
Celery
Chameleon Arch
Chameleon circuit
Charged Vacuum Emboitement
Cloister bell
Compression field
Coronet of Rassilon
Crystal of Kronos
Data Ghost
Dalekanium
Dalek-enhanced Thompson submachine guns
Deadlock seal
Decadron Crucible

Delta Wave
De-mat gun
Dimensional Stabiliser
Dimension Vault
Doomsday Weapon
Dwarf-star alloy
Dynatrope
EMP unit
Everlasting Matches
Eye of Harmony
Field Gravity Detector
Firestone
Fob Watch
Gas Mask
Genesis Ark
Giant brain
Grachtian statue
Gravitron
Great Key of Rassilon
Great Seal of Diplos
Hand of Eldrad
Hand of Omega
The Harp of Rassilon
Huon particles
Hymetusite
Hypersonic Sound Wave Manipulator
Ice gun
Info-stamps
Jacenite
Janis thorn
Jathaa beam weapon
Jelly babies
Jethrik
A Journal of Impossible Things
Key of Rassilon
Key to Time
Koh-i-Noor Diamond
Laser Screwdriver
Laser spanner
MagnaClamp
Matrix
Melkur
Mercury Fluid Links
Miniscope
Molecular disseminator
Nanogenes
Nitro-9
Nova Device
Om-Com
Opera Glasses

Osterhagen key
Paradox Machine
Perception filter
Preacher Gun (Mk II)
Progenation Machine
Psychic credit card
Psychic paper
Quantum Accelerator
Quantum Crystalliser
Randomiser
Reality Bomb
Recorder
Rod of Rassilon
Sash of Rassilon
Scarf
Seal of the High Council
Seal of Rassilon
Security disk
Severed hand
SIDRAT
Skinsuit
Sonic blaster
Sonic knife
Sonic lance
Sonic Pen
Sonic screwdriver
Space-time telegraph
Sphere (Shada)
Sphere (The Abominable Snowmen & The Web of Fear)
Stattenheim remote control
Superphone
TARDIS
TARDIS comparator
TARDIS shields
Temporal Limiter
Terraforming device
Time Cabinet
Time Destructor
Time Log
Time Ring
Time scoop
Time/Space Visualiser
Timelash
"Timey-wimey" detector
Tissue Compression Eliminator
TOMTIT machine
Transmat
Travel dial
Tribophysical waveform macro-kinetic extrapolator
Trilogic game

Trisilicate
Umbrella
Universal Roaming
Untempered Schism
Validium
VCR
Void ship
Vortex magnetron
Vortex manipulator
Warpstar
Watch
Wormhole Refractor
Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey, The
Zero Cabinet
Zeus Plugs

* * *

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