**Financial Times Weekend Oxford Literary Festival 2018**

Creative writing event II: 24 March 2018

**Getting down to detail**

**The course**

Focusing on the specific matters of location, point of view, narrative voice, character, dialogue and plot, this course can either be taken on its own or as a follow-on from the festival’s earlier creative writing course, ‘Where do you get your ideas?’, held on 17 March.

Designed by two professional writers with long experience of teaching creative writing at university level, the programme will address the writer’s art and craft in ways both practical and thought-provoking, involving both writing and the discussion of writing. The focus will be primarily on fiction, but writers of poetry and creative non-fiction are likely to gain useful insights from the event.

The course has been devised with a group of 30 in mind; however, the presence of two tutors means that, apart from a half-hour period at the beginning of the course and another at the end, the teaching will take place in groups of 15. Each group will have two sessions with each tutor.

**The sessions**

9.30 - 11.00: Session 1.What kind of detail? / Thinking about place

11.00 - 11.30: Coffee

11.30 - 1.00: Session 2. Point of view and narrative voice

1.00 - 2.00: Lunch

2.00 - 3.30: Session 3: Character, dialogue and action

3.30 - 4.00: Tea

4.00 - 5.30: Session 4: The emergence of plot / Drawing it all together

Session 1. What kind of detail? / Thinking about place

We shall begin by talking generally about the kind of detail likely to preoccupy us as we engage with the practice of writing, before breaking into two separate groups to discuss the importance of place in writing.

Session 2. Point of view and narrative voice

As writers, we need a firm grasp of the point(s) of view that inform our narrative, as well as the voice(s) in which our narrative is couched. This session is designed to enhance our understanding and control of these matters.

Session 3: Character, dialogue and action

What makes a character convincing? How do we reveal character through description, dialogue and action? This session will address these and other questions faced by writers as they explore these crucial aspects of their art.

Session 4: The emergence of plot / Drawing it all together

Although it’s perfectly sensible to start with a plot outline, many writers find their plot taking shape as they work. In this final session we shall discuss the fruitful interplay between prior planning and unplanned development, before the two sub-groups are drawn together for a final discussion of the day’s work.

**The tutors**

Jem Poster is Emeritus Professor of Creative Writing, Aberystwyth University, and Affiliated Lecturer in Creative Writing with Cambridge University’s Institute of Continuing Education; he is the author of a collection of poetry, *Brought to Light* (Bloodaxe, 2001) and two novels, *Courting Shadows* and *Rifling Paradise* (Sceptre, 2002 and 2006). Sarah Burton, founder and former Director of Cambridge University’s MSt in Creative Writing, is the author of *Impostors* (Penguin, 2000) and *A Double Life: A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Penguin 2003).