

To: SA PEN Members

**E-Newsletter No. 11/2013 – 14/07/2013**



**THE SOUTH AFRICAN CENTRE OF  
PEN INTERNATIONAL**

**A World Association of Writers**

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**CONTENTS:**

- Karen Jayes wins the 2013 *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize.
- Book Launch: *Five Lives at Noon* by Brent Meersman. **16th, 20th and 31st July in Johannesburg, Soweto and Cape Town.**
- *A Shot at the Big Time*, a short film written and produced by Janet van Eeden premieres at the Durban International Film Festival on the **26th July**.
- May/June letter from John Ralston Saul, International President, to the PEN membership.
- Book Launch: *Arabella, the Moon and the Magic Mongongo Nut* by Hamilton Wende, **30th July, Johannesburg.**
- Ken Barris wins the 2013 University of Johannesburg main literary prize.
- Tan Twan Eng wins the Walter Scott Prize.
- Hedley Twidle named one of the Mail & Guardian's 200 Young South Africans for 2013.
- Diane Awerbuck & Sean O'Toole - "Silver Award" finalists in the National Arts Festival/BASA Arts Journalism Awards.
- International PEN Congress 2013: Registration is now open.
- AERODROME – online literary magazine launched.
- Blog on imprisoned land rights activist Yorm Bopha in Cambodia from PEN International.
- English PEN meets Pussy Riot.
- Welcome to new members.
- Forthcoming events.
- Members' Publications: *Displaced* by Russell Kaschula, *Bright Dreams On A Dark Canvas* by James O'Connor

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**Karen Jayes wins the 2013 *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize**



Congratulations to Karen Jayes on winning this year's *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize for her debut novel *For the Mercy of Water* (published by Penguin Books SA). Karen was the winner of the 2009 PEN/Studzinski Literary Award for her story *Where he will leave his shoes*, published in the anthology *New Writing from Africa 2009* (published by Johnson & KingJames).

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**Book Launch: Brent Meersman launches *Five Lives at Noon* and invites you to join him:**

JOHANNESBURG:

Exclusive Books, Hyde Park

18h00 for 18h30, **Tuesday, 16th July**

Shop U30, Hyde Park Corner, Jan Smuts Avenue, Craighall

RSVP to [hydepark@exclusivebooks.co.za](mailto:hydepark@exclusivebooks.co.za) or tel: 011 325 4298 or fax: 011 325 5001

SOWETO:

Van Schaik Bookstore, Shop No. 242, Maponya Mall

11h30 for 12h00, **Saturday, 20th July**

Old Potchefstroom Road, Klipspruit Ext. 5, Chris Hani Road, Soweto

RSVP to [xavier@xaviernagelagencies.co.za](mailto:xavier@xaviernagelagencies.co.za) or tel: 021 447 1225

CAPE TOWN:

The Book Lounge

17h30 for 18h00, **Wednesday, 31st July**

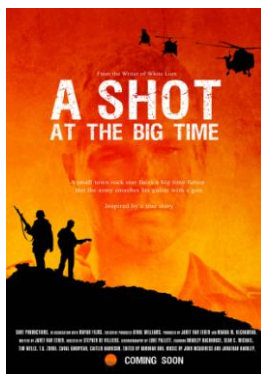
Corner Roeland and Buitengracht Street, Cape Town

RSVP to [booklounge@gmail.com](mailto:booklounge@gmail.com) or tel: 021 462 2425

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**A Shot at the Big Time, a short film written and produced by Janet van Eeden**  
premiers at the Durban International Film Festival on the **26th July**.

Janet participated recently in the Think!Fest at the Grahamstown Arts Festival at the Legacies of Apartheid War (LAW) Conference where she was a guest on a panel on talking about the LAW from a woman's perspective and discussed the film.



*A Shot at the Big Time* is a film inspired by the true story of Janet van Eeden's brother, Jimmy, who took his own life rather than fight in the Apartheid Border War, a war he didn't believe in.

Janet launched a crowd-sourcing campaign on Indiegogo.com to raise production funds for this film after the conventional fund raising platforms didn't work. This film is timeless, about the young men who gave up their lives to fight in a war many of them had no desire to fight. Every white boy in South Africa in the seventies, eighties and early nineties, was conscripted into military service. After three months of brutal basics they were spat out onto the border to kill their so-called enemy.

To link to the electronic press kit go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yup20BzinJY>

For more information on the film, go to: <http://www.shotthemovie.com/>

The Durban International Film Festival programme is available at:

<http://www.durbanfilmfest.co.za/2013/short-films/a-shot-at-the-big-time>

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**May/June letter from John Ralston Saul, International President, to the PEN membership**

3rd July 2013

Dear PEN members, Dear friends,

This letter comes a few days after the Turkish government forced the peaceful protesters off Taksim Square in Istanbul. I have been speaking regularly with Turkish PEN President, Tarik Günersel, who said that some people – including writers – have been injured by the police. He also feels that there is a great deal of misinformation from the government and provocations from its supporters. The writers are deeply disturbed by the situation and concerned by what appears to be a new level and focus of police activity, as well as governmental attitudes towards public debate. All of us at PEN International are equally disturbed and are ready to give any support we can. We have a small international working group concentrating on the issue to ensure that we are able to intervene in very precise ways.

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This is also a time in Western countries when we are discovering how far democratically elected governments have gone in cutting back on each citizen's right to privacy in their own country. There is no reason to assume that this problem is limited to one or two democracies or, of course, to non-democracies. And this is not a new threat to free expression, but the radical expansion through technology of a longstanding threat. Privacy is one of the key elements of free speech. Citizens do not simply have the right to speak publically. They need and have the right to speak privately. Those private conversations and debates are meant to be exactly that – private.

They are also central to the development of public ideas.

This growing reduction of private rights needs to be put together with the shrinking levels of government transparency, which in turn are tied to the growing governmental addiction to secrecy. Each year millions of secrets are created and the numbers keep growing. It is hard to imagine what most of these secrets are, except information that ought to be in the public domain.

All of this takes the form of legalized infringements on free expression. In other words, when it comes to citizens using language, our elected governments are resorting to the letter of the law rather than its spirit or intent.

There is great controversy over one aspect of this collapsing spectrum of rights: whether the individuals who have revealed some of this information have broken the law. Much less is said about whether the growing infringements of the state on citizens' rights are legal by the normal standards of healthy democracies.

The central issue is whether authorities are infringing on essential rights. Their constantly repeated justification is that they are doing this for our own good. Why? Because they say that public safety is at risk. But public safety is always at risk, from one source or another. And citizens' rights, such as free expression, were put in place with political drama and painstaking care over a good century

and a half. What is more, it all happened in the context of great risks to public safety. Those risks of violence, murder, organized crime, corruption and so on, continue to involve thousands of deaths and violent incidents.

What we have learnt over the last 150 years is that free expression, governmental transparency, minimal state secrecy, clear and fair laws seeking justice not retribution, carefully controlled agencies of law enforcement, carefully balanced justice systems are our best protection against all risks, all threats. And the most dangerous enemies of all, when it comes to public safety, are public officials who try to govern by making us afraid in general and therefore afraid to defend our rights.

This is the context in which PEN's Digital Declaration is beginning to play its role. Yes, we are living a technological revolution. But at no time have citizens agreed that this new technology creates a justification for removing rights. There has not even been a broad public discussion on this issue.

With our Digital Declaration in hand, PEN is beginning to play an important role in encouraging such a debate. There were discussions about the digital situation at both the Writers for Peace Committee in Bled and the Writers in Prison Committee in Krakow in May.

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Also, for the first time, the Peace Committee brought together the chairs of the four standing committees to discuss how they should work together. Hori Takeaki, Eric Lax and I took part in this discussion, along with the Board. This was Edvard Kovac's last annual gathering as chair of the

Peace Committee and we should all thank him for the initiative.

As you know, we also held our semi-annual face to face Board meeting in Bled, just before the Peace Committee meeting.

I then went briefly to Zagreb, to meet with our Croatian Centre – led by Nadežda Čačinović – and took part in a PEN discussion at the new Subversive Literary Festival which included David Van Reybrouck, President of Flanders PEN. It was a little after the fact, but we also celebrated the 80th birthday of our International Vice-President, Predrag Matvejević, who is as unflinching in his ideas of the public good as ever. I have always thought of him as a great model of ethical independence.

There were two official meetings – one with the President of the Republic, Ivo Josipović and another with Andrea Zlatar Violić, the Minister of Culture.

From there I went to Vienna on the way to Poland and had two good meetings; one with Austria's Secretary of State, Reinhold Lopatka, and the other with the people at the International Press Institute.

Then to the WiPC in Krakow, which was combined with the Milosz Literary Festival and again with our friends at ICORN. It was a very good gathering and you will hear more about it from Marian Botsford Fraser, the WiPC Chair.

From there to London where Hori Takeaki, Eric Lax and I met with Laura McVeigh and the staff on issues such as centre development and fundraising.

Finally, at the Hay on Wye Festival, I chaired an event with the wonderful

Turkish novelist, Elif Shafak, during which we talked a great deal about linguistic rights and Kurdish linguistic rights in particular.

It was a long bit of traveling. But each of these events and meetings was an opportunity to talk about and seek support for the issues raised in our recent China Report, freedom of expression in Turkey and the impunity crisis in the Americas. One of the worrying themes to come out of it all was the sense in many places that populism is indeed burgeoning in its negative form.

Finally, back in Toronto, Haroon Siddiqui from the International Board, Charlie Foran, PEN Canada's President and myself were able to spend time with the Palestinian poet Ghassan Zaqtan and the Palestinian-American poet and translator, Fady Joudah, to discuss the situation for writers and books in Palestine. Ghassan and Fady, as his translator, were shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize and subsequently won. It was wonderful to be with them.

Best wishes to you all,  
John Ralston Saul

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**Book Launch: *Arabella, the Moon and the Magic Mongongo Nut* by Hamilton Wende, 30th July, Johannesburg**

Come celebrate the launch of *Arabella, the Moon and the Magic Mongongo Nut* with author Hamilton Wende and Tafelberg.

Kate Sidley will be in conversation with Hamilton about the book he describes as "Harry Potter in Parkview".

Date: Tuesday 30 July  
Time: 17:30 for 18:00  
Venue: Love Books in Melville  
(The Bamboo Lifestyle Centre, 53 Rustenburg Road)

Light snacks and drinks will be served.

RSVP to Alicia.Pietersen@nb.co.za or 021 406 3477 by 25 July.

Wine generously sponsored by Leopard's Leap. Tafelberg is an imprint of NB Publishers.

HAMILTON WENDE

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**Congratulations to Ken Barris on winning this year's University of Johannesburg main literary prize for his novel *Life Underwater*.**

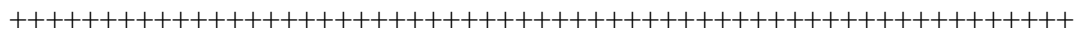
The prizes are not linked to a specific genre. This may make the evaluation more challenging in the sense that, for example, a volume of poetry, a novel and a biographical work must be measured against one another, but the idea is to open the prize to as many forms of creative writing as possible.

Approximately 70 works were submitted this year.



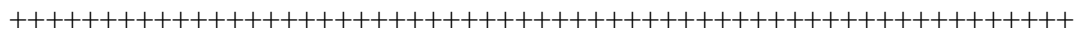
**Congratulations to Tan Twan Eng for winning the Walter Scott Prize for historical fiction for his novel *The Garden of Evening Mists*.**

Other writers nominated for this year's fourth Walter Scott Prize were Pat Barker, Thomas Keneally, Anthony Quinn, Rose Tremain and Hilary Mantel. This is the first time that the Walter Scott Prize, was awarded to a writer from outside the United Kingdom. Since last year, writers from outside the Commonwealth have been legible to enter the competition.



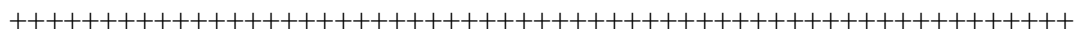
**Congratulations to Hedley Twidle on being named one of the Mail & Guardian's 200 Young South Africans for 2013.**

Go to <http://ysa2013.mg.co.za/about/> to read more.



**Congratulations to Diane Awerbuck & Sean O'Toole on being "Silver Award" finalists in the inaugural National Arts Festival/Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) Arts Journalism Awards.**

"The importance of arts journalism cannot be overstated," BASA CEO Michelle Constant said. "Without the kind of interrogation and exposure journalists provide, our artists would be working in a vacuum. While a good journalist is not simply a publicity machine for the arts, their role in provoking intelligent debate and raising awareness of the arts is crucial. We hope that, by supporting these awards, we are helping to raise the standard of arts journalism, and to encourage young journalists to consider reporting and commenting on the arts as a career."



**International PEN Congress 2013: Registration for the 79th Congress is now open!**

To register, view the programme of events, and find out more go to [www.penreykjavic2013.is](http://www.penreykjavic2013.is). Margie Orford, Executive Vice President of SA PEN will be attending as SA PEN's official representative.



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**AERODROME – online literary magazine launched**

1st July 2013 - After months of preparation, AERODROME is now live! Head over to [aerodrome.co.za](http://aerodrome.co.za) to check it out.

AERODROME celebrates words and people. Through its reviews, interviews, extracts and original poetry, it aims to both champion and critique the art of writing — and showcase the subjects conveyed through books and writing.

Today we launch with an interview with Lauren Beukes, a Q&A with book designer Gabrielle Guy, a video interview with novelist Tan Twang Eng and a poem by Genna Gardini. For the month of July, we also have a selection of reviews and extracts that form our WinterReads -- books ideal to cosy up with while the mercury is low. Our first featured book (there'll be a new one published every second day for the rest of July) is Maya Angelou's *Mom & Me and Mom*.

AERODROME's content will vary in frequency, embracing the flexibility of publishing on the web. Once our WinterReads campaign wraps up at the end of July, we will settle into a rhythm of weekly reviews, extracts and poetry. Other Q&As, including The Reader (interesting people sharing their favourite reads) and Work/Life (authors, illustrators and others discussing their work and leisure) will be published monthly. Major interview features will be shared twice monthly

Today is just the beginning. We've got lots of exciting things in store over the next few months, including the August launch of PHOTOBOTH, a portrait exhibition featuring writers who appeared at the recent Franschoek Literary Festival. You'll be hearing more about this from us soon.

Of course we're more than just a website. Follow us on Twitter (@thisisaerodrome), make friends with us on Facebook ([facebook.com/thisisaerodrome](https://facebook.com/thisisaerodrome)) and hang out on our blog -- [aerodrome.co.za/blog](http://aerodrome.co.za/blog). And in case you're worried that we just that little bit \*too\* digital, please be rest assured: there are author events -- from panel discussions to cosy book salons -- in the pipeline too!

Best regards  
Alex and the AERODROME team

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**Blog on imprisoned land rights activist Yorm Bopha in Cambodia from PEN International, 27/06/2013**

*“You can’t imagine how much it means to me to have so many visitors from international organisations. Now I know that neither I, nor the demands of my fellow activists who are outside prison, are forgotten.”*

These were some of the first words that a tearful Yorm Bopha, a 29-year-old imprisoned lands rights activist in Cambodia told ten visitors from international, regional and local organisations, when we visited her at the Phnom Penh Police Judiciare prison on Friday morning. Yorm Bopha came out to meet us wearing the blue prison uniform of trousers and jacket. She told us she doesn’t have to wear this in her communal cell – a 5x5m2 room housing eight women prisoners, where they sleep on thin mats on a concrete floor.

At the prison gates, we had to leave behind all cameras, phones and notebooks. The visit, around a long table with trestle benches set under gently whirring fans, was arranged in the wake of a four-day conference in Phnom Penh of the IFEX network – an 90–strong global network of organisations defending the right to freedom of expression of which PEN International’s Writers in Prison Committee is a founder member. We handed her a purple IFEX t-shirt which she said she would be able to wear in her cell.

During the conference, there were several actions highlighting the injustices in the case of Yorm Bopha – she is serving a three-year prison sentence, one year of which was suspended on appeal, after a conviction of “intentional violence with aggravating circumstances”. We believe these charges were trumped up and politically motivated, in order to stop her activities on behalf of the Boeng Kak lake community. The residents are facing forced eviction as the lake around which they live is being filled in with sand to make way for yet more development in Phnom Penh’s rapidly changing landscape. Yorm Bopha came to prominence for her campaigning for the release of 13 fellow activists who were imprisoned in 2012 and received threats as a result. PEN International is joining calls for her immediate and unconditional release.

But Bopha’s activism has not been halted by her incarceration. She has been organising and defending her own and her fellow prisoners’ rights while behind bars. She has been writing protest lyrics to popular tunes which she passes to her husband during his visits which take place 2-3 times a week (her young son only visits at the weekend). The songs are then sung by the other activists at their on-going protests. She is requesting that women prisoners are granted access to English language lessons – male prisoners are being taught but so far women have been excluded. She has also insisted on being allowed to receive food brought by family and friends, which the prison authorities had tried to prevent, requiring prisoners to buy food from the prison canteen. We were glad to deliver several boxes of fruit and nuts to her.

Yorm Bopha is also chronicling her daily experiences in a prison diary, which she hopes to publish on her release. Judging by the energy emanating from her nine



months after her arrest, it will be an inspiring read. But I hope that it will not be too long a book – she has appealed to the Supreme Court against her conviction and sentence. It would be a good day for Cambodia if the court ordered her release.

Ann Harrison  
Programme Director  
Writers in Prison Committee  
PEN International

IFEX (the global network defending and promoting freedom of expression): Yorm Bopha is serving a two-year sentence for protesting forced evictions related to a land conflict in the Boeng Kak community. Upload a photo at <http://www.ifex.org/cambodia/2013/06/17/photos4bopha/#.Uc2YPIOk5kQ.facebook> calling for her release, and we'll send collages of the photos to Yorm Bopha in prison, and to Cambodian authorities calling for her freedom.

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### **English PEN meets Pussy Riot**

22nd June 2013

This week, members of the Russian protest group Pussy Riot made a visit to London to meet some of their many supporters. Shortly before their arrival, English PEN was invited to arrange an opportunity for them to meet with English PEN staff, members of our Writers at Risk Committee, and key supporters from our award-winning *Catechism: Poems for Pussy Riot* project.

We were also asked to arrange a press conference with select members of the UK press. Read about their visit in *Index on Censorship*, *New Statesman*, *the Guardian*, and *the Telegraph*.

Both meetings were held under strict conditions in order to preserve the individual anonymity of the group members. As well as being a key principle for Pussy Riot - the belief that everyone is equal is fundamental to their ideology - this was also a security measure to mitigate any fallout for them when they return to Russia.

To read the transcripts from our meetings with Pussy Riot, <http://www.englishpen.org/pen-meets-pussy-riot-2013/>

If you would like to send letters to imprisoned Pussy Riot members, Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, please email [cat@englishpen.org](mailto:cat@englishpen.org).

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A warm **welcome to new member**: Maren Bodenstein



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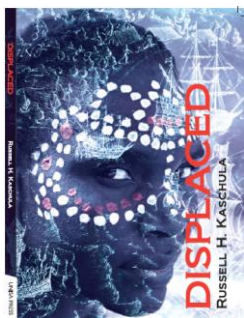
**Forthcoming events**

- ❖ **The Bloody Book Week** – 31st July to 4th August, Johannesburg. [www.thebloodybookweek.co.za](http://www.thebloodybookweek.co.za)
- ❖ **Edinburgh International Book Festival** – 10th to 26th August 2013. <https://www.edbookfest.co.uk>
- ❖ **Jozi Book Fair** - 25th to 26th August 2013, Johannesburg. [www.jozibookfair.co.za](http://www.jozibookfair.co.za)
- ❖ **Open Book Festival** - 7th to 11th September 2013, Cape Town. [www.openbookfestival.co.za](http://www.openbookfestival.co.za)
- ❖ **PEN International Congress** - Reykjavic, Iceland from 8th to 11th September.

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**Members' Publications**

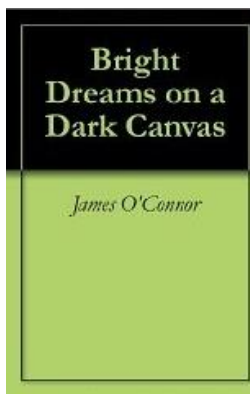
**Displaced by Russell Kaschula**



The stories in this book embrace our historical uncertainty and displacement from the 1850s up to the present. Russell Kaschula has lived in the intercultural spaces of southern Africa, and his delightful and provocative stories explore this complexity. They bring together pre and post-apartheid threads, weaving together sometimes painful, sometimes humorous incidents of change, sorrow, fun, violence, forgiveness, innocence, identity, belonging, new directions and interlinked destinies. This collection of twelve short stories was launched as part of the

Word!Fest Programme (National Arts Festival in Grahamstown).

**Bright Dreams On A Dark Canvas by James O'Connor**



Eddie Webster is a husband, father, factory worker and part-time boxer struggling to work his way out of the shabby life he was born into. The dullness of his life at the factory and the hardness of professional boxing are somewhat relieved by the humour and camaraderie of his relationship with his male friends.

Eddie is beginning to achieve some success in his life but things are changing for him as well as for the small businesses of the country and threatening the livelihood of his manager. The forces of greed, desperation and sex are turned on Eddie, catapulting him and his family into a dangerous situation at the same time as his mind is beginning to awake, and he is forced to make a fateful decision that could change his life.

*Bright Dreams On A Dark Canvas* is available on Kindle.

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Had a book published recently? Attended or participated in a Festival? Won an award? Achieved a personal milestone of note? The compiler would welcome any news of your activities for future issues of the SA PEN e-newsletter. Please e-mail your contributions to [rudebs@icon.co.za](mailto:rudebs@icon.co.za).

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Please note that SA PEN Newsletters, from issue no. 1 of 2013 onwards, are henceforth available to members **and** to the public on the SA PEN website at <http://www.sapen.co.za/newsletter-archive>