



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 10 Aug 2011

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This is the 172nd 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.

1. Joy Harjo	1
2. The Orator	2
3. Tangiwai	2
4. We have some winners!	3
5. Ralph Hotere's 80th	3
6. Literary festivals	3
7. Jungle Rock Blues	4
8. Moon over Martinborough	4
9. The expanding bookshelf	4
10. Complimenting a writer	4
11. A new laureate	5
12. A Christchurch invitation	5
13. Opportunities knock	5
14. Recent web reading	5
15. Great lists of our time	7

1. Joy Harjo

We're looking forward to next week's visit from poet and music-maker Joy Harjo. Joy is coming to New Zealand to lead a masterclass for our MA students, but while she's in Wellington she'll also be giving two [free public presentations](#) of her work. One is in our regular [Writers on Mondays](#) lunchtime slot at Te Papa with Patricia Grace as her platform host. The other is a special evening presentation at Rutherford House in downtown Wellington

You can check out Joy's website [here](#). While you're exploring it, here's a little

known fact: Joy Harjo and Glenn Schaeffer were students together at the Iowa Writers' Workshop in the 1970s. Joy is one of the Workshop writers who figure in *We Wanted to Be Writers*, the book edited by Glenn Schaeffer and Eric Olsen, and just published by Skyhorse Publishing. There's more on the book [here](#). We understand there's even a chance that Glenn may turn up at Joy's Tuesday evening performance.

Monday 15 August, 12.15 - 1.15pm, Te Papa Marae, Wellington.

Tuesday 16 August, 7.00 - 8.30pm, Lecture Theatre 1, Rutherford House, 23 Lambton Quay, Wellington.

2. The Orator

We're also very excited – well, seriously proud and hugely over-excited – that a film which started life in Ken Duncum's MA Scriptwriting workshop is to premiere at the 68th Venice Film Festival. *The Orator/O Le Tulafale* is the debut feature of filmmaker Tusi Tamasese. It was filmed last year on the island of Upolu, Samoa, and the screenplay is entirely in Samoan. The *New Zealand Herald* notes that *The Orator's* selection 'will place Tusi Tamasese in an illustrious group of New Zealand filmmakers - including Sir Peter Jackson and Jane Campion - whose films have screened at the [Venice festival](#)'.

Tusi won the IIML's 2007 David Carson-Parker Embassy Prize for the first draft of *The Orator*. Here's [Tusi description of himself](#) back when he joined Ken's course and here's a [YouTube clip](#) where he talks about his film.

3. Tangiwai

Our 2009 Writer in Residence, Paula Boock, was co-writer for *Tangiwai: A Love Story*, which screens this Sunday August 14 at 8.30 p.m. on TV One. The production company, [Lippy Pictures](#), has set up a website where people can leave their own Tangiwai stories. This made us wonder just how many re-tellings of the Tangiwai tragedy there have been over the years. We can immediately think of several appearances in fiction, including Laurence Fearnley's prize-winning *The Hut Builder* and Bill Manhire's story and prize-winning radio-work 'The Days of Sail'. No obvious poems come to mind, though there must be some, but there are at least a couple of stage plays. One is novelist and filmmaker Anthony McCarten's first ever theatre work *Invitation to a Second Class Carriage* (1984); the other is Johnny Brugh's *The Second Test*, which like *Tangiwai: A Love Story* is about the cricketer Bob Blair whose fiancée was killed in the Tangiwai disaster while he was on tour in South Africa. Tangiwai has also been retold for children – Jillian Sullivan's poem 'On the Train to Tangiwai', and David Hill's 2004 novel *Journey to Tangiwai: the Diary of Peter Coterill*.

4. We have some winners!

National Poetry Day on July 22 was busy throughout the country. We think the best and biggest news – because it points towards the future – was the announcement of the winners of the National Schools Poetry Awards. There were ten shortlisted writers. The winner, Eden Tautali, had the invigorating experience of seeing her poem animated by the fine folk at Neogine, who have built a great [website](#) that features all the shortlisted poems by the ten finalists. The finalists will all be in Wellington the weekend after next, staying at the Bolton Hotel, and participating in a special full-day workshop with poets Bernadette Hall, James Brown and Louise Wallace.

5. Ralph Hotere's 80th

It must be odd to have your birthday on a palindrome day, but tomorrow's date is 11.8.11, and it's also the artist Ralph Hotere's 80th. The occasion is being well marked on his home territory. There are a couple of exhibitions in Dunedin: one is the Hotere/Culbert installation, *Pathway to the Sea*, at the [Dunedin Public Art Gallery](#); the other is Zero to Infinity, a 50-work show at the [Hocken Gallery](#). As a piece of synchronicity, his great work Black Phoenix headlines the [Oceania](#) show which has just opened in Wellington. Meantime, the travelling show of Hotere's line drawings has been causing [shockwaves in Invercargill](#), whose citizens seem to be living in a bit of a baffled timewarp. Ralph Hotere's paintings have always been hospitable to New Zealand's poets, so it's entirely appropriate that Bill Manhire, Cilla McQueen, Ian Wedde and David Eggleton will be giving a poetry reading at [DPAG](#) at 3.00 this Sunday afternoon.

6. Literary festivals

Going West, everyone's favourite boutique writers' festival, has survived the arrival of the super city. This year's 19-session writers' weekend is 10-11 September, and has a focus on Allen Curnow, whose birth centenary it is this year. Dinah Hawken, Spiro Zavos and Steve Braunias are among the many writer guests.

The [Whanganui Literary Festival](#) takes place 16-18 September and includes sessions with Elizabeth Knox, Elizabeth Smither and Bill Manhire.

Eleanor Catton and Craig Cliff will be discussing recent New Zealand fiction, including their own, at the [Melbourne Writers Festival](#) on September 4.

The annual Storylines Festival starts nationwide on Saturday 20 August. More information [here](#).

7. Jungle Rock Blues

A launch with a difference celebrates the republication of Nigel Cox's [Book That Must Not Be Named](#).

On Monday 29 August, from 6.00 pm, Auckland's The Basement will host a special session of [True Stories Out Loud](#), at which New Zealand writers will tell stories based on the theme of 'Writing from the Heart'. Contributors include Damien Wilkins, Elizabeth Knox, Chris Bourke, Fergus Barrowman and Brian Boyd.

8. Moon over Martinborough

We were delighted to discover that the prize-winning blog [Moon over Martinborough](#) <http://moonovermartinborough.com> came into being because of Curtis Sittenfeld's Iowa Workshop. We learned the news on [Radio New Zealand's Country Life](#) programme, which we recommend highly.

The [Iowa Workshops](#) will be running again this summer, and we can now confirm rumours that the brilliant Dave Armstrong will be teaching a special workshop on writing television drama. More details in a future newsletter.

9. The expanding bookshelf

Johanna Knox and Sabrina Malcolm have been collaborating on a new children's mystery-adventure series for 9-12 year olds, The Fly Papers. Wellingtonians can pop along to the launch today at the Children's Bookshop Kilbirnie, 4.00-5.00 pm. There's more about the [book project here](#).

Johanna and Sabrina are both past graduates of the IIML Writing for Children course, and Johanna also completed the 200 level Original Composition course with Bill Manhire in the early 90s.

Paula Morris has a new YA book out: [Dark Souls](#). It's set in the city of York where, many moons ago, Paula studied for her PhD.

A return to pines and paddocks: Rhian Gallagher's second book of poetry, [Shift](#), is about to appear from Auckland University Press.

10. Complimenting a writer

We enjoyed Hugo Williams, writing about literary parties in the TLS for July 15: 'Your average author will habitually find himself in a room full of people none of whom have read each other's books. One gradually learns that this doesn't matter and

that once you have established that someone is a writer you should always go ahead and compliment them on their work because they will never want to challenge such a precious moment. In fact, if my experience is anything to go by, it will make their day.'

11. A new laureate

Congratulations to Ian Wedde, announced last week as NZ's new [poet laureate](#). A nice and perhaps typically New Zealand irony - Wedde's [most recent book](#) is a novel. One little known fact about our new poet laureate was recently revealed by blogger Stephen Stratford - Ian Wedde seems to have invented [planking](#). Tom Fitzsimons interviewed the outgoing poet laureate, [Cilla McQueen](#), on National Poetry Day.

12. A Christchurch invitation

'Living in Christchurch? We are a small group of ex IIML graduates meeting fortnightly at a cafe for critique/discussion and a fair bit of eating. If you are interested in joining us please [email](#) for more details.'

13. Opportunities knock

Submissions are being sought for project pitching at the [Asia Pacific Producers' Network \(APN\) Symposium 2011](#).

[Young & Hungry](#) are currently accepting idea submissions for the 2013 Festival of New Theatre season. 'We are looking for fresh and funky New Zealand voices to create plays for young people aged 15-25 years'.

The [Takahē Poetry and Short Story Competitions](#) are on again.

The Lilian Ida Smith Award for 2011 is now open for applications. This biennial award provides the successful applicant, who must be a member of the NZ Society of Authors and aged 35 or over, with a grant of \$3000 to assist them towards the completion of a specific project. For further information visit [here](#).

14. Recent web reading

[Poetry covers](#)

[The BBC Writers' Room](#)

[The Atlantic's 2011 Fiction issue](#)

[Etgar Keret's extremely skinny houses](#)

[A Chronological List of Statements People Made to Me at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, 1995-1997](#)

[Putting Tennyson to music](#)

[Terrifying books](#)

The first two chapters of Laurence Fearnley's [*The Hut Builder*](#)

[Nice Guy Somerset interview with Lynn Jenner](#)

[A word from our sponsors](#)

Five Easy Questions with 2011 NZSA Best First Book winners [Pip Adam](#) & [Lynn Jenner](#)

'Jettison ornament gaily but keep shape' - [Basil Bunting's advice to young poets](#)

[Dora Malech talks with Michael Silverblatt](#) about her new book Say So on KCRW's Bookworm

[Graham Beattie shops for books in Paris](#). Does this bookshop have the most terribly punning name ever?

[What Mark Twain, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Mary Shelley, TS Eliot, Oscar Wilde & Tolstoy have in common](#)

[A winning poem](#)

[A winning short story](#)

[Highly Commended poems](#)

[A happy PhD student](#)

[Ireland's writers and artists can teach their government some useful lessons](#)

[NZ Post Book Awards winners talk about writing, winning and what's ahead](#)

[There are worse ways to lurch into your 40s than by being Neil Cross](#)

[Mix and Mash](#)

15. Great lists of our time

A list of unusual deaths (via Wikipedia)

c. 620 BC: **Draco**, Athenian law-maker, was smothered to death by gifts of cloaks showered upon him by appreciative citizens.

270 BC: **Philitas of Cos**, Greek intellectual, is said to have studied arguments and erroneous word-usage so intensely that he wasted away and starved to death.

53 BC: The Roman general and consul **Marcus Licinius Crassus** was put to death by the Parthians, after losing the Battle of Carrhae, by being forced to drink a goblet of molten gold, symbolic of his great wealth.

415: **Hypatia of Alexandria**, Greek mathematician and pagan philosopher, was murdered by a mob that ripped her skin off with sharp sea-shells.

9th century: The legendary **Prince Popiel**, was eaten alive by mice in a tower.

1410: **Martin I of Aragon** died from a lethal combination of indigestion and uncontrollable laughing.

1478: **George Plantagenet**, Duke of Clarence, was executed by drowning in a barrel of Malmsey wine at his own request.

1649: **Sir Arthur Aston** was beaten to death with his own wooden leg, which enemy soldiers thought concealed golden coins.

1660: **Thomas Urquhart**, Scottish aristocrat, polymath and first translator of Rabelais into English, is said to have died laughing upon hearing that Charles II had taken the throne.

1671: **François Vatel**, chef to Louis XIV, committed suicide because his seafood order was late and he could not stand the shame of a postponed meal.

1673: **Molière**, the French actor and playwright, died after being seized by a violent coughing fit while playing the title role in one of his own plays.

1771: **Adolf Frederick**, king of Sweden, died of digestion problems after having consumed a meal of lobster, caviar, sauerkraut, smoked herring and champagne, topped off with 14 servings of his favourite dessert: hetvägg served in a bowl of hot milk. He is thus remembered by Swedish schoolchildren as "the king who ate himself to death."

1816: **Gouverneur Morris**, an American statesman, died after sticking a piece of whale bone through his urinary tract to relieve a blockage.

1912: **Franz Reichelt**, tailor, fell to his death off the first deck of the Eiffel Tower while testing his invention, the overcoat parachute.

1918: **Gustav Kobbé**, writer and musicologist, was killed when the sailboat he was on was struck by a landing seaplane.

1923: **Frank Hayes**, a jockey at Belmont Park, New York, died of a heart attack during the course of his first race. His mount finished first with his body still attached to the saddle, and he was only discovered to be dead when the horse's owner went to congratulate him.

1940: **Marcus Garvey** died as a result of two strokes after reading a negative premature obituary of himself.

1941: **Sherwood Anderson**, writer, died of peritonitis after swallowing a toothpick at a party.

1947: **The Collyer Brothers**, extreme cases of compulsive hoarders, were found dead in their home in New York. The younger brother, Langley, was crushed to death when

he accidentally triggered one of his own booby traps that had consisted of a large pile of objects, books, and newspapers. His blind and paralyzed brother Homer, who had depended on Langley for care, died of starvation some days later.

1974: **Basil Brown**, a 48-year-old health food advocate from Croydon, drank himself to death with carrot juice.

1983: American author **Tennessee Williams** died when he choked on an eyedrop bottle-cap in his room at the Hotel Elysee in New York. He would routinely place the cap in his mouth, lean back, and place his eyedrops in each eye.

1987: **Franco Brun**, a 22-year-old prisoner at Toronto East Detention Centre, in Toronto, Ontario, choked to death after attempting to swallow a Gideon's Bible.

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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