

Seamus Heaney

He was born in Northern Ireland in 1939 and is still alive today (27/07/12). In 1995 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

There are many rural and personal themes in his poetry. An example is given by "Digging". Heaney's father was a digger of peat in Northern Ireland: just like him the poet "digs" the truth in his poems. He deals with contemporary Irish political issues and Ireland's early history and myths.

"The Tollund Man"

The political issues are evident in "The Tollund Man", a poem made of three stanzas and which contains a pacifist message. The poet had read an article about a man found mummified in the peat. It was found in Denmark. The poet

would like to go and see it.

In the poem he describes the mummified body. It was a young man who had been sacrificed to the goddess of nature to get fertility.

So ancient men had committed violence to the sacrificed in the name of religion.

Consequently the "Gallund Man" becomes the symbol of any violence in the name of any religion. The poet compares it to the violence between Irish Catholics and British Protestants.

He has a negative vision of religion.