



## Autumn 2021 Newsletter.

### Welcome.

Hello again, and welcome to the Kildare writing Centre Autumn newsletter. I am not sure how you feel about this time of year, but I think you will agree that Autumn 2021 has been particularly kind so far, the mild weather allowing us to be out enjoying the changing colours and gently falling leaves. But as we head into late Autumn and early Winter, while I don't want to put the hex on things, I am looking forward to reasons for lighting fires, turning down the lights, and enjoying things I can do sitting in an armchair, like reading and knitting and good old-fashioned dozing.

It is also a good time for planning ahead, and I am not talking about the 'tis the season...' type of planning, but of thinking ahead to where you want to see your writing going, where you want your current project to be when January rolls around, what submissions you are aiming for, what competitions and what festivals you need to start booking and saving for. I hope this issue can help you in some ways.

On a personal level it has been, and continues to be for a while yet, a busy time as I send my debut, *Charlotte & Arthur* off out into the world, always a worrying time for a creator, even if it is a paperback baby, so if you happen to come across it, you might help it on its journey.

In this issue of the **Kildare Writing Centre Newsletter**, you will find:

- The 'In Praise of...' for this issue is about the Michael Mullan Charity Fund Writing Competition.
- The latest courses at the centre, sadly still all online.
- Writing Competitions and submission opportunities
- Festivals in late 2021.
- A certain Book Launch
- A little about ghost stories

**In Praise of the**  
**Michael Mullan Charity Fund Writing Competition.**

The Michael Mullan Charity fund has its own website, and when you click on the page the first thing you will see are images of Michael, or Mick as he is referred to on the site, scrolling across the top of the page. We see him smiling out at us from his childhood days, on his wedding day to his best friend, Mel, and even through some of the more challenging days of his grapple with renal cell carcinoma, the rare form of cancer he was diagnosed with. Michael sadly lost that fight on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2020 and as his first anniversary approaches, I want to use this space to pay tribute to Michael and his father Pat, who established the MMCF writing competition, initially to raise funds for Michael's treatment and now to continue to raise funds for research into RCC. And as writing competitions go, this is one to watch in the future.

Writing competitions are so important, this is a firm belief of mine. It gives the writer a purpose to write and a deadline to finish it by. If you are long-listed or short-listed, it can often be the first real recognition you get, the first indication that you are doing something right. And if you are one of the lucky few to win a prize, well then you have arrived! There are lots of competitions out there, I know, I think I have entered most of them, and well, a lot of the time you feel it is a rather soulless endeavour. You submit via an online platform having paid your entry fee, hoping that a judge you have never heard of, somehow miraculously picks you from the pile, and most of the time, you never hear another thing. But then there are the competitions where you have heard of the judges, you might even know former winners, you are informed how and when you will know if you have been long-listed, shortlisted, declared the winner, you know where your entry fee is going and what it is being used for, and you know that if successful, rather than being named in a link on social media, there will be an award ceremony.

And this is exactly what you get with the MMCF writing Competition. This is one of the soulful ones.

Last Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, we had the award ceremony of the MMCF Writing Competition, 2021, hosted by Kildare Readers Festival, and yes, it had to be online like so many other artistic events this year, but this one was different. It was on zoom, zoom as we know it, where you can see everyone present, unmute when you want to say hello, and send messages to 'everyone' or privately to individuals, in the chat box...in real time.

As we would have said in the past at all great live events, there was a great turnout, and as I scanned the zoom boxes on the screen, most with a familiar face or name, I had a real sense of being in a safe, familiar place with my tribe. Amye Quigley, the ever smiling, hardworking, visionary that is Amye Quigley, who I see as Miss Kildare Readers Festival, introduced the night before handing the reins over to Celine Broughal from Kildare Town Library. Celine is a huge supporter always of writers and everything to do with writing and books, so I knew we were in good hands. Celine introduced Paddy O Byrne who did a sterling job of MC for the night.

What was very special though about this gathering was that all the adjudicators from the various genres were there, Niamh Boyce (Short Story), John Mackenna (poetry), Caroline E. Farrell (flash-fiction) and Lynn Buckle (micro-fiction), and not just there to announce a



name, they each took us through the shortlisted entries in their categories and why they deserved to be on the list. So, not only were we treated to an insight into the works involved but also each judge talked about what they were looking for, what type of writing was needed to make the cut...it was a great lesson in each and every genre, and I took copious notes.

The winners and runners up in each category read their work and what a wonderful experience that was, the standard was so high; as open mics go, I can say that this was the best I have ever attended. One of the aspects of this years' competition that I loved was the nationwide spread of entrants, short-listed works, and winning writers. This is a competition that has gone from strength to strength, and I know that it is going to continue to grow and soon will trip off fledgling writers' tongues as easily as the Francis McManus or Bryan MacMahon ones do.

Pat Mullan himself, the founding father of this competition, spoke at the end of the night in his usual humble, soft-spoken manner. And what had been a warm, tribal gathering from the world of writing was brought to a close, as we all remembered Pat's son, Michael, the provider of our literary feast.

You can find out who the winners were and read their stories and poetry on the MMCF website: <https://www.michaelmullancharityfund.com/2021-competition-winners>



## **November Courses at Kildare Writing Centre.**

### **1. Introduction to Creative writing, with a focus on the short Story.**

This is a four-week course, eight hours in total, and it will cover the following:

#### **Week 1: November 8<sup>th</sup> 7pm -9pm:**

##### *All about beginnings.*

- Introduction to the short story
- Where to begin with your writing
- How to write an impressive opening to a story
- Using all the senses in your writing.

#### **Week 2: November 15<sup>th</sup> 7pm-9pm:**

##### *All about Character*

- Defining what a character is.
- kinds of character.
- A character's desire.
- Human complexity in your character.
- Where do characters come from?

#### **Week 3: November 22<sup>nd</sup> 7pm-9pm:**

##### *All about Dialogue*

- What Dialogue is used for/what dialogue is not used for.
- Gestures and Beats.
- Silence as an aspect of dialogue
- Speech markers.
- Subtext
- Dialogue and Dialect.
- Dialogue conventions.

#### **Week 4: November 29<sup>th</sup> 7pm-9pm:**

##### *All about Setting.*

- How Time and Place add to your story.
- Beginning a story with Place
- How setting can affect the action in a story.
- The Dramatic Present.
- In Medias Res
- Backstory
- Foreshadowing
- Flashback and repetition

### **2. Introduction to Creative Writing with a focus on the short story: Part 2.**

This is a four-week course, eight hours in total, and it will cover the following:

#### **Week 1 November 9<sup>th</sup> 7pm-9pm:**

##### *All about Language and Description.*

- Attention to detail
- Thinking small: The difference between abstraction and specificity
- How fiction operates through the senses.
- The use of Figurative language.
- Chekhov on description.
- The dos and don'ts of description.
- What Flannery O' Connor has to say about writing short stories.

#### **Week 2 November 16<sup>th</sup> 7pm-9pm**

##### *All about voice, point of view and John Gardner*

- John Gardner's Continuous Fictional Dream
- John Gardner's Common Errors
- Voice and Style...what is the difference.
- Types of Voices
- Finding your voice.
- Point of View.

#### **Week 3 November 23<sup>rd</sup> 7pm-9pm**

##### *All about Plot and Theme.*

- Plot and story; the difference.
- The Core Question associated with plot.
- Plot Structure.
- The seven basic plots.
- Theme: What do we mean by Theme.

- Finding the theme of your story.
- How Theme touches every aspect of the story.
- Other writers on theme.

#### **Week 4 November 30<sup>th</sup> 7pm-9pm**

##### *All about editing and rewriting.*

- The Revision Process
- A Cheat Sheet.
- Editing your own writing
- Adverbs and Adjectives
- Sound
- Tone
- Presentation
- Comparison
- Dialogue
- The 5 big mistakes people make when they write short stories, from Arvon.

**Booking as always can be made here:**

<https://kildarewritingcentre.com/short-story-online>

***There are only 2 places left on the Tuesday night course, Introduction to Creative Writing with a focus on the short story: Part 2 as I go to print.***



### Competitions and Submission

1. <http://www.icarusmagazine.com/submit>  
This is the Trinity College Students Arts magazine, and it is accepting submissions from current students and staff of the college but also from alumni, so if you fit into any of those categories, this would be a good space to make an appearance. Closing date is October 29<sup>th</sup>.
2. <https://www.bansheelit.com/shop/p/subscribe>  
Banshee Press, founded by Laura Cassidy, Claire Hennessy and Eimear Ryan in 2014, is an amazing success story and their literary journal has gained huge prestige, so this is definitely worth a submission. The deadline is October 31<sup>st</sup>.
3. <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/new-irish-writing/>  
This is going since the 1960s and the editor since 1989 is Ciaran Carty, you may remember it used to appear in the Irish Times on a Saturday, but it is now gone back to the Independent. Some of the best-known writers in Ireland got their start here, writers like Anne Enright. The email to send your entries to is [newirishwriting@independent.ie](mailto:newirishwriting@independent.ie) Stories should be 2000 words and you can submit up to four poems. This is only open to writers who have not been published yet, and submissions can be made at any time.
4. [https://www.poetryireland.ie/writers/opportunities/the-francis-ledwidge-poetry-award?utm\\_campaign=meetedar&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=meetedar.com](https://www.poetryireland.ie/writers/opportunities/the-francis-ledwidge-poetry-award?utm_campaign=meetedar&utm_medium=social&utm_source=meetedar.com)  
This is the Francis Ledwidge poetry competition. It is €5 to enter a poem and the closing date is November 5<sup>th</sup>.
5. <https://wordsireland.ie/competitions/>  
With regards to competitions this one-stop shop is the best, you can get lost in it though. Some nice free, Halloween themed competitions, mostly in the US, but, hey, why not!

**WORDS** IRELAND

<https://wordsireland.ie/>

## **Festivals in late 2021.**

There seems to be a caution around the planning of festivals as everyone awaits the news as to what is going to be possible, so I suspect that we have more news and more things to look forward to in 2022, after October 22<sup>nd</sup>. But in the meantime, there have been some forward-thinking, brave organisers who have gone ahead with live events.

<https://leavesfestival.ie/>

**2<sup>nd</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

**LEAVES**  
FESTIVAL OF WRITING & MUSIC

Taking place in Ballyshannon, Donegal, the Allingham Festival is a combination of live and virtual events.

<https://www.allinghamfestival.com/welcome>

**3<sup>rd</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> of November 2021**



One of the loveliest aspects of the Dublin Book festival was you got to roam around Smock Alley Theatre and this year it is back live and online.

<https://dublinbookfestival.com/presenting-dublin-book-festival-2021/>

**8<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021**



As if we needed an excuse to head south to Dingle! Again, this festival is a combination of in-person and online events.

<https://dinglelit.ie/>

**19<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> November 2021**



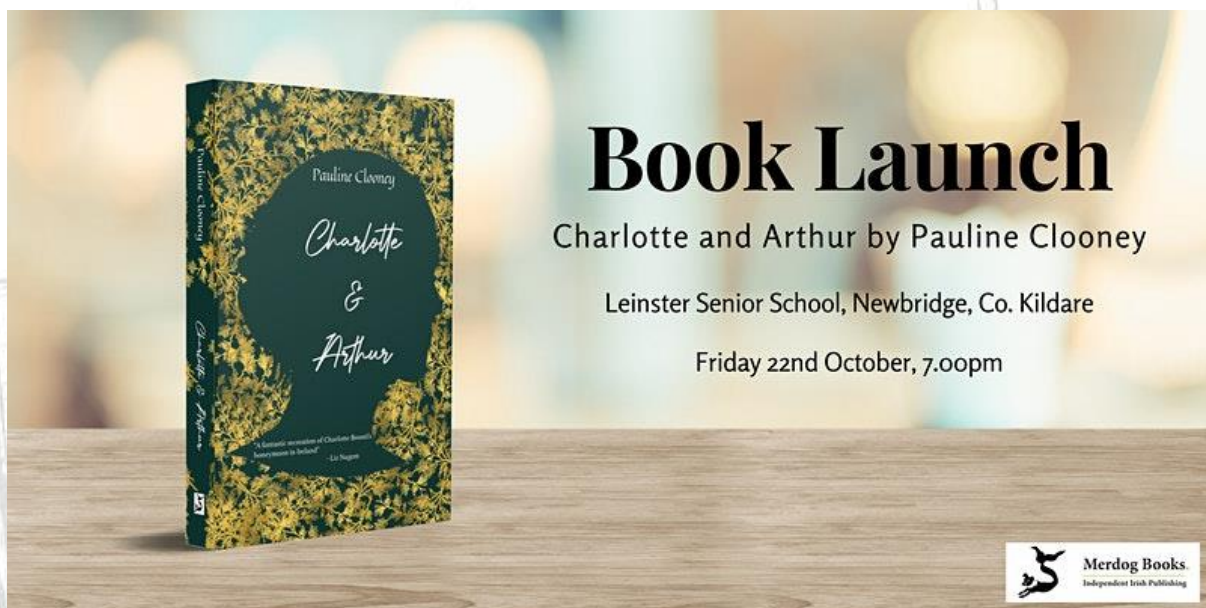


### **Book Launch Announcement.**

As you will already know, it has been an exciting year in Kildare Writing Centre as my novel about the wedding and honeymoon of Charlotte Brontë and Irishman, Arthur Bell Nicholls, was picked up by Donegal based publishers, Merdog Books and it was released on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

I am delighted to be announcing that the launch of my debut, *Charlotte & Arthur*, published by Merdog Books, is going ahead as a live event on October 22<sup>nd</sup> in Newbridge. It is a free event but because numbers are restricted you will need to register on the Eventbrite link. But maybe the capacity will be increased after government announcements!!!

<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/book-launch-charlotte-and-arthur-by-pauline-clooney-tickets-169522381005?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>



The book is available in bookshops, from the publishers, and online, and there is a ebook version on Kindle, Amazon. And can I take this opportunity to thank the two local bookshops, <https://farrellandnephew.ie/> in Newbridge and <https://www.woodbinebooks.ie/> in Kilcullen for hosting book signings. It was lovely to meet friends and family, and, I can't fully believe I am saying this...readers!



**Seeing as it is Samhain it is hard to ignore the otherworld of spirits. So, if you feel like writing something seasonal here is an article, I wrote on the ghost story genre.**

### **The Ghost Story.**

Stories about ghosts are as old as language itself. In the earliest writing, the classics, we have ghosts in Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*. The ghosts in these stories look as they did in life, but they can only engage with the living through words; they are ethereal. They usually visit the living in a dream or when they are on the edge of sleep. The ghosts in these early stories usually need help to be able to cross over to the other side

In Shakespeare's works the ghosts were very similar to the ones in the Classical tales in that they look like they did in life, but their purposes are different. There is something more psychological about them as they push the characters they haunt very close to the edge. I'm thinking here of the ghost of Hamlet's father and Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth*. These ghosts are tortured souls who can't rest until their deaths have been answered for, usually by the destruction of their murderers.

In the nineteenth century probably the best-known ghost story is Dickens *A Christmas Carol*. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is also considered a ghost story because the monster is a revenant. Other popular stories were *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James and the stories of M R James (no relation to Henry James) who many consider the foremost writer of ghost stories in their 'Golden Age', from the mid-1800s to the outbreak of the First World War. The ghosts in Dickens story can be terrifying but they are helpful ones, they have come back to save the one being haunted.

In the twentieth century famous stories are Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, a psychological ghost story that was probably inspired by Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, and of course Stephen King's *The Shining*. These ghost stories will often have no manifestation of a ghostly presence, they tend to be in the spirit of Roald Dahl's advice; ***the best ghost stories have no ghosts in them.***

The twenty-first century gave us Alice Seybold's *The Lovely Bones*. Told from the point of view of the ghost this is a new take on the ghost story that has been used very effectively in films like *The Others* and *Sixth Sense*.

### **Crafting a Ghost Story.**

Crafting a ghost story is no different really to how you would craft any short story, but you do have to pay more attention to setting and how you create and build suspense.

M R James, who Stephen King is believed to have been inspired by, had the following to say on effective setting:

It should be . . . "fairly familiar and the majority of the characters and their talk such as you may meet or hear any day. A ghost story of which the scene is laid in the twelfth or thirteenth century may succeed in being romantic or poetical: [but] it will never put the reader into the position of saying to himself, 'If I'm not very careful, something of this kind may happen to me!'"

**On building and sustaining tension**, he said:

"Let us, then, be introduced to the actors in a placid way; let us see them going about their ordinary business, undisturbed by forebodings, pleased by their surroundings; and into this calm environment let the ominous thing put out its head, unobtrusively at first, and then more insistently, until it holds the stage."

Two other effective techniques employed by M.R. James and many of his successors include:



1) ratcheting up suspense by having the main character(s) ignore warnings about impending supernatural events or having them doubt their own paranormal experiences.

2) keeping the reader guessing by leaving open the possibility of a natural explanation for any ghostly phenomena. (Concerning this latter tactic, James said, “. . . *it is not amiss sometimes to leave a loophole for a natural explanation; but . . . let the loophole be so narrow as not to be quite practicable.*”)

### Character.

Create **internal terror** for your character. What do we mean by internal terror? Well first, let's talk about what it's *not*—which is external terror. In a story that is intended to unsettle the reader, external terror is generated directly by the supernatural element, the ghost, demon, vampire, monster, or zombie. The ghost says *boo* and you scream and run; the monster swipes at you with its claws, and you scream and run. That's external terror. Every jump-scare in every scary movie ever made is pure external terror.

**Internal terror**, by contrast, is a psychological element that existed in your protagonist/hero/victim even before your supernatural antagonist entered his or her life. For instance, your protagonist is both a lonely and an anxious person, their loneliness is going to welcome company and at first seem like the answer to their needs but what company have they embraced? Perhaps, your hero is afraid of driving alone at night but because their son cannot get a taxi home they are forced to go out. The tension will start to build from the moment they turn the key in the ignition. Or, take the example of Henry James' governess character in his classic novella, *The Turn of the Screw*: She's as sexually frustrated as she is sexually naïve—and inexorably she finds herself contending with—or maybe just imagining—a pair of sexually menacing ghosts. (Something similar happens to the main character in Shirley Jackson's fine novel, *The Haunting of Hill House*.)

**Internal terror** also occurs when characters' imaginations run wild. This is especially effective when those characters are uncertain of what, exactly, they're facing on the supernatural front—and their own minds present them with an array of horrifying possibilities.

**Internal terror** is usually deeper, richer, more thought-provoking, and ultimately more satisfying to the reader than external terror. In cases where a supernatural story has been generally accepted as fine literature, it is usually because of the skilful way the author has managed to arouse internal terror in both his characters and his audience.

**Get inspired by your own fears.** It can be helpful when writing a ghost story to begin by thinking about what you find scary about ghosts. Imagine a situation where you come face to face with a ghost and take note of what you think would make you feel the most fear. Knowing what you find to be terrifying about ghosts can help you get inspired when writing your ghost story.

- Think about which situations meeting a ghost would be most terrifying.
- Imagine the details of the ghost and how it haunts you, noting what scares you the most.
- Try watching your favourite horror films or reading other ghost stories to get inspired.

And if you would like to read more, this article has some further points.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jul/04/how-write-modern-ghost-story>

***Until next time...***