

FESTIVAL OF WILD ATLANTIC WRITING

in the footsteps of Ted Hughes

To be held at Doonreagan, Cashel, Co. Galway, Ireland

October 27th-29th, 2017.



www.doonreagan.com

doonreagan@gmail.com

[Tel: 00353 95 31049](tel:003539531049)

Programme

Friday, October 27th:

20.00 – 22.00 Wine reception at Doon House.

Saturday, October 28th:

9.30 – 11.00 First morning session

11.00 – 11.30 Tea/coffee break

11.30 – 13.00 Second morning session

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch at Doon House

14.00 – 15.30 First afternoon session

15.30 – 16.00 Tea/coffee break

16.00 – 17.30 Second afternoon session

19.30 Conference dinner at the Zetland Hotel

Sunday, October 29th:

9.30 – 11.00 First morning session

11.00 – 11.30 Tea/coffee break

11.30 – 13.00 Second morning session

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch at Doon House

14.00 – 15.00 Afternoon session

Talks

Saturday, October 28th:

9.30 – 11.00

Robert Jocelyn: Welcome and introduction.

Tony Curtis: Connemara ponies and their poetry along The Wild Atlantic Way.

I have been travelling to the West of Ireland all my life. It is not difficult to explain what draws me; Connemara has to be one of the most entrancing places I have ever been. That said, it is often the wettest; the sea, the bogs and the mountains vanished in mist and cloud. I think my fascination with Connemara began on the 20th of July 1969. It was the day Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Fourteen years old, I was watching the historic event in the kitchen with my granny. Just as Neil Armstrong was about to utter his immortal line “One small step for Man, one giant leap for mankind.” — she declared to me, “Now Tony, that’s not the moon, that’s a beach in Galway. I’ve been there with your grandfather.” So, when I walk out onto the Old Bog Road part of me, the part that believes every word my grandmother told me, sees, not heather and sheep, but a lunar landscape. One of the first poem I wrote about the West of Ireland begins: “And still they live in unforgiven places / on the sides of arthritic hills,/where low walls hide the sea and the sea hides the dead...” or the later poem ‘Unveiling’ begins “This could be Tuscany but for the rain the mist and the hundreds of stone walls...”. Connemara, like the moon, is a beautiful bleakness.

In 2011, Occasional Press and Ballynahinch Castle invited me to write a book about Connemara ponies, and so, with drawings and paintings by the wonderful David Lilburn, I wrote *Pony*. It is a book full of wild and bendy poems created wandering the wild Atlantic way. Come along and hear me read and talk about how I make these poems.

Tony Curtis was born in Dublin in 1955. Among Curtis’ nine warmly received collections, the most recent are *Folk, Pony*, with drawings and paintings by David Lilburn, and *Approximately in the Key of C*. In 2008, *Days Like These*, with Paula Meehan and Theo Dorgan, was published by Brooding Heron Press in Washington State. He is currently working on a book of poems about Alcock and Brown. Curtis has been awarded the Irish National Poetry Prize and has read his poetry all over the world to great acclaim. He is a member of Aosdána.

Máire Holmes: A Song of Praise

My nearest neighbour dances naked at the end of my garden; roars for attention; throws salt at the window and then waltzes away. This happens a lot and only a pane of glass separates us. My neighbour ebbs and flows near the study window, waving or waltzing and finally wooing inspiration.

The Aran Islands are almost in the back garden and I have lived on two; Inis Mór and Inis Oirr. I hope to show this bond with the sea and surrounding areas, including mountains, by giving a bilingual poetry/prose reading at Doonreagan Festival. But the charm of the Ocean doesn't just happen in An Spidéal where I live. Early one morning, walking in *Baile an Fheiritéaraigh*, I heard the Atlantic singing a poem! By eight o'clock, I had jotted the lilt on the back of an envelope. Later, when I was Kerry writer in residence, this poem *Ciarraí* was aired on radio and had a huge response. Why? Because the Wild Atlantic Way is considered among the top fifty most attractive drives in the world; and listeners were happy to hear a song of praise.

Máire Holmes is Editor in Chief of *The Galway Review* – which so far has 334,759 online readers. Former writer in residence for Kerry, Mayo, Connemara and the Aran Islands; having spent eleven years as outreach writer for N.U.I.G.

11.00 – 11.30

Tea/coffee break

11.30 – 13.00

Gerry Dawe and Padraic Rainey: Crossing the Sound

In this special reading, Gerald Dawe reads from a work in progress, his collaboration with the artist, Padraic Reaney which includes a selection of Gerald's poems, written over forty years, and based in and around the west of Ireland's famous coastlines, as well as rural villages and famous towns. Focusing upon Galway and Mayo landscapes, *Crossing the Sound* will also feature the art work of Padraic Reaney's images drawn from Inishark.

Since he moved to Galway in 1974 Gerald has published over twenty books of poetry and essays. He taught for many years at NUI, Galway before moving to Trinity College Dublin where he was professor of English and Fellow until his retirement this year.

Robert Jocelyn: "Living in your dream": Richard Murphy's Connemara

A connection to a place, in this instance the coastal district of Connemara and the Wild Atlantic, runs through much of Richard Murphy's work. At an early age he was determined to write poetry in and of Connemara against the express wishes of his parents. This paper will trace Richard's long association with the area, its people, the landscape and seascape. It will illustrate how events, legends and the natural world that Richard encountered during his daily life in Connemara, became the theme and sources for the greater proportion of his poetry, leading many to the view that, besides his reflections on history and the dispossessed, Richard Murphy is Connemara's greatest nature poet and interpreter.

Robert Jocelyn with his wife, Ann, as owners of Doonreagan, inaugurated the conferences there in 2013. He has lectured on Ted Hughes in the UK and on

landscape history at NUIG. He is the author of *Tollymore, the Story of an Irish Demesne*, an architectural and social history, and a biography, *Major John (D.M.) Kennedy MC – A Tribute*. He also edited *The Diaries of Lord Limerick's Grand Tour 1716 -1723*.

13.00 – 14.00

Lunch at Doon House

14.00 – 15.30

Sean Ryder: Ecology and Wild Places

Thinking about our relationship to wild places has taken interesting turns in recent years. The popular success of celebratory nature writers like Robert McFarlane has been balanced by darker, more apocalyptic voices such as the work associated with the Dark Mountain collective, and arguments around new concepts like "the Anthropocene", biosemiotics and dark ecology. This talk will survey some recent trends in the theory and practice of writing about ecology and wild places, and offer some thoughts on how these ideas may help us think about Irish writing.

Sean Ryder is Professor of English at NUI Galway. He writes mainly on nineteenth-century Irish literature.

Pat Mullan: Where the Past and Present Co-Exist

Connemara, to me, is a place of parallel universes where the past and the present co-exist. This western part of County Galway's Wild Atlantic Way is a beautiful, peaceful, magical place far from the hustle and bustle of modern city life. But it has a dark Celtic soul. I write thrillers and poetry. My poetry lets me travel effortlessly between those parallel universes. I will take you from the moonscape of Roundstone to the magic of Dog's Bay. That dark Celtic soul of Connemara forces its way onto the pages of my thrillers. I will invite you to a murder on Omey Island. Finally I will take you to the imagined world of Yeats and Lady Gregory at Coole.

Pat Mullan is a member of International Thriller Writers. His thriller novels, poetry, and short stories are published in the US, Ireland, and the UK. His work was included in 'City-Pick DUBLIN', for UNESCO'S City of Culture in 2010. He has published five thriller novels: *The Circle of Sodom*, *Blood Red Square*, *Last Days of the Tiger*, *Creatures of Habit* and *A Deadly Gamble*. At the *Love Is Murder* conference in Chicago, *The Circle of Sodom* was nominated for Best First Novel and Best Suspense Thriller. You can read more about him on his website: www.patmullan.com

15.30 – 16.00

Tea/coffee break

16.00 – 17.30

Moya Roddy: Landscape: Presence and Absence

Moya Roddy will read from her short story collection *Other People* as well as from her forthcoming poetry collection. Originally from Dublin, she came to live in the West over twenty years ago, making a home for herself amidst the breath-taking scenery she'd fallen in love with during several biking holidays. Since the move Moya's found that whenever she tells people she's a writer living in the West of Ireland the usual response is "You're lucky - it must be so inspiring!" But inspiration is a curious thing as she was to discover. Using her own work and Ted Hughes' poem *Thistles* as jumping off points, Moya will intersperse the reading with thoughts on the effect living in the presence of extraordinary beauty has had on her writing. Landscape as such may not feature prominently in her work but its transfiguring influence has been critical: allowing her to see the "spectacular" in the ordinary - or in Blake's words "the world in a grain of sand".

Moya Roddy's novel *The Long Way Home* was described as "simply brilliant" in the Irish Times. Her collection *Other People* was longlisted for the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award; her poetry was shortlisted for the Hennessy Award and highly commended at the Patrick Kavanagh Awards. Salmon is publishing her first poetry collection in spring 2018. She's written for TV, radio, film and stage.

John Fanning: Ludwig Wittgenstein in Connemara: The Irish Poets' Response.

Charles de Gaulle came to Connemara, to Cashel in fact, as did Lucien Freud, who painted a picture from the bedroom of the Zetland Hotel, but Irish poets weren't moved to write poems about either event. In contrast, Wittgenstein's visit to Connemara in 1948 has been the subject of poems by more than half a dozen Irish poets. This paper will suggest why he came to Connemara in the first place and why he has captured the imagination of so many Irish poets.

John Fanning worked in Marketing Communications and Branding for many years and now lectures on the subject in the Smurfit Business School. He has been coming to Connemara since the 1970's, where among other things he reads poetry.

19.30

Conference dinner at the Zetland Hotel

Sunday, October 29th:

9.30 – 11.00

Ann Henning Jocelyn: Fruits of Doonreagan

I arrived at Doonreagan in August 1982, looking for peace and quiet to help me meet a deadline for a book commissioned by a UK publisher. Having allocated six weeks in which to get the work done, I found that, once the book was finished, I had no wish to leave. It came to me that here, in the freedom of these wide open spaces, far away from all metropolitan distractions, my life and my writing would take on a direction very different from my usual London existence. Today, thirty-five years later, I am still here – still writing, still inspired, still enthralled by my surroundings.

My talk will explore the various forms of writing that have resulted from the daily immersion in this locality; starting with the light-hearted *Connemara Whirlwind Trilogy*; to more serious reflections in *Keylines*, first broadcast on RTE as A Living Word but in translation spreading its wings as far away as India and China; and on to a revival of my preferred professional identity as a playwright, bringing my personal experience of Doonreagan to a wider international audience.

Born and educated in Sweden, Ann was briefly employed as Junior Lecturer at Gothenburg University, but then moved to London to attend drama school and work in avant-garde theatre, before finding a comfortable niche for herself as translator of Scandinavian plays and novels. Since settling in Ireland, she has concentrated mainly on her own writing. Details of her work can be seen on www.annhenningjocelyn.com.

Sean Lysaght: Irish Nature Writing: Sketches of a Genre

Is it possible to speak of a ‘tradition’ of Irish nature writing to set beside the flourishing genre in Britain? Seán Lysaght comments on several writers, in Irish and English, who celebrate the natural world, with a focus on the Atlantic. Early topographical writers such as Richard Pococke and John Bush were motivated by science and an interest in antiquities. Caesar Otway’s writings on the Atlantic west were a broader canvas of anecdotes, folklore, antiquarianism and science. In the Irish language, Amhlaoibh Ó Súilleabháin’s diary (1827-35) is a unique attempt to embrace new forms of knowledge in botany, ornithology and astronomy.

The scholars of the Gaelic Revival reported on island communities in Kerry and Connacht (J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands*), and gave the idea of native memoir writing that immortalised island life (Tomás Ó Croimhthainn, *The Islandman*). Robert Lloyd Praeger (1865-1953) is the main Irish exemplar of a Victorian tradition of natural history: his career as a botanist culminated in *The Way that I Went* (1937), his classic account of the island of Ireland. Liam O’ Flaherty’s early short stories of life on the Aran islands include sketches of wildlife and the environment; one story narrates the process of erosion on the south-west coast of Aran (*The Wave*, *Spring Sowing*, 1924).

Seán Lysaght taught for many years at the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Castlebar. He has published eight collections of poems, including, *The Mouth of a River* (Gallery, 2007) and *Carnival Masks* (Gallery, 2014). He is also the author of a biography of Robert Lloyd Praeger, *The Life of a Naturalist* (Four Courts, 1998).

11.00 – 11.30

Tea/coffee break

11.30 – 13.00

Pete Mullineaux: Poetry and the Aural Landscape

Pete Mullineaux's reading/talk will focus on his collection *Session* (Salmon Poetry) and how the visual and aural landscape of the West of Ireland and Atlantic seaboard have impacted on his work. *Session* identifies both background and foreground presence of music in nature and in human interaction and explores how rhythms of natural speech alongside the various rhythms contained in Irish Traditional Music can influence the formal language of poetry.

Pete was invited to read several of these poems on RTE's Arena programme and the collection has been praised by many including Siobhan Long (Irish Times) and Michael O'Suilleabhain at the Irish Academy of Traditional Music.

'This collection of rare beauty and understanding – characterized by an awareness of the past, place, people...giving the reader an illuminating insight into the music and the place it inhabits, particularly the west of Ireland.' (Sean Crosson: *The Given Note: Traditional Music and Modern Irish Poetry.*)

Pete Mullineaux's most recent collection is *How to Bake a Planet* (Salmon 2016). He was included in *Poetry Ireland Review 100 special edition* and has been published as far afield as USA, India and Japan. He also writes for the stage and has had three plays broadcast by RTE radio.

Anne McCabe: From West to East: The landscapes of J.M. Synge

J.M. Synge is best known for his portrayal of the people of the Aran Islands in his dramas, with their particular speech patterns underpinned by the syntax of the Irish language. The mountainous terrain of South Wicklow was the home place of the Synge family, where, according to J.M. Synge, '*they speak a language more Elizabethan than the English of Connaught*'. This is the landscape which inspired my own novel, *Under the Avalanche* and where I found equally quirky speech patterns, as did Synge in his essays. Both the landscapes of the West and East of Ireland influenced his work.

'I had a cottage in Wicklow once...' The light and smells and sounds and shapes of the mountains and forests and wildlife found their way into my prose as I wrote my first novel, *Under the Avalanche*. This was an unconscious osmosis, while on a conscious level the story of the actual avalanche fascinated me. It was the only one ever to occur in Ireland, in 1867, and it killed a family of cottagers.

While living there, I discovered that a Mrs Margaret Synge lived in the big house down by the bridge in Ballinglen. She died in December 2010 age 90, and was married to John Synge, nephew of John Millington Synge. Here is the link: I found speech patterns in this part of Ireland, which is cut off by mountains, to be quirky and odd, and not dissimilar to those patterns found in *'Playboy'* and other Synge dramas. This will be the terrain of my talk.

Anne McCabe is an author, award-winning T.V. director and Artistic Director of An Taibhdhearc, the national Irish language theatre. As part of the Galway International Arts Festival, she recently produced and directed *Dún na mBan trí Thine* (The Women's Fairy Fort is on Fire) by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, which will go on tour shortly. Her M.A. thesis at University College Dublin was entitled, *'Life Becoming Art in the work of Sylvia Plath'*.

13.00 – 14.00

Lunch at Doon House

14.00 – 15.00

Oliver McQuillan: *The Mermaid Sings*, a play for radio.

A middle-aged choreographer has fled the intrigues of Dublin cultural life and a fading marriage to live in semi-isolation in a small cottage on a breen in Connemara. In the final three years before he left Dublin he found a companionable friendship in a young dancer. The only record he has now of their friendship are the text messages they exchanged - his "diary of a friendship". With only his laptop as companion, and the visits of a curious young seven-year-old child of a neighbour for conversation, he reflects on and records the happiness his life knew in the short time before he left the city; on the disintegration of his marriage; on the ambiguity of his sexual experiences. And comes to a decision as to his future.

Oliver McQuillan graduated in Ancient Classics from Maynooth College. Originally a member of Dublin's celebrated Lantern Theatre, he worked in a range of industries both in Ireland and abroad, before returning to the stage, also working in film, television and radio. He has written several plays including *The Trial of Dr Luther*, a dramatic monologue produced in Dublin's New Theatre in November 2011 and performed by the author. His play *The Puffin's Nest*, "a gothic comedy" was produced in the same theatre in 2015.

Booking Form

Please note that places are limited.

Name.....

Address.....

e- mail.....

Telephone.....

Occupation.....

€70 Conference fee (to include all sessions,
wine reception at Doon House, coffee/tea and
sandwich lunch on Saturday and Sunday)

€30 (optional) three course conference dinner
at the Zetland House Hotel

TOTAL EURO

Subject to availability, sessions at €10/each can also be paid separately at the door.

**To secure your reservation, please return the booking form to us by email.
A Paypal invoice payable by credit card will be issued end September.
If you don't wish to use email, please telephone us for payment.**

Contact details: e-mail doonreagan@gmail.com Telephone+353 95 31049

TRANSPORT AND LOCATION

Please refer to www.doonreagan.com/History and [Location](#) for details of transport, exact location of Doonreagan and directions.

ACCOMMODATION

Due to the Bank Holiday Weekend, early booking is recommended.

1) Rossroe Lodge, 4 * B&B, 4 km away, Conference rate €35 B&B per night per person, single or double occupancy.

Website: www.rossroelodge.com Email: rossroelodge@live.ie

Tel: +353 95 31928, +353 87 6668718

2) The Anglers' Return, 4 km away, Award-winning guest house, Conference rate €60 B&B per night per person, single or double occupancy.

Website: www.anglersreturn.com Email: info@anglersreturn.com

Tel: +353 95 31091

3) Zetland House Hotel, 4 *, 1,5 km away, Conference rate €65 B&B per night per person, single or double occupancy.

Website: www.zetland.com Email: info@zetland.com

Tel: +353 95 31111.

4) Cashel House Hotel, 4 *, 250 m away, Conference rate €75 B&B per night per person, single or double occupancy.

Website: www.cashelhouse.ie Email: sales@cashelhouse.ie

Tel: +353 95 31001