



SOUTH AFRICA

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN CENTRE OF
PEN INTERNATIONAL**

A World Association of Writers

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PEN condemns savage attack on French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*

7th January 2015

PEN SA, English PEN, PEN International, French PEN, PEN Lebanon, PEN Turkey and PEN American Center condemn the unprecedented attack on the office of the French publication *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris today in which 12 people died and seven were injured.

This is not the first time that journalists, editors, writers, cartoonists and translators have been targeted for expressing opinions that may offend, outrage or shock sections of society. But there has never been an assault on such a scale in Europe. There can be no justification for using violence to silence or intimidate those who speak out, no matter how offensive their views.

In the face of such violence, it is incumbent on all governments and religious leaders to strengthen their commitment to press freedom and to safeguard freedom of expression as a fundamental human right. This attack must be investigated promptly

and impartially in accordance with international standards and the perpetrators brought to justice.

Maureen Freely, President, English PEN said: ‘Today we are all horrified, devastated and appalled. But tomorrow we must look for new ways to stand together with writers and artists of all backgrounds and faiths and take courage from our shared commitment to free speech.’

Salman Rushdie, English PEN member, said: ‘Religion, a mediaeval form of unreason, when combined with modern weaponry becomes a real threat to our freedoms. This religious totalitarianism has caused a deadly mutation in the heart of Islam and we see the tragic consequences in Paris today. I stand with *Charlie Hebdo*, as we all must, to defend the art of satire, which has always been a force for liberty and against tyranny, dishonesty and stupidity. “Respect for religion” has become a code phrase meaning “fear of religion”. Religions, like all other ideas, deserve criticism, satire, and, yes, our fearless disrespect.’

Jean-Luc Despax, President of French PEN, said: ‘Despite this atrocious act, freedom of expression remains intact, whether expressed through art, satire or analysis.’

John Ralston Saul, President of PEN International, said: ‘PEN is appalled by today’s savage attack on *Charlie Hebdo*. Today the entire PEN family stands in solidarity with journalists in France, and all over the world, who are increasingly subjected to violence for exercising their right to freedom of expression.’

Peter Godwin, President of PEN American Center, said: ‘We are sickened and shocked by this atrocious attack. The right to criticise - even in a manner some may find offensive - is vital to all free and democratic societies, and writers and artists around the world must unite to protect freedom of expression against this cowardly and deplorable act.’

PEN Turkey condemned the ‘violent attack which killed not only our friends – journalists and caricaturists, but also threatens our freedom of thought and expression. Today, we are all *Charlie Hebdo*.’

PEN Quebec, in the name of its members and all writers from Quebec, ‘condemns the slaughter of our colleagues from the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. We join the global literary community, and all those who reject violence and wish to live in freedom and to express their views and thoughts freely’.

To read PEN SA member **Zapiro’s comments on the *Charlie Hebdo* attack** go to <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-01-07-zapiro-attack-on-charlie-hedbo-worst-weve-seen-in-recent-times>

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PEN African Network Centres Meeting – December 2014



PEN SA Member **Justice Edwin Cameron** addressed the PEN African Network Centres meeting, held in Johannesburg in December, **on LGBTQI issues**. Go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dZTyWD6P1Q> to hear his speech.



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Free the Word! 4th December 2014, Johannesburg

PEN International, PEN SA, and the University of Witwatersrand hosted a Free the Word! event at The Orbit, Braamfontein’s home of jazz, in December 2014. Beatrice Lamwaka (Uganda), Mandla Langa (South Africa,) Makhosazana Xaba (South Africa) and Masande Ntshanga (South Africa) read extracts from their latest novels and poetry collections and discussed their work with Michele Magwood, Contributing Books Editor for the *Sunday Times* and host of TM Live Book Show. Go to <http://thejourneytoadream.wordpress.com/> for more.



Beatrice Lamwaka, Makhosazana Xaba, Masande Ntshanga and Mandla Langa

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German Literary Scene Trip: The PEN Center and German-African Partnership
By Niq Mhlongo

Arrival, Leiptzig, 23rd November 2014

Mandla Langa, Executive Vice President of PEN South Africa, and I left South Africa on the evening of the Saturday, 22nd of November 2014. We arrived in Hamburg on the morning of the 23rd of November where we took about an hour’s flight to Leiptzig. At the Leiptzig Airport, Mr Claudius Egmont was already waiting for us. We immediately drove with him to the Ibis Hotel Bruhl Street where we were lodged for the duration of our stay.

At 8.00 p.m. we attended a welcome dinner at a restaurant that we were told was the oldest in Europe. Claudius came to fetch us in the lobby at 7.30 p.m. We walked to this restaurant as it was close to the hotel. It was in this restaurant where we met other participants: Mr Aschalew Kebede Abebe who is a PEN Ethiopia Board member, Mr Erba Solomon Hailermariam (President of PEN Ethiopia), Dr Frankie Asare-Donkoh (President of the Ghana Center of PEN International, Secretary-General of the PEN African Network-Ghana Centre of PEN International, PEN African Network), Mr Foluso Adedoyin Agoi (Vice President of the Nigerian Center of PEN International), Tsitsi Dangarembga (author from Harare). It was at this dinner that we were joined by Ms Franziska Sperr who is the Vice President of the German PEN Center. That night we introduced ourselves with a quote from our favourite first line from a book. We also presented our works to others. Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, Kafka, Marechera, Armah, Achebe and other writers were quoted and discussed over beer, wine and great food.

Day 2, 24th November 2014

On this cold, wet morning after breakfast, Claudius and Franziska came to fetch us at the hotel at about 9.30 a.m. We took a bus around the corner of the hotel to the German Institute for Literature. Here we met Professor Josef Haslinger, the Director of the Institute and President of the German PEN Center. He talked to us about the training of the authors at the Institute. The highlight of the trip was when we had an opportunity to meet some of the students and facilitators. Personally, I was happy to hear Professor Haslinger mentioning the Iowa Writing Program (USA) which I was part of in 2008. He gave the comparisons between the German Institute for Literature and the IWP, giving us the history, and detailing the mandate of the two institutions.

From the German Institute for Literature we then went to the Leiptzig University Library. Here we were taken on a guided tour through the library. We were told of the history of the library, how it was bombed during the 2nd World War, and how the books and manuscripts were saved. We were also told how the library was rebuilt and how some of the old architect was restored. We then had lunch at the nearby Café Kowalski before we went on another guided tour through the campus of the University of Leiptzig with Ms Gudula Esquinazi. It is during this tour that we learnt a lot about the historical roots of the university and the treasures inside, especially on the use of the new Augusteum and the works of art which is displayed in its modern foyer.

My day's impression

We learnt a lot about the history of the city on that very first day:

- that Leiptzig has a population of approximately 520 000
- that is the 3rd largest city of former East Germany (GDR)
- that it is the center for business and education, administration and culture in Eastern Germany and Saxony
- the demonstrations that took place in 1989 near St. Nicholas Church shaped the city's reputation and gave it a heroic status following the reunification of Germany.

Day 3, 25th November

In the morning of this day, at 11.00 a.m., we took a tram to the Leiptzig Trade Fair, where the Leiptzig Book Fair takes place. We met Mr Oliver Zille, the Director, and his two assistants who told us about the range of the Book Fair's activities. Mr Zille is a member of the Board of International Book Fairs and there are 25 of them around the world, including the Cape Town Book Fair. Here we learnt a lot about the Book Fair, that:

- it is the second largest after the Frankfurt Book Fair, and it takes place in March
- it used to be the biggest literary festival in Europe since 15th century
- one of the selling points is 'Leiptzig reads, Leiptzig leads'
- the Book Fair and Trade Fair are connected and this year was the Trade Fair's 850th anniversary
- there are approximately 1300 readings a day
- reading is important during the Book Fair, each author normally reads for 3 0minutes (Leiptzig is a Reader's Book Fair)
- the main competitor is the Frankfurt Book Fair which is in October
- in Germany there are about 400 Book Awards, and they get around 400 entries. Most awards are worth 15 thousand Euros

- we also talked about the digital revolution, and acknowledged that Amazon dictates the program of the Bookshops
- we also learnt that in Germany there are fixed-price agreements when it comes to the selling of a book. This means that every bookstore sells a book at one price.
- we talked about the digital vs analogue revolutions - and acknowledged that it is difficult to promote an E-Book by a new author that is unknown.
- there are awards for translators, non-fiction and fiction

At 3.00 p.m. we took a tram to the Leiptzig Cotton Spinning Works. This was a guided tour with Mr Bertram Schultze, the CEO and the subject was on the significance of the Leiptzig Baumwollspinnerei for the contemporary arts. We learnt that:

- this is formerly the largest spinning works in continental Europe
- it was put to new use in the early 1990's as a cultural location and artists residency where empty spaces were rediscovered for alternative projects like summer academy, artists' studios, architect's firms, workshops, tango factories, and exhibition rooms.
- it is the home for the Leiptzig Schauspielhaus theatre

Hamburg, 26th November

We left Leiptzig on the morning of the 26th. Claudius and Franziska took us to the Central station and we departed for Hamburg. This was a wonderful three hour train journey, and Irina Linke was waiting for us at the Hamburg Station. After checking in the motel and having lunch at the nearby Turkish Restaurant, a get together was organized with the PEN Centre Bureau members and fellowship holders. We took a boat tour together with the members on the Alster River. Mrs Franziska Sperr whom we had met in Leiptzig was also there, as well as some members of the German PEN Centre Bureau and fellowship holders. Upon coming back from the Alster Boat Tour, Ms Linke made another optional boat tour on the Elbe River. Only a few of us went on this tour as most people wanted to prepare for the night's activity, which was to be the PEN Germany 90 Years Benefit Gala.

At 7.00 p.m. we all went to the PEN Germany Benefit Gala, which included a round table discussion between Professor Haslinger and Mr Gunter Grass, a reading for writers in Exile and Writers in Prison by Hamburg PEN authors, an auction of selected objects belonging to Mr. Gunter Grass, etc.

Hamburg, 27th November

In the very cold morning after breakfast we went to the Emigration Museum with both Ms Linke and Dr Regula Venste, the General Secretary of the German PEN Center. Here we learnt about how, nearly a century ago, many emigrants spent their last moments in Germany in the emigrants halls of Hamburg before embarking on a new future. We read about the motivations that led nearly five million people to emigrate to the United States of America.

At 1.00 p.m. we visited *Die Zeit*, which is the major weekly newspaper. Here we had a discussion with Ms Elisabeth Von Thadden, the Arts Editor. The subject was on literary criticism in Germany. It was great to see Achille Mbembe featured on the magazine of the newspaper (*Zeit Literatur*) as his book is translated into German. I know Achille from South Africa (Wits University).

At 3.30 p.m. we went to the Literature Center where we took a short tour through the center with Dr Antje Flemming. We discussed the promotion of literature and the literary events in Hamburg. Things we learnt/did here included:

- authors they have hosted in the center
- visiting the small bookshop inside
- the kind of events hosted , e.g. weddings, etc.

At 7.00 p.m. we took the train to Berlin, which was our final destination.

Berlin, 28th -29th November

We arrived in Berlin on the night of the 27th November and Chris was waiting for us in the station. We checked in at the Ramada Hotel and had dinner. In the morning we took a train to the Berlin Literary Institute where we had a discussion with Mr Jurgen Jakob Becker, the Deputy Director. Amongst the things discussed were the profile and activities of the literarisches Colloquium; promoting translators and translations from African countries. Here we learnt that:

- the Institute was founded in 1963
- the Institute is funded by the city of Berlin and it finances writers and offers them travel grants
- author Helon Habila, whom I've known for some year ages, is one of the beneficiaries from Africa
- writers work individually at the Institute, and there are reading activities organized
- it is easier to get funds to do African Literature nowadays in Germany
- the Institute does fund translators

We then visited the Federal Foreign Office at 12.30 p.m., at the invitation of the Directorate-General for Culture and Communication. We had lunch and were hosted by Ms Irmgard Maria Fellner, Head of Division 602 - Cultural and Media Relations with Africa, Asia, Australia, the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean and Cultural Heritage Preservation worldwide. Among other things we talked about what the office does in literature. Ms Sabine Kebir, author and member of the German PEN Center accompanied us throughout our stay in Berlin. We then visited the Berlin State Library's manuscript department where we saw original manuscripts of writers such as Kafka. There was a concert, 'Beethoven Sonatas', that was optional to attend in the evening and only Tsitsi and Sabine went.



The following morning there was a tour to the German Bundestag before the sightseeing tour through Berlin. We then went to a farewell dinner with Ms Sabine Kebir, and Charlotte Wiedemann. Early Sunday morning was our departure day.

My overall impression of the trip

- Besides the cold in Germany, this was a very exciting trip. It is by far one of the greatest literary trips I have been invited to participate in as an author. Thanks to all who made it possible, especially the German Federal Foreign Office, The Goethe-Institut as well as the German PEN Center.

- I learnt that the literary structures in Germany are working, co-ordinated and functioning way more than my part of the world in South Africa.
- I was given the opportunity to exchange ideas and my passion for writing with authors from different countries. These are the ideas that I'm so passionate to implement in my country.
- I was shown the possibilities of partnership between PEN SA and German PEN as well as different African countries.
- I was inspired by the commitments of other writers towards writing and literature in general.
- The trip had given me a right to write.

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Chair of PEN International's **Writers in Prison Committee**, Marian Botsford Fraser's report entitled "**Chair's Notebook #14 - From Congress To Conference**" is available online at <http://www.pen-international.org/01/2015/pen-international-writers-in-prison-committee-chairs-notebook-14/>. Her note contains some thoughts about the 2014 Congress in Bishkek and subsequent work, and looks forward to the WiPC Conference, 26th to 29th May, in Amsterdam.

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Mindful Writing - Writing Beyond the Self (with Anton Krueger), 27th March to 1st April 2015

The theme of this writing retreat arises from my own recent reflections on trying to reconcile a creative life with one of mindfulness practise. I've been wondering how we work with our minds when we write, and how writing could benefit from mindfulness. On this retreat, we'll use different kinds of guided practises (sitting, walking, bodyscan) as well as practical workshops geared towards sparking creativity and honing writing skills. Drawing on texts such as Dinty Moore's *The Mindful Writer: Noble Truths of the Writing Life* (2012), the retreat sets out to cultivate a mindful approach to writing in a variety of genres.



The retreat will be kept small with a maximum of 12 participants, so that there is enough time to focus on each person's individual work in group feedback sessions. A shorter option exists to come only for the first two nights of the initial weekend, but those staying for the full five nights will also receive a one-on-one session of at least 30 minutes for feedback on a work in progress of up to 10 000 words. Writers who have an existing project as well as those just starting out are equally welcome. No previous experience required.

For more information on different pricing options, visit: <http://www.tararokpacentre.co.za/mindful-writing>. For any further details please contact Anton at mnrkrueger@gmail.com.

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PEN International Writers in Prison Committee Biennial Conference, May 2015

PEN International are delighted to inform you that the PEN International Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) Biennial Conference ‘Creative Resistance: Stories from the Edge of Freedom’ will be held in Amsterdam, Holland from 26th to 29th May 2015. The event is being hosted by The City of Amsterdam and Dutch PEN and as in previous years will also include joint sessions with the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN).

The conference will include 2.5 days of debate and working sessions, some with our partner ICORN, to review the developing global freedom of expression landscape. It will also enable us to look at the work of the WiPC since the last Conference held in 2013, and to plan for the future. As always, it provides an invaluable opportunity for PEN members world-wide who are engaged in freedom of expression work to meet face to face, share ideas and to strengthen our work.

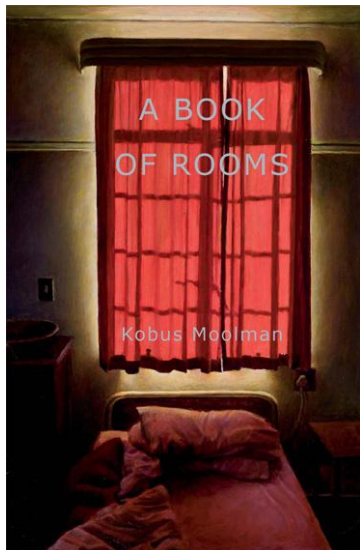
(NB: The WiPC Conference is open to the entire PEN membership, regardless of whether your Centre has an official WiPC component or not).

Registration for the Conference will be open by the beginning of February, with the full costs communicated at this time. Please be aware that participants will be required to pay a minimal registration fee and cover the cost of their flights and accommodation.

Please contact Jena Patel Jena.Patel@pen-international.org if you would like to attend this event.

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This Is The House That Kobus Built
A review by Geoffrey Haresnape



Kobus Moolman is a much published author with six collections of poetry and several plays to his credit. *A Book of Rooms* is a re-work of material written as part of his 2010 Doctoral thesis in creative writing at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The poems which it contains evince an intense autobiographical concern... for one assumes that the ‘he’ who populates them is, in fact, the author transposed into the third person. They retrospect upon childhood experiences, and create in the process a narrative involving a boy’s relationships with an authoritarian father and an often-put-down mother. The boy’s growth into his first sexual experience, his response to the loss of his father, and the ongoing complications of the bond with his mother are all presented.

Each of the 35 poems which make up the book — or by metaphorical extension ‘house’ — is named as a ‘room’ in its own right. Titles range from ‘The Room of Maybe’ to ‘The Room of Self Pity,’ and to ‘The Room of Absolute Whiteness.’ The ‘rooms’ are arranged in four suites entitled ‘Who’, ‘What’, ‘Why’ and ‘When’. Family members and lovers wander in and out of the various apartments which are furnished with curious, intimate revelations.

What the boy does with his ‘soft penis’ and ‘a wooden floor/with a small hole/ in one plank’ becomes a detail worth recall in ‘The Room of Growing.’ In due course the boy moves as an adolescent into ‘The Room of the First Time’ when, in the company of a sentient other, ‘his hands taste and touch and see everything in the whole world /they have always wanted.’ The companion has provided her partner with concerned advice: *‘Take the weight on your forearms. She says./Slowly. Keep the momentum. Yes. Yes.’* No wonder that the poem has a coda in which the novice is *‘coming back the next night. / For more.’*

From a structural point of view all the poems are cast in couplet form — although these are different in almost every way from traditional couplets. For a start, they are in no way heroic. They do not concern themselves with rhyme, nor do they seek to evoke symmetry. In fact, they seem to be deliberately asymmetrical, with one long line followed by a short one. Very few couplets are self-contained. Often a couplet gets caught up in waves of passing images, a small vessel swamped, as it were, by a sea of language. It is a form well suited to the enterprise of striving for detailed recall when psychological insight may be found cheek by jowl with fragmentary observation, and who can say which is the more important?

Two contrary flows may be sensed when taking the tour of Moolman’s domain. The ‘he’ of the poems reaches out and make important discoveries ... that is the forward flow. However, there is also the feeling of repeatedly being dragged back into the ‘he’s’ formative moments.

‘The Room of Whiteness.’ the penultimate poem, finds the author ‘*Scraping. Scraping. Up. Fragments*’ of the past. Here the little boy, re-appears on

*the dusty carpet in the lounge at the feet of his sleeping father
Playing with his green*

*Plastic soldiers. His little farm animals and little wooden blocks
For building his/tower to the sky*

Back to square one, as it were.

Moolman has a well-chosen epigraph from Georges Perec which helps a lot with the reading of these poems. In this, Perec stresses how fugitive a personal past is, and yet how important in the formation of an individual’s present self.

A Book of Rooms, Deep South, published 2014

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PEN American Center Report: The Impact of Mass Surveillance on International Writers

5th January 2014

Dear friends,

I am so pleased to announce that today PEN American Center is releasing the results of our international survey of writers on surveillance. You can view *Global Chilling: The Impact of Mass Surveillance on International Writers* on PEN’s website: <http://pen.org/global-chill>

Global Chilling also appears in today’s New York Times. You can read the article online here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/05/arts/writers-say-they-feel-censored-by-surveillance.html>

PEN American Center warmly thanks all of the writers, editors, publishers, and other members of the worldwide literary community who participated in our survey, and all of the PEN Centers who circulated the survey to their membership to ensure that we would receive a robust response. Nearly 800 writers living in 50 countries participated in the survey. We could not have done this without your help. We are currently working on translating the survey report into other languages.

We would love your help drawing attention to the report by sharing it on social media, blog posts, etc.

Many thanks, and a happy new year to all!
Katy Glenn Bass
Deputy Director, Free Expression Programs
PEN American Center

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***Itch* – Call for submissions for Issue 14. Theme = Value. Deadline = 2nd March 2015**

“The danger is in what we codify, commodify, and exploit.” — Terry Tempest Williams, *Leap*

“Bart, with \$10,000, we'd be millionaires! We could buy all kinds of useful things like... love!” – Homer Simpson

What is the value of something? Is value defined as importance, or worth? Or how much that thing or person deserves?

In our late-capitalist society, it is sometimes hard to separate the person from the consumer, the individual from the group, and indeed to understand how we now place value on people and things. The question is: should we?

As our world is further fragmented and atomised by a surge in technological advance that on the one hand makes our lives easier but on the other threatens to foment further alienation and displacement, emotional, social and object transactions become harder to identify and evaluate.

We live in a morass of mediated images and ideas, where the difference between price and value, between value and values, and between values and ethics becomes blurred, as low-price consumer goods flood the market just as our need for greater connections is not met.

What, then, is the essence of value? After all, if we are encouraged to place a value on people and ideas through the click of a 'like' button or a retweet, or to take part in the public ritual of shaming that reality-TV espouses, how do we place a value on things ostensibly of little or no (material) worth?

And, perhaps the shifting concept of value has made it that much easier – or at least more pressing – to focus on things whose value is unquantifiable in traditional terms.

Send us your best and most thought-provoking work around the theme of **value**. Remember, this can be in the broadest possible sense, and we certainly don't limit the use of the word in its commercial sense.

We look forward to your contribution.

Elan Gamaker, Editor

Submissions can be made by visiting www.itchmagazine.org. *ITCH* is the Journal of Creative Expression of the School of Literature, Language and Media at the University of the Witwatersrand.

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❖ **Forthcoming events in 2014:**

- ❖ International Data Privacy Day – 28th January 2015
- ❖ Woordfees – 6th to 15th March 2015, Stellenbosch.
www.sun.ac.za/afrikaans/woordfees/
- ❖ Knysna Literary Festival – 18th to 22nd March 2015.
www.knysnaliteraryfestival.co.za

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All information regarding awards/competitions, residencies, festivals, etc., included in this newsletter is passed on to you as a service to PEN SA members. Any questions regarding entry rules, entry processes, festival programmes, etc., should be forwarded direct to the relevant organisers. PEN SA attempts to establish that the information received is genuine before passing this on to our members, but we cannot be held responsible should that not be the case.

Please note that PEN SA Newsletters are available to members and to the public on the PEN SA website at <http://www.sapen.co.za/newsletter-archive>

