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Announcements and Comments

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Announcements and Comments

THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE will be on the Ancient Roman Epic, edited by Hanna M. Roisman and Joseph Roisman, Department of Classics, Colby College.

In March 1995 we will publish an issue about Contemporary Irish Fiction edited by George O'Brien of Georgetown University. The September 1995 issue will be about The African-American Narrative Tradition. Essays should be sent, by March 1, to the guest editor, Cedric Bryant, Department of English, Colby College.

The front cover is a reproduction of a pastoral landscape by Samuel Palmer (1805–1881), one of several providers of Yeats's towers. The graphite-on-paper original is part of the permanent collection of the Colby Art Museum. The photograph on the back cover, and those accompanying "Seamus and Sinéad," are from *Hush-a-Bye Baby*, reprinted through the courtesy of Derry Film and Video.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

MAURICE HARMON has retired from the Literature Department, University College Dublin, and is currently the Burns Library Scholar in Irish Studies at Boston College. He has edited and written many books on modern Irish literature, most recently a *Life* of Sean O'Faolain.

CATHARINE MALLOY teaches at Mount Mary College, Wisconsin, has published poetry and articles on Irish literature, and is co-editor of a volume of essays, *Seamus Heaney: Home-Word Bound*.

JONATHAN ALLISON, an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, the University of Kentucky, is the editor of *Yeats's Political Identities* and is preparing a reference guide to the work of Patrick Kavanaugh.

HENRY HART, Professor of English at the College of William and Mary, editor of *Verse* and a widely published poet, has written books on Heaney and Geoffrey Hill and is at work on a study of Robert Lowell.

ELIZABETH BUTLER CULLINGFORD, Professor of English and Graduate Adviser at the University of Texas, is the author of *Yeats, Ireland, and Fascism* and *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry*. She is working on the intersections of literature, culture and politics in contemporary Irish writing.

RAND BRANDES is the Martin Luther Stevens Professor at Lenoir-Rhyne College, North Carolina. He has published widely on contemporary Irish poetry and is currently a Fulbright Senior Research Fellow in Dublin.

INTRODUCTION

SEAMUS HEANEY has had a longer relationship with Colby than with all but a few American colleges and universities and it has been, for us, an unusually pleasant and productive friendship. He first visited in 1980, invited by two students who had met him in Ireland, and, almost unannounced, filled a large classroom for an afternoon reading. Students have been reading and writing about his poetry since then. He was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters in 1983. The citation reads:

You are the son of a farmer whose father was a farmer, and you live on a troubled and often threatened island. You have a spiritual bond with those strong people of Maine who sweat their living from an obdurate soil or an unforgiving sea. You have taught us about digging. Claiming the bog is possessing your territory, which is to understand place, family, clan, and nation. You have told us that confronting origins—"quagmire, swampland, morass," "our love and our terror"—is to encounter our common humanity. You ask the hard questions: "how should a poet properly live and write? What is his relationship to be to his own voice, his own place, his literary heritage, and his contemporary world?" Your remarkable ear and your attentive eye, and your hard work, your own sweat, have given us the sweetest music of all, "the music of what happens." You celebrate those enduring virtues—tenderness, tolerance, warmth—and you know with Freud that what we need is love and work. You say those dangerous and vulnerable things like "the end of poetry is peace," and invite from your readers those treacherous and sustaining words: sincerity, humanity, grace. It is precarious in these days to use those words. It is also a privilege, yours to use, ours to hear, and Colby's to today honor their authenticity.

In 1993 Heaney returned to conduct a workshop for advanced poetry students, teach a class on Yeats, pack the chapel to capacity for a reading, and gracefully fend off a student photographer who seemed to think he had been told to cover a basketball game—not, however, the poet's most painful confrontation with the press.

So it is fitting that this issue of the *Quarterly* is devoted to a varied consideration of his work. In his brief survey Maurice Harmon defines the beauty and consoling power of the poetry and insists that the achievement is marked, from the beginning, by tension, danger, struggle, and division. Catharine Malloy establishes a perspective on that tension by her account of the (almost) free floating of multiple voices in *Field Work* and shows one of the ways in which Heaney's work is susceptible to a post-modernist reading. Jonathan Allison demonstrates that Heaney's imagination was saturated with—and liberated by—Joyce well before the famous Section XII of "Station Island" and charts one of those complex and wonderful intertextual conversations that mark modern Irish poetry. Henry Hart attends to the different tensions in *Seeing Things*: between the mundane and the strange, quotidian and visionary, ordinary and sublime; between the burden of actual experience and the imagination compelled to transform it; between the productive co-existing of contraries in the fertile memory and the antithetical imagination. Elizabeth Butler Cullingford reclaims Heaney for feminist reading and challenges some rather too easy attacks. She also breaks down the largely unhelpful boundaries between high literary culture and popular media culture and shows how trivial and trivializing those distinc-

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tions are when set against human suffering and the sympathetic imagination's response to it. Rand Brandes's survey of the critical reception, 1965–1993, suggests how various and interesting—as its own phenomenon—the Heaney industry is, *and* how it is different from either poet or poetry. *CQ* is pleased to add these essays to this rapidly growing commentary.