

Prince Edward Island/Tasmanian Writers' Centre Residency 2008

Report

1. Dates and Venue: The residency ran from 7 October to 7 November 2008. I was provided with an office at the University of Prince Edward Island, in the English Department, and with residential accommodation in a condo in downtown Charlottetown.

2. Activities and Events:

There were 19 face-to-face consultations of one hour's duration each with PEI writers. These included students and faculty from the University and other writers from the community, including members of the PEI Writers' Guild.

There was an official reception at the University faculty lounge, at which I presented a reading of my work. The audience for this reading was approximately 60. I also read, along with two local poets, at a private gathering organised by the Director of the Institute of Island Studies, at which the audience was approximately 40.

I conducted one all-day workshop attended by 13 writers.

I attended one meeting each with the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province and the Mayor of Charlottetown, along with faculty members of the UPEI English Department. At these meetings the nature and significance of the exchange residency was discussed. I also took these opportunities to present the Lieutenant-Governor and the Mayor with a copy each of *Along These Lines*, the Tasmanian anthology and literary guide.

I gave two lectures to students at UPEI, one to a class on Australian Literature and one to a Creative Writing class.

In addition I met informally with local poets and other writers on a number of occasions.

3. Benefits:

The immediate and most quantifiable benefit to me was that the residency enabled me to write a total of ten poems during the month. I was able, in some of those poems, to draw on the physical and social environment of Prince Edward Island, on the similarities between it and Tasmania, on the nature of island communities, and even on the word "island" itself.

One of the more important and in all likelihood more lasting benefits was the interaction with PEI poets, other writers and publishers. The island has an unusually high number of published poets per capita, and, in addition to those poets I worked with in the consultations and workshop, I was able to meet with the PEI Poet Laureate, David Helwig, and with Judy Gaudet, Deirdre Kessler, Richard Lemm, Hugh MacDonald, John McKenzie, Brent MacLaine and John Smith among others. In all cases I was also able to read their work and in most cases to bring copies of their books (which would otherwise not be readily available in Tasmania) back with me.

It is not for me to judge the benefit obtained by those PEI writers who attended my workshop or with whom I had consultations, but there were several expressions of gratitude.

Thank You:

I wish to thank the Tasmanian Writers' Centre, the Hobart City Council, the University of Prince Edward Island (in particular the Dean of Arts, the English Department and the Institute of Island Studies) and the PEI Writers' Guild. I also acknowledge with gratitude the warm welcome and the practical assistance I enjoyed from many individuals.

Tim Thorne
17 December 2008