



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtake Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 21 May 2010

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This is the 156th 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](mailto:modernletters@vuw.ac.nz).

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1. Our workshops are available!

We’re delighted to be able to say that our second trimester creative writing workshops are **exempt** from Victoria University’s decision to no longer accept any new domestic undergraduate applications for the remainder of 2010. **Please tell interested friends.**

The courses available are CREW 253 Poetry Workshop, CREW 255 Children’s Writing Workshop, CREW 256 Writing the Landscape, and CREW 257 Creative Nonfiction.

Each workshop accepts only 12 students. Applications can be made online as usual, but any queries should be sent to modernletters@vuw.ac.nz, or phone 04-463 6854.

Each course offers twelve three-hour workshops, and one individual consultation with the workshop leader. Courses are ungraded (pass/fail only), and you receive two

extended written commentaries on your final folio – one from your workshop leader, the other from a published writer.

The official application deadline is Saturday June 5.

Descriptions of the individual workshops follow.

2. CREW 253 Poetry Workshop

This course involves the writing and study of poetry. Weekly workshops are held for the discussion of set exercises, set readings and work in progress by course participants. In the second half of the course students will present a draft folio of poems for discussion and written feedback from the rest of the group. There is a specially designed set-text reader of poetry and essays, available from Student Notes just prior to the commencement of the course. There are also workshop visits from leading New Zealand poets.

The workshop leader is [James Brown](#), whose four poetry collections are all published by Victoria University Press. His poetry is widely anthologised, including in several [Best New Zealand Poems](#). He has held the Writer in Residence Fellowships at Canterbury University and Victoria University, and been a finalist in the Montana New Zealand Book Awards three times.

The course runs Thursdays 3 – 6pm.

3. CREW 255 Children's Writing Workshop

Become the next Margaret Mahy!

In this workshop you'll explore different forms of writing for the pre-adolescent child: picture books, plays, short stories and the novel, and you'll begin to develop your own clear voice as a writer.

CREW 255 Children's Writing Workshop is led by [Eirlys Hunter](#) whose children's titles include *Coldkeep Castle*, *The Astonishing Madam Majolica*, and *The Robber and the Millionaire*.

The course runs Mondays 4 – 7pm at the IIML, 16 Waiteata Road, Kelburn Campus.

Eirlys Hunter writes:

“In past workshops exercise work has led to a huge variety of stories including: *The Do List for the Unshrivelled* (which begins ‘Dear Whippersnapper, I used to be young and short but unfortunately I ate my leeks and crusts...’), *The Thief*, about a girl whose family lives in a caravan in a camping ground in Taranaki; *Golden North*,

about a boy who lives with his aunt in Alaska; a story about a highly-trained chicken called Nuggets, and a fantasy called *Aphra and Fennel*. Everyone wrote (at least) the text for a picture book and the beginning of a novel for older children. Everyone surprised themselves. I must also mention that the Writing for Children class enjoys a high standard of afternoon teas!”

There are also workshop visits from professional writers, and a course prize (the Maurice Gee Prize) is awarded to the best end-of-course folio.

4. CREW 256 Writing the Landscape

A workshop, unique in New Zealand, focusing on writing and the natural world.

The workshop leader is [Dinah Hawken](#) whose five books of poetry (*It Has No Sound and is Blue*, *Small Stories of Devotion*, *Water, Leaves, Stones*, *Oh There You are Tui!* and *One Shapely Thing*) have been largely inspired by the natural environment.

The course runs Fridays 10am – 1pm.

Our relationship as human beings with the natural world is both intimate and vital and yet we often have very little time for it. This creative writing workshop gives you the chance to explore some of the landscapes around you and to develop your potential as a writer. You will write both poetry and creative non-fiction (such as travel accounts, journal entries, reflective essays) but will also have the opportunity to concentrate on one or the other.

Attending to the natural world with an ‘animal-watchfulness’, and playing with words to express your response to it, are two of the main tasks of the workshop. Another is sharing your writing with others in the group, hearing their reactions, and refining your own judgements. The course will also include a writing field trip.

5. CREW 257 Creative Nonfiction Workshop

This course involves the writing and study of Creative Nonfiction, sometimes called ‘the fourth genre’, or the literature of reality. The term refers to any kind of nonfiction writing which uses the techniques of narrative fiction. In practice, this tends to mean the memoir, the personal essay, the biographical sketch, travel writing and other kinds of prose life writing. In this course, students will explore a full range of Creative Nonfiction possibilities – but will also be able to focus on a particular area of interest.

The workshop is led by [Harry Ricketts](#), Associate Professor of English at Victoria, whose publications include an acclaimed biography of Kipling, and *How to Catch a Cricket Match* in the Awa Press essay series. He is also a well-published poet and co-editor of the reviews journals *New Zealand Books*.

Both David Vann and Lee Gutkind (see below) are acclaimed writers of Creative Nonfiction.

The course runs Fridays 9.30 – 12.30 pm.

6. Public event reminder (1)

US writer David Vann appears in a special event presented by the IIML at City Gallery on Wednesday 26 May at 6pm. The event is free and open to the public: early arrival is recommended to secure a place. Access to this event is via the Gallery's Harris Street entrance.

David Vann is best known for *Legend of a Suicide*, a remarkable book of stories set around his father's suicide. This genre-defying work - a fictionalised memoir - has been named in numerous Best Books of the Year lists in the UK, US and Australia. It is a bestseller in France, and has been translated into many languages. American writer Lorrie Moore praised the book for its 'luminous narrative art'. David has also written two memoirs connected with his disastrous adventures as a sailor.

More recently, his account of the Northern University of Illinois shooter, Steven Mazmierczak, who killed five students, won the 2009 AWP Non-Fiction Prize. His novel, *Caribou Island*, will be published next year. (Kim Hill's December 2009 interview with David Vann is still available on the Radio New Zealand website.)

7. Public event reminder (2)

Lee Gutkind appears in conversation with the IIML's Creative Nonfiction workshop leader Harry Ricketts in a public event at City Gallery on Thursday 3 June, 6pm. This event is also free and all are welcome.

Lee Gutkind is widely known as the 'godfather of creative nonfiction'. 'Creative nonfiction stories,' in Gutkind's definition, 'are dramatic, true stories that use scene, dialogue and close, detailed descriptions - techniques usually employed by poets and fiction writers - to examine and explore a variety of subjects: politics, economics, sports, race relations, family relations, the arts and sciences and more.'

Lee Gutkind is the founding editor of *Creative Nonfiction* magazine and prize-winning author or editor of more than a dozen books, the most recent of which is *Almost Human: Making Robots Think*. His forthcoming book is a memoir, *Truckin' with Sam*, co-written with his son.

8. And a Tweet reminder

You can now follow us on [Twitter](#).

Recent tweets include:

[Crikey! Metrical and/or marital strife. Check out the comments beneath this Guardian poetry review:](#)

[Wine & Poetry: Fiona Kidman and Bill Manhire at Gladstone Vineyard with Fergus Barrowman, 3.00 pm this Saturday.](#)

[Peter Jackson needs this woman](#)

[Tennis poet](#)

[Elizabeth Knox meets Philip Pullman](#)

[Janet Frame the Buddhist](#)

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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