

**Module Title: Heaney's *North* and its afterlives**

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Junior Sophister Option

5 ECTS

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**Module Description**

The publication of Seamus Heaney's fourth collection of poems was a landmark moment both in his literary career and in Irish literature. This was reflected in the reaction to *North* (1975), which was almost immediately heralded by the American poet Robert Lowell as 'a new kind of political poetry by the best Irish poet since W. B. Yeats', and also decried by Heaney's fellow northern poet Ciaran Carson as a book written by the 'laureate of violence'. Beyond these early reactions, *North* has had a profound impact on the writing and reading of Irish literature, particularly in the north of Ireland. Beginning with an introduction Heaney's poetry before *North*, the module examines the making of the 1975 collection, and the poet's own description of it as a departure from his previous outputs. The module examines the debates that emerged from its publication, the literature that responded to it, and the ethical questions that these raise in relation to myth, violence, gender, and literary representation. It will ask students to consider the impact of Heaney's fourth collection on the writing and reception of Irish poetry.

**Learning Outcomes**

On the completion of this module, students will have:

- LO1:** Studied one text closely, and gained a detailed insight into its contexts and impacts.
- LO2:** Understood the role that tradition plays in writing, both in terms of the single text and the texts that responded to it.
- LO3:** Identified and analysed the qualities and conventions of Irish writing, particularly poetry, through close reading.
- LO4:** Articulated an argument about the historical, literary, and ethical questions raised by a single text.

**Learning Aims / Objectives**

This module has been designed to:

- LO1:** Enable students to independently research and think critically about literature in a focused way.
- LO2:** Advance students' knowledge of Irish literary traditions and contemporary responses to these traditions.
- LO3:** Develop students' capacity for close reading and analysis with an appropriate literary vocabulary in a written argument
- LO4:** Expand students' knowledge of historical and cultural contexts, to include the reception of a single text.

**Assessment:** Essay (100%), 3000 words.

## Reading List

As well as Heaney and some of his contemporaries, students will be asked to read various texts which respond to Seamus Heaney's poetry (obviously particularly in *North*). The following texts will form the core of the reading:

W.B. Yeats, *The Tower* (1928)  
Seamus Heaney, *North* (1975)  
Seamus Heaney, *Field Work* (1979)  
Eavan Boland, *The War Horse* (1975)  
Medbh McGuckian, *The Flower Master and Other Poems* (1982)  
Seamus Heaney, *Station Island* (1984)  
Paul Muldoon, *Quoof* (1983)  
Ciaran Carson, *The Irish For No* (1987)  
Enda Longley, 'From Cathleen to Anorexia' (1990)  
James Simmons et al, eds, *The Honest Ulsterman* (1968-2003)  
Robert McLiam Wilson, *Eureka Street* (1996)  
Stephen Sexton, *If All The World And Love Were Young* (2019)  
Padraig Regan, *Some Integrity* (2022)  
Susannah Dickey, *Isdal* (2023)

Most of these are available in the library, but further instructions and uploaded content will be provided on Blackboard.

## Secondary Reading

As this is a module which is partly about reception, much of the 'secondary' reading will be included as a primary text. Some useful recent and forthcoming publications include:

R.F. Foster, *On Seamus Heaney* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023)  
Geradline Higgins, ed., *Seamus Heaney in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)  
Rosie Lavan, *Seamus Heaney and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)  
Christopher Reid, ed., *The Letters of Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber, 2023).