



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 1 February 2012

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This is the 178th 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.

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Welcome to our first newsletter for 2012.

1. The year ahead

We have spread the cards and chicken entrails across the workshop table and begin to see a busy year up ahead. In Wellington, Writers and Readers Week takes place 9-14 March, and many of our students will be involved as volunteers. IIML staff and graduates are involved in various ways, among them Eleanor Catton, Craig Cliff, Tina Makereti, Ken Duncum, Chris Price and Bill Manhire. Bill is giving a public poetry masterclass, the first such in New Zealand, and there may still – just – be time for aspiring poets to have their work considered: check [here](#). The full Writers and Readers programme is available [here](#).

But wait, there's more. New Zealand's guest of honour status at the [Frankfurt Book Fair](#) is generating a lot of activity, much of it still to be announced. The IIML's Damien Wilkins will be attending the Leipzig Book Fair in March, as will Victoria graduates Elizabeth Knox, Kate Camp and Jenny Pattrick, while Chris Price is to be involved in a collaboration with contemporary German poets centred around the [Transit of Venus celebrations](#), Bill Manhire will also be travelling. With Fleur Adcock and Tusiata Avia, he will be presenting an evening of New Zealand poetry, [New Worlds, New Perspectives](#), at London's Kings Place. And we hear rumours of a new play by Ken Duncum coming up at Circa later in the year. Watch this space.

The National Schools' Poetry Awards are back again. Check [here](#) for updates.

[Bernard Beckett](#), whose identical twin sons we've just met, has now joined us as our annual writer in residence.

And Bill Manhire leaves us at the end of the year – we're expecting his job as IIML director to be advertised in a month or so.

2. Graduates exposed!

We were delighted to see so many of our students and recent graduates getting media exposure over the summer break. They were there in the *Dominion Post's* "Your Weekend" magazine, and in the *Sunday Star-Times*. We were also very pleased to see poets Hera Lindsay Bird and Ruth Upperton alongside prose writers in *Metro's* summer Literary Review – especially as the quality of their work called forth this commendation from editor Simon Wilson: "I'm especially impressed by the work of the six young writers in our annual Literary Review. Most of them are recent graduates or current students of Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters, where clearly something very fine has been added to the water."

We were also pleased to see Lawrence Patchett and Gemma Bowker Wright featuring among the "[Writers to Watch](#)" in the *Dominion Post*.

And we were also very happy about *The Exercise Book's* good reviews and sales – especially to see it on [Unity's Top 20 list](#) between Joan Didion and *The Hare with Amber Eyes*. Our [modernlettuce](#) blog, where we aim to build an online exercise archive, is also back in business.

3. Pop-up literature

Wellington is to have a temporary [Literaturhaus](#), courtesy of the Goethe Institute. The first week's programme runs 7-11 February, and includes presentations by [Kate de Goldi and Lloyd Jones](#) and a [poetry cabaret](#) with [Lorenzo Bühne](#), Bill Manhire and Chris Price.

The poetry cabaret takes place at [Meow](#), which hosts another poetry evening a week later, at which Poet Laureate Ian Wedde reads alongside Amy Brown, Aleksandra Lane and Lynn Jenner. More [here](#).

4. The expanding bookshelf

It's going to be a busy time for Aleksandra Lane, whose first book, *Birds of Clay*, will be launched amid wild gipsy music on Saturday February 11th. All welcome: there's an invitation with time and venue details [here](#).

Anthony McCarten, who was a poet when he studied Creative Writing at Victoria, has just published his new novel *In the Absence of Heroes*. Here's a recent [NZ Herald](#) profile of him.

Greg O'Brien, the original convener of our poetry workshop has a new book about to be published by Auckland University Press, *Beauties of the Octagonal Pool*. Late last year Greg could be found blogging about the [Rugby World Cup](#) and he's about to take his work to the [Cork Spring Poetry Festival](#).

James Brown, who currently convenes the poetry workshop, also has a new book coming from VUP – working title: *Hand and Rattle* – but later in the year.

5. Apostrophe corner

“I'm waiting at the Job centre. Apparently there's an exclamation mark that's been here for HOURS.”

We enjoyed the furore around Waterstones' decision to lose their apostrophe, especially as it led directly to the twitter account of @SadApostrophe, whose attempts to find fresh employment in a heartless and punctuationally-challenged world can be followed [here](#).

“Went to the pub last night. !?*@ was slumped at the bar as usual. He used to work for the News of the World. He's in there a lot.”

6. From the whiteboard

“One's complete sentences are attempts, as often as not, to complete an incomplete self with words.” William Gass

“You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.” Jack London

“I always feel I need a bath more when I'm wearing my blue suit.” Philip Larkin

7. A new writers' group at Victoria University

Caolinn Hughes has started a writers' group at Victoria which is open to all writers on campus and beyond – that's to say, there is no need to be enrolled for any of Victoria's creative writing courses to go along. The first meetings are in room 802 in the Von Zedlitz building on Wednesday afternoons from 3pm. For more information, contact [Caolinn](#).

8. Hemi's back on the street

Dunedin has Robbie Burns, Hull has Philip Larkin, and Whanganui looks likely to get a bronze [statue of James K Baxter](#). We understand the project is supported by the James K Baxter Trust and by the Whanganui City Council, as well as by the Guyton Group, who set the ball rolling. As a taster, they hope to inscribe a couple of verses from a Baxter poem on the wall of Paiges Book Gallery, which has been actively involved with the proposal. Funds will need to be raised, and anyone who wants to help can write to "The Guyton Group, c/o Paiges Book Gallery, 60 Guyton Street, Whanganui 4500" – or email [Lesley Stead](#).

9. A couple of competitions

Readers will know that we don't often promote competitions, as so many of them seem mainly to be money-raising projects for the organising entity. Here are a couple of entry-free ones that we like, though.

The Thresholds Short Story Forum is running a competition for feature writing. The first prize is £250, deadline is 29 February, and length is up to 2,000 words. More [here](#).

The US journal *Shenandoah*, which recently moved online, offers the [Bevel Summers Prize for the Short Short Story](#). "The submission window for 2012 is March 1 and March 31, 2012. Word limit is 1000. No entry fee. Writers may submit as many as three stories. The winner will receive \$500 and publication in *Shenandoah*; all finalists will be eligible for publication in *Shenandoah*."

10. Recent web reading

[Jenny Bornholdt – in American, with cigarette](#)

[Laurence Fearnley on white-water kayaking](#)

[Ken Duncum profile](#)

[The Book: A Life Cycle](#)

[Hierarchy of Book Publishing - New Zealand Top Twenty](#)

[“Writers have the final say” - how the Danes make such successful television drama](#)

[Cormac McCarthy: screenwriter](#)

[Laurie Anderson meets Thomas Pynchon](#)

[Solitude and creativity](#)

[Ashleigh Young meets Edgar Allan Poe](#)

[NZ Poet Laureate Ian Wedde in a podcast interview](#)

[Joy Cowley: writer and woodworker](#)

[Mary McCallum's 2011 best of books and music](#)

[Mavericks need not apply](#)

[Sebald's “eleven books to read for a class on Major Trends in European Fiction”](#)

[The other Vincent O'Sullivan](#)

[What philosophers look like](#)

[The mysteries of poetry editing](#)

[Reasons not to sleep with a poet](#)

[Salman Rushdie interview](#)

[Smother Goose: a treasury of traumatic children's tales](#)

[The Scottish Poetry Library's fine new website](#)

[How to read poetry](#)

[White Fungus goes to MoMA](#)

[Paula Morris's *Rangatira* reviewed](#)

11. Great lists of our time

Here is a list of applicants who were unsuccessful in their recent bids for Creative New Zealand funding:

1. Helpless Henley
2. Repent Durant
3. Wrestling Brewster
4. Restore Weeks
5. Fight-the-good-fight-of-faith White
6. Kill-sin Pimple
7. Preserved Fish
8. Hope-for Bending
9. Flye-debate Smart
10. Much-mercic Harmer
11. Thankfull Thorpe
12. Safe-on-Highe Hopkinson
13. Sin-Deny Outtered
14. Anger Bull
15. Continent Walker
16. Hate-ill Wood
17. Replenish French
18. Called Lower
19. Hope-still Peedle
20. Humiliation Hinde
21. Abuse-not Collyer
22. Faithful Teate
23. Repentance Water

24. Vyctorye Buttres
25. Buried Sence Muschamp
26. Creature Cheeseman
27. Magnyfye Beard
28. If-Christ-had-not-died-for-thee-thou-hadst-been-damned (known familiarly as “Dr. Damned”) Barebone
29. Battalion Shotbolt
30. Die-Well Sykes
31. Weakly Ekins
32. Lament Fox
33. Redivivia Mathews
34. Sorry-for-sin Coupard
35. No-merit Vynall
36. Lively Moody
37. Abstinence Pougher
38. Obey Larkford
39. Humble Ward
40. Faint-not Blatcher
41. Wealthy Whathing
42. Unfeigned Panckhurst
43. Clemency Chawncey
44. Vitalis Engaine
45. Love Appletree

Of course the Creative New Zealand bit is just a feeble joke, but the names are all apparently real – or were once. See further [here](#).

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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.

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, Development Manager-Planned Giving, Victoria University of Wellington Foundation Ph: 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534), Email: diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz