CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—Looking for a good read? Here are some writers to avoid.

The winner—or loser—of an academics' Bad Writing Contest announced Friday was Frederic Jameson, a professor of comparative literature at Duke University in North Carolina.

His book, "Signatures of the Visible," opens with this sentence:

"The visual is essentially pornographic, which is to say that it has its end in rapt, mindless fascination; thinking about its attributes becomes an adjunct to that, if it is unwilling to betray its object; while the most austere films necessarily draw their energy from the attempt to repress their own excess (rather than from the more thankless effort to discipline the viewer)."

Contest organizers said they believed reading his prose "was like swimming through cold porridge."

Telephone calls to Jameson's home Saturday were not answered.

All the entries in the contest were gleaned from published academic works. The top three offenders were all English professors. The judges observed: "This reliance on jargon is an indication of the death throes of English as an academic discipline."

Second place went to Rob Wilson of the University of Hawaii, whose sentence reads, in part:

"If such a sublime cyborg would insinuate the future as post-Fordist subject, his palpably masochistic locations as ecstatic agent of the sublime superstate need to be decoded as the 'nowall-but-unreadable DNA' of the fast deindustrializing Detroit."

The third-place winner kept his sentence short.

"The lure of imaginary totality is momentarily frozen before the dialectic of desire hastens on within symbolic chains," wrote Fred Botting in his 1991 work, "Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory." Botting is a lecturer at Lancaster University in England.

The contest showed that academics and major publishing houses have been so busy using the "magical incantations of jargon, they've forgotten what real thinking is," said contest judge Denis Dutton, senior lecturer in the philosophy of art at Canterbury University in Christchurch.