**Financial Times Weekend Oxford Literary Festival 2019**

Creative writing event II: 6 April 2019

**A Sense of Time**

**The course**

Whether you’re a beginner in creative writing or a more advanced writer looking for new ideas and inspiration, this one-day event may be exactly what you need. 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.

Highlighting matters relating to the fiction-writer’s representation of time and the establishing of historical perspective and plausibility, this course can either be taken on its own or as a follow-on from the festival’s earlier creative writing course, ‘A Sense of Place’, held on 30 March.

The course has been devised with a group of 30 in mind; however, the presence of two tutors means that almost all of 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. Introduction/The importance of time

11.00 - 11.30: Coffee

11.30 - 1.00: Session 2. Playing with time

1.00 - 2.00: Lunch

2.00 - 3.30: Session 3: Historical fiction: research

3.30 - 4.00: Tea

4.00 - 5.30: Session 4: Historical fiction: dialogue/Drawing it all together

Session 1. Introduction/The importance of time

Whatever we’re writing, we shall have to consider aspects of time as they affect the framing of our narratives; in the case of historical fiction, we shall also need to consider the complex relationship between historical accuracy and imaginative freedom. Using examples drawn from a range of different texts, we shall begin by discussing the ways in which writers’ awareness of time figures in their work.

Session 2. Playing with time

As writers of fiction we exercise a certain control over the passage of time: our narratives may proceed in non-linear fashion, or narrative time may be speeded up or slowed down, as we see fit. This session will illustrate, through discussion and a practical exercise, the importance of a fluid and exploratory approach to the passage of time in our narratives.

Session 3: Historical fiction: research

Historical fiction relies significantly on our ability to read and interpret historical fact. In this session we shall investigate both the value of research and the importance of stepping beyond that research to create imaginatively satisfying fictional worlds.

Session 4: Historical fiction: dialogue/Drawing it all together

Dialogue is a particular challenge for the writer of historical fiction. How far are we able to replicate the speech of the past in fictional dialogue – and how far do we want to? After exploring these matters, we shall conclude by discussing ways of incorporating in our future writings the insights we’ve gained during the course.

**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).