

ABOUT THE WRITERS



MUNSTER LITERATURE CENTRE

presents

WINTER 2011

WRITING WORKSHOPS

POETRY WORKSHOP WITH MATTHEW SWEENEY
FICTION WORKSHOP WITH IAN WILD

WORKSHOPS BEGIN FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER

MATTHEW SWEENEY

Born in Donegal in 1952, Matthew Sweeney is based in Cork currently, having previously been resident in Berlin, Timișoara and, for a long time, London. His last collection was *Black Moon* (2007). Several books prior to that include *Sanctuary* (2004) and *Selected Poems* (2002). New from Salt in 2010 is his retrospective selection under the title *The Night Post*. Bilingual collections of Sweeney's work came out in Germany and Holland in 2008. Earlier translations appeared in Mexico, Romania, Latvia and Slovakia.

IAN WILD

Ian Wild is a writer, composer and theatre worker from Enniskean, Co. Cork, Ireland. In 2009 he won the Fish International Short Story Prize and received a literature bursary from the Irish Arts Council. His publications and broadcast work include *Way Out West*—a comedy series about the English community in West Cork for RTE Radio One; *The Great Moodini* and other stories—20 children's stories also broadcast on RTE's Radio One. He has a collection of short stories published by Fish: *The Woman Who Swallowed The Book Of Kells* and also a volume of poetry entitled *Intercourse With Cacti* (Bradshaw Books). His literary awards include the North West Playwrights Award, a short story prize with the Cork Literary Review and in 2005 he won a runner-up award in the Bridport Short Story Prize. His most recent publication is *The Naked Umbrella Thieves* (Knightstone, 2011).

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FICTION WORKSHOP WITH IAN WILD

Week 1: Lifting the Pen--“He took up the paper and began to study form.” Seán O’Faoláin.
This introductory workshop concentrates on taking the inhibition out of writing and clearing blocks that may lie in the path of the creative process. In a series of practical exercises, the group will also explore dialogue and the development of a distinctive prose voice.

Week 2: Switching on the Light Bulb--“Dearer to me than a host of base truths is the illusion that exalts.” Alexander Pushkin
Where do ideas come from? This workshop will look at ways to generate original imaginative material for stories. Central to this session will be the notion that a story is not a story unless something actually happens.

Week 3: Beginning--“Surprise is the greatest gift that life can grant us.” Boris Pasternak.
Short stories differ to novels in that readers have to continually make an effort to assimilate new characters and settings. This workshop will look at grabbing the reader early on with an arresting first sentence and a first paragraph that doesn’t let go.

Week 4: Middle--“That is the satisfaction of writing - one can impersonate so many people.” Katherine Mansfield.
The creation and exploration of characters is a key element of narrative development. This session will look at imaginative reprocessing of life experience in the depiction of fictional characters. We’ll also look at the idea of writers giving their creations ‘freewill’ as the character-driven plot works best when the truth of a story can unfold without the intrusion of writers playing God.

Week 5: End-- “True genius shudders at incompleteness.” Edgar Allen Poe
One of the great difficulties for writers of short stories is narrative closure. This workshop will explore two key elements in concluding a story. Reincorporation of material and allowing the story to control its own ending.

Week 6: Editing – the Unkindest Cuts. “If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.” George Orwell
This final session will look at practical ways to achieve the distance and detachment necessary to edit effectively. Participants will practice condensing prose and streamlining narratives using examples of their own work.

PARTICIPATION DETAILS

- Intimate class size (ten maximum) individual attention guaranteed from a much published, prize-winning author.
- Held weekly on Thursdays, 7-9 pm, from 3 November (Fiction).
- Fee: €120 (€100 Concession) for six workshops.

To Book: please contact The Munster Literature on (021) 431-2955 or email info@munsterlit.ie. Further details are also available on www.munsterlit.ie.

Due to the limited capacity, we suggest that you book your place as soon as possible.

POETRY WORKSHOP WITH MATTHEW SWEENEY

Workshop 1: Less is More--‘It’s what you leave out, not what you put in’: WD. Snodgrass
In this first workshop we will be looking at the benefits of simplicity, and of being spare. And at how to avoid overstatement, and overwriting. And at the enhanced power of being implicit, rather than spelling out. How less is always more in poetry.

Workshop 2: The Devil in the Details
Choosing the right rather than the wrong details is essential to the writing of good poetry. And one very simple device that is found everywhere in poetry is the humble list, where stark juxtapositions can, if one is lucky, become inexplicably enlarging.

Workshop 3: The Perils of Autobiography--‘Yet why not say what happened?’: Robert Lowell
It’s not that easy. Many would-be poets think that it is, though. The next line in Lowell’s late poem ‘Epilogue’, from where the above quote comes, is ‘Pray for the grace of accuracy’. We will be looking at poems that use autobiography well, and at the pitfalls that writing autobiographically brings with it.

Workshop 4: Using Personae
While there is nothing wrong with writing autobiographically, when it’s done right, (as we will have seen in the last workshop) many poets find it liberating to use personae sometimes – to inhabit an imagined person’s head, and draw on made-up rather than experienced detail.

Workshop 5: The Liberating Effects of Translation--‘Poetry is what gets lost in translation’: Robert Frost
This rather grumpy belief of Mr Frost’s is not one that is shared much anymore. Certainly, more and more poetry is being translated. Some fine translations are even being done by poets who do not know the language they are translating from. We will look into all this, and at the benefits of reading translations, and of attempting to translate.

Workshop 6: Writing Poetry for Children
‘There are no good poems which are only for children’: WH Auden
Many people think that it is easier to write poetry for children. It is not. As the Auden quote suggests, a good children’s poem will be a good poem for adults as well. Much of what passes as poetry for children is very bad – patronising to its young readers, and technically inept. We will look at this, and at good examples of poetry for children, and why these are good.

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