



some languages survive, many have become extinct and with them a way of life, a way of being, of navigating the world writers contribute to the authenticity of political dialogue and the preservation of cultural diversities as civilisation is recorded through the written words and arts literature and freedom of expression cannot be separated from each other because of their intrinsic values no matter how controversial or difficult our words are, their ultimate purpose is to bring people together we represent literature and freedom of expression, and that you can't separate one from the other, it is a simple statement of fact imagination and the transparency that imagination creates, and the acceptance of complexity—all of this is above politics and below politics a piece of paper with words on it cannot accurately convey the right inflections and nuances there will always be parts lost in the transition from oral to paper Indigenous language has something very special to offer in terms of its inseparability from its natural environment Where I come from language cannot be separated from anything else because it is interwoven into our culture it's interesting that the things I find the most amusing happen to be, well, political We have that great power which is language and imagination we are confronted by an epidemic of silencing that will result in the language and cultural loss if a language dies, then the fundamental part of that culture is missing and can never be replaced

Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing

A language is the energy of the people who created that language are the right and necessary ones to enact that energy, to bring that language back to life. Yet they need collaborators and interested listeners, too the

Eureka now! FreeSpeak Event—details on page 4

hardest thing to write about or explain is how the language seems to belong in the land and sea: it is as if it rises up out of the Yanyuwa country. When the British flag was raised at Sydney Cove 222 years ago, there were 250 separate languages spoken on the continent later known as Australia. There were therefore 250 cultures, nations, each with their way of understanding the place they called home. In

Annual PEN Melbourne card-writing event—support courageous writers globally who refuse to be silenced—see page 7

pen MELBOURNE *Quarterly*

**Issue 3
October 2011**

PEN Melbourne Committee

President	Arnold Zable
Vice-Presidents	Judith Buckrich, Judith Rodriguez
Treasurer	Rob Cope (co-opted)
Membership secretary	Elaine Lewis
Secretary	Jackie Mansourian
Writers in Prison officer	Chris Flynn and Paddy O'Reilly (co-opted)
Asia and Pacific liaison	berni m janssen
Committee members	Cynthia Troup, Christine McKenzie
Website administrator	Paddy O'Reilly

Honorary Members of PEN Melbourne

Anne Bihan has lived in New Caledonia since 1993. She was a guest poet/translator representing New Caledonia at the 2008 Franco-Anglais Poetry Festival and was subsequently invited to work with berni janssen, coordinator of the A&PWN (Australia and Pacific Writers Network).

Seedy Bojang is a journalist and writer from The Gambia. After the closure of independent newspapers in The Gambia, Seedy was briefly employed by the government-supported Gambia newspaper. His employment was terminated because he would not write articles supporting the government.

Wajeha Al Huwaidar is a writer and women's rights activist from Saudi Arabia. Wajeha has often been a lone voice for women's rights, campaigning for women to be allowed to drive cars and against their treatment as second-class citizens.

Zhang Jianhong 1958–2010. The prominent poet, playwright, editor and author died 31 December 2010. Independent Chinese Pen (ICPC) considers Mr Zhang Jianhong (Li Hong) as a victim of contemporary literary inquisition in China and one of the worst cases since China started its policy of 'reform and opening-up' in the late 1970s.

Lucina Kathmann is an International Vice-President of PEN and has had a long association with the San Miguel de Allende PEN Centre in Mexico. She helped establish PEN Women Writers Committee. She has travelled through Kurdistan, including into Iraq with Kurdish writers who had been in exile from their homeland.

Rosa Vasseghi faced years of repression in Iran and has made a new life in Melbourne. She is the author and illustrator of eight children's books, a painter, an organiser of musical gatherings, and is currently completing an Iranian cookbook. In 2009 she published her book *Where is the justice? Stories from behind closed doors*, which documents the stories of women and girls persecuted in a various countries.

Irina Khalip was arrested on 19 December 2010 after she reported on demonstrations connected to the Belarusian presidential election. Severely beaten and held in isolation by the Belarusian State Security (KGB) for one month in Minsk she was then placed under strict house arrest. In May 2011 Khalip was handed a two-year suspended sentence but lost her appeal case in July 2011.

Natalia Radzina, Belarusian journalist, was ordered to attend the KGB office in Minsk on 31 March. It is thought that the KGB wanted to bring a formal charge against her for organising 'mass disorder' during a protest against the presidential election result in December 2010. Radzina is thought to be seeking political asylum in a foreign country.

Newsletter Production

Editor	Christine McKenzie
Assistant Editor	Christina C Ratcliffe
Copyeditor	Mary-Jo O'Rourke
Desktop Publishing	Lynn Smailes

Submission enquiries: admin@melbournepen.com.au

Please write 'Newsletter' in the subject line.

The opinions in this publication are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the editors and the PEN committee.

PEN Melbourne

PO Box 373, Fairfield, VIC 3078

Phone: 9482 6134 after 7 p.m.

admin@melbournepen.com.au

www.melbournepen.com.au

PEN Melbourne at The Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas

176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

Messages may be left on 03 9094 7885

You will be contacted as soon as possible



pen
INTERNATIONAL

www.internationalpen.org.uk

**THE
WHEELER
CENTRE
AGE**



Supporters of PEN Melbourne



Contents

PEN Melbourne Reports	
President's Report	5
Features	
Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing	
Introduction by Arnold Zable	12
Kim Scott	13
John Bradley	15
Marie Munkara	17
Connections	21
Sue Jackson	
A riddle and a dare	28
Translating Aphids' A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays into Italian	
Cynthia Troup	
Poetry	
Nuances	19
Ann Shenfield	
The dark	20
Thanh Le	
In the name of friendship	36
Di Cousens	
Special reports	
77th World Congress of PEN International, Belgrade	8
Judith Rodriguez	
2011 PEN International Congress winds up	25
Seedy Bojang	
PEN International	
International President's opening speech at Belgrade Congress	23
John Ralston Saul	
International publishers to work with PEN	27
Notices	
PEN Melbourne FreeSpeak event—Eureka now!	4
Co-opted committee members	4
PEN Annual General Meeting and card-writing event	7
Commentary	
Lessons learnt in Libya	35
Seedy Bojang	
Books	
From the Writer's Desk	38
Seedy Bojang	

PEN Melbourne Notices

PEN Melbourne committee welcomes Robert Cope, Chris Flynn and Paddy O'Reilly as co-opted members

Robert Cope, Treasurer

Robert has worked at the Universities of Michigan, Massachusetts, and Washington as well as serving at University of Melbourne and ANU as a visiting academic. Academic subjects are varied, from psychology and accounting to macro economics. Presently retired and he occasionally writes news and Op-Ed pieces for North American publications.

Chris Flynn, Writers in Prison officer

Chris is books editor at *The Big Issue* and fiction consultant at *Australian Book Review*. He writes for *The Age*, *The Book Show* on ABC Radio National, *The Australian* and *The Paris Review*, and is editing a forthcoming issue of *McSweeney's* devoted to Indigenous Australian fiction. His novel, *A Tiger in Eden* (Text Publishing) will be released in 2012.

Paddy O'Reilly, Writers in Prison officer and Website administrator

Paddy is the author of *The Factory*, a novel, and *The End of the World*, a collection of short stories. Her stories have won awards and been published in Australia, Europe and the USA. Her next novel, *The Fine Colour of Rust*, is forthcoming in March 2012 from Blue Door, HarperCollins.

FreeSpeakFreeSpeakFreeSpeakFreeSpeakFreeSpeakFreeSpeak

Eureka now!

Brendan Gullifer with Professor Spencer Zifcak

Mechanics Institute Ballarat, Victoria

Saturday 3 December from 5 p.m. Free Event

Eureka was a defining moment for democracy in Australia when people of over twenty different nationalities fought together in defense of freedom against tyrannical laws. It was a fight for democracy, a fight for freedom, for freedom of speech, for equality. This event will focus on issues of freedom of speech in 21st century Australia. Questions that can be considered include, do we need a bill of rights? And in the light of the recent Bolt case, what are the limits to freedom of speech?

Former Sydney PEN Vice President, Dr Rosie Scott put it like this:

'Free speech is the cornerstone of genuine democracy, but when writers publish disinformation dressed up as fact, lies as truth, slander as objective evaluation and call it free speech, they are devaluing its very essence and betraying all those who've fought for it.'

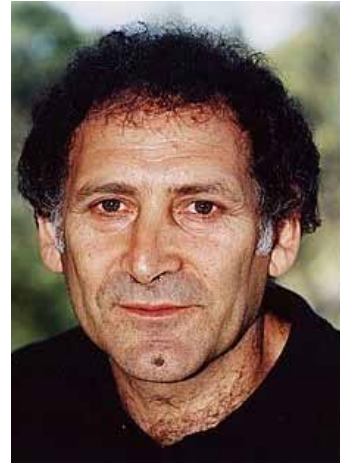
Brendan Gullifer will discuss these issues with Professor Spencer Zifcak

In his launch speech for *Sold*, author Brendan Gullifer says that his book is about "where we get to when outcomes are pursued in complete disregard of consequences or ethics. And people are rewarded accordingly. It's the Australian Wheat Board. It's Enron. It's Barings Bank. It's Lehman Brothers. It's George Bush. It's John Howard. In the long term, it's completely unsustainable."

Professor Spencer Zifcak is President of Liberty Victoria and Professor and Director of the Institute of Legal Studies at Australian Catholic University. He researches and teaches in international law, comparative constitutional law and human rights law. He has written several books and has published more than a hundred articles in these fields. Spencer is a Director of the Australia Institute and the Centre for Dialogue at La Trobe University and is an Executive Member of the Australian Human Rights Group and the Accountability Round Table.

Report

President's Report



Arnold Zable

PEN Melbourne is one of 145 PEN centres in 106 countries. While each centre is intimately bound up with the roof body, PEN International, and acts according to its charter, individual centres develop their specific interests and character. So it is with PEN Melbourne. Our core commitment remains our work on behalf of persecuted writers worldwide and our commitment to PEN International's principal tenet, that literature knows no boundaries. As long-time PEN member, the Argentinean writer, Mario Vargas Llosa, succinctly put it, 'In time of division between countries, International PEN is one of the rare institutions to keep a bridge constantly open'.

At the same time, two of our most recent events have consolidated our specific concerns as a centre, to reach out to voices that may not be so readily heard in mainstream Australian literature. These include Indigenous writers and writers from many backgrounds, some of whom still write in their original language. These words are echoed by one of PEN International's major concerns: 'Literature is essential to understanding and engaging with other worlds; if you can't hear the voice of another culture, how can you understand it?'

The two events I refer to have arisen out of PEN Melbourne's FreeSpeak program. The first was a cross-cultural poetry and translation salon, held at the inimitable Collected Works bookshop on Monday 25 July 2011. Poets from some of Melbourne's many diverse communities were invited to write poems on the theme of free speech in their own languages. Selected poems were performed and, translated, were published as a special feature in our previous *Quarterly*. The languages heard and published included Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish, Arabic, French and Turkish. The evening provided a model for similar events in the future.

These words are echoed by one of PEN International's major concerns: 'Literature is essential to understanding and engaging with other worlds; if you can't hear the voice of another culture, how can you understand it?'

The second FreeSpeak event, PEN's annual Melbourne Writers Festival panel session, 'Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing', reflected another major concern of PEN International—the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages. While some languages survive, many have become extinct and with them a way of life, a way of being, of navigating the world.

This panel session has since led to a joint venture between the PEN Melbourne *Quarterly* and *Overland* magazine, featuring essays written by the three participants, Kim Scott, linguist John Bradley and Darwin-based novelist, Marie Munkara. The essays are published as a special feature both in the next edition of *Overland* and in this edition of the *Quarterly*.

In reading all of Kim Scott's work in recent weeks, I have become more acutely aware that he is a writer at the forefront of Australian literature, both as a superb craftsman and as an author who

has documented the dispossession of his ancestral Noongar people of Western Australia. Scott's work crosses boundaries and offers many points of view. His three novels, *True Country*, *Benang* and the much-celebrated *That Deadman Dance*, alongside his oral history, *Kayang and Me*, represent a twenty-year quest to know his people.

While confronting very dark episodes, Scott also offers hope and excitement with his emphasis on cross-cultural understanding and language retrieval. The recently published bilingual, English-Noongar picture books, *Mamang* and *Noongar Mambara Bakidj*, retold by Kim Scott and Lomas Roberts among others, are products of the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project. These books have evolved over years of community consultation centred on language retrieval. They provide models for similar projects in Indigenous communities Australia-wide.

This month we are reminded of the critical importance of PEN International's work on behalf of persecuted writers. October 7 marked the fifth anniversary of the assassination of Russian journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, an acclaimed journalist, author and human rights advocate. Politkovskaya was shot dead in the elevator of her Moscow apartment.

To mark the occasion, PEN International renewed its calls on the Russian authorities to end the impunity of those responsible for the killing, and to ensure a full and impartial investigation in order to identify those responsible.

'We honour Anna Politkovskaya's memory with vigilance and we insist upon justice for her,' said Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee. 'She was a fearless defender of the truth, and so we must continue to demand the truth behind her murder.'

Anna Politkovskaya first received threats in 1999 when she began documenting gross human rights abuses by the Russian armed forces in Chechnya. She took great risks in covering the conflict and her courageous investigative efforts resulted in several books: *A Dirty War: A Russian Reporter in Chechnya* in 2001 and *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya* in 2003. She became a forthright critic of Vladimir Putin, describing the then President as a 'power-hungry product of his own history in the armed forces' in her 2004 book *Putin's Russia*. Events of recent weeks, signalling the return of Putin to the presidency, seem to confirm her observations.

In 2001, while reporting in Chechnya, Politkovskaya was detained by military officials, who threatened to torture and rape her and subjected her to a mock execution. In 2002, she was one of the few outsiders allowed into a Moscow theatre in an attempt to negotiate with Chechen rebels for the release of hundreds of hostages held there. Her murder silenced a much admired and courageous voice.

In the months after her murder, PEN Melbourne honoured Anna Politkovskaya with several readings from her powerful works. Anna wrote with great passion and daring. She did not compromise. In the best traditions of investigative journalism, she went out into the field to see and hear for herself, unmediated by official spin and propaganda. And she paid the highest price for her efforts.

PEN Melbourne continues to co-host events, which resonate with its concerns for freedom of speech. On August 23, PEN Melbourne and WISA, Women's International Solidarity Australia, hosted Maryam Namazie, refugee advocate, broadcaster and spokesperson for One Law for All (UK), who spoke on the topic of 'Sharia law and human rights'. One Law for All is a strong advocate of one secular law that protects the rights and freedoms equally of all those living in Britain, with no religious courts.

In her presentation Maryam made a distinction between Islam as a faith and ‘political Islam’ with its fundamentalist political agenda. She believes that the demand for Sharia law has grown with the increasing influence globally of ‘political Islam’. More than 90 people participated in the meeting, with open and dynamic discussion following Maryam’s presentation. Her visit to Australia was timely and a useful contribution to the dialogue we must continue to have in Australia.

PEN Melbourne’s commitment to international forums is reflected in Judith Rodriguez’ representation at the recent PEN International congress in Belgrade. Judith’s report as well as the resolutions of the congress appear in this Quarterly. Our other intrepid traveller, Judy Buckrich, is going to Cambodia in November as a guest of the Cambodian PEN. Her visit will strengthen our ties with the centre and also add another dimension to the Asia Pacific Writers Network. Committee member bernijanssen is still at the helm of the network, which provides a forum for many writers in the region.

This month also marks a number of changes in key personnel. After five years of hard work as PEN Melbourne’s Writers in Prison advocate, Toni Jordan is handing over the reins to Chris Flynn and Paddy O’Reilly. Toni has been totally committed to the role throughout the past five years, answering Rapid Action Alerts, coordinating our ongoing letter writing campaigns and our annual card writing event, and disseminating information about new cases. She has ensured a smooth transition to two very able replacements. We are very grateful for Toni’s work and also pleased to welcome Paddy and Chris aboard.

We also welcome Robert Cope as our new honorary treasurer. Robert has been a PEN supporter for a number of years. He replaces Elaine Lewis, who has performed her duties as treasurer as she has every task she has undertaken—with enthusiasm and meticulous attention to detail. Elaine remains as the membership officer and continues to organise events, with a special interest in translation and the work of writers from diverse communities. She was a driving force behind PEN Melbourne’s first FreeSpeak event.

Christine McKenzie has edited yet another great *Quarterly* and Jackie Mansourian continues to send out regular missives to all our members. We look forward to our third FreeSpeak event, to be held on December 3, in Ballarat, the home of Eureka, and to our annual card writing get-together.

Arnold Zable, October 2011

AGM and card-writing event

You are warmly invited to attend PEN Melbourne’s Annual General Meeting and our annual card-writing event to courageous writers globally who refuse to be silenced on

Monday, November 28, 7.30pm - 9.30pm.

North Fitzroy Star

32 St Georges Road South

North Fitzroy

RSVP by November 21 admin@melbournepen.com.au

Special Reports

PEN International

77th World Congress of PEN International

Belgrade, 12–18 September 2011

This Congress set as one of its aims to encourage a new togetherness among the Balkan states, which were so recently opposed in deadly conflict. This achieved notable successes. The most difficult sticking-point is Serbia's relationship with Kosovo, yet Kosovan delegates were admitted to Serbia – they did not get visas, but they were allowed to cross into Serbia and were driven to the Congress by Serbian PEN members. The Congress saw the formation of a Balkan regional network of thirteen PEN Centres, which looks to future cooperative work.

Given Serbia's efforts to renew its international relations, the location of the Congress in New Belgrade was significant. A modern precinct of wide avenues and large apartment and office blocks to the west of the Sava River and the old city, New Belgrade afforded ready access to old fishing villages visited by some delegates on the shores of the Danube upstream from the capital. The Congress itself was in the Continental Hotel, its eastern rooms looking across the Sava's bridges at the old city, an easy walk for those with the time.

The opening ceremony, on the evening of Tuesday 13 September, was held in Belgrade's Town Hall, a dignified stone building with a series of fine large leadlight panels depicting heroic events of World War II. Delegates were welcomed by Vida Ognjenovic, President of the Serbian PEN Centre, and Boris Tadic, the President of the Republic of Serbia.

A program of music by a youngish composer, Isidora Zebeljan, was presented by a group from her own orchestra. I particularly admired two songs to Shakespearean themes – “Milan Air” and “Ferdinand and Miranda”. The composer said afterwards she intends to write more music with a Shakespearean inspiration. The program was followed by a reception and delegates then walked to the National Theatre, where they witnessed a modern dance work, Vojislav Voki Kostic's *Who's Singing Over There?*, interpreting a recent Serbian novel about the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia.

When the Assembly of Delegates opened the next morning, we found that the hall's usual order—with ‘A’ centres at the front, going back in alphabetical order to Zambia and Zimbabwe, up against the interpreters' booths—had been reversed. Fortunately that left Melbourne about where it has always been—within calling distance of both ends. The Danes were the first to complain; quiet satisfaction emanated from all occupying the frontish seats, from ‘R’ and ‘S’ onwards.

The initial press release of the Congress recognised the achievements of 2010 Nobel laureates Mario Vargas Llosa, a former President of PEN International and winner of the Prize for Literature, and Liu Xiaobo, former President of the Independent Chinese Centre and winner of the Peace Prize.

Reports

Notable points from Reports were the international mobility and activism of our President, John Ralston Saul; the responsibilities allotted individually to all members of the International Board; and the efforts—current and set to continue—to achieve swifter and better communication and understanding between different parts of the PEN International organisation.

International Treasurer Eric Lax was able to report that PEN has emerged from debt but continues to depend on timely presentation of centres' dues.

- Innovative plans are being implemented, such as the Publishers' Circle, a group already containing major publishers from several cultures, who have pledged substantial funding.
- While restricted funds (designated for specific uses) are wonderful, PEN's great need is for unrestricted funding—and strong support (donations from members) is needed if donors outside our organisation are to be attracted.



The Estonian delegate—Kaldmaa Katlin

New Director

Our new Executive Director, Laura McVeigh, addressed the Assembly and was everywhere observing and contributing to our activities. Her excellent French and Spanish are an asset. Her ideas on organising congresses and communication with centres should soon make themselves felt. The Assembly did not forget the devoted heavy lifting by joint Acting Executive Directors Frank Geary and Sara Wyatt (in addition to their previously allotted workloads) during the last year; anyone contacting the international office has been aware of it. The standing ovation was a genuine tribute.

Program

The two first days of the Congress were taken up with committee meetings. I attended the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee with other Search Committee members, to hold the election for committee chair; also a special meeting of the Women Writers Committee. Three days of sessions of the Assembly of Delegates followed, with cultural events in the evenings – readings and a salon with buffet dinner. I also attended a post-Congress retreat of the Board in Novi Sad, further up the Danube, for a wide-ranging discussion of directions for PEN's future.

Workshops

A pre-lunch period between Assembly sessions was given over to minuted workshops on governance, congresses, technology and PEN's image, to be used in planning.

Resolutions

Most of the Resolutions originated, as usual, from the Writers in Prison Committee. However, the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, with its Girona Declaration on the rights of minority languages, and the Writers for Peace Committee, now with four working groups specialising in the Middle East, minorities in China, Russian PEN and democratisation and peace in Eastern Europe, have both taken on a new purposefulness in making recommendations to the Assembly.

The Resolutions passed concern human rights issues in Bahrain, Basque issues, Belarus, China, China: Uyghur issues, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, South Africa, Syria, Syria: Kurdish issues, Turkey, Turkey: Kurdish peace issues, Turkey: Kurdish language issues, Vietnam, European Union, European Union: Roma issues, Recommendation for a review of the constitution of the Board of PEN International, and Recommendations for events surrounding the 90th Anniversary of PEN International.

The Resolutions on the European Union concern legislation or threatened legislation promoting racism, particularly that affecting the Roma, or Gypsies.

Abuses of human rights in Fiji were briefly discussed and a decision made to write to the government there. New Zealand delegate Nelson Wattie and I protested that enough was already known for a firmer response. However, PEN International's research on the area is sparse. We shall prepare a Resolution for next year.

Elections

One Board member, Mohamed Magani (Algerian Centre) came to the end of his second term and therefore was not eligible to stand again. Yang Lian (Independent Chinese Centre) was re-elected and two other candidates, Ekbal Baraka (Egypt) and Sylvestre Clancier (France), twice tied for the remaining place on the Board. However, the voters and electoral committee of PEN are tireless and finally gave a clear majority to Sylvestre Clancier.

The Assembly ratified the re-election of the Chair of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, Josep-Maria Terricabras of the Catalan Centre.

An unprecedented event was a special meeting of the Women Writers' Committee, which moved and passed (unanimously) a vote of no confidence in its Chair of two years, Kadija George. This was the result of her absence from meetings and lack of activities. The Assembly ratified this move and the International Board will discuss future moves. Meanwhile, a group of members of the Committee has pledged to continue communication by website and newsletter, and to consult among all members concerning the Committee's future including the election of a Chair.

Delegates came from 87 centres, with almost 300 attendees in all, a very creditable number given the Congress's modest funding, with less help offered to needy Centres than, for instance, at last year's Tokyo Congress. Only the Hispano-American sector was disappointingly underrepresented.

Sitting with me for several Assembly sessions was PEN Melbourne's honorary member, writer-in-exile Seedy Bojang, a delightful colleague who is scoring writing successes—his latest book has been accepted for U.S. publication.

Assisting the Serbian PEN Centre was a squad of students, many with good English language, who seemed ever-present and ever-helpful. I was delighted to re-meet in Nice one of our Serbian angels scheduled to begin a year studying French—and to put her in touch with friends who were happy to help her in various ways. Another reunion was with South African Margie Orford, an articulate and energetic PEN delegate, who was in Melbourne as keynote speaker for the Sisters in Crime convention *Shekilda: Women Crime Writers Convention 2011*. The world gets smaller and smaller.

Next Congress

Plans for the Gyeongju Congress of 9–16 September 2012 were presented by Lee Gil-won, President of the Korean Centre. Its theme is 'Literature and Media'.

Judith Rodriguez

International Secretary Hori Takeaki talking to two delegates.



In Republic Square, delegates perch on the Monument to Prince Mihailo Obrenovic III to hear informal readings from the balcony of the National Theatre. International President John Ralston Saul (holding program) is sitting in the front row with his wife Adrienne Clarkson, a former Governor-General of Canada, beside him.



Peter Rifkin of Frankfurt, a founder of ICORN (Cities of Refuge) representing it at the Congress; Judith Rodriguez, PEN Melbourne delegate; Seedy Bojang, Gambian Writer in Exile living in Copenhagen and honorary member of the Melbourne Centre; Lucina Kathmann, Vice-President of PEN International, from San Miguel de Allende Centre; and Sarah Lawson, of the English Centre.



Feature

Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing

A PEN Melbourne Panel, originally presented at the 2011 Melbourne Writers Festival with John Bradley, Kim Scott and Marie Munkara

Introduction by Arnold Zable

The preservation of indigenous languages is a major concern of PEN International and a challenge for indigenous peoples worldwide. While some languages survive, many have become extinct and with them a way of life, a way of being, of navigating the world. I cannot think of a more urgent and appropriate topic for this year's PEN Melbourne session at the Melbourne Writers Festival than 'Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing'.

The retrieval of the Noongar language is a passionate concern of Kim Scott's and features in all his work. Scott weaves language into his groundbreaking novel *That Deadman Dance* with powerful effect. His work with Aboriginal languages includes co-authorship of several bilingual English–Noongar texts published by the University of Western Australia.

Linguist, John Bradley, has sat with the Yanyuwa people of the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria for three decades and, through language, has gained insights into the Yanyuwa way of knowing the world. *Singing Saltwater Country* is his account of his journey into that world.

Darwin-based novelist, Marie Munkara, is a distinct new voice in Australian literature. Her debut novel *Every Secret Thing* is a biting satire about the mission experience that, among many things, integrates indigenous words into the text.

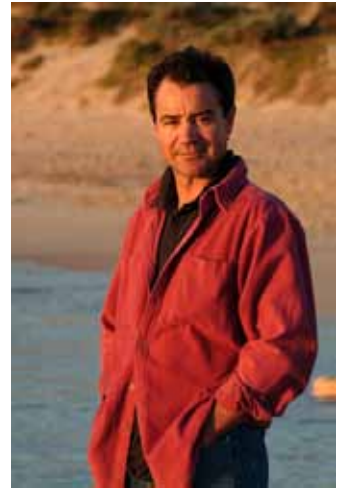
The one-thousand-word limit for the essays was a tough ask. Yet each essay offers unique insights into indigenous languages, their adaptations, and their critical importance in the contemporary world. The essays explore some of the ideas discussed at the Melbourne Writers Festival session. They are also a part of PEN Melbourne's ongoing involvement with indigenous writing and languages. The dual publication of these essays with *Overland* magazine has enabled them to reach a wider audience and sets a precedent for future joint ventures.

* The PEN Melbourne panel at the Melbourne Writers' Festival and these essays were generously funded by the Copyright Agency Limited.



Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing

Kim Scott



Sometimes Indigenous language—specifically, Noongar—is very important to my writing, sometimes not at all. This importance, however, may not necessarily be to the reading and interpretation of the story, and occasionally it might be the very absence of Indigenous language that is most significant. I think this is the case with my novel *Benang*, in which the narrator repeatedly makes utterances that, within the novel, are unequivocally recognised as the sounds of his ancestral place. I intended this as a metaphor for Indigenous language. The sounds that demonstrate his ‘authenticity’ and the strength of his connection to that place are not reproduced but only described, and they suggest—or so I would like to think—‘untold’ stories that are not among those available to conventional researchers scouring the archives. The title itself is a word from Noongar language and translates as ‘tomorrow’.

Perhaps such use of language is so obscure that it can only ever be private. I offer these examples not as some indicator of how the novel should be ‘correctly’ interpreted, but merely as a frank contemplation of my writing.

Kayang and Me, my book written with Noongar elder Hazel Brown, is written mainly in English, but illustrates the importance of Noongar language to personal and collective identity, especially when uttered in the context of the landscape that serves as the ‘text’ for language and its stories. Surely there can be little doubt that Indigenous language has something very special to offer in terms of its inseparability from its natural environment.

The effort to revitalise my ancestral language in this way is so tied up with who I am and my vocation as a writer that I do not feel the need to weave Indigenous language through my work merely to posture difference or even ‘authenticity’.

John Bradley referred to language and song in the landscape as an almost dormant energy that human agents can arouse and amplify. I think the descendants of the people who created that language are the right and necessary ones to enact that energy, to bring that language back to life. Yet they need collaborators and interested listeners, too. The very act of language regeneration can reveal the extent of historical damage along with, importantly, a narrative of survival, resilience, recovery and inclusion. Add collaboration to this mix and you have a fine expression of ‘reconciliation’ through active recovery of the most ancient expression of the spirit of place, and through people making themselves instruments of that spirit by sharing.

In hindsight, writing *Kayang and Me* was the formal beginning to a considerable amount of what I call ‘cultural consolidation’ with elders and other significant community members to both rebuild and reconnect to heritage. Some of my most recent writing has been of this nature, and a

series of community-based workshops over a number of years has culminated in *Mamang* and *Noongar Mambara Bakitj*: two bilingual (Noongar and English) picture books being published by the University of Western Press. Because Noongar is an endangered language and such an important marker of identity, the process has necessarily been collective and included engaging a ‘community of descendants’ with the language and stories of their ancestors in ways that both consolidate that knowledge and provide for considerable control over how it is shared.

The effort to revitalise my ancestral language in this way is so tied up with who I am and my vocation as a writer that I do not feel the need to weave Indigenous language through my work merely to posture difference or even ‘authenticity’. But I do believe that the experience of regaining one’s ancestral language after being ‘linguistically displaced’ has dimensions it is difficult to articulate here.

The role of Indigenous language in *That Deadman Dance* is different again.

Originally, that novel had the working title, *Rose a Wail*, a (poor) pun on a whale breaking from the ocean surface and the hint of an inarticulate cry of anguish. I wondered about the possibility of conveying a Noongar language sensibility as it emerged in English: would this mean a transformation of the language or an adjustment of the sensibility or, and probably most likely, both? The first word of the novel is an attempt by a Noongar character to render a Noongar word in English spelling; the novel concludes with the central character delivering a speech in Noongar. But even more than this sparse spattering across pages and pages of English, Noongar language influences the imagery, rhythm and characters of the novel. This is not necessarily conscious or intended, but is more the product of a growing awareness of the insights and perspectives Noongar language can enable. This process is not overt, perhaps more like that of osmosis. It may not be important to the interpretation of the novel, but was integral to its construction.

For several years I worked on *That Deadman Dance*, along with the language project that led to the bilingual picture books. They were separate activities but, conducted concurrently, provided a possible solution to the dilemma shared by a number of postcolonial and Indigenous writers who write in English. Often, we write in the language of the coloniser. Possibly, those with whom we most identify form a minority of our readership. And then there are obvious pressures to act, rather than “merely” write: to force change, to supply “ammunition for the cause, to directly contribute to community development.”

In the face of those pressures I split my efforts. On the one hand, I explore and create narratives in English, and let the work find its own way according to largely aesthetic, ‘literary’ considerations. On the other, I try to revitalise my ancestral language by bringing together archival linguistic knowledge and descendants of the linguists’ ‘informants’ in ways that, by spreading in ever-widening, concentric circles, attempt to help a contemporary Noongar community (as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board puts it) ‘claim, control and enhance’ our heritage.

Kim Scott

Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing

John Bradley



Yamulu, marnijingarna jarna-barlirranji Yanyuwa wuka, jarna-wunkanyinji marda, li-wankala li-bardibardi baki li-malbu kanalu-ngunda ngatha jakarda barra wuka, ngayamantharra li-kularrkularr jalini li-lhungku, nalarrku kalinymaba-mirra wiji warriya li-luku marningarna munanga Yanyuwangala jiwini mulungka ngathangka.

Okay, here I am writing Yanyuwa words, I can also talk this language, the old people, the old men and women have given me many words, now there are only a few of them alive, so many have died, the poor things, I am here a white man talking Yanyuwa, these words sit in my mouth.

As a white person working with the Yanyuwa people of the south-west Gulf of Carpentaria, in a township called Borroloola, a thousand kilometres south-east of Darwin, I have been blessed with amazing experiences, teachers and mentors. Yanyuwa is a language with sixteen noun classes, a language that has separate ways of speaking for men and women, a language that has special ways of speaking depending whether you are on the mainland or on the islands and sea. The more, however, I think about this language, the hardest thing to write about or explain is how the language seems to belong in the land and sea: it is as if it rises up out of the Yanyuwa country.

When the British flag was raised at Sydney Cove 222 years ago, there were 250 separate languages spoken on the continent later known as Australia.

Yanyuwa people are ‘saltwater people’—li- Anthawirriyarra—people whose spiritual origins come from the sea. The old ladies at Borroloola composed a song about these origins, which they still sing:

*Marnaji ngambala
li-Anthawirriyarra
layirli-nganji waliwaliyangka*

We are the people
Whose spirits are from the sea
We are the people who are kin to the island country

(composed by Dinah Norman, Annie Karrakayny and Eileen McDinny, 1992)

The song was written for the judge during a land claim to stress how important the islands and the sea country are for the Yanyuwa people.

Today, only the old people speak Yanyuwa. A lot of other people can understand it, but they can’t speak it, which is something the old people continue to worry about. I have worked with them for

thirty years to get younger people interested in Yanyuwa language and culture. For instance, we are still working on the Yanyuwa encyclopedic dictionary, which gets bigger and bigger as the old people think of more things to include.

We have made two films, which both won awards. The first, *Buwarrala Akarriya (Journey East)*, made in 1988, is about walking back into country that no-one had visited since just after the Second World War. In 1992, we made *ka- Wayawayama (Aeroplane Dance)*, which is about Yanyuwa people searching for a crashed Liberator bomber.

With the old people, we have made an atlas of Yanyuwa country so that the young people can really read and understand the law of their country.

Then there are the animations—seven already—which are an attempt to get the young people to watch stories from their country, to hear the language of their people. It is an attempt to have grandparents sit with grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and so far the results have been encouraging. One of the first was *The Crow and the Chicken Hawk*, which is about why people have fire and water. One could think fire and water are simple enough words but Yanyuwa has so many different words for these things. *Buyuka* is fire, a word anyone can hear and use, but if you are speaking to your sister or your female cousin or your brother-in-law you have to say *wumayangka*, and then if you are out on the islands you have to say *bujibuji*. *Wabuda* is water, but if you speak to those same relatives you have to say *ngalulu* and if you are out on the islands, the fresh water from the springs is called *ngayulu*. So speaking Yanyuwa always keeps you on your toes and in any writing or representation of Yanyuwa language and culture these things have to be demonstrated: it is the Law of the language.

When the British flag was raised at Sydney Cove 222 years ago, there were 250 separate languages spoken on the continent later known as Australia. There were therefore 250 cultures, nations, each with their way of understanding the place they called home. In addition, there were at least 600 dialects of these languages. Whichever way these numbers are viewed they speak of diversity. In 2011, less than one hundred of these languages are spoken, some by only one or two people; of this one hundred, 15 are considered strong: that is, all generations of the language community are speaking the language.

On average, two of Australia's Indigenous languages are disappearing a year. It has been suggested by some linguists that by 2050 there may only be a handful being spoken. Thus we are confronted by an epidemic of silencing that will result in the language and cultural loss, an epidemic that has in part been produced by thinking that everything we need to know can be said in English. Yet only now, as these languages fall silent, have biological and ecological scientists begun to see how much of the knowledge that lives in these languages and cultures is also of value to them: fine-grained details of species and micro-environments have been named and worked with for millennia by Australia's Indigenous inhabitants. In the words of the Malawian-born author Amadou Hampaté Bâ from 1966: 'An old person dying is a library burning.'

Outside of my own intimate personal life, to hear a language fall silent, a language so enmeshed into the land we now call Australia, continues to be one of my saddest experiences.

John Bradley

Language and Politics in Indigenous Writing

Marie Munkara



The spoken word is one of the most powerful weapons that we have on this planet. Words can be used as weapons of mass destruction and they can be used to heal the human heart. Although society teaches us to look at language in the context of words, language is something that is far more encompassing. To me language is the distinctive but intangible voice of my soul, it is the voice of who I am and where I belong in the world and in relation to other people. Where I come from (northern Arnhemland and Tiwi Islands) language cannot be separated from anything else because it is interwoven into our culture. But for the purpose of this article I'll stick to using language in the context of words.

I discovered recently that, thanks to my wonderfully literate and multilingual Indigenous family, English was one of five 'tongues' I was conversant in and understood by the tender age of three. Although the other four were natural languages—a language that is first spoken then written—my ancestors clearly realised that if they were to survive in a world where our language and culture had very little value in the eyes of the colonisers, then we needed to know their words. We needed to know the words in order to understand the colonisers because we had to accept that it was live beside them or die, and knowing their words takes you closer to knowing the people. This worked to a certain extent but it is impossible to encapsulate the essence of another language or culture by words alone. A language needs to be lived before it can be understood.

I am beginning to think that being born an Indigenous person means that you are immediately catapulted into the political arena and that's where you stay until death releases you.

I have seen some interesting changes in the Tiwi language over the past twenty years, both in the pronunciation and in the alarming number of foreign words starting to replace the old words. Obviously since colonisation there have been new situations and objects where no words previously existed and these words automatically become incorporated into the language, but the old Tiwi that I first learned is now being replaced by modern Tiwi or, as I call it, Tiwi Creole. Maybe the alarmingly high incidences of otitis media in Tiwi children have contributed to the mispronunciation of many words now. For instance, *pularti* (breast milk) is now pronounced 'ploddy'.

But maybe the faster pace of our society is causing us to rush our words, with no care taken to ensure that they remain pure. If the Tiwi language still exists in another hundred years, I don't believe that I will be able to understand a word of it. Although there are books with the written form of our language, a piece of paper with words on it cannot accurately convey the right inflections and nuances to a reader or non-fluent speaker of the language. And if a language dies, then the fundamental part of that culture is missing and can never be replaced. Although a great deal of work has been done to preserve Indigenous languages, ours were never meant to be written, so there will always be parts lost in the transition from oral to paper.

But how does language get transformed from a cognitive faculty that enables us to communicate with each other to something political? It's a complete mystery to me. And although many people have said that my book *Every Secret Thing* is profoundly political, I still have difficulty seeing it that way because the issues in the book, like the removal of children, or clergy molesting children in their care, are everyday things for me. As ugly as they are, these things have happened to me and they have happened to members of my family so they fit more within the realms of the personal. But even though it wasn't my intent to create a political work I can appreciate that others might see it that way.

But then maybe that's the way I'm wired because as I write my second book, I find myself once again eagerly searching for more dirt. Who can I make look like a fool this time, I wonder. I'm not politically motivated and I don't set out to draw attention to the inadequacies of government policies or religious groups but it's interesting that the things I find the most amusing happen to be, well, political. And why do I feel compelled to write about Indigenous events and situations instead of non-Indigenous? I think the answer may be that I have a wealth of information to use, so why struggle with something else that I don't know as much about or that doesn't interest me greatly.

When I started out as a writer I didn't want to be classified as an Indigenous author; rather I wanted to be an author who happened to be Indigenous. I've given up on that idea now because people take one look at my face and I am immediately labelled despite my objections. So I have chosen to save my energy instead for looking for more things to amuse and shock people with. I'd like to think that something I've written has positively altered perceptions because there is still a lot of ignorance and fear out there about the race of people I belong to.

I am beginning to think that being born an Indigenous person means that you are immediately catapulted into the political arena and that's where you stay until death releases you. So if being born can be perceived as a political act, then it stands to reason that everything we do and say is political as well. With that in mind I think I understand now that when it comes to Indigenous writing, language and politics can never be separate. Even though writing about uncomfortable issues may be seen as an act of defiance (whether politically motivated or not), to create and draw attention to contentious matters can only be a good thing.

Marie Munkara

Nuances

To attempt to see beyond the generic
past trees, plants, birds, as only synonyms for: *nature*

psychologists say that in the former Soviet Republic
people overlook the nuance in consumables

raspberry, lemon, orange and cola,
are all equated as one thing: *soda*

when I bring my mother an array of cakes
vanilla slice, éclair, peach danish, fruit tart,

she considers them all then invariably says,
I don't mind—you choose

the assortment peters into: *cake*
and invariably I choose for her

when she sends me the emails
of her life story she labels them: *the saga*

I reinterpret her story,
switch focus to the lyrical,

a child's perception of war
as improbable as any fairytale

revision it through a limited prism
though over time the scenery shifts to life

the birdcalls weave a tapestry of sound
each mynah an individual, each its own song

this day then might stand for any other
but on Friday night I give my mother

half a pear danish, and some cheesecake
then try to sit within the moment

to listen, or endeavour to not seek more
starvation calls from deep within the child

Ann Shenfield

Poem

The dark

To Elaine Lewis

I realise that the darkness
has carved my soul as an artist
every cut has left a wound
like those on an autumn leaf
to enable me to experience
the faded beauty
of a life or a love

I realise that the darkness
as poet created in my soul
a surrealist poem
using metaphors
the rushing of a river
or a black spring
when I had lost all hope
for an idea or a love

I realise that the darkness
is a bird filling up
my stormy soul

I realise that the darkness
has left in my soul
traces of the Creator

Thanh Le

Connections

I recently stayed with my sister, Jude, and her partner, Brien, on their farm in the middle of Jaara Jaara country in the hinterland north of Bendigo. Brien is a Jaara Elder and an ex-park ranger, so there is not much that he doesn't know about the local landscape and topography. After all, he has 40,000 years' experience behind him.

One night we were sitting out on the back step, admiring the stars, when he reached down and plucked what looked to me like an unremarkable piece of rock out of a nearby garden bed. He placed the rock on the palm of his hand and by the light of the moon proceeded to show me what had caught his eye and why that rock was different.

The first thing I noticed was that the shard I'd perceived as dull grey was not grey at all, or even uniformly coloured, but variegated. With some of the surface dirt removed, it flickered salmon pink, beige and cream and glistened as if it was wet.

On closer examination, I saw that the rock tapered to two slim, sharp edges and was bisected by a well-defined, dune-like ridge. Brien explained that, while his ancestors were ingenious at utilising found objects, the presence of the ridge identified this object as man-made. In fact, it was a multi-purpose scraping or cutting tool, whose construction would have taken considerable time, patience and know-how.

Some documentaries and films I've seen over the years have been particularly effective in conveying a sense of how the traditional owners of our land probably lived. *Ten Canoes*, which was released in 2006, is a great example. The director, Rolf de Heer, collaborated with the people of Ramingining in the Northern Territory for three years in telling this story about their ancestors.

As I watched them making their canoes, building platforms high up in the gum trees, tracking down the eggs of *gumang*, the magpie goose, all in the beautiful Arafura Swamp, I became completely caught up in their world. I thought I'd come as close as I ever would to experiencing what it must have been like to live in the Australia of those far-off days. That was until Brien handed me that ancient cutting tool.

As I grasped it, weighed it, moved it around for just a moment before it settled naturally and comfortably into my hand, I had an overwhelming sense of connection with its maker. Perhaps thousands of years ago, one of Brien's ancestors had sat nearby, under the same stars, fashioning the tool I held in my hand, awed as I was by its simple beauty.

Possum Cloak

As a Jaara elder, it is Brien's responsibility to welcome visitors to his people's country. Undoubtedly the most famous guest of all time was the Dalai Lama, who in June 2007 came to bless the site of the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion at Myers Flat on the outskirts of Bendigo. It's amazing to think that the cleansing ceremony Brien conducted that day originates even further back than the ancient rituals of Tibetan Buddhism.

On that occasion, Brien was resplendent in a possum-skin cloak made especially for the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in 2006. It was lucky he had it on, as it was a freezing day and his legs were bare. It's little wonder that the cloaks were native to the colder south-eastern corner of the continent.

Recently Brien showed me the cloak up close. Although it is new, it was made entirely in the traditional way by the women of his family. The pelts were sewn together with kangaroo sinew, and the only concession to current-day practices was that the skins were from New Zealand, where possums are denoted pests and not protected as they are in Australia.

Brien explained that cloaks were treasured for their warmth and durability and were handed down as heirlooms. Like so many Aboriginal possessions, they were multi-purpose, sometimes being used as blankets or mattresses or to wrap babies.

When he flung it over the kitchen table to display it to me, the light reflected back the glossy sheen of the fur, which proved irresistible to the touch. But it was the underside that intrigued me. A leather burning tool had been used to draw a map of Brien's country, showing the Loddon River, the women's camp, and initiation, hunting and basket-weaving sites. Under the fur, up close to the wearer's body, an age-old narrative perpetually unfolds.

In my small inner-city garden, possums are my nemesis. They use the chicken wire covering the garden pots as trampolines. Our telephone wires are their highway and their exit ramp is our roof, where they rev their engines and do wheelies all night long. And no matter where I hide them, I've yet to have a cauliflower or cabbage reach maturity.

Yet when a mating pair recently took up residence in the roof, I took great pains to evict them without harming them, because usually I'm a merciful sort of person. But as Brien explained to me how it takes roughly fifty skins to make an adult-sized cloak, I suspect my eyes gleamed.

Bush Tucker

Like so many people, I'm on a mission to make my inner-city garden water-wise and I'm also trying to grow more of my own food. And that's one reason why I'm lucky to be related to Brien. Because of course Aboriginal people have developed expertise over millennia at living in arid conditions and can identify and harvest food where others mightn't even know it exists.

Several years ago, while visiting Kakadu, I discovered a short trail where all the Indigenous edible and medicinal plants were signposted. When you know what to look for and where to look, what initially seems to be arid bushland quickly reveals itself as an Aladdin's cave of goodies. Which is exactly what happens at Jude and Brien's.

Strolling around the property last spring, Brien pointed out what appeared to be a white coating of fungus on the leaves of one of the eucalypts. This substance, called lerp, is composed of tiny insects that discharge a honey dew to repel animals. I hesitantly accepted the lerp, which Brien scraped off for me, and was taken aback by its sweetness – lerp certainly doesn't repel humans.

Next on the menu were chocolate lilies, which were entirely camouflaged amidst the native grasses. Brien knelt and delicately dug below the luscious growth of a mildly chocolate-scented plant. Underneath were small tubers, which proved surprisingly crunchy and refreshing. Brien explained how his predecessors only ever harvested a limited number of the tubers, so that the plants remained strong and healthy and productive for years to come. Try as I might, I found it impossible to spot the lilies, in a paddock where Brien had no trouble pointing out hundreds. He gave me some to plant at home, but so far I've had no success, though maybe I just can't see them.

I've had much greater success with Indigenous spinach, also from the farm. This plant is supremely adaptable, shrinking when it's dry and expanding rapidly when the rains come. It is a great substitute for conventional spinach and makes a fabulous spanakopita.

The farm also has chickens, which produce wonderful eggs, guaranteed to impart a buttery lemon hue to any pancakes. The secret is the creeping, berried Indigenous saltbush that proliferates all year round. It's not only humans who love bush tucker.

I always return from Jude and Brien's with a car full of goodies and a mind full of possibilities.

Sue Jackson

This article is an adaptation of three scripts written by Sue Jackson for Radio National's *Bush Telegraph*.

PEN International

77th PEN International Congress

Belgrade, 12–18 September 2011

John Ralston Saul

PEN International President

Opening speech

Thank you, Serbian PEN! Thank you, Vida, and thank you to all of your members. You have organised a wonderful Congress. People who attend have no idea how much work is involved and how many hours are taken up that could have been used for writing. So, a very personal thank you from all of us who have come from other countries.

When we say, we members of PEN International, that we represent literature and freedom of expression, and that you can't separate one from the other, it is a simple statement of fact. This is our 90th year. We are, we have always been, the only truly international literary organisation. We have invented the idea and the implementation of freedom of expression campaigns.

Sometimes, the obvious has to be reiterated. There are some governments, some people in power — those that George Konrad, one of our former presidents, calls 'professionals of power'—who say: 'Ah.. they're only writers, only words'. And it is true that we do not have tanks or banks or the capacity to bear a huge deficit or support a large bureaucracy. But if we are only writers, why is it that about 850 of our colleagues are in jail around the world? Why is it that writers are still killed with a terrifying regularity? We have that great power which is language and imagination—through poems and plays and novels and essays—a power that sets free the spirit of readers. It is with the words of imagination that people work.

Yesterday, I was asked—quite rightly—what difference does it make that writers from 89 PEN centres are gathered in Belgrade? It is the right question.

But if we are only writers, why is it that about 850 of our colleagues are in jail around the world? Why is it that writers are still killed with a terrifying regularity? We have that great power which is language and imagination—through poems and plays and novels and essays—a power that sets free the spirit of readers.

The first answer is that this Congress is a public expression of reconciliation. Of course, writers in the Balkans have never stopped talking to each other. But this Congress is a formal evocation of the imagination of the Balkans. Today, the leaders of 10 Balkan PEN centres sat together on a stage and created the Balkans PEN International Network. The founding members are Bosnian PEN, Bulgarian, Croatian, Kosovar, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Romanian, Serbian, Slovenian and Turkish. This is an historic event. It is a message to the world.

Second, the gathering of hundreds of writers from around the world matters because it is a force for imagination and transparency. Our charter is clear. We believe in unlimited freedom of expression. But we also believe that, no matter how controversial or difficult our words are, the ultimate purpose is to bring people together. The great Serbian Canadian writer, David Albahari, has rightly written that 'knowledge can never catch up with the power of ignorance'. This is true. But the imagination can catch up. Imagination can leap over ignorance. Let me give you an example: When a virtually unknown radio journalist is killed in Mexico—the most dangerous place in the world today to be a writer — they leave, in Ivo Andrić's words, 'a memory clearer and more lasting than that of so many other more important victims'.

This year, our former President, Mario Vargas Llosa, won the Nobel Prize for Literature. And the founding president of our Independent Chinese PEN Centre, Liu Xiaobo, won the Nobel Peace Prize. Two men of courage. Two masters of the imagination. One of whom remains unjustly in prison. And several of our centres were central to what is called the Arab Spring. In some cases, they are now a key part of the rebuilding of civil society in their country.

The core of what we do is this: imagination and the transparency that imagination creates, and the acceptance of complexity—all of this is above politics and below politics. It's everything except politics. In a society without this democracy of the mind it becomes possible for lies to install themselves, as if they were language. And as Danilo Kiš put it, 'when everyone lies, no one lies'.

We are in the business of open memories, memories that do not oppose people, one against the other. We represent an open idea of how people can live together.

This is the 77th Congress. The Congress in 1933 in Dubrovnik was organised by this centre. It was a complex but historic moment for PEN. We were faced by the rising forces of authoritarianism, even within our own centres. The divisions of European society had become the divisions of PEN. Our President, H. G. Wells, a great writer, but also an anti-Semite with confused public views, found himself caught in an atmosphere of impossible divisions. But, complex though it was, Wells and the delegates found their way through in order to stand with the imagination and transparency and therefore against authoritarianism.

In 1933 we found an ethical shape—long before governments took a stand. And at every PEN congress since 1933, those ethical standards stand before us as the measure of what we do. I like to think that in leading with wisdom in Dubrovnik, Wells found his own way to a personal understanding of PEN's ethics. It was a noble moment for him and for PEN.

There are always those who believe that writers can be dragged away from their independence in the public place. And I believe that the next few years will be difficult. There are many strong and negative forces at work. But the meaning of PEN is simple. Our central ethical force is the independence of our imagination and our creativity. And we know what this means because for 90 years we have defended that independence.

Hvala!

2011 PEN International Congress winds up

The 77th PEN International Congress was held from 12 to 18 September 2011 in Belgrade, Serbia, where representatives of writers from 89 PEN centres throughout the world converged at the Continental Hotel to deliberate on issues surrounding the plight of writers and freedom of expression.

Dubbed 'Literature is the language of the world', the Congress, which saw the gathering of hundreds of writers from around the world, was officially opened by the President of Serbia, Boris Tadic, at the Belgrade City Hall. Expounding the crucial role writers play in society, Tadic said writers contribute to the authenticity of political dialogue and the preservation of cultural diversities as civilisation is recorded through the written words and arts.

In his remarks, John Ralston Saul, the President of PEN International, delved into the importance of literature and freedom of expression, which, he noted, cannot be separated from each other because of their intrinsic values. Noting that writers do not have tanks or banks or the capacity to bear a huge deficit or support a large bureaucracy, he said there are over 850 writers in jail, who, for one reason or another, are in trouble simply because they possess a power that sets free the spirit of readers. As Saul put it, a force for imagination and transparency. According to him, where this democracy of the mind does not exist, it becomes possible for lies to install themselves, as if they were language.

Our charter is clear. We believe in unlimited freedom of expression. But we also believe that, no matter how controversial or difficult our words are, their ultimate purpose is to bring people together. There are always those who believe that writers can be dragged away from their independence in the public place. And I believe that the next few years will be difficult. There are many strong and negative forces at work. But the meaning of PEN is simple. Our central ethical force is the independence of our imagination and our creativity, as Saul stated.

Eric Lax, the treasurer of PEN, gave a financial breakdown of the income and expenditure accounts, and disclosed that there were restricted and unrestricted incomes. He said the total income stood at £774,251, which was 20% less than the previous year, and the expenditure for the year was £805,091. He said although there was a deficit in the budget, there were grants and dues brought forward from 2009 that had accumulated to the year 2010. Noting that dues are critical to the smooth running of the organisation, he said grants represented 43% of income, which was a drop of about 30% from the previous year, 2009.

On the fourth day, the Congress was divided into different working groups, namely, communication or new technologies, governance, the image of PEN, future congresses etc., all of which came up with different recommendations and suggestions, which were later tabled and adopted by the general congress.

The next day, Frank Geary, the Program Director of PEN International, dwelt on the importance of the work of PEN, stating that it strives to establish regional and international networks, delivering programs such as in the areas of education and human rights. He cited the establishment of the Pan-African PEN and Asian PEN networks.

Abdul Rahman, who spoke on behalf of the Pan-African Network (PAN), said since the 76th PEN Congress in Japan, the PAN has been revitalised, with many centres networking on several fronts. According to him, a highlight post-Japan congress was the hosting of African centres by the Egyptian centre in December 2010, which brought together centres from all four corners of the continent to discuss the role of the writer in Africa and also the future growth of PAN. He said it was at the Tokyo congress that PAN came up with a coordinating structure to consolidate the impetus gained from the



Seedy Bojang

presence of so many African centres. He said PAN now has a database of centres and individuals who are constantly networking on a variety of issues and collaborative ideas, stating that the common constraint cited by all PAN members was the lack of funds.

Ayako Sato from Japan spoke on behalf of Asian centres and underscored the need for a strong bond of relationships. She said a series of conferences have been held between the Japanese PEN and Independent Chinese PEN, geared towards fostering a mutual bond of friendship and cooperation in a wide range of areas.

Jonathan Harwood said there are a number of PEN centres in Europe, some of which have very good relationships, while others do not have strong collaboration. He stressed the need for building stronger networks among existing centres, as this would help to strengthen and build concrete activities and programs.

Following this session, reports from individual PEN centres were heard by the Congress, and then Judith Rodriguez of PEN Melbourne led the Congress in nomination and election processes.

On Saturday, the Congress ended with field trips to Nis and Novi Sad, where the literary festival Free the Word was launched at both places, characterised by readings from books from different writers.

Seedy Bojang

International Publishers gather in Frankfurt with PEN International to signal cooperation in the fight for freedom of expression across the world

Formed by PEN International with founder members Hachette Livre, Penguin Books and Random House early in 2011, the PEN International Publishers' Circle announces its expansion today to embrace Scandinavian and Canadian Publishers, and its intention to grow across the world in the coming year. The Circle welcomes amongst its members the Swedish publishers Forlag AB, KF Media AB, Natur & Kultur and the independents' group De Oberoende. Norway will be represented by Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Aschehoug Forlag and Cappelen Damm, whilst Harper Collins Canada and Douglas & McIntyre have joined from Canada.

The PEN International Publishers' Circle is the first organization of its kind. It believes that improving Freedom of Expression for writers creates the conditions needed for a successful and active publishing industry. The Circle invites publishers around the world, large and small, to support PEN's work developing Freedom of Expression and ensuring that publishers and writers are free to operate in all countries and readers are free to access the books of their choice. PEN International President John Ralston Saul commented, "Without a solid publishing system, whether for books or journalism or any new technology, you cannot have freedom of speech.

The purpose of the Publishers' Circle is to join the work of publishing with PEN's work on Freedom of Expression."

PEN is marking its growing cooperation with the publishing world at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the biggest media and book fair in the world. At the PEN International event Free the Word: Times of Transition, John Ralston Saul will be joined by leading figures from the worlds of writing and publishing to discuss the social, political and technological transitions which are the evolving challenges to freedom of expression and literature. Speakers include Ronald Blunden, Head of Communications at Hachette Livre; Eva Bonnier, Chairman of Swedish Publishing Association and Publisher at Forlag AB; and Anders Heger, writer, publisher with Cappelen Damm, and President of Norwegian PEN.

Anders Heger says of Cappelen Damm's participation: "For a publishing house that aspires to play a role in promoting freedom of speech, it is an honour to support PEN International and its vital work." Eva Bonnier, Chairman of the Swedish Publishers Association, has highlighted the concrete steps that the Circle will take, commenting, "It is key that we fight for freedom of speech around the world. As Forlag AB, we are proud to be making a concrete commitment to this cause."

Juergen Boos, Director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, has expressed PEN's place at the heart of the fair: "For many years, PEN International has been a fixed part of the Frankfurt Book Fair. Freedoms of speech, of press and of opinion have to be fought for anew, every day. These freedoms are the foundation of our whole industry. They are what PEN International stands for, and that is why we support PEN International."

Notes to editors:

PEN International celebrates literature and promotes freedom of expression. Founded in 1921, our global community of writers now comprises 144 Centres spanning more than 100 countries. Our programmes, campaigns, events and publications connect writers and readers for global solidarity and cooperation. PEN International is a non-political organization and holds consultative status at the United Nations and UNESCO.

Feature

A Riddle and A Dare: Translating Aphids' *A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays* into Italian



AQP Aphids Photo: Yatzek 2006 © Aphids

A Quarreling Pair: A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays has been in the repertoire of Melbourne-based Aphids arts company since 2004. In June this year, the production toured to Italy, for a week's season at Rome's Teatro Patologico. Writer Cynthia Troup, recently returned from Rome, outlines the history of the production and the decision to translate the scripts into Italian, reflecting on the linguistic and cultural discoveries afforded by the invitation to Rome.

***A Quarreling Pair* by Jane Bowles**

In 1999, when browsing in a second-hand bookshop in Melbourne, I came upon a 1995 paperback edition of *My Sister's Hand in Mine: The Collected Works of Jane Bowles, with an Introduction by Truman Capote*. I began reading straight away. Capote had written his essay in a warmly conversational style for the first edition of Bowles' collected works, published in New York back in 1966. His opening sentence refers to 'that modern legend named Jane Bowles', his opening paragraph to Bowles' social elusiveness, and her 'eccentricity'. I paid twelve dollars to be able to continue reading on the train home. The price of the book is still clearly pencilled on the corner of the first page, although the cover is now much worn, and the glue of the binding very brittle.

Towards the back of this compact, inch-thick volume are the six pages of Bowles' play titled *A Quarreling Pair*, written for two puppets who 'are sisters in their early fifties'. On first reading of *A Quarreling Pair*—which took all of three minutes—I was struck by the work's psychological intensity, belied by its brevity. Later, having begun to discover more about Bowles' life and writing, I was fascinated by the fact that the script called for puppets—unlike any of Bowles' other dramatic work. As prompted by the script, I tried to imagine puppets able to play 'the chimes' when singing a song; I wondered what style of puppet could also carry a glass of milk, which is then sent 'flying out' of her hand.

Halfway through *A Quarreling Pair*, Rhoda, the younger sister, exclaims 'Oh, what a hideous riddle!'. Harriet responds, 'You love to pretend that everything is a riddle.' These days I tend to agree with Rhoda, and to quote her line as an epigrammatic description of the play overall. The adjective 'hideous' and the exclamation mark can denote the melodramatic wit of the sisters' repartee, as well as its sinister implications. And to characterise the work as a riddle is to acknowledge that the script provokes a multiplicity of questions, perhaps above all a lingering doubt as to the intended tone. Is

the sisters' quarrel—ostensibly about a glass of milk—simply an eruptive habit in their domestic lives together? Or does the squabble represent a turning point in the fraught history of their relationship? Why is the small amount of prescribed action intercepted by reflective songs? Is the play an intensely dry and mannered double act, in which, ultimately, the joke is on the audience?

A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays

In 2003 I took these questions and plenty more into the collaborative process of developing what may have been the first Australian production of *A Quarreling Pair* with director Margaret Cameron, performers Sarah Kriegler and Caroline Lee, sound designer Jethro Woodward, lighting designer Richard Vabre, and producer David Young, who was at that time artistic director of Aphids arts company in Melbourne. To create an evening of theatre from Jane Bowles' miniature work, we placed it first in *A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays*. The triptych is completed by two short works written to complement *A Quarreling Pair*: each is for two sisters; each includes some kind of singing or singsong language; each contains a reference to milk. *Mr Peterson's Milk*, by Lally Katz, sees the sisters travelling exuberantly into a surreal unknown, while in my own play, *And When They Were Good*, the sisters' rooms are encroached upon by a shadowy fairytale world.

By placing *A Quarreling Pair* beside the two additional works and their different settings, our production extends the riddle posed by Bowles' play, asking: does the triptych present the same two sisters in transformation, or does it show us three separate pairs of sisters? Throughout the Aphids triptych, Sarah Kriegler and Caroline Lee are at once puppeteers and actors performing as sisters. In the first instance, this literally magnifies the possibility that Bowles' sisters constitute a double act—a pair whose uneven relationship is inherently comic. The same possibility is also by turns transcended: the puppets' 'lifelikeness' is relentlessly juxtaposed to the actors' capacity for spontaneity and mobility of expression, such that the 'doubling' suggests the more sober realm of psychological manipulation. In addition to such volatile doubling, the Aphids production blends puppetry with object theatre, and with an intricate sound design involving contact microphones hidden on the set, live mixing and pre-recorded voiceovers.

Now, some twelve years after my first encounter with *A Quarreling Pair*, and after having attended nearly forty performances of Aphids' production, I remain fascinated by both. If I wonder much less about the choreographic challenges posed by Bowles' script, I remain captivated by the precarious weight of its language—a structuring source for the Aphids triptych. Together with the Aphids team, I thrill in the robustness of our production, which has continued to draw audiences into the amusement and stimulus of the 'hideous riddle', most recently in Rome, where we performed with subtitles in Italian.

Aphids' production *A Quarreling Pair: A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays* was first performed at Melbourne's La Mama theatre as part of the Robyn Archer-directed 2004 Melbourne International Arts Festival. It was seen in a second Melbourne season at Malthouse Theatre in 2006, and has toured to festivals in Australia's Blue Mountains (2005) and Castlemaine, Victoria (2006). In 2009, the triptych was part of the international festival Puppets Series 3, presented by La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York City's East Village—the first production nurtured by Melbourne's La Mama theatre to tour to La MaMa in NYC. As a consequence of this season in New York, the production toured to Rome in July 2011 as part of the Festival dei Mondi (Rassenga Internazionale di Teatro)—the 'Festival of Worlds (International Theatre Review)'—at the Teatro Patologico, or 'Pathological Theatre'.



AQP in New York City

Una coppia litigiosa: trittico di piccole burattinate

Because the Festival dei Mondi was planned as an event of international scope, we received no request from the Teatro Patologico to present our production in Italian, nor even to provide subtitles. However, in anticipation of the Rome season, the Aphids team undertook to translate the scripts of the triptych into Italian. More precisely, we decided to commission the translation at our own expense, and then, as far as possible, to refine the Italian version collaboratively.

This decision was motivated by several considerations. We were intrigued by the translation's capacity to inflect our shared view and experience of the triptych. We were very curious about the process of honing the Italian, especially because one of our performers, Caroline Lee, is a longtime student and speaker of Italian—as am I, having lived in Italy for several periods during my childhood and school years; our producer David Young also speaks Italian. From a more pragmatic point of view, the company wished to try to ensure that such a precisely scripted production would have every chance of being enjoyed by our Rome audiences; that it would have an excellent chance of communicating if not all its poetic richness, then its themes, including the theme of the riddle. Thus we clarified the purpose of the translation, which was to make the scripts 'available' to our audiences in Italian. This was by no means a project of literary translation, premised on the idea that the lines in Italian might be required to 'stand alone' on the printed page. Rather, from the outset we assumed that the cultural frame and embodied context for the translation would be our production, in all its deliberate artifice; in all its unconscious 'foreign-ness' to Italian.

Professional translator Giovanna Dafulis agreed to take on the task, and from October to December 2010 we met intermittently to discuss queries, checking each line of the translation conceptually against the ways in which the Aphids production interprets the material for performance. Naturally this was in some respects an intuitive process, in other respects a matter of explaining and appreciating sometimes extremely subtle emphases. It required speaking and hearing the lines aloud again and again, 'chewing' the Italian over in the mouth, as it were, to interrogate its salience. There was also the question of the 'currency' of certain choices for the triptych as a whole; we asked whether the patterns and resonances of the lines in Italian were appropriate to the scenography and choreography of the Aphids production overall.

Six lines into Bowles' play, Rhoda pronounces herself 'disgusted with the world.' Four lines on she says, '... the world and its sufferers are always on my mind.' Harriet responds, '... You're not smart enough to be of any use to the outside, anyway.' And, shortly afterwards, '... You don't even have the pep to worry about the outside when I'm not around. Not that the outside loses by that!' Here the sisters' dialogue is rapidly gaining emotional scale—if not also emotive force—through an insistence

on contrasting the space ‘inside’ their home with that of ‘the world’ beyond. To ensure that this contrast is clearly maintained in the Italian, ‘the outside’ is specified as *‘il mondo esterno’*, ‘the outside world’, so that Harriet’s last-quoted lines are, *‘Non sei abbastanza sveglia da essere di alcuna utilità al mondo esterno, comunque. Non che il mondo esterno ci perda niente!’* The set for the Aphids triptych is a life-sized mirrored dressing-table. For Bowles’ play, two Czech-style marionettes are seen on the table top, while the actors peer from above. Our decision to emphasise ‘the outside world’ in the Italian intersected with the knowledge that, for Harriet and Rhoda, the set is lit so that it appears to float in the expansive black void of the space beyond.

As I recall, the discussions with Giovanna Dafulis did not result in many changes to her meticulous work, but generated within the company immense confidence in the ‘rightness’ of the lines in Italian, and altogether invigorated our return to work in rehearsal. As exemplified above, the translation errs on the side of ‘correct’; it errs on the side of rendering unambiguous the metaphoric detail and repetitions of the texts.

Still with reference to Bowles’ script, a few post-war Americanisms such as ‘knack’, ‘pep’, ‘boons’, and ‘dead-set’ were not given special attention as historically specific words. Hence the cultural ‘charge’ from Bowles’ sophisticated combination of streetwise and formal vocabulary may well have been entirely eclipsed. Where Rhoda says, ‘Sisterly love is one of the few boons in this life’, ‘boons’ has been translated as *‘benedizioni’*, or ‘blessings’—a word which can, however, similarly serve an ironic interpretation. Moreover, *‘benedizioni’* has connotations relevant to ‘family’ in the Italian context, since the latter carries meanings still broadly indebted to the socio-cultural heritage of Catholicism. In this and other instances, lines that in English teeter on the edge of cynicism acquire in Italian something of an old-world fatalism, equally compelling in its moodiness and wit.

The word for ‘house’ and ‘home’ is the same in Italian: the word *‘casa’*, strongly associated with ‘family’, as in ‘clan’ or ‘kin group’. Where Harriet says to Rhoda, ‘You don’t have any knack for making a home’, this phrase became, *‘Tu non hai neanche la capacità di gestire una casa’* which more precisely means, ‘You don’t have any knack for managing a home’. Very fittingly here, the phrase *‘gestire la casa’* denotes ‘household management, house-keeping, keeping the family together in one place’—all aptitudes that Harriet is claiming for herself.

Some surprising insights and compromises in the translation might be described as unobtrusive. To us the Italian seems most constrained when faced with the freely rhythmic singsong that characterises the part of the voice-over in *Mr Peterson’s Milk* by Lally Katz—the second work in the triptych. For example, the line, ‘Past the condos that were townhouses and before that train tracks that went all the way to the market and back’ becomes *‘Passati i condominii che erano case a schiera e ancora prima binari che arrivavano fino al mercato e tornavano indietro.’* The Italian has little of the original’s clever cadence, although it successfully conveys some of the breathlessness of Katz’s writing. In such cases, once again our translation errs on the side of simply respecting the imagery and punctuation of the English. Meanwhile, because the voiceover was pre-recorded in English as part of the show’s sound design, we knew that the inherent musicality of these lines would ‘carry’. Likewise, the third play, *And When They Were Good*, includes traditional verses—for instance, ‘There was a little girl/ Who had a little curl/ Right in the middle of her forehead.’ There are no exact Italian equivalents for any of the English nursery rhymes featured in this work. Yet where a feeling of forcing the rhyme could be avoided, some rhyming appears in the translations; it came easily for the abovementioned verse: *‘C’era una bambina/ Con un ricciolo di frangettina/ Proprio al centro della fronte.’* Throughout the translation, where rhymes could not be achieved, the Italian certainly communicates, as appropriate, that these elements of the scripts belong to the imaginative expressions, chants and taunts of childhood.



AQP in New York City

Wherever possible, obvious idiomatic expressions were explored for their Italian equivalents in meaning—always preferable, though not always straightforward. In *And When They Were Good*, Q declares, ‘Skin deep is deep enough.’ This becomes in Italian, ‘*Bella fuori basta e avanza*’, which more literally translates as, ‘beautiful outside and that’s enough’, or, ‘beautiful outside and enough said.’ A good Italian counterpart to the saying ‘beauty is skin deep’, is, ‘*bella fuori e vuota dentro*’: ‘beautiful outside and empty inside.’ So in our translation, this expression is invoked, shorthand, and emphasised for its perverse meaning—just as ‘skin deep is deep enough’ invokes and twists the English adage ‘beauty is skin deep’.

On the other hand, the translation of our project title was based on expedience: *A Quarreling Pair: A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays* became *Una coppia litigiosa: trittico di piccole burattinate*. While ‘*una coppia litigiosa*’ is closer to meaning ‘a quarrelsome pair’, to have used the gerund form of ‘*litigare*’ (the ‘-ing’ form of the verb) would have made the title very unwieldy indeed.

In the frenetic weeks before our departure for the Teatro Patologico, the Rome season of our triptych attracted attention in the Italian language media: I was interviewed at length about the history of the production for SBS Radio’s Italian language program, and on 20 May Melbourne’s Italian language daily, *Il Globo*, published an interview with performer Caroline Lee. Lee’s closing remarks reflect the excitement occasioned by the translation of the scripts, our collective sense of having simultaneously rediscovered them in English, and our having begun to discover the particular pleasures they afford in Italian. *A Quarreling Pair: A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays* ‘has given me many satisfactions’ she said. ‘Indeed it seems that the text works better in Italian than English. Certainly to take part in the festival in Rome is a wonderful adventure.’ (*È un lavoro teatrale che mi ha dato molte soddisfazioni. ... Anzi mi sembra che il testo funzioni meglio in italiano che in inglese. Certamente partecipare al festival di Roma è una meravigliosa avventura.*)

Rome’s Teatro Patologico

The Teatro Patologico was founded by avant-garde actor, director and filmmaker Dario D’Ambrosi. D’Ambrosi retains a high profile in Italy on account of his mainstream television and feature film work. Alongside this activity, for more than 30 years he has made theatre involving adults and children with mental illness and other disabilities. The Teatro Patologico is inseparable from his committed concern with mental illness as a subject for contemporary theatre, and his advocacy of theatre-making as universally inclusive artistic expression and as a form of social education about mental illness. In 1980 D’Ambrosi first found a forum for this interest and advocacy at La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York City. The development of the Teatro Patologico has been in part a unique consequence of D’Ambrosi’s friendship with the founder of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, the late Ellen Stewart,

who was so often called ‘Mama’ by the artists she encouraged and inspired. From this perspective, the Teatro Patologico represents a singular offshoot from the now famously experimental, provocative ‘Off-Off Broadway’ ethos—that is, its embrace of independent theatre and all kinds of diversity—which La MaMa E.T.C. helped to create and establish.

Begun as an association in 1992, the Teatro Patologico acquired permanent premises in a hillside suburb north-west of Rome in 2006 through the support of the Lazio regional government. These premises now include a garden, meeting rooms, and dormitories for visiting performers, in a colourful complex created from pre-existing buildings on the site. It was in late 2009 that the Teatro Patologico finally opened, not simply as a theatre, but as an ongoing theatre school for adults with mental illness.

Located a forty-minute bus ride from Rome’s historical centre, the Teatro Patologico, as a venue, is still in its ‘early days’. That is, while events and productions associated with D’Ambrosi’s projects draw a dedicated following, the venue has yet to effectively identify and reach its audiences for the work of other directors and companies. Moreover, it has yet to develop a sustainable momentum for its annual program in the way of including productions touring or visiting from elsewhere. To its longstanding communities of supporters, the Teatro Patologico—as both project and venue—acquires its powerful appeal from D’Ambrosi’s strong personality, talents, and focus. Beyond these communities, neither the name nor the location of the venue suggests its credentials as a vibrant location for contemporary theatre artists; for experimentation; or for independent theatre.

It was with this circumstance uppermost in mind that Dario D’Ambrosi met the Aphids company on our arrival in Rome. That is, after greeting and welcoming us, he cautioned apologetically that this inaugural ‘Festival of Worlds’ represented ‘*una sfida*’—that is, a challenge, or ‘a dare’, and, in terms of programming, timing and audiences, a foray into the unknown.

Hadn’t we already begun such a venture months before, when resolving to translate *A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays*? Don’t the two sisters in *Mr Peterson’s Milk* take a trip into the unknown and remain ebullient? With the Italian subtitles neatly formatted into 212 PowerPoint slides, our conviction of the value of having made the journey to Italy was unshaken. The delight of being in Rome in the first weeks of summer was undiminished, as was our familiar enthusiasm for taking the puppets from their calico bags and assembling the set from our suitcases. Just what our small Rome audiences made of *Una coppia litigiosa: trittico di piccole burattinate* is, of course, another story entirely.

Cynthia Troup

Gabriella G. Hubbard, ‘“Una Coppia Litigiosa” a Roma’ [interview with Caroline Lee] in *Il Globo*, 20 May 2011

Gaia Pianigiani, ‘Using Theater as a Salve to Soothe Minds’, *The New York Times*, 2 June 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/theater/06pathological.html?ref=dariodambrosi>

The scripts of the plays comprising the Aphids triptych are collected in *A Quarreling Pair: A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays* (published by Aphids: Melbourne, 2004).

See also: http://aphids.net/repertoire/A_Quarreling_Pair

and the website of the Teatro Patologico: <http://www.teatropatologico.org/>

Special Report



AQP subtitled *Photo: Eugene Schlusser 2011 © Eugene Schlusser*



AQP in NYC 2009 after last show

The unfolding crisis in Africa today is a clear indication that the days of dictators are often numbered even before they come to their senses and realise their mistakes and the pitfalls they face.

Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi, who came to power through the barrel of the gun back in the late 1960s, has ruled Libya with an iron-fist. As part of his efforts to realise his long-held dream of unifying the African continent, he reportedly aided and abetted rebels to launch attacks in different parts of the continent, thus killing countless number of innocent people.

His book, *The Green Book*, was an outline of what he claimed would provide solutions to the economic, political and social problems bedeviling humankind. This, he noted, was the scourge of bad political systems in existing countries, as against what is depicted in his principles of democracy in *The Green Book*. Like a holy book, *The Green Book*

In the name of friendship

She was taken away, drugged, hospitalised, pathologised,
and told she was mad.
But ten months' observation by the doctors found no madness.

She had been scrutinised by a German couple,
intent on behavioural purity,
who found her guilty of staying up late,
writing incomprehensible poetry,
fraternising with sadhus,
of sleeping in till ten,
sitting in the street, talking to beggars,
and her greatest crime
sitting at home alone, not talking to anyone.

In the name of caring,
they paid a servant to put psychiatric drugs in her food
and had her carted away.

In the name of helping,
they forged her signature on a withdrawal slip
and emptied her bank account.

In the name of cleaning her room,
they burned her clothes and possessions.

In the name of therapy,
my friend was obliged to talk all the time and watch TV.

Seeking the name of God,
she left Finland and has been living in India for 30 years –
Walking around the mountain,
Staying in temples and caves.

In the name of observation,
she was watched, made to talk and asked to cry,
But she could not cry.

In the name of behaving like a normal person,
she was prevented from writing.
Her writing was a problem.
She had been found staying up late,
writing in the bathroom, keeping the light on, wasting electricity,
acting alone.

Taking away her name,
they called her by her second name,
and made her change her signature.

Keeping alive her own name,
her own voice,
her own mind,
her own life,
her own ideas,
she kept writing, in secret, hiding her notebooks in her clothes.

When I came to get her,
in the name of freedom,
we packed up ten kilos of notebooks into the car.

In the name of poetry,
the freedom to write,
the freedom to be.

Di Cousens

(Dedicated to Kirsti Taavitsanen)

Books

From the Writer's Desk



Seedy Bojang

The press has played and continues to play a fundamental role in the democratic dispensation of nations. But the more daring the works of journalists, the more they have been subjected to all forms of inhuman degradation in different parts of the world, and Africa in particular.

Since stories are lived even before they are told, as a guest writer I am obliged to write a piece that describes what had been depicted in the case of the protagonist of the story in my latest book.

Entitled *Our Tears and Sorrows*, the book mirrors the story of a young female script typist cum graphic designer, Maimuna, who lost her husband in what has been described as a string of attacks on the media to silence independent-minded journalists who ply their skills in modern-day African society.

As Maimuna was reeling from the sudden disappearance of her husband, armed men stormed her offices at Vanguard Newspaper, setting one room on fire and severely damaging a number of printing machines. The tale is a model of what all the civilised world would condemn as an assault on democracy, human rights and freedom of the press. In a few words, it chronicles all blows to media freedom and democracy on the African continent.

While this systematic silencing of independent-minded journalists is not confined to one particular country in Africa that continued to inflict terror in the minds of journalists plying their skills, the book exposes the sorry condition of these fleeing, persecuted journalists in the service of humanity.

The agony of this sad story is the refusal of African leaders to be accountable to the electorate, and their clinging onto power by any means necessary, for fear of public enlightenment that might grow out of the truth being heard by a wide spectrum of the populace. Sadly, most journalists continue to be victimised on the basis of flimsy excuses, while networks of national saboteurs in different parts of the world go scot-free.

In Africa today, it is evident that there is constant and systematic deployment of all forms of mischievous tricks and strategies to silence independent-minded journalists, and to frustrate journalism from flourishing as a cohesive field of study. It is even the case that the information transmitted by journalists is sometimes rubbished in many quarters as unfounded, even though it is balanced, objective and to the point.

Seedy Bojang

The author is the first guest writer of Frederiksberg (Copenhagen).

A copy of the book can be obtained from www.redleadbooks.com



Membership Application

- I agree with the PEN charter
- I wish to become a PEN member / an associate* member

MEMBERSHIP OF PEN IS OPEN TO ALL QUALIFIED WRITERS, EDITORS AND TRANSLATORS WHO SUBSCRIBE TO THE AIMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PEN CHARTER WITHOUT REGARD TO NATIONALITY, LANGUAGE, RACE, COLOUR OR RELIGION.

DATE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

I enclose a cheque (no cash please) for:

- Annual Membership fee (waged) \$75
- Annual Membership fee (unwaged) \$40
- Optional donation for:

Writers in Prison \$.....

Women Writers Committee \$.....

Total \$.....

ADDRESS: PO BOX 373 | FAIRFIELD | VIC 3078

PHONE: 9482 6134 after 7 p.m.

*Associate members need not be published writers.



PEN International Charter

The PEN Charter is based on resolutions passed at its International Congresses.

PEN affirms that:

1. Literature knows no frontiers and must remain common currency among people in spite of political or international upheavals.
2. In all circumstances, and particularly in time of war, works of art, the patrimony of humanity at large, should be left untouched by national or political passion.
3. Members of PEN should at all times use what influence they have in favour of good understanding and mutual respect between nations; they pledge themselves to do their utmost to dispel race, class and national hatreds, and to champion the ideal of one humanity living in peace in one world.
4. PEN stands for the principle of unhampered transmission of thought within each nation and between all nations, and members pledge themselves to oppose any form of suppression of freedom of expression in the country and community to which they belong, as well as throughout the world wherever this is possible. PEN declares for a free press and opposes arbitrary censorship in time of peace. It believes that the necessary advance of the world towards a more highly organised political and economic order renders a free criticism of governments, administrations and institutions imperative. And since freedom implies voluntary restraint, members pledge themselves to oppose such evils of a free press as mendacious publication, deliberate falsehood and distortion of facts for political and personal ends