

Wall sees parallels in our two Wests

Poet and scholar Eamonn Wall is from Ireland's sunny Southeast, but it is the West – along with its equivalent in the United States – that is the subject of one of two recently published books by him.

"Writing the Irish West: Ecologies and Traditions' is a book about writing, writers and places in the American West and the West of Ireland," he said.

"It grew out of the many western road trips I went on with my family when our children were little: the Black Hills, the Rockies, New Mexico, the back roads, the rivers, and all the varieties of life that we encountered. When I began to read Western American Literature, I saw strong parallels with writing from the West of Ireland," he added.

"In the various chapters, I compare John McGahern with Wallace Stegner, Tim Robinson with William Least Heat-Moon, 'The Virginian' with 'Amongst Women,' Galway with Phoenix, and women writers of the American West with their counterparts in Galway—Mary O'Malley and Moya Cannon," Wall said. "And I explore the role violence plays in the literature and films of both Wests from John Ford to Sam Peckinpah to Quentin Tarantino and to Martin McDonagh."

The second, "Sailing Lake Mareotis," is a book "of recalled and imagined journeys across the American and Irish landscapes."

That book, Wall continued, is "comprised of poems, prose narratives, satires, and a short play and is my attempt to describe some of the dynamics of contemporary life, my own included."

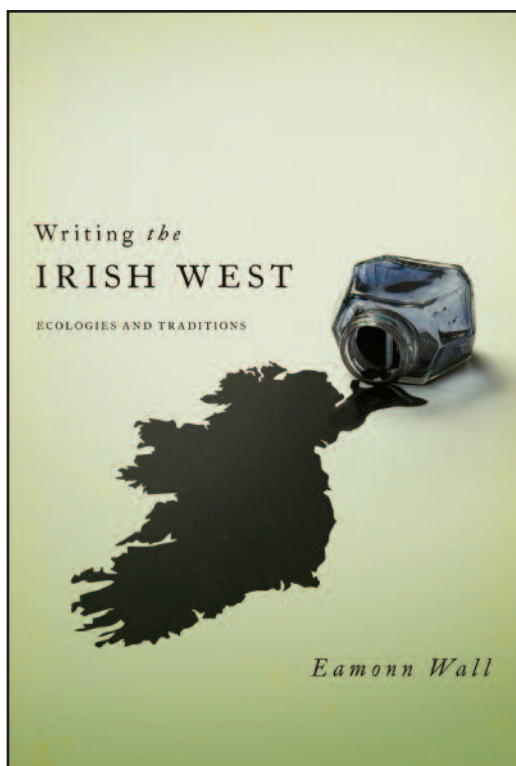
"The long title poem revisits the theme of emigration/immigration to celebrate the complex roles played by immigrants in the USA," he said.



Eamonn Wall.

"During the writing of the book, my father passed away and his presence/absence is present throughout the book. He had been a journalist and encouraged me in my efforts to become a writer. 'Sailing Lake Mareotis' is also, I hope, a celebration of Irish and American connections."

Wall's own American journey began 31 years ago in New York. In his first decade as an immigrant, he also

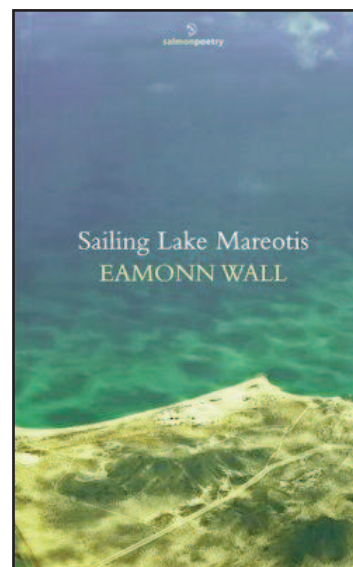


became a husband and father.

"We lived in Inwood for eight years while I worked part-time at various units of CUNY in Manhattan and the Bronx and, eventually, earning a Ph.D. in English from the CUNY Graduate Center in 1992," Wall said. "In the process of becoming an immigrant, I became interested in Irish-American writing and the immigrant experience and this has played an important role in the essays, articles, and poems I have written ever since."

From 1992 to 2000, he lived in Nebraska while teaching at Creighton University in Omaha. "I used the time spent there to explore and write about the American West in poems and essays," he said.

Since 2000, Wall has lived in St. Louis and worked at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. "As Smurfit-Stone Professor of Irish Studies, my job is to provide cultural and academic programs for the St. Louis community," the County



Wexford native said. "As well as teaching, I curate a lectures/readings/performance series that has been running for 11 years."

Wall has also been involved with study abroad for two decades and, each summer, brings American students to Galway.

Eamonn Wall

Date of birth: March 22, 1955

Place of birth: Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford

Spouse: Drucilla

Children: Matthew and Caitlin

Residence: St. Louis, Mo.

Published works: Eight books including "Writing the Irish West: Ecologies and Traditions," (University of Notre Dame Press), and "Sailing Lake Mareotis" (Dufour Editions/Salmon Poetry).

What is your writing routine? Are there ideal conditions?

Growing up as one of a large Irish family, I learned early on not to be put off by distraction or noise. I can write almost anywhere, though I like libraries best of all.

What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

Aspiring writers should not be discouraged by disapproval or rejection. They should also read extensively and make time for reading and writing.

Name three books that are memorable in terms of your reading pleasure.

Growing up my favorite books were Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights" and Patrick Kavanagh's "Collected Poems." Among American writers, I have a great fondness for James Wright's "The Branch Will Not Break." These are books I read again and again.

What book are you currently reading?

Per Petterson's "It's Fine By Me" and Greg Delanty's new book of poetry "The Greek Anthology, Book XVII." Both are terrific.

What book changed your life?

The "Soundings" Leaving Certificate anthology in Ireland because it brought the poetry Keats, Wordsworth, Eliot, Yeats, Kavanagh and Kinsella into my life.

What is your favorite spot in Ireland?

The Hook Peninsula in County Wexford where my father and I fished for mackerel and spent happy hours under the great lighthouse.

You're Irish if...

You squeeze in among the crowd at the kitchen table, and pour milk into your tea. Listen for a bit to catch the direction and tenor of the conversation, then join in.

Introducing the e-retreat

Eleanor Martin, a Philadelphia area resident, was in New York last week to hear her son, bestselling author the Rev. James Martin S.J., introduce his new e-book at a talk at the American Bible Society. "Together On Retreat: Meeting Jesus in Prayer" (HarperOne, \$9.99) is billed as a first-of-its-kind e-book

"Hundreds of people have told me how much they want to make a retreat, but don't have the time or the money," Martin said. "I'm always looking for new ways to help people to pray in the real world. An e-retreat, based on an actual weekend retreat I led a few years ago, is my solution for the modern believer."



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