

WRITING ACROSS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES Creative Writing Workshops

Where: Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square,
Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HS

When: February to June 2016

All
workshops
are free!

What will happen in the workshops:

- Whether you already write in more than one language or often come into contact with different languages and cultures, we will think about how we bridge gaps and move across languages and cultures in our lives.
- The monthly workshops will offer the chance to talk and write about a range of themes, as well as share and discuss your writing with the group.
- The workshops are led by Somali-born writer Shirin Ramzanali Fazel who lives in the West Midlands and has published novels and short stories in Italian and English.

Who is it for:

- The workshops are aimed at people who want to explore experiences of living between languages and cultures in creative writing.
- You should be aged 18 or over, and we welcome both new and experienced writers.

Our aim:

- We are a team of researchers from the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Warwick who are interested in how people move across languages and cultures in their daily lives.
- As researchers we also move across languages and cultures at home and at work, and we hope to build up a group of enthusiastic and committed writers who are keen to explore these experiences and themes with us in their writing.
- Our research looks at experiences of migration to and from Italy, but we want to work with writers from different backgrounds in the West Midlands to understand how they respond creatively to living in a multilingual and multicultural environment.
- During and after the series of workshops we will talk to you and support you in sharing your work outside of the group on our website, in public arts festivals and in future publications linked to our project.

I am interested so what do I need to do?

- Email naomi.wells@warwick.ac.uk to register for the workshops or if you have any questions.
- As places are limited to 9-10 people at each workshop, we would ask you to confirm attendance at each workshop by the Monday before and encourage you to attend at least 3 of the workshops.

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Programme

Meetings will take place on Wednesdays from 6.30-8.30pm (arrival and refreshments from 6pm) on the following dates:

Workshop 1: Words and Voices, Wednesday 3rd February

Encounters with different languages and voices are part of our daily lives. Some of us speak different languages at home and work, others hear new and unfamiliar words in the overheard conversations on the bus. A change in feeling, sudden excitement or anger, might change our own voice, perhaps returning us to the words or accents of our childhood home. How and why do we change our language and voices? And how do we feel when we hear new and unfamiliar voices or words?

Workshop 2: Heritage, Wednesday 17th February

The idea of heritage creates a connection with a past, a history, a culture or a set of traditions which we might feel that we own or are part of. Heritage is often described as “rich”, is seen as something to display and be proud of, and something to pass on to future generations. But are the stories it tells always happy ones? Heritage in a particular time or place might tell a story of suffering, oppression, or pain. What does heritage mean to an individual as well as to a culture or community? What feelings does it provoke?

Workshop 3: Beginnings and Endings, Wednesday 23rd March

A journey often means the beginning of new experiences but can also mean a change or even end to old ties. As people and places enter our lives and others leave we are often transformed, beginning new stories yet rarely forgetting those which came before. Do we always realise when these changes in our lives take place or do we only see them when looking back? And do beginnings bring excitement for what is to come or perhaps fear for what might be lost?

Workshop 4: Relations, Wednesday 27th April

Through our relations with others we play different roles, sometimes the rebellious son or daughter and at other times the worried parent or friend. Life in a new place becomes more familiar as we form friendships. While parents brought up in other languages and places may share these experiences with their children, bringing familiarity to their new homes. How do we build connections across differences in age, culture or language? And how do these relationships change our feelings of belonging to new and old places?

Workshop 5: Homes, Wednesday 18th May

Our sense of home may be attached to a house, village, city, landscape, region, nation or culture. Home might also be embodied by a specific person or network of relationships, by a language, accent or sound, by smells or flavours, by habits and values, by objects, by emotions. Is home always the place of our birth or do we each create new homes for ourselves? Does home move? When and why do we run away from home? When and why do we go back?

Workshop 6: Writing, Wednesday 22nd June

We might write every day for pleasure or as a pastime. An event, encounter, or emotion might bring us to record what happened and how it made us feel, so that we don't forget the intensity of the moment or so that we can share it with others, now or in the future. When is writing intimate and private and when is it for sharing? What happens to the feelings or experiences we write about when we hear others respond to them? How do we choose our words and forms of expression and from which languages and traditions?

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