General Editor’s Introduction

John Countryman
Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Irish Studies South*, an online journal devoted to the scholarly and creative work of the membership of the Southern Region of the American Conference for Irish Studies and invited contributors, as well as others whose contributions to the journal reflect the spirit of our region. We are especially proud to introduce our new publication with a tribute to Seamus Heaney, whose generous participation in our conferences and other activities are cited throughout this volume.

I first attended an ACIS conference (and, of course it was a Southern Region conference) at Lenoir-Rhyne University, the home institution of this volume’s editor, Rand Brandes. Seamus was the keynote speaker, and I was not a little intimidated by his presence because the subject of my paper was his then recently published play script, *The Cure at Troy*. He was, of course, a most gracious respondent and was a full participant in every facet of the conference, including the roasting of a pig, the consumption of great quantities of Guinness, and the gift of chapbooks created expressly for our gathering, containing Heaney’s autograph and, more importantly, his recent poem, “Gravel Walks.” Seamus created many memories for those of us in attendance, so it is most fitting that this volume is principally devoted, in verse and prose, to memories of his work, his generosity to all of us, and to his magnificent self.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Rand and to all of the esteemed contributors to this volume. All of you have ably honored a man who bestowed much honor upon our organization.

John Countryman
General Editor