

## SMC Spring Authors Series—a Literary Gem Next Up: Sue Miller and Adam Haslett

By Andrea A. Firth



Sue Miller



Adam Haslett

Photos submitted

Saint Mary's College will kick off their Spring Creative Writing Reading Series with two award-winning, best-selling fiction writers: Sue Miller and Adam Haslett. "These authors are two great examples of writers who are accessible but not easy," notes Graham Foust, the Director of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at the college. "Their books are approachable, but they are also difficult. These authors deal with difficult issues—and people are difficult; so literature should be up to talking about that sort of thing."

Sue Miller is the author of the novels *The Good Mother*, an international bestseller, and *While I was Gone*—an Oprah Book Club selection—among several other works of fiction. She frequently writes about the vicissitudes of family life and delves deep into her characters

personal lives as they deal with parenthood and marriage in the face of forbidden love, infidelity, and divorce. Her latest novel, *The Senator's Wife*, chronicles the lives of neighbors in adjacent townhomes—two women who face the trials of unstable marriages side by side. Miller will serve as fiction writer-in-residence at Saint Mary's during the spring semester.

Adam Haslett's collection of short stories entitled *You Are Not a Stranger Here* was a Book Club selection for NBC's *The Today Show* and was short listed for both the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award. Haslett, both an author and a Yale-trained lawyer, tells his somber tales with characters who deal with isolation and psychiatric problems. An elderly inventor with mental illness, a schizophrenic woman who forgoes her medication, and an orphaned boy who escapes in

physical pain, are among the diverse cast that Haslett uses to convey the sadness of estrangement and the human need for love and friendship.

A literary opportunity not to be missed, SMC's Creative Writing Reading Series presents four to six authors in the genres of fiction, poetry and nonfiction each Spring and Fall. The evening programs last about an hour and consist of a 30 to 45-minute reading by the author followed by a question and answer session. Three of the writers each year are also writers in-residence on campus. "[The Reading Series] is a way for the writer, who is interacting with people at St. Mary's every day, to also interact with the public," explains Foust. "Although not everyone in *Lamorinda* has the opportunity to be in Sue Miller's fiction workshop, they do have the chance to come hear her read

and to ask her questions."

Sue Miller will be reading on February 13th at 7:30 pm in the Soda Activity Center; Adam Haslett follows on February 27th at the same time and location. Subsequent readers will be poet Jane Miller on April 2nd and novelist Sandra Lim on April 23rd. A "literary homecoming" of sorts will end the season on May 7th with a combination reading by faculty member Marilyn Abildskov and recent graduate Michael Gardner. Graduate students in the MFA in Creative Writing program will read on March 12th and April 16th. The Series is open to the public; a donation of \$3.00 is appreciated.