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Free the Word! at the Orbit

PEN International, South African PEN, and the University of Witwatersrand are delighted to invite you for an evening of readings, discussion, and debate in Johannesburg's celebrated jazz venue The Orbit.

Thursday 10th March 2016, 7.30pm – 8.30pm

Orbit Jazz Club, 81 De Korte Street, Johannesburg, Gauteng

Towards a World Literature? Translation, identity and the nation

Poet Laureate, Professor Keorapetse Kgositsile, and Professor Chris Wanjala, literary critic, Kenya in conversation with Simona Škrabec, chair of PEN International's Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee.

The event will seek to discuss how literary translation is only open to cultures that enjoy a written language and have produced written works, that is, cultures with readers who are able to read these works in their own tongue. The panelists will explore how literary translation reveals conflicts of identity, latent or otherwise; and how literary translation represents the opposite moment of cultural assimilation or even the obliteration of identities. We will try to raise awareness about how literature can promote the voices of those who are suppressed or silenced and promote an open dialogue between cultures.

Keorapetse Kgositsile was born in 1938 in South Africa, and was a founding member of the African National Congress Department of Education and Department of Arts and Culture. He left the country in 1961 and from 1962-1975, lived in the US as a student then teacher at various Universities, extensively studying African-American literature and culture and developing a deep interest in jazz. His first poetry collection, *Spirits Unchained*, was published in 1969, and in 1971, his influential collection *My Name is Afrika* established him as a leading African-American poet. He also became well-known for his performances in jazz clubs in New York City and his significance in the Pan-African movement. After the end of Apartheid, he returned to South Africa in 1990 and settled in Johannesburg. *When the Clouds Clear* (1990) was his first book to be published in his native country. His selected poems *If I could Sing* was published in 2002.

He has also written a book about writing poetry – *Approaches to Poetry Writing* (1994) and edited *The Word is Here: Poetry from Modern Africa* in 1973.

Christopher Lukorito Wanjala is Professor of Literature in the Department of Literature, Faculty Arts, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Nairobi.

Professor Wanjala, is the current Chairman of the National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDCK) and Chairman of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee of Kenya PEN Centre. He is one of the foremost literary critics of the region having authored several book on East African literature and given commentaries on literature, politics and culture on radio and television, and as a poet and novelist and has been awarded the Order of Elder of the Burning Spear (EBS) for his work in the promotion of the reading culture in Kenya.

Simona Škrabec is Chair of PEN International's Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee. Born in Slovenia, she has lived in Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain) since 1992, where she is a Professor at the Open University of Catalonia. Her book *L'estrip de la solitud* ("The Descendants of Solitude", 2002) on 20th Century European literature won the Josep Carner Prize for literary theory. She has translated over twenty books between different languages. She is also a regular literary critic with various Barcelona based newspapers.

About Free the Word! Free the Word! is PEN International's roaming event series of contemporary literature from around the world. The Free the Word! team works with PEN Centres, festivals and book fairs to develop an international network of literary events. Each event is rooted in its local culture, but international in outlook. - See more at: <http://www.pen-international.org/events-festivals/free-the-word/#sthash.W6zBxEcN.dpuf>

*****THIS EVENT IS FREE TO THE PUBLIC*****

Space is limited - please RSVP by emailing: Shireen.Rubenstein@wits.ac.za. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact PEN International's Congress, Centres and Committees Coordinator, Jena Patel on jena.patel@pen-international.org or Lindsay Callaghan on communications@pensouthafrica.co.za.