

THE IRISH WRITERS













SHAW, WILDE, YEATS, JOYCE, BECKETT, HEANEY
Bronze details
(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)

Cover: Yeats, Bronze

CONTENTS..

SHAW 4

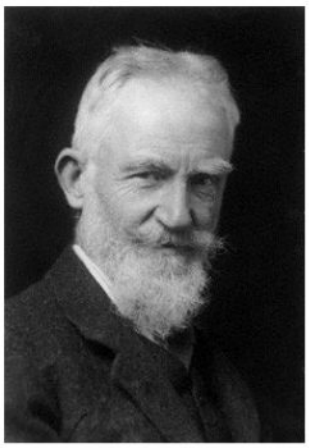
WILDE 6

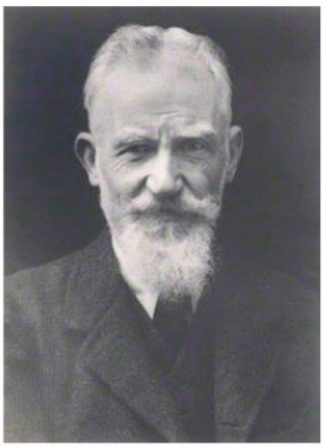
YEATS 8

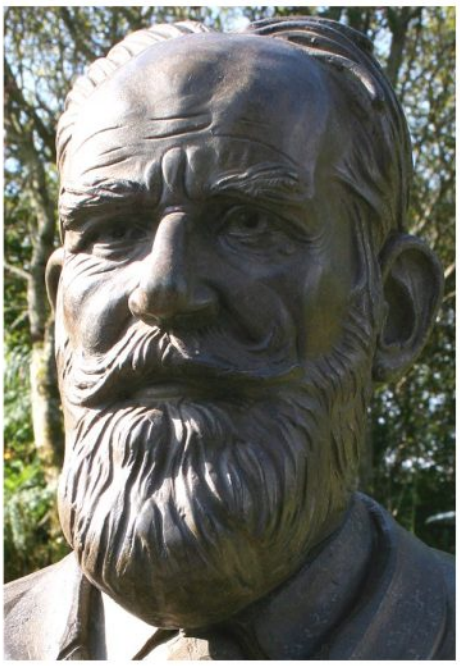
JOYCE 10

BECKETT 12

HEANEY 14









Clockwise from left:

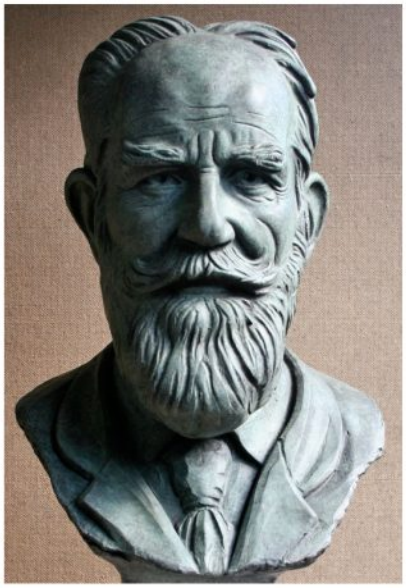
I. Clay
II. George Bernard Shaw, London 1919
III. George Bernard Shaw, London 1920
IV. Bronze detail (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)
V. Clay
VI. Bronze

George Bernard Shaw

SHAW

This portrait draws heavily in terms of rendition, on the photographs of Eliot & Fry, Walter Stoneman, and Claude Harris respectively, images that are now with the National Portrait Gallery in London. They were taken in 1919 and c.1920 at the time Shaw was writing *Back to Methuselah,* which, after being published in 1921, was first presented at the Garrick Theatre in New York by the New York Theatre Guild in early 1922. Its first English production was at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in the autumn of 1923. Two years later he receives the Nobel Prize for Literature.

It had been a difficult previous few years for Shaw. In a supplement to the *New Statesman* in October 1914 he published *Common sense about the war*, the extended essay that won him widespread notoriety and hostility for its cool analysis of the origins of the war and resistance to the fervid patriotism of the time. His one-act play *O'Flaherty VC* written in 1915, was not performed at the Abbey on the advice of the military authorities in Dublin. Shaw defended the actions of the leaders of the Easter 1916 Rising, and subsequently worked to try to save Roger Casement from execution, even though he had no sympathy with Irish republican nationalism.













WILDE

Clockwise from left:

I. Bronze
II. Oscar Wilde, New York, 1882.
III. Ibid.
IV. Bronze detail (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)
V. Bronze
VI. Bronze

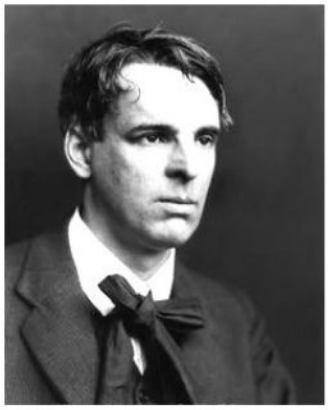


Oscar Wilde

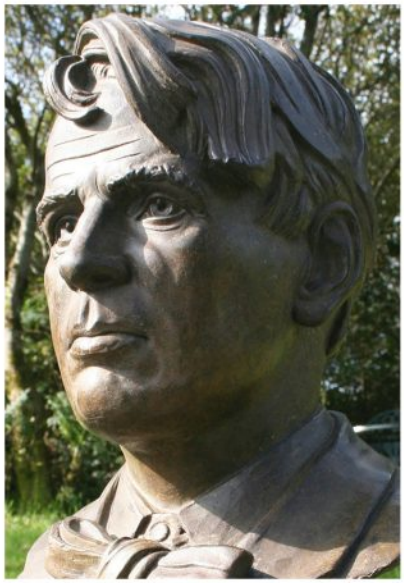
Wilde's portrait is based on the interpretation of a series of images taken by the New York photographer Napoleon Sarony. Wilde, at the invitation of producer Richard D'Oyly, was on his American lecture tour of 1882. His attire for his photographic session was as it was for his lectures, a fur-lined jacket and vest of velvet, silk knee breeches and stockings and slippers adorned with grosgrain bows.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York describes Wilde in these series of photographs as, ' Posing as the ultimate aesthete, or, rather, a caricature of one, Wilde was warmly received and enjoyed tremendous social success. To mock with his appearance the seriousness of the very ideals he was championing was, of course, characteristic of Wilde's fondness for paradox....Here, his features not yet bloated by self-indulgence and high living, Wilde leans toward the viewer as though engaging him in dialogue, the appearance and calculated pose of the dandy secondary to the intelligence and spontaneous charm of the conversationalist'.











William Butler Yeats

The portrait of Yeats is modelled on the series of photographs by George Charles Beresford taken in July 1911 who worked as a photographic portraitist in Yeomans Row in Knightsbridge in London. They are currently part of the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London. A year that could be described as quite pivotal for Yeats. He meets Ezra Pound for the first time, his future wife to be.... George "Georgie" Hyde Lees (marries 1917) and he accompanies the Abbey Players on tour in USA.

Fours years before, the Abbey's staging of Synge's satire *The Playboy of the Western World,* on Jan. 26, 1907, stirred up so much resentment in the audience over its portrayal of the Irish peasantry that there was a riot. When the Abbey players toured the United States for the first time in 1911, first night of *Playboy* in Boston was peaceful, followed by riots in New York with the second night attended by Theodore Roosevelt. The company were technically arrested in Philadelphia and there were threats to Lady Gregory's life in Chicago.

Academics contend that his work after 1911 was strongly influenced by Pound, becoming more modern in its concision and imagery, but Yeats never abandoned his strict adherence to traditional verse forms. He had a life-long interest in mysticism and the occult, but he remained uninhibited in advancing his idiosyncratic philosophy, and his poetry continued to grow stronger as he grew older.



YEATS

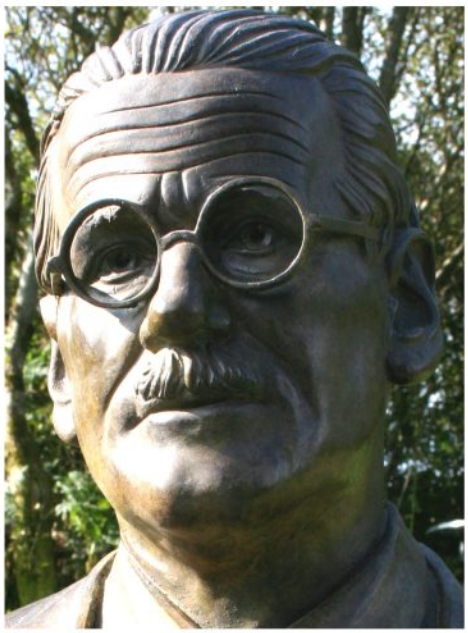


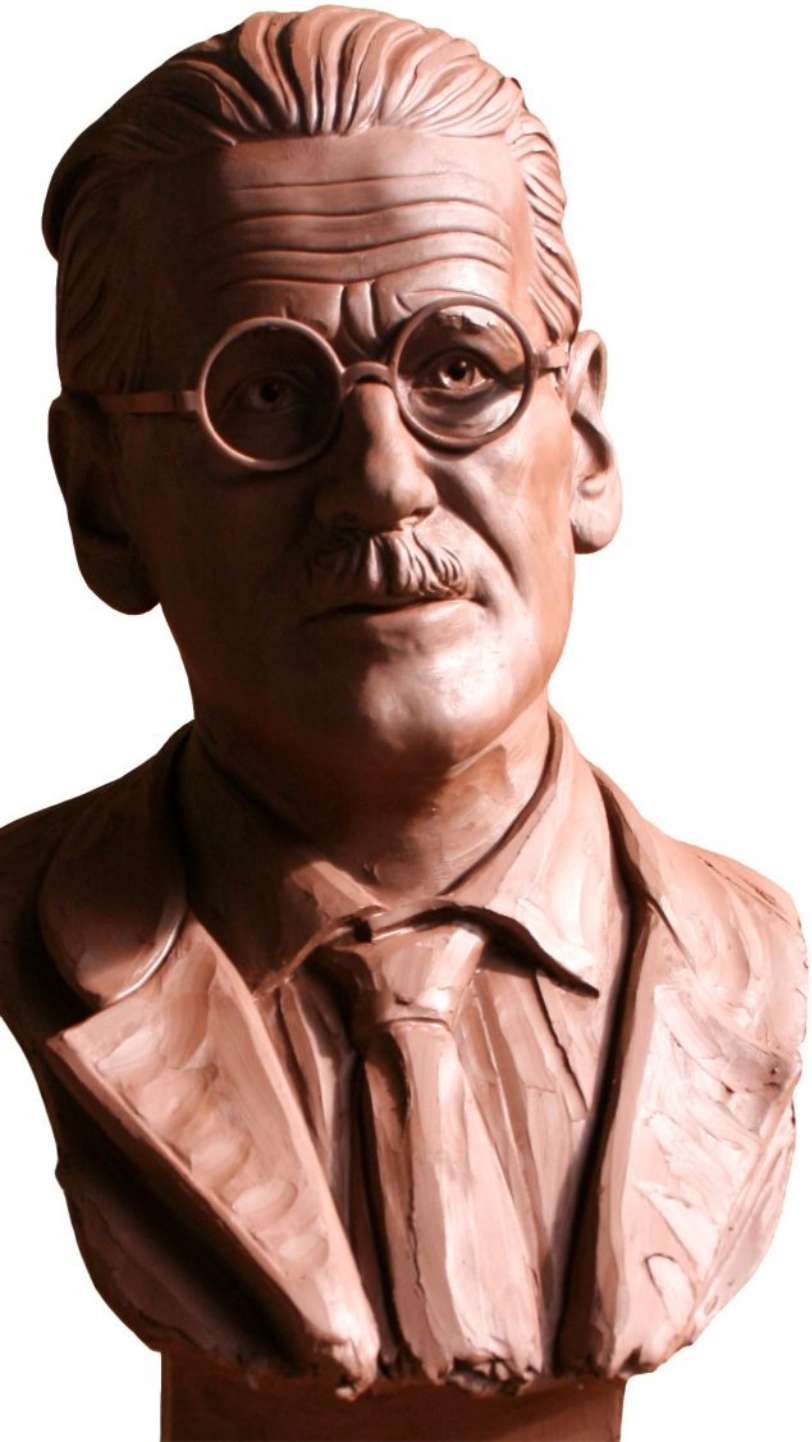
Clockwise from left:

I. Bronze
II. W.B. Yeats, London 1911
III. Ibid
IV. Bronze detail (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)
V. Clay
VI. Clay









Clockwise from left:

I. Clay
II. James Joyce, Paris 1928
III. Ibid.
IV. Bronze detail (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)
V. Bronze
VI. Bronze

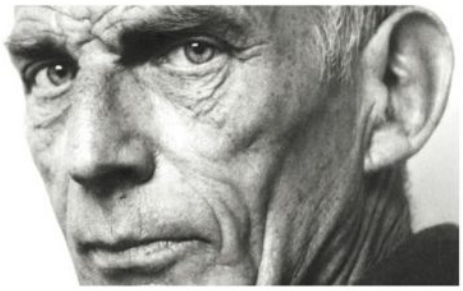
JOYCE

James Joyce

The bust of Joyce interprets the studio photographs of Berenice Abbott, especially those taken in 1928, after she returned from Germany and before she went back to America. The portrait of Joyce on the left shows him serious (even doleful) but relaxed, wearing a neck-tie with rings, fedora hat and cane while sitting on a wooden chair. The image of Joyce on the right seems to be liberated from formality.

Joyce apparently liked sitting for Abbott, as there are several other photos from the 1928 session, without the stylish fedora and cane, but obviously from the same session, as he is wearing the same striped necktie and the backdrop and chair are similarly positioned. The image on the right captures Joyce with more feeling; perhaps without the protection the hat and cane afforded him he let his guard down. The iconic photo of an iconic literary figure, the confident, 46-year-old artist. The bust similarly tilts Joyce's head subtly to the left and portrays with a him curious and confident countenance.











Clockwise from top left:

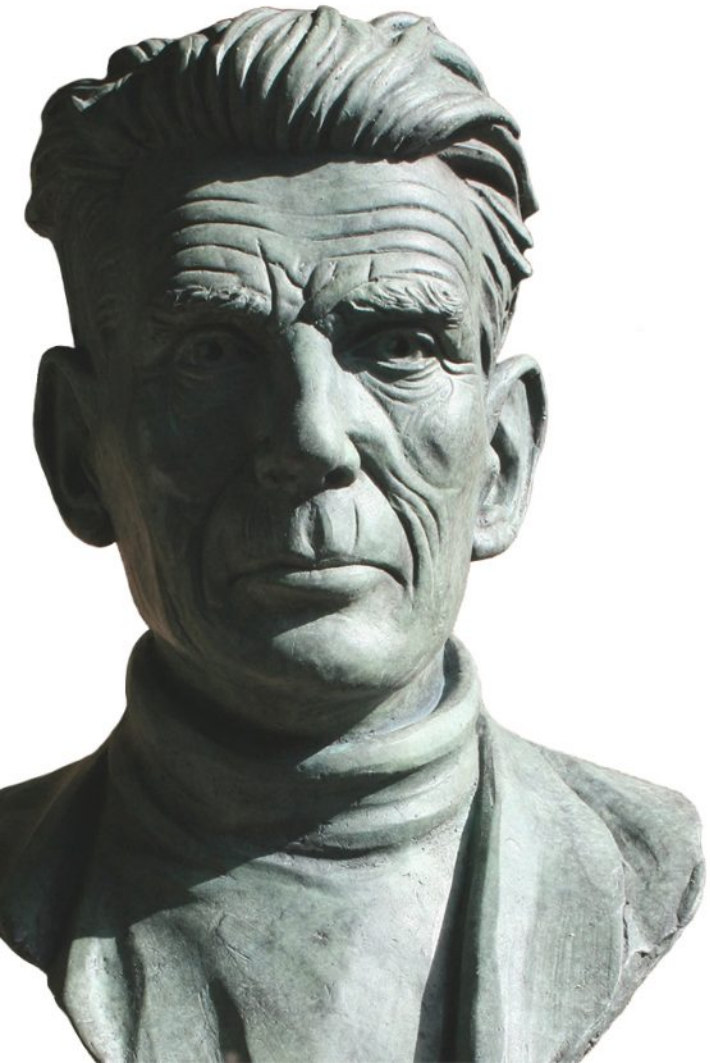
I. Clay
II. Samuel Beckett, Paris 1964
III. Samuel Beckett, London 1965
IV. Bronze detail (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)
V. Clay
VI. Bronze

Samuel Beckett

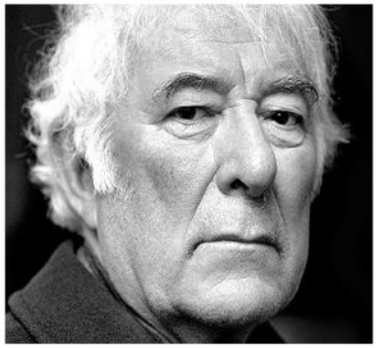
The bust of Beckett draws on the 1964 and 1965 series of images of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Dmitri Kasterine respectfully. Just a few years before receiving the Nobel prize for literature in 1969, this was a busy time for Beckett. *Play* is first performed in Britain at Old Vic on 7 April 1964, and in Paris at Pavillion de Marson on 11 June 1964. He travels to America to make *Film* in 1965 with Buster Keaton and wins Prix Filmcritica in Venice in 1965.

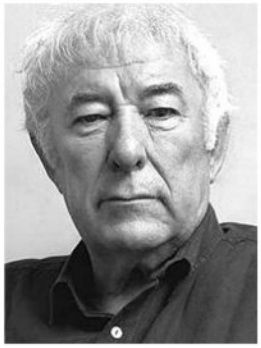
Dmitri Kasterine's contemplative portrait of Beckett was taken in London, in 1965, at a rehearsal for *Beginning To End*, a BBC Television production that Beckett wrote for the actor Jack MacGowran. Kasterine recalled that "Beckett observed acutely.....never taking his eyes off the actors or director, but saying very little. I gave no directions while taking the picture. When they broke for lunch, we went to a local pub where Beckett drank Guinness and played bar billiards—he beat everyone."

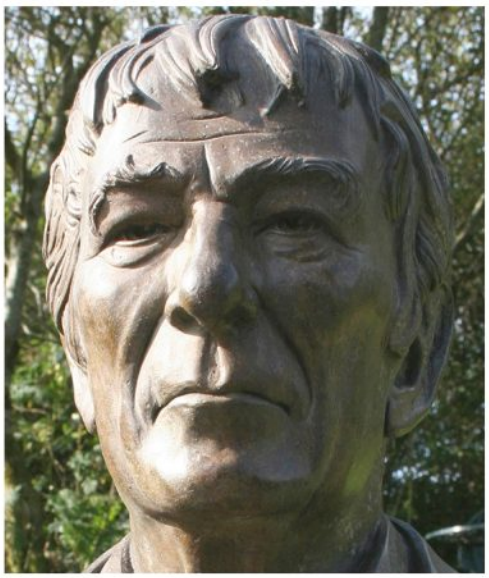


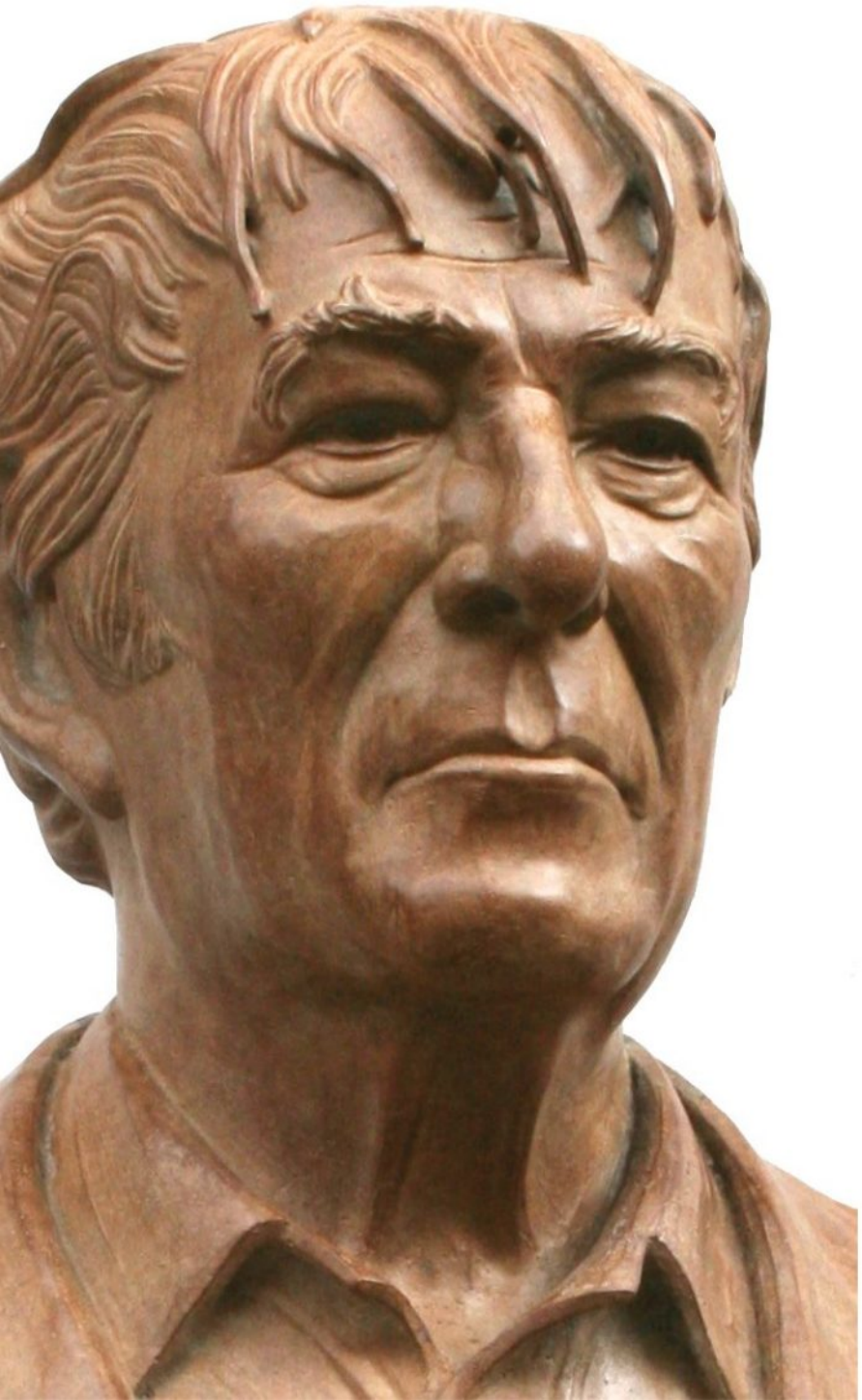


BECKETT



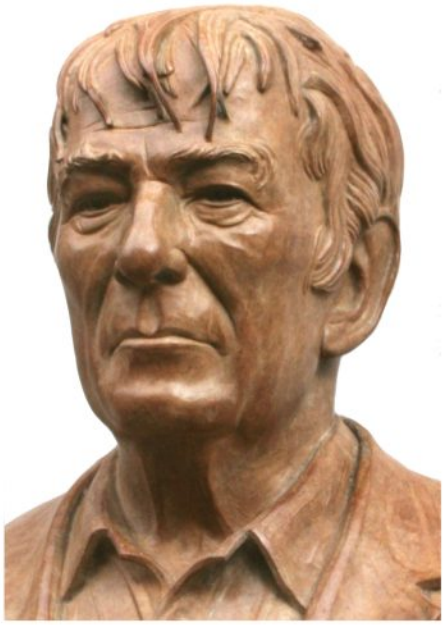






Clockwise from top left:

I. Bronze
II. Seamus Heaney, London 2013
III. Ibid, 2009
IV. Bronze detail (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)
V. Bronze
VI. Clay



HEANEY

Seamus Heaney

A series of photographs taken for The Guardian by photographers Murdo MacLeod and Eugene McCabe from a period between 2009 and 2013 form the basis for the interpretation of this bust. This four year period saw Heaney awarded many prizes and accolades. The year before Seamus Heaney Stræde was named after him in Østermarie, Denmark. From 2009 onwards, Heaney was presented with an Honorary-Life Membership award from the University College Dublin (UCD) Law Society, in recognition of his remarkable role as a literary figure and in the same year the David Cohen Prize for Literature. In 2010, Faber published *Human Chain*, Heaney's twelfth collection. *Human Chain* was awarded the Forward Poetry Prize for Best Collection. In 2011, he was awarded the Griffin Poetry Prize and in 2012, a Lifetime Recognition Award from the Griffin Trust. His literary papers are held by the National Library of Ireland. In June 2012, Heaney accepted the Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry's Lifetime Recognition Award··

On the well known 1972 Portrait of Seamus Heaney by Edward McGuire, Heaney told art critic Dorothy Walker that having been warned by Benedict Kiely that McGuire "was a very dangerous man", he was careful how to situate himself for the portrait sittings. He would arrive at McGuire's studio every morning "at a safe hour" at about 10 o'clock, and always sat at the same table. At about 11.30 the first bottle of stout was produced, and thereafter thing became more relaxed. But what the painter caught was this general wariness, a real essential of the time.

