Seamus Heaney

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REFERENCES

Rand Brandes & Michael J. Durkan (eds.), *Seamus Heaney A Bibliography 1959-2003*, London, Faber, 2008, p. 494, ISBN 978-0-571-23439-4

- 1 Seamus Heaney scholars have greeted the publication of this volume with a unanimous cry of “At last”! This comprehensive bibliography is the work of two scholars, Michael J Durkan, the author of the first Heaney bibliography in 1986, and Rand Brandes. They had already collaborated on the valuable *Seamus Heaney a Reference Guide* in 1996. On Durkan’s death, in the same year, Brandes pursued this mammoth task alone. The book is compiled according to the principles of modern bibliography and has received the assistance of the poet himself. It includes comprehensive indexes (both title names and a general index). It is divided into eight sections.
- 2 Academics will delight in the listing of subsection AA which deals with broadsides and cards. As well as the titles of the works themselves, the accompanying notes are a mine of information. For instance, we read on page 129 that the 1982 Christmas card, “Sweeney and the Saint”, was subsequently published with revisions in *Sweeney Astray*. The bibliophiles amongst us will savour descriptions such as those on page 159 of a poem published for Marie Heaney’s 60th birthday entitled “The Clothes Shrine”: “Printed in black and red on cream wove paper, bottom edges untrimmed; laid in dark greyish-yellow tri-fold wrappers with the title printed in black outline letters on front wrapper”. At such luxurious detail we can only bow down in homage! Indispensable also is the section devoted to “Interviews with Seamus Heaney”. Dennis O’Driscoll repeats in the opening pages of *Stepping Stones* Ian Hamilton’s statement that Heaney can be regarded as “the most over-interviewed of living poets”. The present volume numbers at 94 the interviews accorded until 2002. And no doubt, despite the existence of *Stepping Stones*, we will be determined to track down the elusive one we may have missed out on,

such as “Poet aims at Irish War” published in the *Minneapolis Star* in March 1981 (p. 426).

- 3 Having enjoyed the wonderful fare provided by Durkan and Brandes, it may seem ungracious to end this review with the Twist-like: “Please sir may I have some more?”, but five years lie between the publication and the terminal date of the bibliography and we would love to read about what lies between.