

# Malahide Library to host intercultural night

TWO featured guests, due to appear at an intercultural night in Malahide Library this week, are not only authors who have crossed oceans to visit Ireland, they also have a dramatic real-life story to tell.

When Canadian-born author Roslyn Fuller met Ethiopian author Melkam Hailom at a Human Rights conference in Toronto, the two strangers hit it off immediately.

They were both the eldest children in their families, both wanted to study law and both were very committed to Human Rights in a quiet, determined way.

Roslyn felt that Melkam was a very rare person and they kept in contact after the conference.

Remarkably, the two women maintained correspon-

dence for 10 years without seeing each other.

In that time Roslyn moved to Germany where she learned German and finished a degree in law with a specialisation in public international law.

She then moved to Ireland and has lived in Malahide for the past two years while working on her PhD, Democracy and International Law, at Trinity College.

Melkam's experiences were tragic. One year after the girls met she was pushed in a car crash and is now confined to a wheelchair.

After spending five months in hospital she was able to return home and has been studying - also law - and hopes to complete her degree later this year.

Due to a lack of medical equipment in Ethiopia, Melkam's initial corrective surgery after the accident could not be completed satisfactorily and she was left experiencing severe pain in her legs.

The pain was so unbearable she turned to her long-time friend Roslyn for help.

"I had just moved to Ireland and was working at the German Embassy," Roslyn recalls.

"I didn't know anyone here.



● Author Roslyn Fuller will be a guest this week at Malahide Library.

I only knew that Blackrock Clinic was supposed to be the best and that it was conveniently located just down the road from the embassy.

"I thought that we probably shouldn't take any chances with surgery of this magnitude, so off I went to find out about the likelihood of a corrective operation there."

Roslyn was fortunate to find

Frank Dowling who agreed to carry out the operation after viewing Melkam's x-rays and ultrasound. The only remaining obstacles were money and a visa.

A financial sponsor was found in Stephen Widdows, an American entrepreneur who spends much of his time in Africa.

Subsequently Melkam, her

mother, Jira, and friend, Hebe, were granted visas to visit Ireland for the duration of Melkam's treatment.

The entire process took almost two years to arrange, but Melkam finally underwent surgery to realign her spinal cord in an eight-hour operation.

According to Roslyn, the surgery was successful, but was "no picnic".

"Melkam was in a lot of pain afterwards, but she's making a good recovery now," Roslyn says.

"She looks frail, but she's extremely tough."

Both Roslyn and Melkam will visit Malahide Library this Wednesday, April 9, at 6.30pm. Melkam will read an English excerpt from her book, "Usenet Letters", which has sold out since its recent publication in Ethiopia, and Roslyn will be reading from her novel book, "Fragments of a Lie".

However, there will not only be readings at the event. A discussion about writing, multiculturalism in Ireland and overcoming adversity will also

feature.

Everyone in attendance will be encouraged to ask questions and participate.

Both authors are very politically active and knowledgeable and are part of Agora Media, a co-operative with the aim of producing excellent literature combined with thought-provoking social commentary.

"It is not our aim to produce run-of-the-mill pretty stories," says representative Ake Brant.

"Our books should appeal to everyone, bookworms and those who rarely read novels alike."

"We want to make good literature accessible to everyone."

## Novels shortlisted for literary award

EIGHT novels have been shortlisted for the 2008 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

The eight novels are among 137 nominated by 162 public library systems in 122 cities worldwide and are as follows: *The Sweet and Simple Kind* - Yasmine Goussoneau (St. Louis); *De Niets Gleuze* - Rens Ege (Ljubljana); *Dreams of Speaking* - Oid Jones (Australia); *Let It Be Morning* - Seyed Karim (Israel) in translation; *The Attack* - Yasmine Khadra (Spain) in translation; *The Woman Who Walked* - Andrey Makine (Russia) in translation; and *Waterwood* - Patrick McCabe (Irish).

Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr Paddy Dowse, Patron of the Award, will announce the winners in City Hall on June 12.



● Ethiopian author Melkam Hailom will read an English excerpt from her book, "Usenet Letters".