

*The 11th Annual*

# FRANK O'CONNOR INTERNATIONAL SHORT STORY FESTIVAL 2010

---

Founded in 2000, 2010 marks the festival's tenth birthday. Remarkable things have happened in the world of the short story in that time. Our festival is the oldest annual short story festival in the world but it has now been joined by sister festivals in Britain, Croatia and Poland. Short stories regularly appear in the *Guardian* and the *Sunday Times* after decades of absence from major, international, newspapers. There are not only dedicated literary festivals but now, whole support organisations for the short story. It is still difficult to get published solely as a writer of stories but the likes of Claire Keegan and Helen Simpson demonstrate that it is not quite impossible. There are a great many more substantial, international awards for the form, awards whose large purses and growing prestige are helping to establish a proper level of esteem for the short story and its creators.

America has always been the major supporter, not only through a multitude of publishing opportunities, but through the careful nurturing of the form in their universities. This fact is reflected in the success which US-based writers have achieved in winning and being shortlisted for the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Award - the world's most prestigious for the short story.

In Ireland, for too long, the short story had been considered a form suitable for study only by children. But finally, the universities have stopped ignoring the it; most Irish universities now have creative writing departments encouraging the writing of short stories and a growing number of young academics have been attracted to the form. University College Cork is to be congratulated for the attention it shows Frank O'Connor but the nation's short story capital is now distinguished as the only major Irish centre of third level education without a functioning creative writing department.

Down the years we have played host to great names in modern fiction, many before they have become more widely known. This year will be no exception. We hope people will have fun at this festival. There will be humour, tragedy, tales of domesticity and tales of fantasy. We want you to find here something to make you laugh and cry. There are readings, workshops, seminars, book launches, literary walks and the opportunity to socialise over a pint of beer, glass of wine or bottle of fancy water. We hope you can make it.

Patrick Cotter  
Artistic Director,  
[www.munsterlit.ie](http://www.munsterlit.ie)



# Robin Black

Shortlisted for the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Award  
Reading Thursday 16th September 7.30pm



*From*

*If I Loved You, I Would Tell You This*

**R**obin Black holds a BA from Sarah Lawrence College and an MFA from Warren Wilson College. Her first story collection *If I Loved You, I Would Tell You This*, is forthcoming from Random House in 2010. The book will also be brought out by six foreign publishers and translated into four languages.

Robin Black's stories and essays have appeared in numerous publications including *The Southern Review*, *One Story*, *The Georgia Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Indiana Review*, and *The Best Creative Nonfiction*, Vol. I (Norton, 2007). She is the recipient of grants from the Leeway Foundation, the MacDowell Colony, the Sirenland Conference and is also the winner of the 2005 Pirate's Alley Faulkner-Wisdom Writing Competition in the short story category. Her work has been noticed for Special Mention by the Pushcart Prizes on four occasions and also deemed Notable in *The Best American Essays*, 2008 and *The Best Nonrequired Reading*, 2009. She is currently at work on a novel, also to be published by Random House and overseas. Since receiving her MFA, she has taught Advanced Fiction Writing at Arcadia University and worked extensively with individual students. In 2010, she will be teaching at Bryn Mawr College.

I can hear music humming still in Alyssa's room. She came in late, full of stories about her friends. I tried to listen with good humor to her tales of adventure at the dance, tried not to allow my resentment toward her companions seep in. But no doubt she senses how I feel about them all. Awkwardly emergent female forms, not children anymore, not adults yet, creatures of transition alone, they call my daughter Ally one day and then Lyssa the next, as though she were their property, to name and claim. As though she no longer belongs to me and only I have not figured that out. Deceptively clothed in bell-bottoms and horizontal stripes, outfits reinvented from my own youth, they are the trumpeters of my daughter's departure, the harbingers of yet another loss. They are the clock ticking forward with no concern for me. All of them. The one with bad skin. The one with enormous thighs. The one who dresses like a whore. The one who smells like dope. I have trouble telling them apart too—as I did the women in Heidi's kitchen. My tags on them are a mother's silent protest against their undeniable power over my own little girl, herself half woman now. Half already gone from my home.

It's not a level playing field. My foes do not play fair. Death and all of its traveling companions and close associates, all of those beings who sneaked into my house, camouflaged in the chaos that surrounded Joe's swift disease. Loss and grief. Reality itself. And always, with me since, this horrible heightened awareness of impending abandonment.

Booze is a necessary tiny kindness from time to time, I tell myself as I roll over on my side and try to sleep.

*The Subject Is Subjectivity*  
(from *Robin Black's Blog*)

First a disclaimer:

I'm not a big fan of writing advice – of a certain type. In fact, when I'm in that kind of pissy irritated mood that leads one to go out of one's way to seek reasons to become more irritated, I'll often skip around the internet from one blog to another that purports to tell writers what they **MUST** do and then rail – usually to myself – against the idea that there are people out there who are saying there's **ANYTHING** that every writer must do. They must write every day; I don't. They must use outlines; I don't. They must show their work to trusted readers for critiquing; I only sometimes do. They must try to write while in a semi-conscious dreamlike state. What? Huh?

Really?

Of course, this puts me in an awkward position when I actually want to give writing advice. So, the disclaimer I'm attaching here and always intend whether it's stated or not, is that anything I say about what's helped me along the way or for that matter torpedoed me, is said in the spirit of sharing experience and not at all as some kind of declaration of what I think all writers **MUST** do.

Except of course on the subject of subjectivity.

(Just kidding. . .)

(Sort of. . .)

I had been writing off and on for decades, been through endless (some feeling literally endless) workshoping experiences and had an MFA from Warren Wilson before I realized that taste in literature is subjective. I mean, I knew it in some way – but not in any particularly helpful way. The realization came (Short Story Writer Has Epiphany!) at the second meeting of the first writing course I ever taught. I was in the middle of a discussion of the Grace Paley story "Conversations With My Father," a story I love, a story it never occurred to me anyone else wouldn't love (a story that in my heart of hearts I believe everyone should love) and it became clear to me that not everyone in that room loved it.

"How many of you like this story?" I asked, and about two-thirds of the hands went up.

"Huh. So, how many of you like Faulkner?" About one third.

"How about Virginia Woolf?" Just about half.

"Well," I said, "I just hope you all remember this when your work is being workshoped. If half the folks in here think you're on the right track, you're right with Virginia Woolf and you're ahead of William Faulkner."

Seem obvious? It wasn't to me.

A few months after that, an editor with whom I had previously worked rejected a story of mine in no uncertain terms. She was kind about it, but there was none of that "oh, this was close" stuff. It was an unambiguous no, and I felt pretty devastated. I went through one of those I shouldn't try to be a writer patches. Then, a week later, another editor called me up whispering in shaky, anxious tones that he had just read the same story and was hoping, hoping that it was still available for publication.

"Why yes, I believe it is."

I felt a certain sense of vindication, mingled with relief, but what I eventually realized, what I think it's so important to understand, is that neither of them was right. Because there is no such thing as right. The illusion of objectivity in responses to art is just that. For better and worse, when you decide to write, you hurl yourself and your cherished work product into a world that is ruled by individual taste. The only way in which either editor was

right, is that both were right. The story was wrong for the first journal and a good fit for the second – but not for any reason beyond their subjective responses to the piece.

Writing is not a fixed currency.

Am I saying there's no such thing as bad writing or good writing?

I guess what I'm saying is that long, long before the question of inherent quality can be addressed, the dominance of subjective response has so trampled it that it's barely worth asking. And it's a question I particularly dislike because in the asking lies the implication that some of us are more entitled to write than others of us, because some of us are "good" and others of us are "bad." I would far rather err in the direction of inclusion than risk endorsing that conceit.

One more story. In 2007 an essay of mine appeared in the book *The Best Creative Nonfiction, Volume I*. The anthology is published by Norton, the selection made by the editors of *Creative Nonfiction Magazine*. I was thrilled to have the piece included, chosen from thousands I was told – and I was also amused, because a couple of years before *Creative Nonfiction Magazine* had rejected the same piece. A sad little D-list xeroxed rejection slip. And again, that isn't a matter of self-correction on their part. It's almost certainly a question of whose desk it crossed the first time, and whose desk it crossed the second time. No one right; and no one wrong.

So why is it so difficult for so many of us to remember as we get rejections that each one is just the subjective response of an individual reader and not a judgment from on high either about the worth of that piece or about our right to write? I suppose that a certain desire for universal approval is natural to us all. And I don't think it's surprising that writers, many of whom suspect they have no business writing, hear rejection as a confirmation of their worst fears and so take it to heart.

I also think that writing workshops carry in them the danger of training us all to seek consensus. Not every workshop falls into this trap, but many end up defining themselves in terms of "liking" or "not liking" the piece. We all say that we're there to get advice, but in my experience, when I ask a writer how a workshop went, she'll almost always answer either "Great! They loved it" or "Awful, they didn't like it at all" and only very occasionally something along the lines of "It went well, I got some really good advice."

Problematic too is that there just seems to be something in the dynamics of a group that pulls in the direction of agreement – and agreement argues against subjectivity. Workshops very often seem to want to give clear advice, which in a room of a dozen people is pretty much guaranteed to promote the notion that there is some objectivity to all of this. In truth, there are almost certainly people among the group who don't connect to the work on the table and may well not have anything useful to say. If I had asked the editor who rejected my story how to make it better, I can't imagine what she could have told me. She so disliked the premise of the thing. Really, she could only have said what she did which was "I'd like to see something different." While the editors at the journal that accepted it could and did help me make improvements, because they were already on board with the essential conceit and most of the execution. Workshops rarely make those distinctions, rarely acknowledge the role of subjective response, rarely suggest that people who thoroughly dislike a piece might want to leave some extra room for those who feel connected to it and may know best how to help.

# Belle Boggs

Shortlisted for the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Award  
Reading Thursday 16th September 7.30pm



**B**elle Boggs grew up in King William County, Virginia. She is a writer and teacher. *Mattaponi Queen* is her first book. Stories from *Mattaponi Queen* have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Glimmer Train*, *At Length*, *storySouth* and *Five Chapters*. She lives in Chatham County, North Carolina with her husband, Richard Allen. *Mattaponi Queen* has received the 2009 Katharine Bakeless Nason Publication Prize for Fiction

“*Mattaponi Queen* was one of the best things I’ve read all year. I looked forward each night to a new story, and by the end, felt as if I’d been sitting in a car or on a porch with a cousin or neighbor, listening to how things went wrong, or how they could have gone right, or how they might still look up. The setting was so perfectly rendered that I saw the river, the dirt roads, the woods, and most of all, the way each character moved in that landscape. The interwoven stories remind me of Annie Proulx crossed with Ernest Gaines—the dry humor, the understatement, and the wonderful dialogue that sounds as if I’m hearing it while sitting on a folding chair in a yard.”—Susan Straight, author of *A Million Nightingales*

## from *Mattaponi Queen*

Skinny said again how he didn’t know why she’d want to paint him, but he didn’t say no. After she left he stood for a while in front of his tiny bathroom mirror – a narrow rectangle inside the door, the only mirror in his house – and regretted it. Most of him did not fit inside the mirror but he could see, in the dimming afternoon light, the bloating in his joints, the yellowness in his skin, his thinning, graying hair. You’re a mess, he thought meanly. You’re fit to die.

Skinny brought old photographs to the first sitting. Though he was not handsome, he was vain and over the years he had saved the pictures of himself that flattered. There was one of him sitting astride a motorcycle and wearing a tight leather vest. In another he was standing in the kitchen of his old house wearing dark aviator glasses and smiling slightly, like he had a secret, and there was another – his favourite – that showed just the top of his head bent over an acoustic guitar. He held the small pile nervously in his hands as he waited on the community pier for Ronnie. The day was warm and overcast, muggy. It was low tide, the yellowish stalks of weeks and lily pads exposed where the water had receded. The smell of mud hung in the air.

She showed up a few minutes late, struggling to carry the canvas, easel, and small leather case down the steep hill. He put the pictures in his shirt pocket and held out his arms to take what she was carrying, but she waved him off, annoyed.

“Sorry,” he said. She got to work setting up the easel, screwing its parts into place. He took the photographs from his pocket to show them to her. “Here.” Ronnie looked up, surprised. “What’s this?” she said. “Oh. Thanks.”

“Artistic license,” Skinny said. “That means you can paint me in my better days.” She flipped through the pictures quickly and handed them back. “That’s okay,” she said. “I prefer to paint from life.”

## From Poets & Writers

Although Belle Boggs had moved from King William County, in the Tidewater region of Virginia, long before writing the stories that comprise her debut story collection, the thirty-three-year-old author drew from her experiences in her hometown to develop the rich setting, quirky characters, and intersecting plotlines of *Mattaponi Queen*, winner of the 2009 Bakeless Prize for Fiction, selected by Percival Everett. “I imagined many of the stories taking place in the small town of Walkerton, where my parents still live, and drew inspiration from the people there,” she says. The story collection is actually the second book Boggs wrote. In 2003, after moving from California, where she received her MFA from the University of California in Irvine, to New York City, where she taught elementary school in Brooklyn, she completed a novel called “Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere,” about two brothers who spend a summer laying track for the C&O Railroad in West Virginia in 1969, but she didn’t have any luck placing it with a publisher. Undaunted, during the summer after her first year of teaching she went to the New York Public Library every day and finished drafts of a few stories from her new book, then moved to North Carolina and completed the rest. In spite of her diligence and perseverance, news that the collection had been chosen for the Bakeless Prize came as a complete surprise to her. “I was too busy to submit anything to contests or to send my stories to magazines or journals,” she says. “My husband did it for me, without telling me, and it’s the best gift I’ve ever been given.” Boggs now lives with her husband in Chatham County, just outside Chapel Hill, in a little house on five acres (the objects on the cover of her book were all found on her property), where she’s writing another novel.

## Photographer in Residence John Minihan

John Minihan has been described variously as “the Irish Cartier-Bresson” and “Samuel Beckett’s favourite photographer”. His published books include *Samuel Beckett - photographs* (1995) *Shadows from the Pale - Portrait of an Irish Town* (1996) and *An Unweaving of Rainbows - Images of Irish Writers*. We have been lucky to have him photographing writers at this festival since 2008, by so doing, Minihan is building up a portfolio of images of some of the world’s greatest short story writers and novelists.

“Looking at the work of John Minihan one understands immediately why Samuel Beckett, that most private and publicity-shy of artists, entirely trusted him, and allowed him to become, in effect, his official photographer.

Minihan’s gift is to be at once penetrating and discreet, probing and respectful, close-up and impersonal. His photographs offer us deep insights into Beckett the man while maintaining intact the essential mystery, which is the mystery of art, and the Beckett he presents to our gaze is both mortal being and the timeless artist.” - John Banville

**Enter Draw.** Write the names of the four writers below with your name,, email and phone number on a postcard drop it into “the box” at the festival and be in a chance to win a library of 100 short story collections.

Draw takes place on last night of festival.

Stumped for some names?

Checkout [www.munsterlit.ie](http://www.munsterlit.ie)



# T.C. Boyle

Shortlisted for the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Award  
Reading Thursday 16th September 9.30pm



from *Wild Child*

**T**. Coraghessan Boyle is the author of twenty books of fiction, including, most recently, *After the Plague* (2001), *Drop City* (2003), *The Inner Circle* (2004), *Tooth and Claw* (2005), *The Human Fly* (2005), *Talk Talk* (2006), *The Women* (2009), *Wild Child* (2010) and *When the Killing's Done* (2011). He received a Ph.D. degree in Nineteenth Century British Literature from the University of Iowa in 1977, his M.F.A. from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop in 1974, and his B.A. in English and History from SUNY Potsdam in 1968. He has been a member of the English Department at the University of Southern California since 1978. His work has been translated into more than two dozen foreign languages. His stories have appeared in most of the major American magazines, including *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Playboy*, *The Paris Review*, *GQ*, *Antaeus*, *Granta* and *McSweeney's*, and he has been the recipient of a number of literary awards. He lived for many years in West Cork last century. He currently lives near Santa Barbara with his wife and three children.

Back in the living room, he sank into the couch with his coffee and watched the snake as it came slowly back to itself, its muscles shivering in slow waves from head to tail like a soft breeze trailing over a still body of water. By the time he'd had a second cup of coffee and fixed himself an egg on the gas range, the crisis – if that was what it was – had passed. Siddhartha seemed fine. He never moved much even in the best of times, with the heat on high and the electric blanket Gerard had bought for him draped across the big Plexiglas terrarium he liked to curl up in, and so it was difficult to say. Gerard sat there a long while, stoking the fire, watching the snake unfurl its muscles and flick the dark fork of its tongue, until a thought came to him: maybe Siddhartha was hungry. When Gerard had asked the pet shop proprietor what to feed him, Bozeman had answered, "Rats." Gerard must have looked dubious, because the man had added, "Oh, I mean you can give him rabbits when he gets bigger, and that's a savings really, in time and energy, because you won't have to feed him as often, but you'd be surprised—snakes, reptiles in general, are a lot more efficient than we are. They don't have to feed the internal furnace all the time with filet mignon and hot fudge sundaes, and they don't need clothes or fur coats either." He paused to gaze down at the snake where it lay in its terrarium, basking under a heat lamp. "I just fed this guy his rat yesterday. You shouldn't have to give him anything for a week or two, anyway. He'll let you know."

"How?" Gerard had asked.



RB: You have been at this writing game for a while. At what point did you develop your “program”?

TCB: Only in retrospect.

RB: (Laughs)

TCB: Only in retrospect, Robert. It’s not as if you know what your themes are and what your obsessions are. You don’t really know that at the beginning. I look back, and I can see how all of the books are allied. But especially the last six or seven. They seem to be going in a succession and including the one that I am in the middle of right now. Riven Rock talked about a sexual dysfunction, the ‘98 book that is a novel based on a true story of the McCormack family and Stanley became schizophrenic. He was called a sexual maniac. He was put away. That also reflects back on the Road to Wellville, which is about Dr. Kellogg who never consummated his marriage but in another way. So the book I am working on now, which also has to do with “man is an animal,” is about Dr. Kinsey’s sex researches in the ‘40s and ‘50s. Everything seems to suggest the next thing. I am just riding it. I just want to see where it will go. I write these novels in order to try to understand the world a little better for my own self. And if I help my fans and readers to go along on the journey, that’s great.

RB: You seem to be one of those writers that journalists use to bridge high and low art?

TCB: I operate on the highest level of art. I always have. That’s what I want to do. But, I made many enemies in this way. And I am a professor, a Ph.D. I believe in all of this. I’ve made enemies because I have tried to demystify the whole process. I am also a regular guy. I am also a showman. I love to be on stage. I give readings that people enjoy. There is some kind of mystique with being a writer where you are an intellectual, need a bunch of critics in the university to be intermediaries between you and the audience, I think that’s just crap. No matter what we want to make of it. Art is for entertainment. You can put it in the university but it is for entertainment. And if a book doesn’t entertain it’s useless. Everything else must derive from that. And so I am an entertainer. And yet I am often misunderstood or maybe willfully misunderstood by my legions of enemies, who say, “He wants to dumb it down.” Of course they haven’t read my books. Not at all. I am doing exactly what I am doing for the very highest audience possible. But I also want anybody who knows how to read to be able to enjoy this as a story. They may not get all the subtleties; they may not know all my work. They may not know all of literature. But they can read this and get a charge out of it. That’s what it’s about. It’s entertainment.

RB: I always think of LA as a crime-writer central.

TCB: There are a lot.

RB: Besides you, I can’t think of a literary fiction writer in LA.

TCB: There are a lot. I’m not going to mention them. I agree with you as far as genre writers.

RB: Why not? You may forget some? (Laughs)

TCB: That’s exactly right. Where I live now in Santa Barbara it’s mainly genre writers. Almost all, because no one else can afford to live there. I’m just lucky that I am the literary writer who can afford it. (Laughs) They sell a hundred books for every one I sell. I have something that they don’t have, which they crave. Which is respect. But on the other hand, they never get reviewed or rarely, and they never get attacked. So they can just make their millions and be happy.

RB: You don’t think that’s changing?

TCB: No, it’s not.

RB: People still try to break the walls down. Every year there is one other guy who writes in a genre but is supposed to be more than that.

TCB: Well that’s good. Hallelujah. I don’t want to diss any writers,

we are all in it together, but I’m a not a genre fiction guy. I don’t read it, don’t like it, don’t think about it. I have never read any science fiction, never read any detective novels, thrillers. I am just not interested in them because they are conventional. That’s why people like them. They want the same thing, the same characters. Great writing to me is, you open the book and you are surprised each time out. That’s what I want to do. That’s literature. Genre writing is limited not only by the fact that it is a genre and so that are certain expectations that have to be fulfilled. Like filling in the blanks. But also, the writing isn’t usually as good as it is in literary fiction. And I need to read something that is as good or better than I can do or it doesn’t interest me.

RB: That would be a high standard.

I think writing and reading are unique in this—in all of human culture—but particularly in this electronic culture, this busy culture, you can do it on your own. You can be an independent agent. You can be a punk. You can be a crank and a crazy and you can do it and you can find an audience for it.

TCB: Yeah that’s right. Well, there are a lot of great books to read. If human life lasted ten thousand years, I couldn’t get through the books I want to know about. So why waste my time? It’s thrilling to read something that is a literary book that is great. Much more than reading some whodunnit or thriller. They are so standard. I have no objection to going to movies to see a thriller or a SCI fi movie or something. Two hours, my mind goes numb I’m having fun. I love it. It’s great. But I am not going to waste my time reading a pulp book when I could be reading great stuff.

RB: Occasionally people come back to a novel they have written—Richard Ford with Independence Day, Julian Barnes with Love Etc. and Frederick Busch is writing one for Girls—and a few years later want to write a sequel.

TCB: I’ve never written sequels of my own work. Of course I have written sequels of classic works. I wrote the sequel to For Whom the Bell Tolls in fifteen pages. Also, wrote the Overcoat II, to help the memory of Nikolai Gogol, The Devil and Irv Cherniske. I love to do that. I love to play with literary form and classic stories. I have never written a sequel yet. Because I am so caught with what’s next and what’s new, I don’t want to look back. I don’t want to go back. When I present something to the public I have put everything that I possibly can into it and I have made it as good as I thin it can be. I don’t second-guess. I don’t go back. When I did the Collected Stories in ‘98 I looked at some of my very earliest stories and I obviously I would write then differently today. But I didn’t want to change them at all. Why do a collected stories? Especially, at that stage in my career. I hope to do a second Collected Stories. Well, it’s for the interest of people who want to see where I came from. Whether they be scholars or students or people who just want to be inspired. Or just have a good laugh. Here it is. As far as my next book will be this Inner Circle but the following book will be another collection. I have half of that ready.

RB: Gee whiz.

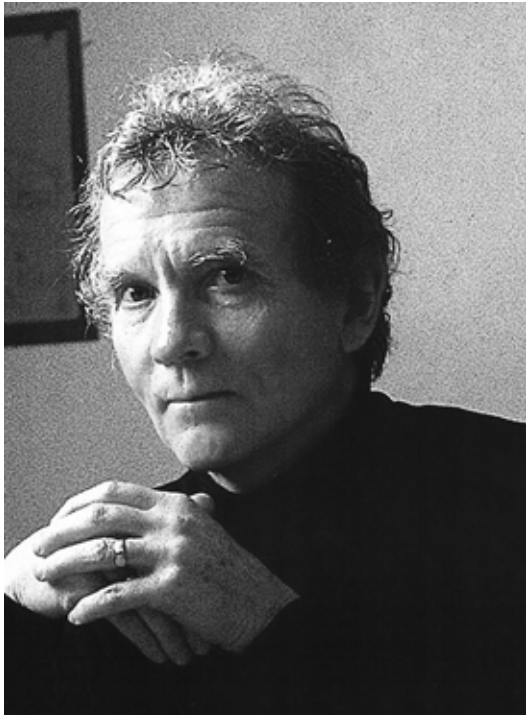
TCB: Of course, of course. I am totally committed to the short story and I will always write them equally with novels.

*Extracted from:*

<http://www.identitytheory.com/interviews/birnbaum94.html>

# David Constantine

Shortlisted for the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Award  
Reading Friday 17th September 7.30pm



Freelance writer, poet and translator, David Constantine was born in Salford, Lancashire, in 1944. He is a Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford. His poetry books include *Watching for Dolphins* (1983), winner of the Alice Hunt Bartlett Award, *Selected Poems* (1991), *Caspar Hauser* (1994), *The Pelt of Wasps* (1998) and *Something for the Ghosts* (2002). His translations include Friedrich Hölderlin's *Selected Poems* (1990, revised 1996), winner of the European Poetry Translation Prize. He is currently working on a translation of Goethe's *Faust* for Penguin Classics, Part I of which was published in 2004. His novel *Davies* (1985) won the Southern Arts Literature Prize and his non-fiction book, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (1984), won the 1986 Runciman Award. He is also co-editor of the literary journal *Modern Poetry in Translation*, and author of the collection of short stories, *Under the Dam* (2005).

David Constantine lives in Oxford. His *Collected Poems* was published in 2004. His latest books are the collection of poetry, *Nine Fathom Deep* (2009) and a second short story collection, *The Shieling* (2009).

*from The Shieling*

Don't want to wreck our own view, he said. It occurred to Roy that maybe chopping down trees here wasn't even legal, because it was some kind of National Forest, but he didn't say anything. His father had been known on occasion to ignore the law when it came to hunting, fishing, and camping. He had taken Roy hunting once in suburban Santa Rosa, California, for instance. They had only the pellet gun and were going for dove or quail on some land they found beside a road that was fairly out of the way. When the owner walked down, he didn't say anything but just watched them as they got back into the car and drove away.

Roy took over with the ax, feeling the thud each time through his arms and studying how white the chips of wood were that flung out loosely around the base.

Careful how it falls, his father said. Think about where the balance is.

Roy stopped and studied the tree, then moved halfway around it and gave the last two blows and it fell away from them, ripping down through branches and leaves, other trunks quivering under the shock and looking like a crowd of bystanders at some horrific scene, all of them trembling and thrown and an odd silence afterward.



## Interview with David Constantine with Ra Page

RP: How is writing a short story different to writing a poem?

DC: The chief thing in common - for me - is that both most often begin in an image or series of images. But in the working out the process is different. Prose and poetry are distinct media; the demands are different in kind not just in degree.

The story 'In Another Country' began as an image that first appeared as a poem. Story and poem began in the same image, which I had from a friend who told me about just such a discovery - a body appearing in the ice as the glaciers retreat - somewhere near Chamonix. In fact, I don't think there was much of a gap in time between story and poem. In my memory now they belong together.

RP: Your short stories don't tend to turn on a plot point, or a denouement where all the strands come together neatly. You've even said that 'closure' is something you're averse to, as a writer. Why is this?

DC: I'm averse to the idea of 'closure' because I don't think life is like that. Life doesn't stop till you're dead and it resists being packaged into manageable phases. I try to write in accordance with that belief. Really, it is how I make sentences.

RP: How does an idea for a short story come to you?

DC: An image or images that I live with. Then a tone of voice, some dialogue.

RP: Many of the stories in *The Shielling* are about characters who lack the ability or the desire to communicate with others, many have even exiled themselves from ordinary society. What is it that draws you to them as a writer?

DC: I have met many such people. I recognize that tendency or temptation in myself. I suppose I sympathize with eccentric, peripheral, marginalized characters because much of what is acceptable, expected or required 'in the mainstream' revolts me.

RP: The title story in *The Shielling* is about two characters creating a shared, imaginary refuge for themselves. Is literature a refuge for you, as a reader (and writer)?

DC: I don't think of literature - my own writing or anyone else's - as a refuge. No such refuge exists or is desirable. I think of writing as an answering back, as an assertion of life against the things that degrade or would even annihilate it. The act of fiction and poetry, whatever their subject, very often carries a utopian charge.

RP: There's also a sense, in your stories, of things building up; great, unbearable pressures storing up being the flimsy wall of the everyday. Do you actively look for such pressure points?

DC: Fiction and drama are, I should say, necessarily drawn to the point at which for good or ill things are becoming manifest. And the structures - personal and social - within which we live do seem to me very precarious.

RP: Landscapes seem to play key roles in your stories - sometimes the landscape almost tells the story itself - as with the great, open-mined crater in 'Witness' - at other times the landscape poses a threat, frightens or even haunts your characters, who are somehow still drawn back to them - as in 'The Cave'. Where does this love, or obsession, come from?

DC: From a love of the real earth and particular places on it. And the real earth is a chief source of my images. The cave, the crater, the estuary, the dam, the lake are images writ large.

RP: Many of the stories in the collection are about absences - either absent places or absent people - and yet though absent, the story coalesces around them. How important is it to you to write 'around' a subject, rather than addressing it head on?

DC: I suppose I feel my way towards some sort of understanding of the story and hope the reader will participate in that process - which is one of tentative, hesitant, perhaps even only provisional realization. Again, it's what I feel life to be like. I write accordingly.

RP: As well as a poet, you're co-editor of *Modern Poetry in Translation*, and a distinguished translator of the German masters Holderlin, Brecht, Goethe and Kleist as well as contemporary writers like Enzensberger. Have any of these German writers influenced you as a short story writer?

DC: Kleist had a deadly insight into what he called 'the fragile set-up of the world', the fragility of all our arrangements. And he writes sentences accordingly.

RP: In an earlier short story 'The Loss' you write about a man losing his soul in the middle of a brilliantly delivered speech. Are you suspicious of 'facility', 'expertise', the point where writing or speaking becomes easy?

DC: I am indeed suspicious of facility (I was a university lecturer for 30 years). But also, in that story and elsewhere, I tried to deal with the sudden loss of faith, the failure of the force that enables you to do and say things. In 'The Loss' the character's circumstances and profession are pretty bleak and might induce some such collapse. But I can imagine it happening in very favourable circumstances too. It's an extreme form of Coleridge's 'dejection' ('my genial spirits fail').

RP: What (English speaking) writers have influenced your short fiction writing, and why?

DC: Lawrence chiefly, because his writing - the making of sentences - is a struggle to arrive at a truthful consciousness in the very moment. Joyce also, especially 'The Dead' - the occasion, the poignant realization, the immense sadness, generosity, compassion.

RP: Do you find it's harder to carve an identity for yourself in the general reading conscious as a short story writer than as a poet?

DC: I try - and most of the time successfully - to give no thought to the 'identity' I have in the minds of a reading public. It would damage me as a writer if I ever let it concern me.

RP: What are your habits as a writer. Do you wait for an idea to crystallise and come to you, or do you write and write every day, proactively searching for it?

DC: As with poetry, so with stories: I have to wait. I like Eliot's phrase (having to do with the attitude or disposition that might be most favourable to being able to write): 'a passive attending upon the event'.

RP: Has your approach to short story writing changed/developed since your first collection?

DC: I can't say. I seem to have to begin again with every new story. I may be learning, I hope I am. But the demands and possibilities are different every time. There is no formula and you would be finished as a writer if you ever thought there was.

# David Marcus

(Remembrance Reading, Spoken by Actor Jack Healy)

Reading Sunday 19th September 4pm

at Cork Synagogue, South Terrace

Ticket Only

Literary Entrepreneur

The Life & Cork Connections

With the help of some funding from a local Jewish businessman David Marcus established the journal *Irish Writing* in Cork in 1945. He was motivated by a concern to provide ample publication opportunities for Irish short story writers and inspired by the British monthly journal *Penguin New Writing*. With Terence Smith as a co-editor Marcus published many writers early in their careers such as Benedict Kiely and Bryan McMahon, while also celebrating more recognized names including Frank O'Connor, Mary Lavin, Samuel Beckett, Sean O'Faolain and Liam O'Flaherty. In this period he also started the journal *Poetry Ireland* and helped establish the reputations of Patrick Galvin, Thomas Kinsella and Anthony Cronin. After many independent issues *Poetry Ireland* was absorbed into *Irish Writing*. With worsening economic conditions *Irish Writing* came to a halt in 1954 and Marcus emigrated to London.

In 1968 Marcus returned to Dublin and re-established his editing career with the page *New Irish Writing* in *the Irish Press*. Every week Marcus published a short story, sometimes with poems. Names such as Neil Jordan, Dermot Healy, Desmond Hogan, Ita Daly, Kate Cruise O'Brien and countless others all received their start here. The Hennessy Literary Awards were established in conjunction with the page.

In the early 70s Marcus established, with Philip McDermott, Poolbeg Press specifically to publish full-length short story collections by many of the authors published in *New Irish Writing*.

After the demise of *the Irish Press* Marcus continued to encourage a new generation of talent such as Claire Keegan and Anne Enright through his Phoenix short story annuals. He edited, in total, over thirty anthologies of Irish poetry and fiction and earned for himself the sobriquet *Godfather of the Contemporary Irish Short Story*. After his death Fintan O'Toole described Marcus as "the single most important literary editor in Ireland in the second half of the 20th Century."

David Marcus was born in Cork in 1924. His parents formed part of the small Ashkenazi community which had fled pogroms in Lithuania at the end of the 19th century. His uncle, David Goldberg, was to become Lord Mayor of Cork and his brother Louis, a distinguished film maker. David attended school at Presentation Brothers College and while still a schoolboy developed a love of writing poetry; his own original poems as well as translations from the Irish. Later he studied Arts and Law at UCC, completing his education in Kings Inn, Dublin. While in Dublin Frank O'Connor was instrumental in Marcus being published for the first time aged 21 in *the Irish Times*.

After being called to the bar in 1945 Marcus returned to Cork to practice, where over the next five years he established the literary magazines *Irish Writing* and *Poetry Ireland* and translated Brian Merriman's *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche*. In the mid-fifties after a successful run of many years his Cork publishing ventures began to lose money and like many young Irish men of his generation he was forced to emigrate to London to make a living. Also around this time he published his first novel *To Next Year in Jerusalem*.

In the late 1960s Marcus returned to Dublin where he renewed his activities as a literary editor, reviving *Irish Writing* in the pages of *the Irish Press* and founding Poolbeg Press with the specific aim of publishing collections of Irish short story writers. Through his editorial activities he met the writer Ita Daly whom he later married. He edited over thirty anthologies and published more of his own fiction and stories. Throughout his life Marcus always professed his love for his home town and his pride in being a Corkman. In his last decade of life this love was expressed eloquently in two volumes of biography, *Oughtobiography* (2001) and *Buried Memories* (2004).

# Ita Daly

Reading Saturday 18th September 8.30pm



Born Co. Leitrim, in the west of Ireland, Ita Daly took her degree in English and Spanish at University College, Dublin. She taught for eleven years until the birth of her daughter in 1979. Her short stories have appeared in Irish, British and US magazines and anthologies, including the *Penguin Book of Irish Short Stories*, and a collection, *The Lady with the Red Shoes*, was published by Poolbeg Press in 1980. She has won the Hennessy Literary Award and the Irish Times Short Story Competition.

Her first novel, *Ellen* was published in 1986 by Jonathan Cape. *A Singular Attraction*, followed a year later. Her third, *Dangerous Fictions*, was published by Bloomsbury in as was *All Fall Down*. *Unholy Ghosts*, a dramatic story of memory and identity, was published in 1996. Oxford University Press have published her beautifully presented *Irish Myths and Legends* and she is working on another novel.

from *Lady with the Red Shoes*

Stephen Hero she called him. She looked at him now, appraising him. She had a predilection for handsome men, and Stephen looked very handsome today. He had an air of distinction about him, a fine dry intelligence emanating from him which somehow diluted his physical handsomeness, preventing it from becoming brash. All this and beddable too. Liza pulled herself up, displeased with herself. One ought not to analyse thus a new husband, with such a mixture of off-handed wryness. Well, never mind. Maybe tonight they would make love in a frescoed room, overlooking a cool courtyard, dusty and quiet, while Rome throbbed outside. She felt her excitement grow.



# Louis De Bernières

Reading Friday 17th September 10pm



**L**ouis de Bernières, who lives in Norfolk, published his first novel in 1990 and was selected by *Granta* magazine as one of the twenty Best of Young British Novelists in 1993. Since then he has become well known internationally as a writer and his sixth novel, *Birds Without Wings*, came out in 2004. *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994), won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Novel. *A Partisan's Daughter* 2008, was shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award and his new book, *Notwithstanding: Stories from an English Village* a lovely collection of stories inspired by life in the English village in which the author grew up.

'The cumulative effect is comic, benignly forgiving and shot through with threads of nostalgic regret..

Bernieres has a big heart.' *The Independent*

'delightful collection...exquisitely told.' *Daily Mail*

from *Notwithstanding:*  
*stories from an English village*

So the moleman was summoned. Joshua Entincknapp was a man in his sixties of stout peasant build. He was fond of saying that 'Moles 'ave only got feet, they 'aven't got legs'. He dressed in hobnail boots, corduroy trousers and a thick cotton shirt closed at the collar by a tatty old green woolen tie. Beneath his shaggy tweed jacket he sported a waistcoat of his own manufacture, consisting of precisely one hundred mole skins. There had been a time when he'd supplied a local furrier with best skins at sixpence each, and it had taken seven hundred skins to make a fine lady's coat that would sell for forty guineas. He'd stretch the skins dry by nailing them to a board with one nail through the snout and one through each foot, so you wouldn't damage the skin itself. Nowadays there wasn't much of a market for them.

The most striking feature of the moleman's appearance was the lack of his right eye, which did not have even a glass substitute in the socket. This loss had been brought about by a Rhode Island Red pullet when he was a toddler, his parents having left him in the chicken coop, under the illusion that he would be safe in there while they painted the kitchen. It felt odd to look at his face, depending upon whether one focused on the concave empty socket, or on the bright dark eye that gazed ironically from the other.

## From GRANTA website by Anita Sethi

At four o'clock in the morning, when Louis de Bernières has lines of poetry repeating in his head which won't stop gnawing away, he writes them down. 'I think of poetry as my original vocation,' he tells me. 'Novel writing somehow grew out of it.' De Bernières did not become a published writer until he was thirty-five, but, he declares: 'I always knew I was going to be a writer from a very early age, the way someone knows they are going to a doctor or a priest.' Since being named a Granta Best of Young British Novelist in 1993, de Bernières's books have included the bestselling *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994) and *Birds Without Wings* (2004), his sixth novel and the one he is most proud of. A new short story collection, *Notwithstanding: Stories of Village Life*, will be published in October by Harvill Secker.

At the Oxfam Bookfest, an inaugural literary festival launched to celebrate the fact that Oxfam, England's largest retailer of secondhand books, has through booksales raised millions of pounds to help fight poverty, I interviewed de Bernières and he gave an enchanting reading of his poetry – he is preparing three poetry collections for publication, as he returns to that original vocation.

After the globe-trotting of his previous works, his fascinating new book, *Notwithstanding: Stories of Village Life*, sees a return to settings much closer to home; a compelling collection of stories based on what he remembers of growing up in a village in the South of England. 'It came about because I had failed to see my country in a proper way,' he explains. The stories were inspired during a visit to the South of France where he met a gentleman who provided insight into England. 'He said to me, "I love England!" And I said "why?" and he said "because it's so exotic" and I said "come on, what on earth do you mean?" And he said "well, I go to France or Belgium or Germany or Holland, and to me they all seem the same but when I go to England it is a huge lunatic asylum." When I thought about this, I realised he was right.'

De Bernières enumerates anecdotes of some of the lunacy: in the village where he grew up there was an old lady who spent her retirement dressed as a man shooting squirrels. There was another lady next door whose house was a 'stinking menagerie', and who drove a car dating back to 1927 with the dashboard hanging off and 'always had a goat loose on the backseat'. Yet another neighbour stayed in the bath for two days once, just topping it up with hot water. There was a spiritualist convinced she could see the ghost of their husband, would go for walks with him and once paid two fares on the bus. Thus, de Bernières realised what an 'extraordinarily mad place' England was, indeed quite like something from a Marquez novel. Although he draws at times on people that he knew, he stresses 'the most dangerous thing that can happen to a novelist is that you get too addicted to the truth. After a while [the characters] take on their own life anyway and start dictating to you what they can and can't do. That's happened to me over and over again'.

'If you separate off cultures in a society the culture seems to disintegrate. One of the things I love about Greece is that everybody has the same culture. Little children can dance with their grandfather. In this country it's fragmented. All over the continent right down into Turkey you have the evening walk which everyone goes on. I think we've lost the plot in England; children don't learn folk dances; they don't learn traditional

songs; they don't learn the old customs; we're losing our regional dialects. It's all very depressing. It's all so diluted.'

De Bernières has just been playing in Ireland with his band The Antonius Players. What, I wonder, is the relationship between his twin passions for poetry and music? 'One of the reasons I stopped writing poetry for a long time was that I no longer knew what a poem was,' he explains. 'There was once a time when we all knew what a poem was and could tell whether it was good or bad in two ways, whether it was technically good, and whether it made any kind of impact on you. But then at the beginning of the twentieth century the standards started to change. People like T.S. Eliot made it much more confusing and we didn't know what a poem was. Since I've been working as a professional musician I've thought the English idea of stress might be just too damn simple. In music you get brevs, minutes, crotchets, quavers, hemi-demi quavers, etc. I feel poetry ought to aspire to that sort of sophistication when it comes to metre. Wouldn't it be nice to write poetry the way a musician writes music? I aspire to that.' Music is very physical but also very stressful, he says, so sometimes his right hand clenches so tightly that it's really very painful but he keeps playing, all the way through. He becomes philosophical when musing on how far he has come since the Granta Best of Young British Novelist nomination in 1993, and on getting older. 'I'm middle-aged now. When you get older you develop a complex that younger people don't see you as an equal. It's a throwback to my generation because that's how we thought of our parents; they were just a bunch of old boring fascists who didn't know anything. Of course it isn't until they get till their eighties [that] you see them as an irreplaceable archive'. The best thing about the Granta nomination was that he got to know writers of his generation, some with whom he has remained permanent friends. 'I couldn't live without Esther [Freud] even though I hardly ever see her'. As for his work: 'I sometimes have this horrible fear that because *Birds Without Wings* was the best thing I'll ever do in a sense my career is over, as I don't think I can do anything better. So why not write poetry? Why not go and play concerts instead?'

However, he affirms: 'I know I've got two or three novels left in me yet. I want to write a book based on the life of my great-grandfather, who was condemned to wander all his life because his wife wouldn't divorce him because she was so religious. So he never could start again. He ended up in a tiny green shack in the rocky mountains. But it needs a plot.'

He also wants to write a book about a charismatic eco-fascist who thinks we should all go back to nature. 'If there's one thing humans aren't suited to it's going back to nature. It would be my version of *Lord of the Flies*. I thought of setting it in East Anglia because that's where I live. At the time I want to set the novel, Norwich was full of lunatics.'

Louis de Bernières's eschewal for rules, evident in his disdain for the army, also emerges in his writing habits, often writing what he wants, when he wants. These days, however, he is more disciplined. 'There was a time when I would wait for inspiration but then I found that if I sat down and worked, the inspiration came anyway.' He finds it important to maintain activities aside from the writing: 'I do a lot of gardening, carpentry, and throwing children around a lot is a great hobby. I always felt that if you live too much in your own head you go mad and disconnected. It's very important to stay connected with the earth and with things and with people.'



## **Take a bow!**

The arts really matter to us in Ireland; they are a big part of people's lives, the country's single most popular pursuit. Our artists interpret our past, define who we are today, and imagine our future. We can all take pride in the enormous reputation our artists have earned around the world.

The arts play a vital role in our economy, and smart investment of taxpayers' money in the arts is repaid many times over. The dividends come in the form of a high value, creative economy driven by a flexible, educated, innovative work force, and in a cultural tourism industry worth €5 billion a year.

The Arts Council is the Irish Government agency for funding and developing the arts. Arts Council funding from the taxpayer, through the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, for 2009 is €75 million, that's about a1 euro a week for every household.

So, when you next turn the pages of a great book or hear a poem that inspires you or attend an enthralling reading, don't forget the role you played and take a bow yourself!

Find out what's on at

[www.events.artscouncil.ie](http://www.events.artscouncil.ie)

You can find out more about the arts here:

[www.artscouncil.ie](http://www.artscouncil.ie)



# Nyk De Vries

Reading Friday 18th September 10pm



**N**yk de Vries is a writer and musician. He was born in Noardburgum in Friesland. At present he lives and works in Amsterdam. Since 2000, he has written two novels, *Rozijnkonijn* and *Prospero*, and a collection of ultra-short, absurdist prose poems, *Motorman & 39 andere prozagedichten*. All of his fiction has been published in both Frisian and Dutch. In the course of his creative work, De Vries unintentionally happened upon the prose poem. He considers the texts to be byproducts of his own stream of thoughts about apparently unimportant or trivial matters. His poems are short, strange and melancholic, and he strives for compactness, combined with a surprising twist.

De Vries' regular performances of his prose poems are characterised by a forceful style of delivery. Usually supported by music, he has appeared on a variety of stages, from literary and theatrical festivals like Wintertuin, Dichters in de Prinsentuin, Oerol and Noorderzon to noisier places such as Escape nightclub and the pop circuit. As a musician he plays with Meindert Talma. In Spain he belongs to the Planeta Pato, a group originating from Madrid, in which he performs his prose-poems in Spanish.

## CAMP

Architects defend architects. Lawyers defend lawyers. Typists defend typists. Artists defend artists. I defended you until we broke up, you took up with a plasterer and we ended up in different camps. I was desperate, but still went off to see the world. I saw differences and suddenly understood why the country was filled with identical houses, the streets with identical cars. I decided to give up defending. I turned onto the road and left the Frisian subsidised art scene behind me.

## CURLS

There was a photo of me doing the rounds. But it wasn't me. Whenever I was confronted by that picture, I would quickly turn the page, disturbed by those strange, unfamiliar eyes. Years passed. During the summers we'd practise in Ursula's renovated farmhouse. Jan Switters took us on tour in the former Eastern bloc. The last time I spoke to Anneke was during the farewell concert. More than a decade later, in a small bar not far from the ferry, I was leafing through a bunch of old clippings when I stumbled upon that portrait. Only then did I realise. That guy with the strange eyes and all those curls. It was me after all



Foundation for the  
Production and  
Translation of  
Dutch Literature

# Tess Gallagher

Reading Saturday 18th September 8.30pm

Workshop Saturday 18th 9.30am



**T**ess Gallagher is the author of eight volumes of poetry, including *Dear Ghosts*, *Moon Crossing Bridge*, and *My Black Horse*. She is presently working on her *New and Selected Poems*. In 2008 Blackstaff Press in Belfast and Eastern Washington Press in America published *Barnacle Soup—Stories from the West of Ireland*, a collaboration with the Irish storyteller Josie Gray. *Distant Rain*, a conversation with the highly respected Buddhist nun, Jacucho Setouchi, of Kyoto, is both an art book and a cross cultural moment. Gallagher is also the author of *Amplitude*, *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray*, *A Concert of Tenses: Essays on Poetry*, and two collections of short fiction: *At the Owl Woman Saloon*, *The Lover of Horses and Other Stories* and *The Man from Kinvara: Selected Stories*. She has also spearheaded the publication of Raymond Carver's *Beginners* in Library of America's complete collection of his stories. She spends time in a cottage on Lough Arrow in Co. Sligo in the West of Ireland and also lives and writes in her hometown of Port Angeles, Washington..

from *The Man from Kinvara*

By all accounts, my great-grandfather was like a huge stallion himself, and when he went into a field where a herd of horses was grazing, the horses would suddenly lift their heads and call to him. Then his bearded mouth would move, and though he was making sounds that could have been words, which no horse would have had reason to understand, the horses would want to hear; and one by one they would move toward him across the open space of the field. He could turn his back and walk down the road, and they would follow him. He was probably drunk, my mother said, because he was swaying and mumbling all the while. Sometimes he would stop dead-still in the road and the horses would press up against him and raise and lower their heads as he moved his lips. But because these things were only seen from a distance, and because they have eroded in the telling, it is now impossible to know whether my great-grandfather said anything of importance to the horses. Or even if it was his whispering that had brought about their good behavior. Nor was it clear, when he left them in some barnyard as suddenly as he'd come to them, whether they had arrived at some new understanding of the difficult and complex relationship between men and horses.

TESS GALLAGHER IS READING TO me from a review of *Dear Ghosts*, her latest volume of poetry: “If ever the iron fist were concealed in the velvet glove, it’s in the poems of Tess Gallagher.”

Her musical voice purrs down the phone from the house over looking the Strait of Juan de Fuca in Washington State. “I did recognise myself,” she says. “I think it might be true.”

After 90 minutes in the company of the 74-year-old poet, widow of short story writer and poet Raymond Carver, I think it might be true, too. This is a woman who fought breast cancer while nursing her mother through Alzheimer’s disease and helping her young unmarried niece with a newborn baby. Her graciousness and frequent laughter conceal a steely core that has dared to take on the giants of US publishing over her late husband’s literary legacy.

Gallagher will be in Scotland later this month to give a rare UK reading at the StAnza Poetry Festival in St Andrews. She fits it in between lecturing on creative writing programmes and promoting *Barnacle Soup*, a book of stories she has written with her partner, Irishman Josie Gray. Her energy is unabating.

Gallagher found herself at the centre of a literary firestorm when news broke that Carver’s breakout book of stories, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, had been the subject of radical redrafting by his editor at Knopf, Gordon Lish. Stories had been slashed by 50 per cent and endings rewritten, causing speculation that Carver’s spare, laconic style, which led to him being described as “the American Chekhov”, was actually a product of Lish’s cuts and rewrites.

Journalist DT Max, studying Lish’s personal archive at University of Indiana, discovered Carver’s original manuscript, as well as a letter from the writer to his editor in 1980 begging Lish to withdraw the book. Gallagher, who is Carver’s literary executor, has announced her intention to publish the original manuscript as Carver intended it, under his title, *Beginners*, though the project raises complex issues of authorship and copyright.

“I want to restore Ray to his work and to himself. I want to tell the truth, and I’m not afraid of the truth. I think that Ray’s work will stand up to the truth,” she says. She has made clear that she doesn’t aim to replace

the existing version of the book, just make both available to readers. “This isn’t a situation where I’m out to get anybody. Editors do carve out territories and, with the best of intentions, they may want to codify an author at a certain position. There can be this submerging of the writer.”

She argues that Lish’s interventions came at a time when Carver, a recovering alcoholic, was vulnerable. Later books had much less aggressive editing, and showed a more expansive style. “Ray’s main battle at that point in his life was to keep sober. He once said: ‘I have no religion, except for these stories.’ He was really attacked at his very core to find these stories so radically changed. The book was something he had to stand by in a public way, and yet it caused him to be regarded in a way which was counterfeit. He never considered himself a minimalist – he would say ‘precisionist’; he wanted to get it exactly right. He considered minimalism a shrinking of the purpose, a shrinking of the attention to character and story. He didn’t sign on for that.”

*What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* was published shortly after Carver and Gallagher got together. She is credited with nurturing a late flourishing of his writing, providing stability in a variety of forms, from literary encouragement to fresh flowers on his desk and a sharp eye over his messy business affairs.

Literary critic Harold Schweizer, a friend of Carver and Gallagher, has said: “I think what happened in Tess’s life with Ray was that she was both furthered by that contact and hindered. She probably came out even, finally. For whatever fame she gained on his coat-tails also belittled her own talent. The problem was that people cannot but think of a couple with one partner superior to the other. Tess was given that inferior role, which she was gracious enough to accept, but she also has tremendous talent.”

Gallagher has dismissed the notion that she put Carver’s career before her own, preferring to talk about their creative kinship. She wrote more stories under Carver’s influence; he wrote more poetry under hers. She has described them as being “a composite person” and has written vividly about her grief after his death from lung cancer in 1988 at the age of just 50. She commissioned his memorial, overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and inscribed her own name next to his.

Carver is one of the “dear ghosts” that haunt her book of poems, her first for 14 years. Yet she describes

it as “a book of regaining”, not a book of loss. It may be populated by those who have died – her parents, Carver, her first husband, who was a pilot in Vietnam – but in its pages they are full of life.

“The Buddhists believe that anything that has ever lived can’t go out of existence, that it still will exist in some form. They have another form and they are still touching our lives, as much as we will allow. I think this makes the world larger too, not to just let the dead be buried.”

So far, so elegiac. But *Dear Ghosts* is no New Age flight of fancy. It has a hard edge, posing difficult questions about life and death, and the territory which may lie in between. There is also a fierce political subtext, questioning US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a poem titled “Firestarter”, which is ostensibly about her father lighting fires for neighbours during the years of the Second World War, she writes:

*In the open malevolence of this young  
millennium, we are like lilies struck by snow:  
asking why democracy works so well when  
nothing’s going wrong.  
Why some lethal agreeableness chloroforms  
the general will to dissent.*

Gallagher says: “There is a sense that the poems seem very approachable, and I think that’s disarming because the cargo is not. It’s unrelenting, it really doesn’t want to let you off, it wants to involve you in some quite difficult matters. That’s what the iron fist is about, but you have to find a way to deliver the hard things so that people can be with it. I think poetry is a political act; I’ve always viewed it as such.

“Although my poems come out of my life, I don’t feel them as personality events. The ‘I’ may be very personal, but it’s a multifarious ‘I’. You may think that it’s only Tess Gallagher, but I don’t think so. Again, it may be my velvet glove.”

Gallagher does not flinch from questions about her own mortality. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2002, and faced four years of surgery and drug treatments which “left my body like a stubble field”. But she also discovered unexpected strength, iron in the soul.

“I remember sitting there and hearing the doctor say, ‘There is no cure,’ and realising the dimensions of that.

And instead of being demolished I felt, ‘Wow, you’re really going out there!’ “ she laughs. “I had a kind of inverse reaction. That seemed valuable to keep that recognition, because I don’t think it’s a cliché. I think poetry is about saying the thing that isn’t the cliché.

“As they say, there is no cure, but there are many treatments. They are pushing the borders out so you get somewhat of a horizon. We are all going in the same direction, it’s just how intensely we are going to use the time we have. Having come up against a life-threatening disease, you really hang on to your days. You don’t throw away anything, you are a real ecologist of the moment. I’m an ecologist of the moment.”

GALLAGHER’S latest writing project is *Barnacle Soup*, a collection of Irish tales on which she has collaborated with her companion, Josie Gray, an artist and storyteller from Sligo. It was published by Belfast’s Black Staff Press last autumn and has just been published in the US.

“It has become very popular,” she says. “There are so many wonderful storytellers in Ireland, one in about every family. It would be good to get some of them treasured. The stories in the book are stories of Irish life, from Josie’s own life and people we both knew. There are some wonderful Zen moments in it. It’s a book that really delights you with ingenuity and wit.

“When I started recording Josie’s stories he didn’t like it at all, but as he began to see that I wasn’t going to let him off, he fell into it. By the time the project was well on its way he was saying: ‘What about those stories?’ He wanted to make sure this book got finished.”

By SUSAN MANSFIELD  
First published in *The Scotsman*.

# Ben Greenman

Interview Friday 17th September 4pm

Reading Friday 17th September 9.30pm



**B**en Greenman is an editor at the New Yorker and the author of several acclaimed books of fiction, including *Superbad*, *Superworse*, *A Circle is a Balloon* and *Compass Both: Stories About Human Love*. His fiction, essays, and journalism have appeared in numerous publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Paris Review*, *Zoetrope: All Story*, *McSweeney's*, and *Opium*, and he has been widely anthologized.

More recent publications include *Correspondences*, a limited-edition handcrafted letterpress publication created by Hotel St. George Press, *Please Step Back*, a novel published by Melville House and *What He's Poised To Do*, stories from Harper Perennial. He is also a regular contributor to the music and psychology blog moistworks.com.

He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and two children.

## *from what He's Poised To Do*

Dear X,

After I insulted you by insulting your new lover, after you stormed off to your taxicab, you disappeared. You wouldn't answer my phone calls. I grew afraid that we would never speak again, and my fear drove me into irrational behavior. I dialed six digits of your phone number and hung up. I wrote your name on a piece of paper, over and over again, as if that might summon you. I went to the apartment where we had met, which was vacant again—the gay couple had decided to move to the suburbs and adopt a baby—and I sat in the middle of the floor and I thought I might cry. Then I went home, and went to bed with my wife, and never stopped thinking about you. Time passed like that for a while. Then, one day, there was a birthday party for a mutual friend. The guest of honor was a woman who was known both for her superb taste in contemporary art and for the massive fortune she had inherited from her father, who had founded the nation's largest manufacturer of railway machinery. Her gallery was called, in tribute, *Stacker*. I asked my wife to go to the party, but she said she'd be at the office late. "I'll probably be home early," I said. "I get tired when I'm at parties without you. I feel weakened."

"Etiolated," she said. "There's a word for it."

Dear Seth Rogen,

Back in 2001, I published a book called “Superbad.” You had already left your hometown of Vancouver and moved to Los Angeles to be in the great sitcom *Freaks and Geeks*, I think, but perhaps you ran across my book on set. McSweeney’s was the publisher. The cover of the book used an image by the painter Mark Tansey. The book was beloved by some critics and reviled by others; *Kirkus Reviews* gave it a starred review and called it “Something extraordinary.” Here is something else extraordinary—that you and your production partners Judd Apatow, Evan Goldberg, and Shauna Robertson have decided to brazenly steal my title for your most recent movie, “Superbad.” See the similarity? When I saw the preview, it almost stopped my heart. Details to follow in next paragraph.

I was in the theatre, watching a film whose title I cannot recall. Maybe I wasn’t even really there to see a movie so much as to eat popcorn and SnoCaps (mixed together, of course) and ogle seventeen—I mean nineteen-year-old girls. That’s not important. What is important is that an image came onscreen of that kid from “*Arrested Development*.” He was playing a dorky-cool character named Evan. He was in the passenger seat of a car. Next to him, in the driver’s seat, was a plumper kid playing an equally dorky-cool character named Seth. (I am assuming that these two kids are playing younger versions of you and Mr. Goldberg.) What I saw over the next minute or so was, frankly, charming. And funny, too. (At one point an even dorkier kid decides to get a fake ID that changes his name to “McLovin.” No last name.) I liked what I saw, and perhaps I even Mcloved it.

But then, in the blink of an eye, that love turned to horror. Why? I discovered that the movie whose preview I was enjoying was named “Superbad.” At first it looked only vaguely familiar, and then time slowed to a crawl. It was more than familiar. It. Was. Exactly. Like. My. Book. Now, for the rest of my life, when people google “Superbad,” they’re going to get your movie instead of my book. (Am I allowed to use “google” that way without crediting the company? Probably not. But that’s my point!) And not just that, but for the next three to six weeks, depending on your box office, people will be asking me if the movie is related to my book. A guy I ran into at a party asked me. A friend from Chicago called to ask me. My boss asked me. Do you know who else asked me? My grandmother. And each and every time, I have to grit my remaining teeth--long story--and say no.

Now, I am told that you cannot copyright a title. And to

be fair, I had my inspiration as well. James Brown, who I am sure you have heard of--I think his fame reached Canada—had a song called “(Call Me) Super Bad.” But in his song, it was two words. I was, I believe, the first person to combine them into one word. I blazed that trail, and then you and Goldberg and Apatow and Robertson came and walked on that blazed trail with your fancy gold-plated Hollywood sandals.

I had made up my mind not to take any action. I did meditation and breathing exercises to control my mounting fury. But then I saw that a writer is suing Mr. Apatow over the plot of his recent movie “*Knocked Up*,” claiming that it bears strong similarities to a book she wrote about an unplanned pregnancy. (Two different comic artworks about getting pregnant? It beggars the imagination.) I decided to put my foot down. I will not let you take “Superbad” away from me.

I was the one who sat there for hours and thought about pushing the word “Super” and the word “Bad” together. I even thought about how you could re-separate them so it said “Superb Ad,” so that if I got a good review, I could write “A superb Ad for Superbad!” So here is what I want. Either a public apology or a single finger in a jar of formaldehyde. Ideally, it would be one of your fingers. I don’t want to hurt your movie, just like I’m sure you don’t want to hurt my book. But if push comes to shove, we’ll see who is superbadder. I have already spoken to my current publisher about titling my next book “*The Pineapple Express*,” which IMDb lists as the name of your next film. Your movie, according to the IMDb Listing, is about a stoner and his dealer who are forced to go on the run after the stoner witnesses a murder. What a coincidence! My new book is about the EXACT SAME THING!

I hope we can resolve this amicably. I look forward to shaking your four-fingered hand.

Yours,

Ben Greenman



# Tania Hershman

Reading Thursday 16th September 7.30pm



## from *The White Road*

The young man paces up and down the small room with one bed and a single high window. 'Henry, my name is Henry,' he mutters. Henry is my name. That's right. Henry. They can't take that away, can they? No they can't. Inside his head, pictures come and go, and his mind tries to catch hold of one and make it stay, but nothing remains. 'A tree, maybe, could be a tree. Grass. Or the sea,' he tells himself. He cannot stop moving in this limited space, he walks up and down the length of it, up and down, as if he is on a long road that leads out of a city, a road with no end.

The man is young because his life has not yet begun. He is only just stepping into adulthood with its responsibilities and desires, joy and insecurity, irrational love and loneliness. The doctor who is watching him on her video screen in the next room sighs. She sees the waste of a perfectly good human being every day, and she knows well that the chances of his recovery are not great. She sighs because this is the profession she has chosen and the place she is in. Her friends and her lovers cannot understand how the doctor can endure this work with the damaged and the confused, but she does. It replaces something from her childhood that she does not even realize was missing.

Born in London in 1970, Hershman moved to Jerusalem, in 1994, and after 15 years in Israel, moved to Bristol in August 2009. After making a living for 13 years as a science journalist, writing for publications such as WIRED, NewScientist, the MIT Technology Review and Business 2.0, she gave it all up to write fiction. Her first short story collection, *The White Road and Other Stories*, is now available from Salt Modern Fiction and was commended by the judges of the 2009 Orange Award for New Writers. She is currently writer-in-residence in the Science Faculty at Bristol University. She received a grant from Arts Council England to write a collection of biology-inspired short stories inspired both by a 100-year-old biology book and by spending time in the labs as writer-in-residence in Bristol University's Science Faculty.

Her short and very short stories, plays and film scripts, have won or been shortlisted for various prizes, nominated for a Pushcart Prize, been published in print and online, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and performed. She is the founder and editor of *The Short Review* dedicated to reviewing short story collections and anthologies and showcasing short story authors. She is the 2010 fiction editor for *Southword*.

# Owen Hill

Reading Thursday 16th September 9.30pm



from *Loose Ends*

Owen Hill was born and raised in an industrial suburb of Los Angeles. He is an occasional book reviewer for the *Los Angeles Times* and the *East Bay Express*. In 2005 he was awarded the Howard Moss Residency at Yaddo.

He is the author of seven small collections of poetry (the latest is *Against the Weather* from Blue Press) and *Loose Ends*, a book of short stories. His first novel, *The Chandler Apartments* was called one of the best mysteries of 2002 by the *Chicago Tribune*. In his *Tribune* review Dick Adler wrote, "Berkeley, California poet Owen Hill captures the taste & texture of the yeasty street & bed life of his native turf with an eye that manages to be fresh & appropriately amoral." *The Chandler Apartments* prominently featured The Chandler Building, Hill's residence during the writing of the book. His second Clay Blackburn mystery, *The Incredible Double*, features the same characters and locale. It is available from PM Press in Oakland. David Ulin, in his *LA Times* review, wrote, "Here we have the essence of noir, a sense of life lived at the edges, which is, come to think of it, a pretty good description of Clay's world."

Mr. Hill is currently working on his third Clay Blackburn mystery novel.

He works as a book buyer and events coordinator at Berkeley's literary landmark, Moe's Books

I turn on the window lights; open the door. T'graph looks worse than usual due to the cloudy weather. Turn up some Rachmaninoff and get to work pricing paperbacks. Big black Mercedes parks out front in the yellow zone. Not the everyday kind. A long scary car with tinted windows. I wish it didn't happen like this. I mean, I wish it wasn't such an obvious car. Because, reading about a car like that you already expect some evil rich person to get out and give me, the store clerk, a hard time. But it happened just this way so I'm going to tell the truth and let the chips fall.

This woman gets out and she's all hair spray and perfume, but she's wearing a black motorcycle jacket over her powder blue sweat suit. She comes in the store and she gives me that look. It says, I hate having to speak to people in the service sector.

She says, Greil left some books here.

Greil who? I say.

Greil Marcus.

What books?

Greil sold some books to you yesterday and he didn't pick up his rejects. He left a box.

I have a prepared speech for this occasion.

Something like, sorry, we gave those books away. But I hold off on it for awhile. She's an interesting specimen. Very nervous. Like maybe she stole Greil's car and now she wants his books. A crazed fan?

I smile and say, Maybe they're under the stairs. Follow me.

*“Towns and cities have a mental age of their own. The mental age limit defines the period after which a young man or woman of talent ought to pack his bags and get out. I don’t know exactly how you judge the mental age of a town, but one way is by its bookshops and libraries, art galleries and theatres and concerts.*

*I have a feeling that, at one time, Cork, for a short time at least, during the reign of Cormac McCarthy, was a real European capital. It has ceased to be that and the problem now is how it’s going to recreate a life for itself, a life in which a man can live completely from the cradle to the grave; that I think is a problem not only for Cork, but for the whole of Western European Civilisation. Life has to start flowing back into the smaller places. Metropolis ended with Hiroshima. People have got to start living a much less specialised form of life, a much more a community form of life and my feeling about this city is... either people make a success of it or Western Europe is finished.”*

## Frank O’Connor speaking to the BBC in 1961

Grant Aided by  
Cork City Council



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

## **Proudly working to create a city life without limits!**

Cork City Council, through its sponsorship of the Arts; its funding of the Cork City-Frank O’Connor Award, the Frank O’Connor International Short Story Festival and the other activities of the Munster Literature Centre is working to create a life without limits, to ensure that men and women can develop to their fullest creative and intellectual extent; so that they are never obliged to leave their home city to fulfil themselves. Cork City Council works to raise the quality of city life by facilitating access to the Arts for all the community.

# Claire Keegan

Opening reception, reading & launch  
of her new book *Foster*  
Wednesday 15th September 7pm



Claire Keegan (born 1968) is an Irish short stories writer. She was born in County Wicklow in 1968, the youngest of a large Roman Catholic family. She travelled to New Orleans, Louisiana when she was seventeen and studied English and Political Science at Loyola University. She returned to Ireland in 1992 and lived for a year in Cardiff, Wales, where she undertook an MA in creative writing and taught undergraduates at the University of Wales. Her first collection of short stories was *Antarctica* (1999). Her second collection of stories is *Walk the Blue Fields* (2007). Her latest publication is *Foster* which at over 120 pages she describes as a long short story and which we will be launching at the festival.

She has won the William Trevor Prize, the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, the Olive Cook Award and the Davy Byrnes Irish Writing Award 2009. Other awards include The Hugh Leonard Bursary, The Macaulay Fellowship, The Martin Healy Prize, The Kilkenny Prize and The Tom Gallon Award. Twice was Keegan the recipient of the Francis MacManus Award. She was also a Wingate Scholar.

The American writer Richard Ford, who selected her short story *Foster* as winner of the Davy Byrnes Irish Writing Award 2009, wrote in the winning citation of Keegan's "thrilling" instinct for the right words and her "patient attention to life's vast consequence and finality". Keegan lives in rural Ireland and was a visiting professor at Villanova University in 2008.

from *Walk the Blue Fields*

On All Soul's night, the middle-aged man who'd given her the embers banged on her door, but Margaret just stood there staring him down through the glass. Eventually, he went away. And women said she must be going through the change of life:

'The new moon takes a terrible toll on women like her,' one woman down in Lisdoonvarna said, feeling the wilted heart of a cabbage.

'Oh, it would,' said another. 'The moon'll pull at her like the tide.'

Stack, like every man who has never known a woman, believed he knew a great deal about women. He thought about Margaret Flusk as he drove home from Lisdoonvarna with Josephine sitting up in the passenger seat.

'Wouldn't it be terrible,' he said, 'if that woman took a liking to me? She'd have nothing to do only break down the wall between the two houses and destroy our peace for ever more.'

All she'd need was reason to knock on his door. If she had reason to knock, he felt sure he'd let her in. If he let her in once she'd be in again and then he'd be in to her and there the trouble would start. One would need a candle and the other would want the lend of a spade. A woman would be a terrible disadvantage: she'd make him match his clothes and take baths. She'd make him drive her to the seaside every fine day with a picnic basket full of bananas and tuna fish sandwiches and ask him where he had gone when he had gone nowhere but into Doolin or down to Ennis for a drop of oil.

CLAIRE KEEGAN was last night announced the winner of the €25,000 Davy Byrnes Irish Writing Award 2009, at a presentation in the Dublin pub made famous by Joyce.

Keegan's winning short story, *Foster*, was chosen from a shortlist of six writers by American fiction writer Richard Ford. Ford was not present, but Caroline Walsh, Literary Editor of *The Irish Times*, read from his winning citation, in which he praised the writer's "sparkling talent".

"Foster puts on display an imposing array of formal beauties at the service of a deep and profound talent. It tells a conceivably simple story – a young child given up to grieving foster parents and then woefully wrested home again.

"Claire Keegan makes the reader sure that there are no simple stories, and that art is essential to life." Ford wrote of Keegan's "thrilling" instinct for the right words and her "patient attention to life's vast consequence and finality".

Walsh presented the award, organised by literary magazine *The Stinging Fly* and administered by Declan Meade, in association with *The Irish Times*, and sponsored by Davy Byrnes.

Accepting the prize, Keegan (41) told the thronged room that on the day of the February deadline to submit entries, it snowed in Wexford, where she lives, and she couldn't get her car out to go to the post office. Thus she walked across the snowy fields until she found a postbox, and had dropped the envelope into it before belatedly tormenting herself by wondering how the postman was going to collect it that day. But clearly the Wexford postmen are undaunted by a few snowflakes, and her story duly made it to Dublin in time.

What will she do with her winnings? "I might buy a new desk," she confessed modestly. "I have two sort of half-desks taped together at the moment, so I might go mad and buy a new one."

Keegan, whose rural upbringing on a Wicklow farm has consistently informed her sensibility as a writer, has published two collections of short stories, *Antarctica* (1999) and *Walk the Blue Fields* (2007). She studied at Loyola University in New Orleans, the University of Wales, and Trinity College Dublin. Among her many previous awards are the Macaulay Fellowship, The Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, and the William Trevor Prize, judged by William Trevor himself.

from *The Irish Times*



Simone Kelly    Trixie Leahy

11 Mac Curtain St. Cork  
021 4505819  
info@interiorliving.ie  
www.interiorliving.ie



LIAM RUISÉAL TEO.

49/50 OLIVER PLUNKETT  
STREET  
CORK

TEL: 021 - 427 0981  
FAX: 021 - 427 1850

EMAIL:  
ruisealbooks@eircom.net

School Books, Exam Papers,  
Stationery, College Books,  
General Books, Children's Books,  
Local History



# Vibes & Scribes

BOOK & MUSIC STORE

We buy, sell & exchange  
Open late 7 days

3 BRIDGE STREET, CORK. TEL. 021-4505370, FAX. 021-4551294

Supporting this Festival



Foundation for the  
Production and  
Translation of  
Dutch Literature

The Munster Literature Centre is grateful to

Waterstones  
The Booksellers,  
69 Patrick Street,  
Cork.

for all the solidarity they have shown the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Festival in recent years



# Aidan Carl Mathews

Reading Wednesday 15th September 9pm



## from *Lipstick on the Host*

He is a gynaecologist. I should have guessed from his hands. His hands are thoughtful and cared-for. No woman would be afraid of them. They are too fatherly for that. Instead of being afraid, you would be the opposite. You would buy new underwear and a new outfit for each visit, and spray the inside of your thigh with an atomizer when the nurse called you. He would stroke your bump, and beam. Then, as his fingers slipped ever so quietly inside you, you'd read the Latin diplomas and degrees that hung from the picture railing on the opposite wall, and wonder why his name didn't have a H in it.

'Are you a Roman Catholic?' he said. That was because we had been talking about the chaplain and what a clot he is.

'No,' I said, 'I'm a Dublin Catholic.'

He laughed when I said that. To be honest, I almost wish he didn't laugh quite so much. It's usually a sign of profound personal unhappiness. Cheerfulness is a quiet condition; glee, on the other hand, is only desperation on a good day.

'I'm a Dublin Protestant,' he said. 'Very low church. When I was little, the select members of the vestry evicted the rector because he dressed the altar with cloth and candlesticks.'

'Do you still go to church?' I asked him. I didn't know if I should say 'attend' or 'practice' or 'receive'. The only Protestants I know are so high church that two of them served as stewards at the Papal mass in the Phoenix Park.

Aidan Carl Mathews was born in 1956 in Dublin. His poetry collections include *Windfalls* (Dublin, The Dolmen Press, 1977); *Minding Ruth* (Loughcrew, The Gallery Press, 1983); and *According to the Small Hours* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1998). His plays are *The Diamond Body* (Project Theatre, Dublin); *Entrance, Exit* (The Peacock Theatre, Dublin); and *Communion* (The Peacock Theatre). He has also published two collections of stories, *Adventures in a Bathyscope* (Secker & Warburg, London, 1988), and *Lipstick on the Host* (Secker & Warburg, 1992); and a novel, *Muesli at Midnight* (Secker & Warburg, 1990).

His awards include The Irish Times Award, 1974; The Patrick Kavanagh Award in 1976; the Macauley Fellowship in 1978-9 and an Academy of American Poets Award in 1982. He reached the shortlist for the first GPA Book Award in 1989. He lives in County Dublin and works as a radio producer for RTE

# Ron Rash

Shortlisted for the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Award  
Reading Friday 17th September 7.30pm



**R**on Rash, an American poet, short story writer and novelist, is the Parris Distinguished Professor in Appalachian Cultural Studies at Western Carolina University. Rash was born in Chester, South Carolina, in 1953, grew up in Boiling Springs, North Carolina, and is a graduate of Gardner-Webb University and Clemson University. In 1994 he published his first book, a collection of short stories titled *The Night the New Jesus Fell to Earth*. Since then, Rash has published three collections of poetry, three short story collections, and four novels, all to wide critical acclaim and several awards and honors.

Rash's poems and stories have appeared in more than 100 magazines and journals over the years. With each new book, Rash has confirmed his position as a central and significant Appalachian writer alongside well-established names like Fred Chappell, Lee Smith, and Robert Morgan. *Serena*, Rash's latest novel, has received favorable reviews nationwide and was a 2009 PEN/Faulkner Award Finalist.

*from*

## *Burning Bright*

The needs of the dead have exhausted her. Too tired to cook or go out, Ruth instead finishes unpacking and takes a long bath. As she lies in the warm, neck-deep water, she closes her eyes and summons the drawing of the jaguar. She tries to remember more. Was the jaguar drawn as if moving or standing still? Were its eyes looking toward her or toward the end of the page? Were there parakeets perched in the palmetto trees above? She cannot recall.

Ruth does not rest well that night. She has trouble falling asleep and when she finally does she dreams of rows of bleached tombstones with no names, no dates etched upon them. In the dream one of these tombstones marks the grave of her son, but she does not know which one.

Driving through rush-hour traffic the next morning, Ruth remembers how she made the nurse bring her son to her when the drugs had worn off enough that she understood what lost really meant. She'd looked into her child's face so she might never forget it, stroking the wisps of hair blond and fine as corn silk. Her son's eyes were closed. After a few seconds the nurse had gently but firmly taken the child from her arms. The nurse had been kind, as had the doctor, but she knows they have forgotten her child by now, that his brief life has merged with hundreds of other children who lived and died under their watch. She knows that only two people remember that child and that now even she has trouble recalling what he looked like and the same must be true for Richard. She knows there is not a single soul on earth who could tell her the color of her son's eyes.

Ron Rash's rise to national literary prominence was inspired by a man who could neither read nor write. As WCU's Parris Distinguished Professor of Appalachian Culture gathers critical acclaim for his novel "Serena," he remembers his late grandfather, James Rash, a hard-working farm boy from Buncombe County who never had the opportunity to become educated, but who taught his grandson the magic of words.

Ron Rash has written about "one of the most remarkable moments of my life" that occurred when he was 5 years old, before he learned to read.

"It was a warm summer evening and my grandfather, still dressed in his work clothes, was smoking a Camel cigarette as he lingered at the kitchen table after a hard day's work.

When I handed my grandfather the red and blue book (*The Cat and the Hat*) and asked him to read to me, he did not offer any excuse, not even the most obvious one. Instead, he laid the open book on the table before us, peering over my shoulder as he turned the pages with his work-and-nicotine-stained fingers, and I heard the story of a talking cat and his high, blue-striped hat.

What he had done was make up a story to fit the pictures that lay on the pages before us. Not surprisingly, I quickly realized that the story he was reading was very different from the one my mother had read from the same book.

The effectiveness of my grandfather's performance was verified by my begging him to read *The Cat and the Hat* again the following Sunday. His story was different this time.

The cat got into more trouble, and out of it less easily. At every opportunity in the following weeks, I ambushed my grandfather so I might hear what new events might occur in this cat's ever-changing life. How could I not grow up believing words were magical? How could I not want to be a writer?"

As he sits in his Coulter Building office, surrounded by books, it is obvious that Ron Rash is a writer who doesn't enjoy talking about himself, but loves to speak of family roots that go deep into the mountains. A son of Buncombe and Watauga County natives, Rash was raised in Boiling Springs and the South Carolina town of Chester, where his family lived from time to time to take advantage of the work available in the textile mill. His grandparents never had the opportunity to go to college, but Rash's parents went back to school as working adults and earned degrees. Rash says it was a family expectation that he would attend college after his high school graduation.

"They tried to do better for the next generation," Rash said. "I think one of the reasons I write is that it's an act of gratitude that the people who came before me sacrificed so much."

Rash made his first serious attempt at creative writing when he was a student at Gardner-Webb University. His mind and energies previously had been focused on running track in high school and college, but he had been a voracious reader all along. "One day I sat down and thought, why don't I try this and see what happens," Rash said. The result wasn't anything to get excited about, but he kept at it and discovered that his athletic background helped him when he

faced the dreaded blank page. "Having been an athlete was a great advantage because it taught me discipline," he said. "You need day-in and day-out discipline to do both."

And so, Rash combined the tough-mindedness acquired in his athletic pursuits with his love and appreciation for the natural and human history of the Southern Appalachians to launch a literary career while he taught in high schools and colleges across the region. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English, and wrote three collections of poetry and two collections of short stories, before transitioning to writing a series of critically acclaimed and award-winning novels. He joined Western's faculty in 2003, coming back to his family's homeland in the mountains, "my true home."

This past November, Rash learned that *Serena* his fourth novel, had been named to the Publishers Weekly "Best Books of the Year" list, and that the novel had come in at No. 7 on the online retailer Amazon's list of the 100 best books of 2008. Those accolades have been accompanied by a burst of complimentary reviews in newspapers and magazines across the nation, including *The New York Times*, in which reviewer Janet Maslin listed *Serena* as one of her 10 favorite books of 2008 and praised Rash's "elegantly fine-tuned voice." The book also has made the "best-of-2008" lists of *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Washington Post* and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Novelist Pat Conroy has stated that "Serena" "catapults (Rash) to the front ranks of the best American novelists." Rash says the praise for the novel is encouraging. "It's the book I worked on the hardest. It's nice to get a good response," he said.

As the literary accolades come his way, Rash stays busy as he teaches Appalachian literature and creative writing at WCU, and continues to prepare his next published work, a collection of short stories. With the October release of *Serena* he is being called upon more often to present readings across the country, and in recent months has been to Boston, Portland, Ore., and Cincinnati. "The best part of that is getting to meet writers I admire," Rash said. *Serena* tells the story of a timber baron, George Pemberton, and his ruthless wife, Serena, who come to the North Carolina mountains to create a timber empire. Rash says each of his three previous novels were inspired by a single image that came to his mind, but "Serena" started with two images: a huge table that he saw at a resort in Waynesville that had been hewn from a single piece of yellow poplar, and an image of a woman riding a ridge crest on a "magnificent white stallion" that popped into his head while he was driving through the mountains. That woman is his fictional *Serena*.

# Karen Russell

Interview Friday 17th September 4pm  
Reading Friday 17th September 9.30pm



**K**aren Russell, a native of Miami, has been featured in both *The New Yorker's* debut fiction issue and *New York magazine's* list of twenty-five people to watch under the age of twenty-six. She is a graduate of the Columbia MFA program and is the 2005 recipient of the Transatlantic Review/Henfield Foundation Award; her fiction has appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Granta*, *Zoetrope*, *Oxford American*, and *The New Yorker*. Her first book, a collection of stories *St Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* was a *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Chicago Tribune* Best Book of the Year.

In 2011 she publishes her first novel *Swamplandia!* - based on the world of one of her short stories.

Now twenty-nine, she lives in New York City and was recently included in the *New Yorker's* 20 best fiction authors under 40 list

*from*  
St Lucy's Home for Girls  
Raised By Wolves

The pack hated Jeanette. She was the most successful of us, the one furthest removed from her origins. Her real name was GWARR!, but she wouldn't respond to this anymore. Jeanette spiffed her penny loafers until her very shoes seemed to gloat. (Linguists have since traced the colloquial origins of "goody two-shoes" back to our facilities.) She could even growl out a demonic-sounding precursor to "Pleased to meet you." She'd delicately extend her former paws to visitors, wearing white kid gloves.

"Our little wolf, disguised in sheep's clothing!" Sister Ignatius liked to joke with the visiting deacons, and Jeanette would surprise everyone by laughing along with them, a harsh, inhuman, barking sound. Her hearing was still twig-snap sharp. Jeanette was the first among us to apologize; to drink apple juice out of a sippy cup; to quit eyeballing the cleric's jugular in a disconcerting fashion. She curled her lips back into a cousin of a smile as the traveling barber cut her pelt into bangs. Then she swept her coarse black curls under the rug. When we entered a room, our nostrils flared beneath the new odors: onion and bleach, candle wax, the turnipy smell of unwashed bodies. Not Jeanette. Jeanette smiled and pretended like she couldn't smell a thing.

The ten stories in *ST. LUCY'S HOME FOR GIRLS RAISED BY WOLVES* are mostly narrated by children. Was this a conscious choice?

It just sort of happened that way; I never sat down to write a collection narrated by children and adolescents. But more often than not, those were the voices I ended up taking dictation from.

Sometimes I'd consciously resist the child/adolescent perspective—in an earlier draft, I tried to write "Children Remember Westward" from the point of view of an older Minotaur named Jax, and thank God that didn't work out!

Maybe because adolescence is still green terrain for me, that's the place that I kept wanting to return to. A lot of my protagonists are stuck between worlds, I think, coming alive to certain adult truths but lacking the perspective to make sense of them. There's something about that blend of adult knowingness and innocence that I find incredibly compelling. For better or for worse, that's the voice that I feel most drawn to at this moment. In future collections, I'd love to try and channel different sorts of voices, older, fainter, stranger voices.

In "The Star-Gazer's Log of Summer-Time Crime," the protagonist muses, "I guess that's what growing up means, at least according to the publishing industry: phosphorescence fades to black-and-white, and facts cease to be fun." The title story, "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves" is about a pack of 15 girls, raised by wolves, who are taken away from their parents and reeducated by nuns to enter civilized society. What are you saying about the nature of growing up? Uh-oh! These sorts of questions always make me nervous, because to be honest I feel I'm lying a little bit, making up a story about my stories. For starters, I don't want to sound like a dufus—anything that I'm trying to say about the nature of growing up, I'm sure other writers before me have said with greater insight and eloquence. Also, if I could just say the thing outright, I probably wouldn't need to strand my young protagonists inside giant shells or exile them from their wolf-parents. They could just play whiffle ball and eat ham sandwiches for awhile, and then one day they'd wake up adults.

There's this line that I love from a Mark Jarman poem: "and like the joy of being, and becoming." And I wanted some of that joy to come through in these stories. But I also think the underbelly of that feeling

is this dark and ferocious sense of loss. In the title story, for example: who exactly are those wolf-girls en route to becoming?

The parents in your collection are often absent or tragically flawed: a proud Minotaur for a father, a mother who is always "draped over some jowly older individual," a set of wolves for parents. Seems pretty tough to be a kid these days, at least for your characters.

I think it's pretty tough to be a parent, too. I wouldn't judge the parents in this collection too harshly; that Minotaur, for example, has to struggle against prejudice and the prison of his own anatomy as well as, you know, snakes. And also dysentery, and the impossible price of corn. Or the wolf-parents, who wanted a better life for their children. That sort of fierce parental love can warp into strange shapes when confronted with the outside world and its dangers, I think.

How did you come to pick the title story? Is "St. Lucy's" your favorite or did you just decide it was a good title?

"St. Lucy's" is my favorite story, most of the time, but all of these stories have been my favorite at one point or another. Most recently it was "Accident Brief," which was a "troubled" story that didn't look like it was going to make it into the collection for awhile. It's like asking, who do you love more, the straight-A, varsity athlete or your wall-eyed mulligan child? My favorite story is often the one that nobody wants to take to the prom. Then I just want to tamp down its cowlick and put it in orthopedic sneakers and set it to dancing. As for the title, it was originally going to be "Ava Wrestles the Alligator." Then my brother strenuously vetoed this, on the grounds that it sounded like a "Hooked on Phonics" story. I seriously considered all sorts of bad titles (see below), some of which I can't even admit to here. At first, I thought "St. Lucy's" was too long to be the title, but it really grew on me. My agent suggested that I find a new saint's name (originally, St. Lucy was St. Augusta, making the title even longer!). So I dug up my old "Catholic Picture Book of the Saints" and did a lot of lame internal agonizing about the relative merits of St. Ulrich (the patron saint of wolves, but too much like Skeet Ulrich?) and St. Gertrude (too much of a hiccupy g sound in the title?). Finally I settled on Lucy, always a favorite name of mine. Lucy is the patron saint of blindness, which seemed to work thematically given the "blindness to vision" reformatory promises made by the school. Also she's the patron saint of authors, and I'll take whatever help I can get.

# Laura Van Den Berg

Shortlisted for the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Award  
Reading Saturday 18th September 7pm



*from*

## What the World Will Look Like When All the Water Leaves Us

Denver told me that he was going to the community pool to swim laps, which I knew was a lie. I didn't know where he really planned to go, only that he wanted to be away from me. When the front door closed, something deep in my body ached.

After my brother had been gone for a while, I found a message from a neighbor on the answering machine, complaining that Denver had spent the day running up and down the sidewalk in his Superman cape, shouting about emergencies. I worried someone might call Children's Services and that Denver would have to go live with Aunt Lucille. I called the neighbor back and told her I had talked things over with Denver and he had promised to not be such a nuisance.

"And the costumes," she pressed. I'd seen this woman around, in her running pants and sweat-shirts and pink hair rollers. She smoked skinny cigarettes and owned a black Pomeranian. "What are you doing about the costumes?"

"You mean the Superman cape?"

"It's not normal for a boy his age."

"Listen." I leaned against the kitchen counter, the speckled Formica edge digging into the small of my back. "We've had a hard year, Denver and me." "You're not the first person life has been unkind to."

I wanted to tell her that she was right in saying we weren't the first to suffer, but sometimes it felt like we were the only people out there with losses so raw and gaping, and that we could both use a little understanding. I didn't say any of this. I thanked her for her time and offered another apology. She reminded me the recycling was supposed to go out on Wednesday, not Tuesday, and then hung up the phone.

Laura van den Berg was raised in Florida and earned her MFA at Emerson College. Her fiction has appeared in *One Story*, *Boston Review*, *American Short Fiction*, *Conjunctions*, *Best American Nonrequired Reading 2008*, *Best New American Voices 2010*, and *The Pushcart Prize XXIV*, among others. She is also the recipient of scholarships from the Bread Loaf and Sewanee Writers' Conferences, the 2009 Julia Peterkin Award, and the 2009-2010 Emerging Writer Lectureship at Gettysburg College. Laura's first collection of stories, *What the World Will Look Like When All the Water Leaves Us*, published by Dzanc Books in October, was a 2009 Holiday selection for the Barnes & Noble "Discover Great New Writers" Program, a finalist for *ForeWord Magazine's* Book of the Year award, and long-listed for The Story Prize.



**Michael Kimball:** The first sentence of the first story mentions Bigfoot: "Some people dream of being chased by Bigfoot." Other stories involve the Loch Ness Monster, the Mokele-mbembe, and a giant snake that may or may not be in Lake Michigan. Could you talk about creating characters that believe in these types of creatures?

**Laura van den Berg:** We all have to believe in something, don't we? My characters tend not to believe in god or other people or even in themselves, but rather find more esoteric elements to place their conviction in. Also, I see these creatures as being, in part, a stand-in for the things that are ineffable to us, for all that is unknown and unreachable. There's so much we will never know, will never understand, about ourselves and the people around us and the world at large, yet we keep trying to make it all make sense. To a large degree, I think my characters believe in things like the Loch Ness and Mokele-mbembe because they are trying to form a narrative that will make their own lives comprehensible; they want their lives to be about something.

**Kimball:** Characters wanting their lives to be meaningful, that makes me think of a recurring character in a bunch of your stories: the scientist/explorer. Sometimes this character is a professional, say, a primatologist, and sometimes an amateur, say, an orphaned little boy. Sometimes this character is alive, sometimes dead, but they are (or were) looking for something they cannot find—a type of monkey, a particular edition of a book, a tunnel to the other side of the world, love, understanding, attention. The searches that these characters undertake, that's one of the things that makes your stories so compelling. Could you talk about the search, as a way to drive the narrative, as well as where you leave the characters (that is, having found or not found what they are looking for)?

**van den Berg:** I think we're all looking for things we can't find in our own particular ways; we always want to understand more about the world, I tend to believe, than we will ever be able to, so I feel as though the "un-findable" things my characters are perusing become emblematic of that larger abyss we all face. I think my characters also tend to feel that if they can achieve a particular goal (become a long distance swimmer, accurately interpret a disturbed child's drawings) or find a particular thing (a rare flower, the Loch Ness), everything will come together for them; they're always looking for ways to make it all make sense.

In terms of how these desires can be used to shape narrative, obsession is a wonderful storytelling tool. Right away, it offers an intensity, a sense of focus. I feel like many of these stories grew out of a character's obsession, in that the obsession was the first element I knew and everything else kind of sprouted up around that element. However, the difficult thing about a story driven by, say, an obsessive quest for a particular object is: how do you end it in a way that's not too neat or too open-ended, that's enigmatic but still satisfying? Frankly, I'm not sure all my endings are successful; they were something I struggled with a lot in revision. My characters don't find what they're looking for and some stories do end with the characters being more lost than ever, while others end with them finding the things they actually needed the most—in the title story, for example, Celia doesn't grow closer to her mother, but gains her independence; in "Where We Must Be," Jean loses her job at the Bigfoot park and will, the story implies, soon lose Jimmy, but at the same time, she manages to pass this kind of fundamental human test in the

final scene.

**Kimball:** I liked your endings a lot, especially since the one thing that seemed as if it couldn't happen was that those characters find the thing they are looking for. I liked the various ways that you found to take those stories deeper into their emotional core (that is, somewhere beyond the surface obsession). But tell me about the struggles with those endings and how you finally settled on the endings that the stories have.

**van den Berg:** Endings are always hard for me. You're juggling a lot of different demands—how does this ending emerge from the character's internal landscape? How does it bring, or not bring, the story's thematic concerns and ideas to fruition? How can I create an arcing moment, a moment that the story has been building to from the start, surprising yet inevitable, to quote Flannery O'Connor, as opposed to just letting things trail off? I'm a big fan of the ending-with-an-image strategy—I'm with T.S. Eliot on that whole objective correlative thing—but it can't just be any old image, of course; it has to have roots in the story, to carry a psychological weight and resonance. It has to somehow gesture toward what is at the heart of the story, but not too much. The worst thing in an ending for me is when the story is wrapped up too neatly; I much prefer the enigmatic. There's a great quote—I can't recall who said it at the moment—about how an ending should be more of an "open window than a closed door," or something along those lines, and that feels right to me. In terms of process, every story was different, but in general it always feels like messing around with a Rubik's cube; I keep turning the story this way and that, hoping that everything will eventually line up.

**Kimball:** In another interview, you mention that one of the best pieces of advice you have ever been given came from Margot Livesey—the idea that a writer should be able to justify every sentence in a story or novel. Please justify it.

**van den Berg:** I interpret those words as a call for a heightened awareness of language and what that language is communicating to the reader, a call for all the story's elements to be in service of the larger enterprise. And I would like to think that I could, if pressed, talk about how most lines in my stories are contributing to that larger enterprise, but I know there are some lines that I feel are important, but would struggle to articulate why. For me, it's not a bad thing to have a strand of the work elude me slightly, to sense that it is contributing something even if I couldn't say exactly what. Which is all to say that I always hold that Margot Livesey—who is, by the way, a stellar teacher—quote in mind, even if I don't take it completely literally.

But back to the quote from *The Believer*: this line comes at the end of the title story, when the narrator, Celia, has undergone a kind of coming of age—a sexual awakening, a desire for independence—which takes the form of her breaking away from her mother, a self-involved scientist who has dominated Celia's life and decisions about how to live, and pursuing her dream of becoming a long distance swimmer. So the phrase "I couldn't imagine ever making my way through the lanes of a swimming pool again" suggests Celia recognizes that she has been irrevocably changed, that things can never go back to the way they were. And the part about her having "grown used to the expanse of the ocean, that sensation that I could, at any moment, vanish within it" is connected to her desire for a bigger kind of life, so even though she's leaving her mother in Madagascar in order to pursue a life of her own, she is in possession of her mother's sense of adventure.

# Festival Club

Readings Thursday to Saturday

15th - 19th September from 10 or 11pm onwards.

At the Boqueria, Bridge Street

Each evening enjoy the ambience of good wine, fine food and scintillating conversation and short readings by emerging authors. Every year we like to showcase a selection of emerging authors who have had success with magazine publication, radio broadcasts, prizes, etc. but who have yet to publish a book. This year we feature three authors in our *Prebooked* reading series. Each event is just 15 minutes long.

## Reading Thursday

**S**heila Mannix is from Youghal, Co. Cork. She graduated from UCC in 1986 with a degree in English & French and has since lived between Cork and London. She completed a Masters degree in Screenwriting & Screen Research at the London College of Printing. She has worked as a freelance production assistant and producer of short films and was Head of Development for several years for Catherine Bailey Ltd - an independent supplier of radio drama for BBC Radio 3 & Radio 4 - where she worked on the script for David Cronenberg's film 'Spider'. She has also worked as a bookseller and cinema manager. She has published poetry and short stories in *Cyphers*, *Poetry Now*, *Microbe* and *Karnival* magazine. Mannix was a prizewinner in this year's Francis MacManus Short Story Award,

## Reading Friday

**S**ean Kim has had stories published in *Word Riot*, *Faultline* and *Dark Horses*. In May 2009 he was a finalist for the Glimmertrain Fiction Open and a STAND Grant recipient in 2006. He writes movie reviews and opinion pieces for *KoreAm* and *The Rumpus*. He has an MFA in Creative Writing from San Diego State University and currently teaches English at City College of San Francisco.

## Reading Saturday

**B**everly Parayno has an MA from University College Cork and an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts, where she received a Lynda Hull scholarship. She recently participated in the Tin House workshop with author Charles D'Ambrosio. Her story "Dilation" received a commendation from the 2009 Sean O'Faolain Short Story Competition, and in 2008, she was selected to read at San Francisco's Litquake event for Best Emerging Writers. A regular contributor to the online culture magazine *The Rumpus*, she lives in Pacifica, California, where she is working on her first collection of stories.

## Practical Advice on Accommodation and Parking

The festival has negotiated a special hotel rate for anyone attending the festival. Bed & Breakfast at the Gresham Metropole Hotel can cost over €120 a night.

If you make your booking directly with Anne MacCarthy, Reservations Manager on Phone 021-4643700 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, mention you are coming for the festival and you can get a special Bed & Breakfast rate of €69 single/ €79 double per night between Wednesday September 15th and Sunday September 19th.

The Patrick's Quay Carpark offers a normal rate of 2 euro per hour in the evening. Mention the festival and pay at the desk (not the machine) and you can enjoy a special all evening rate of €5 after 6pm. There are also special all day rates for guests of the Metropole Hotel. The carpark closes at midnight, earlier on Sundays.

# David Vann

Reading Saturday 18th September 7pm



David Vann's work has appeared in *The Sunday Times*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *The Observer*, *Elle UK*, *The Telegraph*, *Men's Journal*, *Outside*, *Outside's GO*, *Men's Health*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Writer's Digest*, and other magazines and won various prizes and awards. A former National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, Wallace Stegner Fellow, and John L'Heureux Fellow, he's taught at Stanford, Cornell, SF State, FSU, and is currently an Associate Professor at the University of San Francisco. He was born on Adak Island, Alaska and lives in the SF Bay Area with his wife Nancy. He recently found out he's part Cherokee, related to the Cherokee Chief David Vann. His collection of short stories *Legend of A Suicide* was published to great acclaim.

A truly great writer. -*The Sunday Independent*

One of the best writers of his generation. -*Le Figaro*

His legend is at once the truest memoir and the purest fiction... Nothing quite like this book has been written before. -Alex Linklater, *The Observer*

From the shores of Vann's Alaska one can see the Russia of Turgenov's *Fathers and Sons*... "A father, after all," Vann writes, "is a lot for a thing to be." A son is also a lot for a thing to be; so is an artist. With *Legend of a Suicide* David Vann proves himself a fine example of both. -Tom Bissell, *The New York Times*

from *Legend of A Suicide*

Don't want to wreck our own view, he said. It occurred to Roy that maybe chopping down trees here wasn't even legal, because it was some kind of National Forest, but he didn't say anything. His father had been known on occasion to ignore the law when it came to hunting, fishing, and camping. He had taken Roy hunting once in suburban Santa Rosa, California, for instance. They had only the pellet gun and were going for dove or quail on some land they found beside a road that was fairly out of the way. When the owner walked down, he didn't say anything but just watched them as they got back into the car and drove away.

Roy took over with the ax, feeling the thud each time through his arms and studying how white the chips of wood were that flung out loosely around the base.

Careful how it falls, his father said. Think about where the balance is.

Roy stopped and studied the tree, then moved halfway around it and gave the last two blows and it fell away from them, ripping down through branches and leaves, other trunks quivering under the shock and looking like a crowd of bystanders at some horrific scene, all of them trembling and thrown and an odd silence afterward.

# Workshops

At the Munster Literature Centre, 84 Douglas Street

Saturday 18th September 9.30am - 11.30am

## Masterclass in Narrative Poetry

(Short Stories in Verse?)

Presented by *Tess Gallagher* (see page 16)

Limited to ten places. Price €30

About Gallagher's work, the poet Hayden Carruth wrote, "Gallagher's poems, beyond their delicacy of language, have a delicacy of perception, and the capacity to see oneself objectively as another person doing the things one really does, with clear affection and natural concern."

Her honors include a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, two National Endowment of the Arts Awards, and the Maxine Cushing Gray Foundation Award.

Participants must already have at least several magazine publication credits. Send your booking request to [administrator@munsterlit.ie](mailto:administrator@munsterlit.ie) with short bio and publishing history.

## Short Story Workshop

Presented by *Mary Morrissy*

Limited to eight places. Price €30

A class for the beginning and intermediate author. Take the opportunity to gain insight and tips from a master storyteller and consummate stylist. Mary Morrissy was a featured reader at last year's festival and her advanced workshop for published authors was a sell-out.

Morrissy has published two novels and a collection of short stories. She won a Hennessy Award for short fiction in 1984, a Lannan Literary Prize in 1995, and was shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize in 1996. For several years, Mary has taught creative writing for the University of Iowa creative writing summer programme.

Participants: send your booking request to [administrator@munsterlit.ie](mailto:administrator@munsterlit.ie)

# Prizewinners Showcase

Saturday 18th September at Noon

Readings by the winners of three of Ireland's most prestigious prizes for a single short story.

Joyce Russell, winner of the 2010 Francis MacManus Award

Madeleine Darcy winner of the 2010 Hennessy Writer of the Year Award

? winner of the 2010 Sean O'Faolain Prize

# Seminars

## 2pm Friday The Short Story and the New Media

Chaired by festival director Patrick Cotter. Is the printed book endangered? Is web publication valid? In the future will key texts be published only on Kindle? How do podcasts help in promoting the short story? Listen to a selection of festival participants discuss these crucial issues and take the opportunity to contribute from the floor.

Admission Free

## 2pm Saturday Radio and the Short Story

Chaired by poet Billy Ramsell, a discussion about the centrality of Radio to the short story. Three producers (Seamus Hosey, Di Speirs & Aidan Stanley) working for RTE and the BBC talk about what they look for in a story and what adjustments they need to make for different types of production.

Questions from the audience will be encouraged. Admission Free.

# Literary Walking Tour

Sunday 19th September 10am to 12 Noon

Begins opposite the Gable Bar, Douglas Street

Finishes in MacCurtain street

Cork novelist and biographer Jim McKeown will share with you his profound knowledge and entertaining anecdotes about the streets of Cork and their association with literary luminaries such as Frank O'Connor Sean O'Faolain and Daniel Corkery. Please wear comfortable shoes, dress for the weather and exercise caution in crossing the road. Children with adult supervision are welcome. Free.



# The Munster Literature Centre

[www.munsterlit.ie](http://www.munsterlit.ie)

Founded in 1993, the Munster Literature Centre (Tigh Litríochta) is a nonprofit arts organisation dedicated to the promotion and celebration of literature, especially that of Munster. To this end, we organise festivals, workshops, readings and competitions. Under our imprint Southword Editions, we publish a biannual, online literary journal, poetry collections and anthologies. We actively seek to support new and emerging writers and are assisted in our efforts through funding from Cork City Council, Cork County Council and the Arts Council of Ireland.

Originally located on Sullivan's Quay, in 2003 the centre moved to its current premises in Frank O'Connor House (the author's birthplace) at 84 Douglas Street, courtesy of Cork City Council who bought and refurbished the building in time for O'Connor's centenary.

In 2000, the Munster Literature Centre organised the first Frank O'Connor International Short Story Festival, an event dedicated to the celebration of the short story and named for one of Cork's most beloved authors. The festival showcases readings, literary forums and workshops. Following continued growth and additional funding, the Cork City - Frank O'Connor Short Story Award was introduced in 2005, coinciding with Cork's designation as that year's European Capital of Culture. The award is now recognised as the world's most prestigious award for the short story form and is presented at the end of the festival.

In 2002, the Munster Literature Centre introduced the Seán Ó Faoláin Short Story Prize, an annual short story competition dedicated to one of Ireland's most accomplished story writers and theorists. This too is presented during the FOC festival. Each Spring we present a differently themed literary festival with an emphasis on poetry.

Workshops are held by featured authors in both autumn and spring, allowing the general public to receive creative guidance in an intimate setting for a minimal fee. In addition, the centre sponsors a Writer in Residence each year.

The Centre has built up an extensive video and audio literary archive which visitors to the centre can access.

We invite you to browse our website for further information regarding our events. It is possible to sign up for our mailing list on our homepage [www.munsterlit.ie](http://www.munsterlit.ie)

Should you have any queries, we would be happy to hear from you.  
[info@munsterlit.ie](mailto:info@munsterlit.ie)