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Annotated Bibliography*


Appadurai claims that “there has been a shift in recent decades, building on technological changes over the past century or so, in which the imagination has become a collective, social fact. This development, in turn, is the basis of the plurality of imagined worlds” (5). While this argument appears mostly pertinent to the post-Internet world, I believe it can be applied, on a case-by-case basis, to conversations about literature and culture that predate these “recent decades.” My sense is that within Heaney, we can find a proto-version of the imaginative constructions Appadurai details. For one, Heaney frequently

* This is an annotated bibliography that I wrote for a research paper in the first semester of the PhD program. I’m giving it to you as an example for a few reasons. First, it shows you the intended format of an annotated bibliography: study the form of this document carefully. Second, it gives you a sense of some ways in which we can discuss how our work relates to an ongoing conversation. Pay attention to the way in which I make sure to link each source to how I plan to use it. Third, although you cannot tell from this particular document, it is a wonderful example of the ways in which research projects transform. This paper, as you can probably tell from my annotations, was going to involve talking about transnationalism in the poetry of the Irish poet Seamus Heaney, who was the translator for the version of Beowulf we read in this class. While I was writing it, it turned into something entirely different: I instead wrote about the ways that Heaney’s famous bog poems (if you like poetry and you have not heard of these, look them up! They are wonderful!) could relate to some environmental thought from the middle of the twentieth century. I have been slowly re-researching and revising this paper over the course of the last two years. Do you remember that I told you that the paper I gave at the conference a few weeks ago was about Heaney and began with an anecdote about the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey? That is because this paper has ultimately developed into an exploration about the effect that midcentury images of fetuses and midcentury images of the planet Earth from space could have had on Heaney’s career. Of the sources here, I still reference three of them, but in very different ways. All of you have altered your topics several times in different ways: as my story indicates, that is a good thing, showing sustained and dedicated exploration!
places artistic creation in dialogue with “the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies” (5): see “Digging” for a very early example. Additionally, in Heaney’s Nobel lecture “Crediting Poetry,” he argues that poetry—which is undoubtedly the work of “imagination”—is “a staging ground for action” rather than grounds for pure “escape” (7). Further, like (other) mass media, the bibliographic history of any piece of writing tells the story of “collective reading, criticism, and pleasure,” which yields “a group that begins to imagine and feel things together” (8). Thus, I aim to discuss Appadurai in order to figure Heaney’s oeuvre as an imagined world.


Bornstein argues that the bibliographic code of a text can be used “to analyze cultural constructions like history, politics, and alterity” (4). As I aim to analyze four poems from Heaney’s North—“Bog Queen,” “The Grauballe Man,” “Punishment,” and “Kinship”—as a unit based on the fact that they were submitted to little magazines and published together as a group before Heaney includes them in North, the foundation of my inquiry thus comes from Bornstein’s call for scholarship to privilege “issues of textual construction” (4). To connect this foundation to my mention above of figuring Heaney’s work as an imagined world, I seek to use Bornstein’s methodology of textual analysis in conjunction with literary readings in order to map Heaney’s world, particularly the world of “Bog Queen,” “The Grauballe Man,” “Punishment,” and “Kinship.” In so doing, I hope to engage James Joyce Quarterly, in which these poems were initially published, the Danowski collection’s proof of North, and Professor Schuchard’s copy of North. I plan also to reach out to relevant intertexts within this context, such as P. V. Glob’s The
Bog People.


Malouf explores the “the story of the Irish in the Caribbean” (2) as well as the connections between Caribbean and Irish literatures, arguing for a reading “in terms of the dialectical relation between nationalism and transnationalism evoked in these two immigrant cultures reinventing their national cultures abroad” (3). While I do not aim to write about Caribbean poetry, I will draw on Malouf to better conceptualize Heaney’s North, which both physically and poetically “reveal[s] the complex interdependency between discourses of transnationalism and nationalism,” thus “reimagining . . . transatlantic space” (4).


Ramazani suggests a definition of the term “hybridity” that indicates “the intensified hybridization of already mixed and politically unequal cultures”: arguing that postcoloniality is “interstitial, beyond identarian boundaries,” he claims that “postcolonial poets, even when staying at home, have long inhabited cultural spaces that are thoroughly multilingual and multicultural” (6-7). Ramazani then turns to Yeats to analyze the “nature of Yeats’s postcoloniality” (36). Of particular interest to me is Ramazani’s application of the framework of hybridity to Yeats’s case. Acknowledging the “dangers” that the word “hybridity” poses (the “concept . . . has often been attacked for depoliticizing postcoloniality, for flattening out the inequalities between the two sides
of the colonial divide, and for presupposing a false antithesis of purity”), Ramazani
nevertheless argues that “an idea like hybridity . . . invades the exegete to attend to the
intercultural tensions and fusions at the level of language, style, concept, and genre;”
ultimately suggesting too that “the formal hybridity of Yeats’s work” is not “separable
from the politics of his ‘in-betweenness’” (36). I note that similar dynamics may be at
work in and thus relevant to Heaney and his poetry, particularly when considering other
observations Ramazani makes about Yeats—some examples: Yeats’s symbols, his use of
place names, his engagement with English verse, his “outward- and inward-looking
style” (47)—and aim to explore Heaney’s “tensions and fusions” in light of Ramazani’s
frameworks.


In this article, Ramazani critiques “mononational constructions of modernity” (333). He
argues that the division of literature “along national lines” runs against the spirit and lives
of modern poems and the poets who write them. Since the question of nationalism
and/versus internationalism takes on particular poignancy for Heaney, Ramazani’s
argument here provides a crucial foundation for a transnational take on Heaney’s work.
As Ramazani himself states, “the imaginative topography of Heaney’s poetry is an
intercultural space, a layered geography”: “Heaney names an imaginative place that is
local, yet irreducible composite, in between, translocational” (346-347).