



# Seamus Heaney's Gifts

**HENRY HART**

Throughout his career, Seamus Heaney maintained that poetry came to him from a mysterious source like a gift of grace, and that the recipient of this sort of offering had an ethical obligation to share it with others. *Seamus Heaney's Gifts* provides the first comprehensive examination of his preoccupation with gifts and gift-exchange. Drawing on extensive research in Heaney's papers, as well as three decades of correspondence with the poet, Henry Hart presents a richly detailed inspection of Heaney's life and work that foregrounds the Irishman's commitment to the vocation of poetry as a public art capable of reestablishing civil bonds between people in polarized societies. As Hart shows, Heaney found models for gift-giving in his rural community in Northern Ireland, the Bible, the rituals of the Catholic Church, and the literature of mystical and mythical quests.

*Seamus Heaney's Gifts* explains the famed poet's ideas about the artist's gift, the necessity of gift-exchange acts, and the moral responsibility to share one's talents for the benefit of others.

**HENRY HART** is the Mildred and J. B. Hickman Professor of Humanities at the College of William and Mary. He has published four poetry collections and numerous scholarly books about modern poets, including biographies of James Dickey and Robert Frost. From 1984 to 1994 he coedited *VERSE*, an international poetry magazine, and from 2018 to 2020 he served as poet laureate of Virginia.

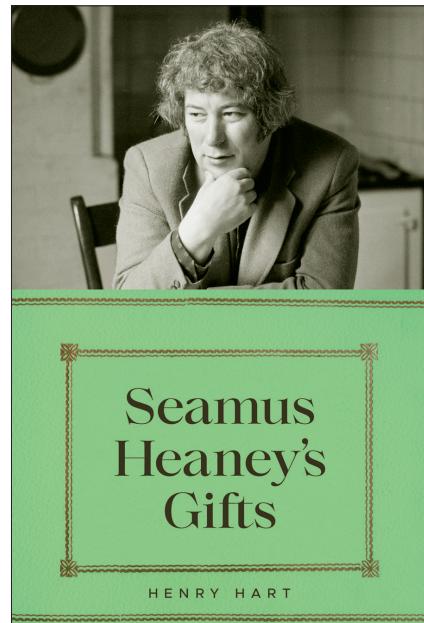
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#### PRAISE FOR *SEAMUS HEANEY'S GIFTS*:

"Henry Hart's book should be unignorable for future writers on Seamus Heaney and will be of genuine help to all who try to take an overview of his work."—Robert Crawford, author of *Eliot after "The Wasteland"*

"This is a fascinating, deftly and deeply researched study of Heaney, taking as its remit his lifelong sense of himself as a poet with a gift (he was!) and his penchant for gift-giving. It will quickly become required reading for the legions of Heaney's readers around the world."—Richard Rankin Russell, author of *Seamus Heaney's Regions*

"This is an original treatment of an important subject, written by a scholar and poet well-grounded in Heaney's work. There is much here that is new and fresh, and cumulatively the narrative gives a perceptive and highly textured account of one of our most celebrated poets."—Stephen Enniss, director of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin



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