SCOPE

These seminars will investigate a period of extraordinary creativity and variety of practice, from the well-made lyrics of Ulster (Mahon, Longley, Heaney) to the experimentalism of Tom Raworth and Denise Riley and the soundscapes of Alice Oswald. Topics will range from the ecological to the urban modernist, taking in politics, sexuality, ethnicity and translation. There will be an inclination to ask questions about the spatial, the geographical and the dislocated, not least because these are leading preoccupations in verse of the last half century.

My long engagement with new poetry—as a reader, reviewer, and essayist—has made my outlook inclusive. Too sharp a delineation of the field, or insistence on one sort of technique, narrows understanding. There is plenty of good mainstream work to be found (published by Faber, Picador, Cape) as there is both strong and ineffective late modernist poetry (Salt, Reality Street, Equipage). Some of the most interesting poets—Roy Fisher, Paul Muldoon, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin—cannot be readily classified, or have several modes of operation. My aim is primarily to explore with you the full range of contemporary poetry written in Britain and Ireland, or intersecting with it; but that brings with it a secondary obligation to introduce the debates and networks that have articulated its reception and have fed back into the conventions of production. This is best done without doctrinaire commitment to one or other way of writing.

I would consequently be happy to suggest many different kinds of reading for the seminars, to match the research-priorities and curiosity of participants. The list of options that follow is, for that reason, provisional. Seminar-by-seminar bibliographies will be provided once students have signed up and interests/needs are clearer. As far as possible, any critical reading will be downloadable in electronic form. Poetry will be made available on Moodle or by xerox, and first publication formats will in some cases be put into your hands in class. There will be close attention to poetic material but also encouragement to recover socio-historical and theoretical contexts.
Another word about geography. The British-Irish archipelago provides a viable structure for thinking about a great deal of writing from the 1960s to the present, but the poetry has often been shaped and cut across by larger, international contexts—American, Caribbean, European avant-garde, Irish/Gaelic, etc.—while the internet has changed the levels of accessibility and speed of interaction between writers, audiences and other writers, within world-wide English. So the framework for discussing British-Irish poetry in these seminars will be ‘transnational’, even when the work is very much home-grown, with attention given to poetry that was partly written as well as imaginatively located beyond the islands (e.g. in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad)—work that is global in its awareness, and sometimes post-colonial.

OPTIONS
While the main objective of the seminars will be to enlarge and advance knowledge of poetry since the 1960s, there is a secondary ambition to make the authors and topics discussed complement the research interests of participants. When students give presentations to the group, they will more often than not be able to deal with questions that relate to their M.Phil. dissertations. For this reason, the headings of argument will be finalised once participants have signed up and their research interests are known. Among likely topics, however, are animals and humans (e.g. Ted Hughes, Colin Simms, Maggie O’Sullivan, Alice Oswald) or fields of landscape, language and verse (Ian Hamilton Finlay and Peter Riley to Kathleen Jamie and Harriet Tarlo). Seminars might e.g. focus on ‘Cities’ (Roy Fisher, Ciarán Carson, Geraldine Monk, Zoe Skoulding), ‘Dublin Modernism’ (Thomas Kinsella to Catherine Walsh), ‘Gender in Irish Poetry’ (Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland, Medbh McGuckian), ‘Black Atlantic’ (Kamau Brathwaite, Grace Nichols, Fred D’Aguiar, Dorothea Smartt), ‘Empire and Mobility’ (Derek Walcott, Vahni Capildeo and others), ‘Old Modernists’ (Samuel Beckett, David Jones, Basil Bunting), ‘Younger BAME Writers’ (e.g. Warsan Shire, Kayo Chingonyi, Siddhartha Bose, Sandeep Parmar, Momtaza Mehri), ‘J. H. Prynne’, ‘Experiments: Tom Raworth, Trevor Joyce’, ‘North’ (Simon Armitage, Paul Farley and others), ‘Knowing Your Place, or Class War’ (Tony Harrison, Tom Leonard etc.), ‘Faith and Style: R.S. Thomas, Geoffrey Hill, Michael Symmons Roberts’, ‘Erotics’ (Jackie Kay, Keston Sutherland) or maybe Irish divorce (Eavan Boland, Mary O’Malley, Vona Groarke), ‘Experimental Poetry Written by Women in Britain’ (a long list), ‘Form and Metamorphosis’ (Derek Mahon, Paul Muldoon, Leontia Flynn?), ‘Glasgow, or Langwij Poetry: Edwin Morgan, Tom Leonard, Liz Lochhead, Peter Manson’, ‘Performance’
(e.g. Kate Tempest, Rap, Drill), ‘War: Christopher Logue, Alice Oswald, Andrea Brady’, ‘Elegy’ (Douglas Dunn, John Wilkinson, Denise Riley, Malika Booker).

SUPERVISION
All students can claim at least a short supervision on draft or written work, but there will be plenty of access via e-mail or other one-to-one meetings if that is requested. This should be particularly useful for those giving short presentations to the seminar, as ways of roughing out and developing their thoughts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(a) Some useful web resources:
http://www.modernpoetry.org.uk/lists.html
Archive of the Now
http://www.archiveofthenow.org/
Poetry Archive
http://www.poetryarchive.org
Jacket [archive]
http://jacketmagazine.com/00/home.shtml
Jacket2
http://jacket2.org
How2
http://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/
Critical Documents
http://www.plantarchy.us/home.html
Prac crit
Praccrit.com
Penn Sound
http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/
The Fortnightly Review
http://fortnightlyreview.co.uk
Complete Works Two
https://www.youtube.com/user/CompleteWorksTwo

(b) Brutally short list of current magazines:
PN Review
Poetry Review
Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry
Cambridge Literary Review

(c) General reading:
Barry, Peter, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)


Kinsella, John, *Disclosed Poetics: Beyond Landscape and Lyricism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)


Kinsella, John, *Disclosed Poetics: Beyond Landscape and Lyricism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)


*The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994)


Mark, Alison and Deryn Rees-Jones (eds.), *Contemporary Women’s Poetry: Reading/Writing/Practice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000)

Middleton, Christopher, *The Pursuit of the Kingfisher* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1983)


for Good Poetry (Exeter: Shearsman, 2011)

or Good Poetry (Exeter: Shearsman, 2011)


Thurston, Michael and Nigel Alderman, *Reading Postwar British and Irish Poetry* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014)


