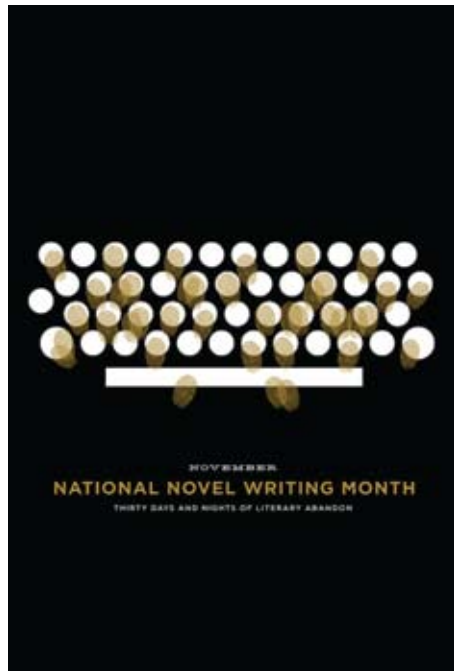


Quantity, not Quality...

Ever thought about writing a novel? **Tammy Moore** tells us how to take the pain, if not the panic, out of the process...



C.E. Murphy

If you listen closely on the 1st of November you might well be able to hear the sound of frantic typing as thousands of people get started on their NANOWRIMO novel. Including yours truly.

NANOWRIMO stands for National Novel Writing Month. It's sort of like the Ironman Triathlon for writers. From the 1st of November to the 30th of November participants undertake to write a 50,000 word novel.

The focus is on quantity not quality and the knack to winning is to completely shut off the little editorial voice in the back of the head and just write...for roughly 175 pages. In their own words: "NaNoWriMo is a novel-writing programme for everyone who has thought fleetingly about writing a novel but has been scared away by the time and effort involved." A mission statement that aggravates quite a few people, who feel that if you're scared away by the time and effort involved, you shouldn't be writing a novel in the first place.

On the other hand there are a lot of published authors who do support NaNoWriMo enthusiastically. Rachel Caine ran a competition on her website one year and gave away a free critique of the winner's NaNo novel, C.E. Murphy has also done NaNo in the past and last year Queen's University's own Ian Sansom ran a support group at Queen's for Northern Ireland's NaNoWriMo participants.

That tradition continues this year - as every Wednesday in November, novelists and writers will be offering advice, warnings and encouragement to participants, in the Seamus Heaney Centre. And who's to say it's a complete exercise in futility? There's a list on the NaNoWriMo site of 25 authors who've gotten their NaNo novels published, that says otherwise.

Besides, getting started on a novel IS scary. Do you know how long those things are? NaNoWriMo gives you the push to get past that. If you care about your writing, if you

want to get published, you'll take the 50,000 words you have on the 1st November and finish and edit and polish until you have something to be proud of.

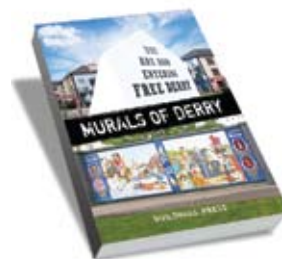
It's also fun. There are word counters and excel spreadsheets with pie charts that help you track your progress. You get to sit up typing madly until all hours of the night and triumphantly inform people who think you are quite mad that Down is ahead of Antrim, but still behind Dublin. (The All-Ireland Word-War, a yearly NaNoWriMo tradition.)

Forums on the NaNoWriMo site and meet-ups organised by Municipal Liaisons give you a chance to talk to other people doing the same thing, providing encouragement, support and competition. Also, sometimes, giant boxes of sweets are provided by N. Ireland's Municipal Liaison, Catherine Sharp, who has been Nano'ing since 2002.

She says: 'The number of NaNoWriMo participants in Ireland grows year on year, and we have a higher winning average than the world-wide one. This year, we're in the process of arranging meetings in Belfast and Derry for socialising and writing, and once more, Queen's University will be hosting weekly sessions with published novelists.' The first of Ian Samson's Belfast meetings will be at 1pm on Wednesday, 5th November in the Seminar Room in the Seamus Heaney Centre. Come along and sign up, I'll see you there...

For more information visit www.nanowrimo.org or see the Seamus Heaney Centre's Autumn Events brochure.

Paintbomb...



Murals of Derry

Various

(Guildhall Press)

A practical, pictorial guide to the city's murals and a testament to the skill of those who painted them, says **Sarah Lapsley...**

With bus and walking tours of the north's murals now amongst the top tourist attractions this book provides an important pictorial memoir of Derry's murals, both past and present.

Derry's demography dictates that many of the murals depicted and discussed in the book would be said to be from a Nationalist perspective, however the book manages to give a fair representation of the Unionist and Loyalist murals that do exist, perhaps to a lesser extent, in enclaves of the city. The inclusion of these is important, especially as the Loyalist mural tradition dates back much

pink facelift in 2007 in support of Gay Pride Week.

While the book clearly shows that the Bogside and its surrounds remain the focal point for murals depicting Nationalist history, several sites are documented in the book for depicting Loyalist history, although the murals tend to be smaller in number. The Fountain Estate and some near the Fountain Youth Group are documented in the book. The estate's murals depict King William III crossing the Boyne, the Relief of Derry and scenes connected to the Battle of the Somme in 1916.



Free Derry Wall during Gay Pride Week

further than that of the Nationalist murals. With Arts Council funded, 're-imaging' projects being undertaken throughout Northern Ireland, to replace some of the more forceful and paramilitary linked murals, this book is timely in ensuring all the images are captured before some disappear forever.

I found the inclusion of memorials around the mural sites to be an unexpected and informative addition to this book. Alongside memorials to those killed on Bloody Sunday and those who died while on hunger strike in the H-blocks and elsewhere are smaller memorial stones, including one to John "Caker" Casey who first painted the infamous slogan "You Are Now Entering Free Derry" in 1969. This iconic mural - Free Derry Corner - deservedly gets a section of its own in the book; detailing its many incarnations since Casey first daubed the words on the gable wall of a house in the Bogside. This wall has been subject to many reinterpretations - including having a

Various sites in the Waterside continue the Loyalist themed murals including reminding the viewers of the Unionist community's links to England and also depicting some of the more well known Loyalist paramilitary groups. Many of the murals are keen to remind us of their links to the 36th Ulster Division at the Somme and their blood sacrifice.

Community murals are dealt with at the end of the book, showing that the murals are becoming more about depicting present day social and world events.

An interesting book providing details of many murals now removed from the streets of the city. While the book goes some way to describing the symbolism and often high degree of thought that goes into the inclusion of items on each mural by those who commission it, more detail on this would have made the book even more fascinating.