

New Zealand Writer Patricia Grace Selected as Recipient of the 2008 Neustadt International Prize for Literature

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA (9-28-07) – An international jury representing 10 countries selected acclaimed Maori / New Zealand writer Patricia Grace as the 2008 laureate of the \$50,000 Neustadt International Prize for Literature, administered by the University of Oklahoma and its international magazine, *World Literature Today*. The announcement was made during a ceremony Friday, Sept. 28, on the OU Norman campus.

Patricia Grace – who is the 20th Neustadt laureate and the fourth woman to win the prize – is the author of six novels and many short stories and children’s books. Her work is heavily influenced by Maori traditions and history, and her children’s stories are often tales heard by Maori children.

Grace won the New Zealand Book Award for Fiction for her novel *Potiki* in 1986. Her most recent novels are *Baby No-Eyes*, which served as the representative text for the Neustadt Prize jury, and the award-winning novels *Dogside Story* and *Tu*. A selection from her novel *Mutumbenua* appeared in the September 2005 issue of *World Literature Today*, and her works have been reviewed in the pages of *WLT* since 1979.

She was nominated for the Neustadt award by Mvskoke (Creek) writer, performer, and musician Joy Harjo, who described her work as a “brilliant weave of Maori oral storytelling contained within the more contemporary Western literary forms of the novel and short story.” Harjo also called Grace “an essential and key figure in the emergence of a unique Maori fiction” and noted that Grace’s short-story collection *Waiariki* was the first to be published by a Maori woman.

Upon announcing the 2008 Neustadt laureate, Robert Con Davis-Undiano, Neustadt professor and executive director of *World Literature Today*, said, “This award is landmark recognition of an indigenous writer and gives a strong sense of the direction of important literature in the 21st century.”

Grace was born in 1937 in Wellington, New Zealand. She attended Victoria University, where she earned her diploma in the teaching of English as a second language.

The Neustadt Prize, awarded every two years, is the only international literary award from the United States for which poets, playwrights, and novelists are given equal consideration. It is widely considered to be the most prestigious international prize after the Nobel Prize in Literature and, in fact, is often referred to as the “American Nobel” because of its record of 32 laureates, candidates or jurors who in the past 39 years have been awarded Nobel Prizes following their involvement with the Neustadt Prize. Go to www.worldliteraturetoday.com for more information about the prize and a list of past winners.

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