

Network Le Réseau La Red



Volume 18 | August 2008

**INTERNATIONAL PEN WOMEN WRITERS
COMMITTEE**

Dr Judith Buckrich, Chair
P.O.Box 2273, Caulfield Junction,
Victoria, 3161, Australia
penmelbourne@optusnet.com.au
www.ipwwc.org

INTERNATIONAL PEN

9/10 Charterhouse Buildings
Goswell Road, London EC1M 7AT
United Kingdom
intpen@dircon.co.uk
Fax: 44(0)22 7253 5711
Jiri Grusa, International President
Eugene Schoulgin, International Secretary

Contents

IPWWC Chair's Report <i>By Judith Buckrich</i>	2
The Americas	3
Africa	6
Asia and the Pacific	8
Europe	12
IPWWC Publication, <i>Our Voice</i>	14
United Nations	15

Edited by Judith Buckrich, Chiara Macconi, Lucina Kathmann

Translations by Lucina Kathmann, Ricardo Gustavo Espeja, Mariam Karim, Emily Hamilton

Layout by Emily Hamilton

Contributions to Judith Buckrich, IPWWC Chair, buckrich@bigpond.net.au



Dr. Judith Buckrich, Chair of IPWWC

IPWWC Chair's Report, July 2008

The last six months have been a relatively quiet period. After the excitement of meeting in Dakar, Senegal last July, the challenge was to find a PEN Centre to host an IPWWC conference in the Asia and Pacific region.

After some failed attempts at finding a host centre, Asia and Pacific expert Berni Janssen of Melbourne PEN, suggested I contact Sampurna Chattargi of the All India PEN Centre. To my delight she was interested and presented the idea to her centre who have approved a provisional plan for an IPWWC Conference in Mumbay in November 2010. This gives us plenty of time to fundraise.

Other good news is that Volume 4 of the IPWWC anthology 'Our Voice', has been published and is now available for purchase.

As usual we have been active on behalf of women writers all over the world and campaigned for women writers in prison.

I am looking forward to seeing as many members as possible in September at the Congress in Bogota, Colombia.

*Judith Buckrich,
IPWWC Chair*

The Americas

Welcome from Colombian PEN

PEN of Colombia welcomes with great enthusiasm and admiration the women writers of the world who are arriving in Bogotá as delegates from their centers. It hopes that their stay in the city and their participation in the Congress will be enriching experiences, both for them and for those who have the opportunity to meet them.

Cecilia Balcázar de Bucher

President of the Congress, Member of the International Board of International PEN

Gloria Guardia de Alfaro

International Vice-President, International PEN

Lina María Pérez

Member of the Board, Colombian PEN

Maruja Viera

Honorary Member, Colombian PEN

Brief Panorama of Women's Literature in Colombia

By María Mercedes Andrade

Literature written by women in Colombia has faced the same challenges as in other Latin American countries, such as the difficulty many writers have experienced in trying to publicize and promulgate their texts. Frequently they have seen their work relegated to a marginal position in the national culture. Nonetheless, whereas among the authors of the 19th century only the names of Soledad Acosta de Samper and Josefa Acevedo de Gómez are still known, in the 20th century women's literature has created a space in the country's cultural panorama and manifests a wide variety of styles and genres.

In the first decades of the 20th century and up till the middle of the century the best-known names were those of some women writers who started specifically questioning the place of Colombian women within society though staying within conventional narrative schemes, such as in the case of the poet and novelist Juana Sánchez Lafaurie (*Viento de otoño*) and the novelists Fabiola Aguirre (*Dimensión de la angustia*) and Elisa Mújica (*Los dos tiempos*).

Interest in the situation of women as well as concern for the country's social problems are themes which continue to appear in the work of some later authors, although they have been approached with very different styles and from different perspectives, sometimes opening to experimentation and the search for new narrative language. Works like *Estaba la pájara pinta* by Albalucía Angel, *Cola de zorro* by Fanny Buitrago and *En diciembre llegaban las brisas* by Marvel Moreno, take on political themes

and sexual identity at the same time as they manifest their interest in developing new narrative techniques. This search for new language is also evident in later writers such as Laura Restrepo, Carolina Sanín, Lina María Pérez and Consuelo Triviño. (The last three are members of Colombian PEN.)

In the fields of essay and criticism, the works of some women writers stand out, including: Helena Araújo, Carmen Elisa Costa, Ángela Robledo, Montserrat Ordóñez, Betty Osorio, Carolina Alzate and Luz Mary Giraldo. (The latter four are members of Colombian PEN.) They have contributed to literary reflection in the country and have done important work in analyzing and rescuing works of women and men writers which have not received the attention that they merit.

María Mercedes Andrade, PhD in Literature, is a Professor and the University of the Andes, a literary critic and a writer of short stories, novels and essays. She is a member of Colombian PEN.

Young Peruvian Poet Released from Prison

By Emily Hamilton

International PEN helped to release the 20-year-old poet Melissa Rocío Patiño Hinostroza from a maximum-security prison in Chorrillos, Lima, where she had been incarcerated for 70 days on charges of terrorism. Patiño was arrested with six others while on their way home from a conference in Ecuador organized by the socialist group Bolivarian Continental Coordinator (CCB). The Peruvian government suspects that the Peruvian branch of CCB has ties to the terrorist group Tupac Amaru (MRTA). Though two of the people arrested with Patiño are former members of MRTA, Patiño does not have any connection with this group. She says that she only attended the conference for the opportunity to visit Ecuador.

The letter campaign to the Peruvian government organized by PEN proved successful. Patiño was released on bail on May 8, 2008. She still faces charges of terrorism and is currently awaiting her trial, even though the authorities have not presented any concrete evidence proving her guilt. If convicted, Patiño faces up to 20 years in jail.

Poetry Cleans up the Corruption of the World

By Melissa Rocío Patiño Hinostroza

When a person is accused of terrorism in Perú, everybody usually turns their back on him or her, including that person's family and friends. On February 29, 2008, I was detained in Tumbes arbitrarily and accused of terrorism for simply having attended a Bolivarian Congress in Quito, Ecuador. I was taken to Lima along with other people who

were also picked up as they were returning from Ecuador. They opened a 15 day investigation without any proof of the accusation of planning to sabotage the summit conferences that they were organizing in my country for May and November of this year. An order of detention was issued and I was moved to the Chorrillos Maximum Security Prison for Women.

Since 2004 I have been a member of the Southern Circle Cultural Movement, a collective of poets and singers who have as our mission to make access to culture more democratic. This was my first approach to anything political. I have never been interested in that. Poetry has found the way to clean my energy from the corruption of the world. I do not believe that violence is the way to change. I would never take up arms to validate my interests and I do not support anyone else doing so, not even when it is legitimized by the state.

A week ago my detention was changed to an order to appear at a hearing thanks to the PEN Club, which did not turn its back on me. The fight for my freedom and with it, the freedom of all innocent people, has still not finished. You have helped me to regain the freedom which the authors of repression in my country tried to wrest from me.

A warm embrace and all my love and gratitude to you.

International Women Writers Movement in Latin America

By Mairyn Cruz-Bernal
PEN of Puerto Rico

In 1998 in Arequipa, Perú, a movement of women writers was born which later established links with the rest of Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain. Using the slogan "Women writers without borders, messengers of peace" the Circle of Women Writers of Arequipa, under its president Elizabeth Altamirano, organized the first conference. Among various objectives there are two which continued important in subsequent conferences: The first, to promote a union of Latin American women writers who would constitute a constructive force for progress and peace in our countries, and second, to promote publication and distribution for women's literary work, hoping we could create an permanent cultural interchange.

Looking for peace among nations by means of dialogue, even in times of war and turbulence between our nations, many women writers have accepted the mandate of the Peruvian women writers, pioneers in this literary movement of women writer in America. The vision of the spirit in which our movement was founded continues fuel our insistence on our right to be heard without prejudice or discrimination on the basis of gender. The conferences close with a plenary session to read the conclusions and re commendations and a formal closing.

The history of these conferences will appear on the IPWWC website, www.ipwwc.org

Event in Peru Honors Poet Blanca Varela

By Emily Hamilton

The Women Writers' Committee of Peruvian PEN organized a tribute to the poet Blanca Varela on June 16, 2008. Writers from around the country including Lady Rojas, Rocío Casto, Elvira Ordoñez, May Rivas and Elena Pasapera gathered to celebrate the Peruvian poet who won the Premio Reina Sofía de Poesía Iberoamericana in 2007. This event was the sixth of a series of conferences called Escritoras Peruanas del Siglo XX, a series organized "to present and promote the valuable literary works of important women writers of our country."

Africa

Kwani Litfest! August 2008

Following the success of 2006, Kwani Litfest (KLF) 2008 is set to bring an even brighter cast of literary icons and events to Kenya during the first two weeks of August for a world-class celebration of African stories. From literary safaris a la Hemmingway to sailboat excursions on the Indian Ocean, plus the usual dose of Afropolitan¹ workshops, dinners and symposiums in the teeming capital of Nairobi, KLF 2008 will harness all of this country's vivid diversity. "Kenya has never been more relevant to global development than today," notes Binyavanga Wainaina, founding editor of *Kwani Magazine* and contributor to *Vanity Fair*, *National Geographic*, *Granta*, and other notable publications. "For the best writers on the continent to gather in a setting that embodies Africa's greatest hopes and deepest fears is an extraordinary opportunity."

The 2008 faculty also includes Chimamanda Adichie, the Nigerian star whose novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* charmed the world and won the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction; Sierra Leone's Ishmael Beah, whose book *A Long Way Gone* thrust the plight of child soldiers into western hearts and minds; plus many more prize-winning journalists, authors, influential editors and publishers from across the literary spectrum.

In addition to honing participants' skills in poetry, fiction, nonfiction and journalism, this year's Litfest will be informed by the horrific post-election chaos from which Kenya recently emerged. The role of the written word in conflict situations will be examined by writers fresh from the field; their experiences and insights are sure to electrify colleagues and participants alike. This unique festival kicks off August 1 to 15, 2008. For more information, please contact litfest@kwani.org

Women and Writing in South Africa

By Arja Salafranca

Mention the words South African women writers, and probably the first name that comes to mind is that of Nadine Gordimer. Now 84, Gordimer is still writing and publishing, her latest short story collection, *Beethoven was One-Sixteenth Black*, appeared this year to favourable, appreciative reviews. Several striking stories appear in this volume, and Gordimer is clearly still at the top of her game.

Yet, the last decade or so, since democracy, has seen a flourishing in local literature, with far more local books being written, published and read in droves by South Africa's small reading public. There was a time when readers saw local fiction as sometimes dreary and oh so worthy; they knew that they were probably going to be reading about politics if they picked up a book by a local author. In addition, the novels were far and few between. How times have changed. It's hard to pinpoint exactly when the renaissance began, but a good starting point would be to look at 1997 when Jo-Anne Richards' book *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* hit the shelves. This book was a bestseller. The book certainly brought in elements of the politics that informed the times, it was primarily a book about individuals struggling, living and loving. Readers responded, and a flood of novels started appearing. The flood is practically a deluge today, with new novels by women writers appearing by the dozen. You literally can't keep up anymore – a fact which strikes me as a regular book reviewer for *The Star*, a Johannesburg-based newspaper. You simply can't read them all and that's delightful news for aspiring writers. The following is a very small selection of works that have impressed me and kept me reading local fiction these past few years. Finuala Dowling's popular and whimsical *What Poets Need* and *Flyleaf*; Rosamund Kendal's *Karma Suture*, about a young doctor working in the Cape's state hospital; *Windwalker* by Natasha Mostert, a haunting tale set in England and Namibia, and *Madlands* by Rosemund J Handler, which explores mental illness and more in one woman's life, and memoir in the form of novel in Maxine Cane's *All We have Left Unsaid*. South African writers are free to write about anything they like now – it's no longer literature with a message of condemnation, and writers are both exploring the larger political and social landscapes as well as the minutiae of individual lives and obsessions.

South African women writers are also venturing into crime, with Margie Orford leading the way. Her two crime thrillers, *Like Clockwork* and *Blood Rose*, featuring Dr Clare Hart, have been hugely successful and are being translated, always a sign of success.

If there's an absence here, it's in the genre of short fiction, and that's simply because short stories aren't published all that often by local publishers, as they claim the genre not to be popular with local readers. Jacana do publish the winners from the Caine Prize every year and Oshun, a women's imprint, have published three anthologies since launching four years ago. Anne Schuster, a writer and writing instructor has brought out several volumes of short fiction by women, including *Women Flashing*, and in August, on the occasion of women's day is launching *Writing the Self - An Anthology of New Writing* from Women's Writing Workshops.

There are two publishing houses devoted to women's writing, Oshun, mentioned earlier, which is owned by Struik, and has published a variety of fiction, memoir and non-

fiction books. Modjaji Books, started up by Colleen Higgs last year, is an independent. After publishing two volumes of poetry she has brought out Tracey Farren's novel, *Whiplash*, about a white prostitute's harrowing journey towards redemption.

South African women's writing is flourishing—there's a demand for it, publishing houses are willing to take a gamble with new authors, and there are, finally, readers, waiting for it.

Asia and the Pacific

Women Writers in Pakistan

By Syeda Henna Babar Ali

Women writers in Pakistan have to compete with men, so they need to be exceptional to get published. In the past sixty years, there have been writers like Attiya Housain, Hijab Imtiaz Ali Taj, who have published fiction about Pakistani society, its contradictions and the frustrations of living in a society that tends to be closed. Kamila Shamsie is among the new group of writers which views Pakistan from an elite perspective, having grown up in a modern environment which is influenced more by European and British culture than by that of Islam. Bano Qudsia, though a traditionalist by nature, explores human relationships in her novels like Jane Austen did, and is also conscious of Islamic traditions and Pakistan's cultural heritage, which has Hindu overtones. She sees the role of women as traditional women in society: introspective, searching for themselves, rarely venturing out of the home to work or find adventure by traveling to a different town. They are stitched to their homes and tied to tradition, culture, their environment and their surroundings because they lack the courage and conviction to break out of the mold and be themselves.

Kishwar Naheed is a rebel. She is a feminist at heart, like Fehmida Riaz; both find the woman within and discover that she has been violated by society and by family. She is never allowed to be herself, express herself or let her true self live. She dies at birth and when she finally realizes, later in life, that she should search for her true self, she finds it difficult to break out of the mold. Only if she is brave and courageous can she do it.

Bapsi Sidhwa is perhaps the best-known Pakistani writer, an author of fiction about the partition and the Parsi way of life. Her books *The Crow Eaters*, *The Bride*, *Ice Candy Man*, *Water*, *Fire*, and *Earth* have been well-received by western readers and audiences. Jocelyn Ort Saeed is a poet who writes in English about her life in Pakistan. Her style is different and sensitive and her diction makes for interesting reading. She chooses unusual and creative ways to combine words. She has published several books of poetry in

Pakistan and is an active member of the executive committee of the Pakistan PEN Center. There are other women writers, including Parveen Shakir and Razia Butt, who write romantic poetry and Gothic novels and have a large readership.

The publishing industry is not flourishing in Pakistan. Over 100 million people are illiterate. No government has encouraged the development of reading habits to provide the readership base for the book industry to thrive. However, the already established women writers have standing contracts with publishers and do not find it difficult to get published. It is difficult to live off royalty payments unless one publishes abroad. Frequently women writers write plays for television or radio, write columns for newspapers, serve on editorial boards, or work as freelance editors to augment their income.

The Accidental Anthologist

By Anastasia M. Ashman

Turkey often makes the news for suppressing its authors. Ironically, as an American expatriate in Istanbul I found my feminist voice -- and stumbled into editing a surprise international bestseller, creating a literary harem of my expat peers.

When my Turkish husband and I arrived from New York City in 2003 I planned to isolate myself with a self-involved travel memoir. No long days spent in language labs, trying to find my footing. Istanbul life would be all about me, an extended writing retreat. This vision had been percolating since I'd last been an expat. Five years I spent rotting away in the Malaysian tropics like a less-prolific and sober Somerset Maugham. The first thing to decay in the equatorial heat was my personality -- the core of my writing voice. When I told people I was a writer they'd reply, "Horses?" I was also mistaken for a very different Western woman in Asia, like when a crew of Indonesian laborers working at my home wondered when I was going to drink beer and take off my shirt.

Instead, whooping cough silenced me, and my ego. In the 6 months-long hush, Turkey suggested an empowering new metaphor for my expatriatism -- and my writing: The Expat Harem. This contemporary gathering of foreign women could be a repository of knowledge and power just as it was in the 15th century days of the Ottoman sultans.

"Embedded here, we're destined to be alien," I brainstormed in an email to my coeditor fellow American émigré Jennifer Gokmen.

"But that's okay -- the Expat Harem is a place of female power," she shot back, linking us to an Eastern feminist continuum little known in the Western world.

"Yes! Ethnocentric prison or refuge of peers -- sometimes it's hard to tell which way the door is swinging!" I replied, giddy with our anachronistic metaphor.

Like a secret password, news spread as we called for submissions. Fascinating women from fourteen nations poured their stories into our in-box. Many had never before been published and all were minority voices in a Muslim country with a reputation for censorship. Alternate realities flooded over me, representing a depth of involvement with the country I couldn't imagine myself embracing. But it didn't matter. If my previous

expatriate adventures made me reluctant, the Expat Harem turned my personal truculence into a benefit: I could give others a stage. Their struggles to assimilate also nudged me to forgive my own resistance.

The award-winning collection *Tales from the Expat Harem* laid foundations for a richer life and a more insightful next book. The joys of working with writers all over globe from my home office on the Bosphorus clarified contradicting aspects of my character -- like how I can be both a prickly introvert and a woman who craves connection with people and the planet. It seems Turkey not only connected me to a worldwide band of my peers, it raised my voice in the cultural conversation. It's also brought me into contact with women writers I admire, like the celebrated Turkish novelist Elif Shafak, who wrote the foreword to the two Turkish editions of my book. Now my literary career and conflicted mindset about life abroad have a promising new cultural context.

A native of Berkeley, California, Anastasia M. Ashman's #1 internationally bestselling and critically acclaimed Tales from the Expat Harem: Foreign Women in Modern Turkey is studied at seven North American universities and recommended to millions worldwide by NBC TV's Today Show, National Geographic Traveler, Lonely Planet Turkey, the International Herald Tribune, and the Daily Telegraph.

Author's page: <http://www.redroom.com/author/anastasia-m-ashman>

Expat Harem site: <http://www.expatharem.com>

Full version of this essay: http://www.janera.com/janera_words.php?id=80

Event in Turkey Honors Women

The cultural activity of Turkish PEN Women Writers Committee, titled "The Social Memory of Women From Literature To Life" took place at Dolapdere Campus of Bilgi University on April 19, 2008. Dedicated to the memory of Pippa Bacca, the program was based on some of the women writers, activists and poets of 19th century such as Şair Nigâr, Nezihe Muhiddin, Fatma Aliye, Güzide Sabri and Suat Derviş who all remained in the shades throughout the period. Şirin Tekeli, Zehra Toska, Ayşegül Baykan, Yaprak Zihnioğlu, Sevgül Sönmez, Melike Koçk, Fatma Karbıyık Barbarosoğlu, Serdar Soydan and Feryal Tilmaç dealt with the socaila history and the reflection of this history on literary products. Furthermore, Members of PEN Women Writers Committee; Müge İplikçi, Sezer Ateş Ayvaz, Karin Karakaşlı, Nalan Barbarosoğlu, Özlem N. Yılmaz and Nazan Haydari focused on the works of these women writers. The detailed and rich presentations were followed with great interest.



Members of Turkish PEN Women Writers Committee

Lebanese Writer Carmen Boustani Honored

Lebanese writer and IPWWC member Carmen Boustani was named to the rank of Chevalier of the Order of Palmes Academiques in a ceremony at the Lebanese University in May of this year.

Europe

Writers' and Literary Translators' International Congress, WALTIC

held in Stockholm from June 29 to July 2, 2008.

By Perla Martinelli

Sixty women were among the 120 speakers invited to WALTIC (Writers' and Literary Translators' International Congress): absolute equality of sexes.

Nawal El Saadawi, Taslima Nasrin, Elena Poniatowska, Rosa Montero, Fataneh Farahani, Esterine Iralu, Herta Mueller, Antonia Arslan and Shailja Patel participated in the congress with readings and discussions.

Nawal El Saadawi, the brave writer, doctor and dissident honored by Esperanto magazine *Femina* in December 2007, is remembered for her sentence, "There is no power in the world that can strip my writings from me." El Saadawi gave one of the keynote speeches in WALTIC, entitled "Creative Words, Dissidence and Women," which addressed the following issues: How can a word on a piece of paper be more powerful than a gun? How can words open the mind and mobilize the oppressed to stand up and struggle against oppression? How can creative words lead to creative insights and action? The public assembled in the large modern Folkethuset auditorium was impressed by El Saadawi's important theme and eloquence.

Mozambican writer Mia Couto offered the second opening speech "Languages We Don't Know We Know," stressing proudly the importance of his literary language (Portuguese) in private and public settings.

Several seminars were particularly interesting to women:

"Migration and the Female Experience", by Nawal El Saadawi, "Society and Literature" by Rosa Montero, and "Gender in Culture and Gender in Language." A surprise participant was Taslima Nasrin, who is grateful to Sweden although she is no longer a guest of the country. After her participation in the round table discussion "A Dangerous Pursuit", Nasrin promoted an informal meeting, in which the WALTIC gender workshop was founded.

Writers and translators from 94 countries witnessed the value of the written word for four straight days. More than 350 people, including delegations from Swedish and Esperanto PEN, signed a resolution to promote literacy, safeguard freedom of expression and strengthen authors' rights.

The next WALTIC conference, in 2010, to be organized by the Swedish Writers' Union, will focus on specific women's conditions and needs as authors. Let's hope that the high level of attention to women writers displayed at this year's conference will continue.

'Essencelle Cultural Foundation' International Conference of Women Writers,
Hungary and Slovakia

The goal of the foundation is to strengthen the connection between woman writers who live in different countries, who speak different languages but in spite of their natural differences would like to think and act together.

The conference will take place in Komárom, Hungary and Komárno, Slovakia on 26-27 September 2008. Women writers from Austria, Croatia, The Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia and Ukraine will attend.

Judit Glaser, *Programme Director*

Judit Keisz, *President*

essencelle.foundation@gmail.com

Hell Unlimited: Where Shakespeare Met Goethe

By Joanne McNally,

Scotland

A work of fiction about the way drama and art, and in particular Shakespeare and Goethe contribute to survival strategies in different camps, and the way they help to prevent an internal shipwreck for some prisoners. The fiction focuses on an acclaimed actor's and a photographer/film-maker's personal struggles with illusion and reality before, during, and after life in various camps. Set in the Second World War, the poetic novella transcends the historical and nightmarish framework and concludes with a glimpse of artistic unity, a sense of release, and with a life-affirming vision.

A Dangerous Liason

By Carole Seymour Jones,

England

The extraordinary 50-year partnership of J.P. Sartre and S. De Beauvoir is brought to life in this dual biography: they lived their lives according to the existentialist belief of man's capacity to transcend the limitations of his being. They hoped to devise new ways of living, unrestricted by detested bourgeois institutions. The book elucidates the interplay

between their intellectual thought and their personal interactions. The poisonous friction between the two is analyzed in depth, as well as their philosophies. In her life, de Beauvoir sought to overcome the socially imposed limitations of her womanhood. But perhaps the most poignant conclusion is that she never quite managed to free herself of what it meant to be a woman in love.

A Dangerous Liaison reveals the truth behind the legend. It is based on new research in the Soviet Archives, which demonstrates that the Russian interpreter with whom Sartre fell in love was a KGB spy, and on interviews and other evidence that show how he and Simone de Beauvoir became borderline collaborators during the Occupation of France in World War II. This revisionist biography shows how and why the couple became, in the eyes of many, the 20th Century's prime example of betrayal by intellectuals.

The Observer, April 13, 2008 <http://ads.guardian.co.uk/click.ng/Params.richmedia>



Author Tessa Ransford

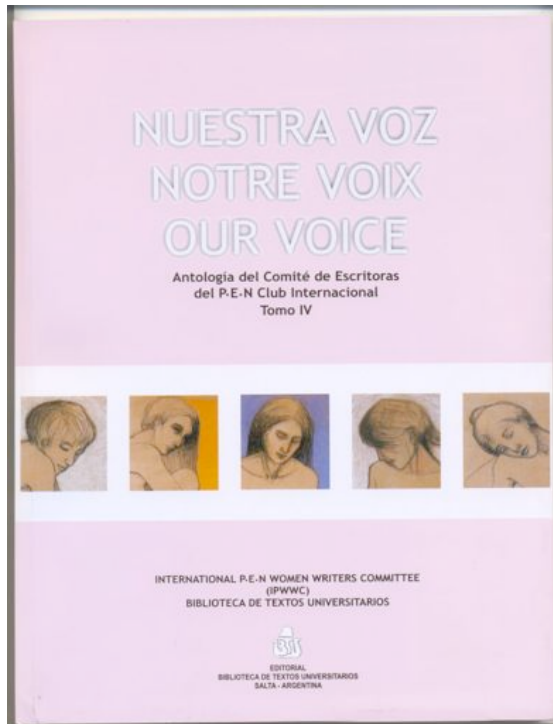
New and Selected Poems, Not Just Moonshine

By Tessa Ransford,
Scotland

Tessa Ransford's *New and Selected Poems, Not Just Moonshine*, has been compiled to celebrate her seventieth birthday.

The book chooses poems from each of the last four decades. Although translations, poem-sequences and many long poems are not included, this selection makes possible an overview of Tessa's development, styles and themes as a poet. It represents a substantial body of work from one of Scotland's most consistently accomplished and engaging poets.

IPWWC Publication



Volume 4 of the International PEN Women Writers Committee's (IPWWC) anthology Our Voice, cover shown, was edited by Judith Buckrich, published by Helena Fiori Rossi, and is now available for purchase.

Volume 4 of *Our Voice/Notre Voix/Nuestra Voz* is now available through the online distributor at :

<http://www.spdbooks.org/Details.asp?BookID=9789508510976>

The cost is US\$20.

PEN Paves the Way for Women Writers to Be Recognized*

By Mariela Baeva,

Member of the European Parliament from Bulgaria, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

The Second World War...The small fishing port of Anzio, Italy...The young girl having become the symbol of the innocent victims of the war cruelty...The rainy Monday morning of March, 25, 1957...Rome... These are the pillars of my story published in

Volume 4 of the tri-lingual International PEN* Women Writers' anthology 'Our Voice' now available. The anthology* includes award-winning poetry from Kenya to India; short stories from contributors living in Bulgaria, Scotland or in exile in Sweden, to mention just a few. The 40 authors and poets give an idea of the sensibility of women authors in the 140 PEN centres across the globe.

The works in Spanish, French and English offer a wide variety of styles and points of view. In the European year of Intercultural Dialogue this anthology will help build bridges between nations and individuals in the international community. "I am very proud to be the editor of this remarkable volume," advises Dr Judith Buckrich, chair of International PEN Women Writers' Committee, in her introductory notes to the anthology, and adds "It is always a privilege to present women's work, but never more so than when the work is excellent and compelling."

*Précis of an article in *New Europe*, www.neurope.eu, June 2, 2008
<http://www.neurope.eu/articles/87343.php>

United Nations

How to Measure Violence: The Secretary General's Campaign

By Lucina Kathmann

On February 25, at the opening of the 52nd Session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced the start of a worldwide United Nations campaign against violence against women. For two weeks, panels and presentations explored the strategy of the campaign.

The campaign is a shared activity of the United Nations Statistical Division and its Division for the Advancement of Women. It is an effort to generate quantitative indicators to measure violence against women worldwide. We know that there is violence against women in every country. The Secretary General estimates that one woman in three worldwide is a victim. However in most places there is little reliable statistical information about how much violence there is. Even where there is statistical information, it has not been collected in such a way that comparisons can be made with the statistics of other countries. Good information about the frequency and gravity of violence against women is useful in advocating for legislation, soliciting programs for victims and many other

measures. Looking ahead, such information will be essential if one day a government or even the United Nations can claim that violence against women has been reduced.

The Questionnaire

Accordingly, a four-point questionnaire has been generated, a simple tool for gathering information. This questionnaire is appropriate to administer either by phone (where good telephone service is available) or in person. Both have been tried. The substance of the questions is as follows.

1. Has anyone used violence against you (hit you, choked you, twisted your arm, pulled your hair or done some other physical thing to you that has made you afraid) in the last year? How severe were the damages? How often did it happen?
2. Has anyone forced you to have sexual relations, either with that person or with someone else, in the last year? How often?
3. Was this person your intimate partner? If so, how many times did this take place in the last year?
4. Were you married before age 18? Have you experienced female genital mutilation? (Question 4 is only to be administered in areas in which there is enough of these practices to have statistical relevance)

Is violence against women a crime or even bad?

Women vary in whether they consider violence against themselves to be a crime or even a bad thing. For this reason the interviewers are cautioned to focus on the facts, no matter what value is given to them. A recent UN study of a small group also asked: *How are these incidents best described: as a crime, as something wrong but not a crime, or as just something that happens?*

Particularly in the case where the perpetrator was the woman's intimate partner, and particularly in areas where there was a great deal of violence against women, the woman answered that it was "just something that happens". However, she did answer the questions to the best of her ability.

This questionnaire has already been administered to women in 11 countries. In every case, the sample was more than 900 women. In the case of Italy, 25,000 women answered. Most of these countries are fairly developed (Hong Kong, Australia, Poland, Denmark, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Greece, Italy), but the questionnaire was also administered in Costa Rica, Mozambique, and the Philippines. In about a quarter of the cases in which the woman was asked, she said that she had never told anybody about it; talking with the interviewer was the first time she had revealed it to anybody.

Limitations

The four-point questionnaire has its limits. For example, the device of a questionnaire inherently cannot yield statistics about murder, which is a significant type of violence against women. A study commissioned by the Italian government found that a woman was murdered on the average every two days in Italy. There are other sorts of

violence too (female infanticide, for example) which will not show up as a result of this questionnaire.

The Future

The campaign will continue until 2015, the time frame of the UN's Millennium Goals for Development. It has been left in care of a special group of the Statistical Division called Friends of the Chair, to be led by the delegation from Mexico. Efforts are underway to find funding to administer the questionnaire worldwide.

Many others beside the Secretary General have contributed to the campaign getting a good start. UNIFEM cooperated by launching a signature campaign, "Say no to violence," spearheaded by the actress and goodwill ambassador Nicole Kidman. Originally the goal of this campaign was to gather 100,000 signatures to obtain a grant of \$100,000 offered with this stipulation. However, in very few days UNIFEM announced that it already had gathered over 200,000 signatures. It seems that, for major action to combat violence against women, the time has come.

UN Commission on Women Report by Tsung Su

The full text of Tsung Su's report on the 52nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women can be found on the IPWWC website: www.ipwwc.org