

Back to the Well: A Weekend Poetry Workshop

Martin Dyar at the Yeats International Summer School

August 1st and 2nd, 2020

This two-day poetry course, delivered by the award-winning poet Martin Dyar, is intended for writers working in all genres, and at all levels. It will include an exploration of technique and subject matter, with an emphasis on narrative, lyricism, feeling, diction, clarity, metre and rhythm. Additionally, this course will emphasise the enjoyment of poems, the ways poetry can inform and enhance our relationship with language, its role in making sense of human experience, and the imaginative basis of poetry itself. Individual classes will combine the reading and exploration of a selection of poems and poets with a series of facilitated exercises through which participants will begin to draft and develop new poems of their own. In addition to one-to-one feedback opportunities, the weekend will comprise three short modules: 'Telling Stories with Poems'; 'Voice, place and poetic feeling'; and 'Poems about illness and healthcare'.

Overview of individual modules:

Past and Present: Telling Stories with Poems. 10am, August 1st:

There are so many places to begin when writing poetry that, despite our best efforts, and even despite flashes of inspiration, the undertaking can be a struggle. Poetry is a wonderfully accessible genre, but it is not a simple one at the level of craft. In this workshop we will approach poetry as a story-telling art-form. Participants will have the opportunity to deepen their grasp of the connection between the poem and the reader, and also their grasp of the functions of character, action, setting and voice in the creation of a strong poem. By thinking of poetry as a story-telling artform, our goal is to discover a new fluency in our writing process. Sample poems by William Carlos Williams, E.A. Robinson, Denise Levertov and Tim Seibles will be included. Level: beginners and experienced.

Voice, Place and Poetic Feeling: Exploring the Poetry of Bernard O'Donoghue. 2pm, August 1st:

Good poems are the best kind of nourishment for an aspiring poet. Good poems are also potentially the best teachers of good writing. In this workshop we will explore a sample of poems from the brilliant Cork poet Bernard O'Donoghue, looking closely at the power of his representations of rural Irish experience, his mastery of narrative, his ability to blend colloquial, lyrical and philosophical modes, and his gentle humour. Participants will be facilitated in commencing their own new poems in response to the O'Donoghue selection explored during the session.

Body Language: Exploring Poems About Illness and Healthcare. 10am, August 2nd:

When writing about human experience very often we come back to the subject of human vulnerability, and also to the ways that we respond to each other in times of need and suffering. This workshop will introduce participants to a sample of poems that powerfully represent aspects of illness and healthcare. Participants will also be facilitated in brainstorming their own interests and experiences, with a particular focus on poems that represent patients, doctors and nurses in hospital environments. What can poetry teach us about such things? How can we get our experiences of illness and healthcare into good poetic shape? And what deeper truth might be revealed when we examine illness imaginatively and with the everyday magic of carefully selected words?

One to One Feedback on Participants Own Writing. 2pm, August 2nd:

On the Sunday afternoon, each participant will be allotted an individual appointment with Martin Dyar, during which poems that have been submitted in advance of the Yeats International Summer School will be discussed in the context of development and revision, and in the light of the creative strategies and concepts explored during the weekend course itself.

Martin Dyar grew up in Swinford in County Mayo. His book of poems Maiden Names (Arlen House), described by Bernard O'Donoghue as 'a thrilling new development in Irish poetry' was shortlisted for the Pigott Poetry Prize, and was a book of the year selection in both the Guardian and the Irish Times. With the composer Ryan Molloy, he has written a poetry song cycle for soprano harp and flute, which toured nationally in 2018. He has also written a play, Tom Loves a Lord, about the Irish poet Thomas Moore. Martin Dyar won the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 2009, and the Strokestown International Poetry Award in 2001. A graduate of Trinity College Dublin, and NUI Galway, he has held fellowships at the University of Iowa, the Washington Ireland Program, and the University of Limerick. Martin's work has been added to the Leaving Cert prescribed poetry syllabus, and selected for numerous anthologies, including Windharp: Poems of Ireland Since 1916 (Penguin Ireland), and Reading the Future (Hodges Figgis/Arlen House). The recipient of the 2019 John Broderick residency fellowship, he has recently edited an anthology of poems on medical subjects, Vital Signs, which will be published in Autumn 2020 by Poetry Ireland.

Martin Dyar workshop Details: Price is €120.

For any summer school students attending, this is an additional cost.

Three samples of writing must be included with applications for this workshop. These can be sent by e-mail to info@yeatssociety.com. Please put SUMMER SCHOOL POETRY WORKSHOP in the subject box.