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**ARTS
OVER
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Northern Literary Lands

BORDER BECOMES A BINDER IN THE NAME OF LITERATURE AS ARTS OVER BORDERS LAUNCHES IRELAND'S TRANSNATIONAL NORTHERN LITERARY LANDS

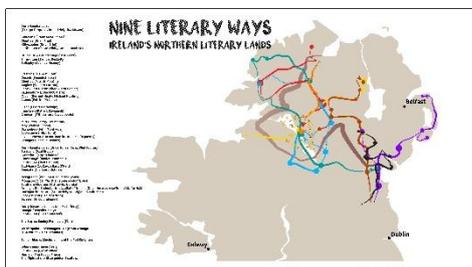
- Arts Over Borders (AOB) unveils new concept, created to celebrate and promote Ireland's unparalleled concentration of literary greatness
- Project seeks to apply to become the world's first UNESCO Region of Literature
- Northern Literary Lands (NLL) covers eleven border counties (6 ROI & 5 NI), covering a third of Ireland's land mass – a literary fifth province
- NLL incorporates this year's forthcoming AOB festivals – Samuel Beckett Biennale and *FrielDays: A Homecoming 2026*
- Seamus Heaney, Lisa McGee, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde, Enya, Brian Friel, Lisa O'Neill, Neil Hannon and The Undertones among the many writers celebrated in *Nine Literary Ways*
- Nine cross-border literary travel paths forged through the villages, towns, cities, mountains, shores and rural landscapes of the Northern Literary Lands

Today, **Arts Over Borders** launches a new visionary project - its most ambitious since its three-year, eighteen-city ULYSSES European Odyssey project - which will identify and celebrate the unsurpassed concentration of literary greatness crammed into one small corner of Europe. Ireland's **northern Literary Lands** proclaims the richness of Ireland's literary heritage and its continued contemporary relevance. A cross-border literary constellation of people and places, the northern Literary Lands will be a foundation and stamp of quality for exhibitions and festivals, arts centres and museums, publishers, writing groups, travel and tourism.

For the Northern Literary Lands, **the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland - and by extension the UK and Europe - becomes a binder in the name of literature, rather than a divider.** Covering eleven border counties, the area stretches from the Atlantic north-west coast of The Wild Atlantic Way from Derry, Donegal and Sligo, into the Hidden Heartlands of Tyrone, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Cavan and Armagh and on to Ireland's Ancient East of Monaghan, Louth and County Down, connecting major towns such as Derry, Newry, Dundalk, Sligo and Armagh.

The eleven counties are forever linked to extraordinary world-acclaimed writers, including **three Nobel Laureates – W.B. Yeats** (influenced by his Co. Sligo childhood), **Samuel Beckett** (school days in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh) and **Seamus Heaney** (born and raised in Derry). The 'heritage' map of literary greats (pictured above) will soon be joined by a contemporary colour map of living writers in the same region.

The NLL takes in works as wide-ranging as the mythological epic ***Táin Bó Cúailnge, The Chronicles of Narnia*** (C.S Lewis - whose love of Rostrevor and the Mourne Mountains in Co. Down was the inspiration for Narnia), ***The Happy Prince*** (Oscar Wilde - inspired by Cole's Monument in Enniskillen, which Wilde could see from his dormitory window at Portora Royal School), ***Gulliver's Travels*** (Jonathan Swift – who wrote most of the novel in Cookstown, Co. Down), ***The Third Policeman*** (Flann



O'Brien - born and raised in Strabane, Co. Tyrone) and ***Dancing at Lughnasa*** (Brian Friel - born in Knockmoyle, near Omagh, Co. Tyrone, he spent half his life in the north and half in the south of Ireland).

Arts Over Borders has created **Nine Literary Ways** through the whole area - suggested routes for travellers with a particular love for specific writers and genres. Each Literary Way can be completed in a day with stops along the way.

These include:

- **The Northwest Dramatic Way:** Derry~Londonderry (George Farquhar, Brian Friel, Lisa McGee) - Buncrana (Frank McGuinness) – Glenties & Omagh (Brian Friel) – Enniskillen (Wilde & Beckett).
- **The Nobel Way:** Drumcliffe, Sligo (W B Yeats) - Enniskillen (Beckett) - Bellaghy (Seamus Heaney).
- **The Novel Way:** Strabane (Flann O'Brien) – Omagh (Benedict Kiely) - Glenties (Patrick McGill) – Enniskillen (Oscar Wilde, Carlo Gebler) – Ballinamore (John McGahern) - Cavan (Dermot Healy, Michael Harding) – Clones (Patrick McCabe).

- **The Poetic Way:** Slane (Francis Ledwidge) – Inniskeen (Patrick Kavanagh) – Mid-Ulster Poetic Centre: Moy, Cookstown, Garvahey, Tyrone - Sixmilecross, Bellaghy (Paul Muldoon, Nick Laird, John Montague, F W Marshall, Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin).
- **The Singers Way:** Derry (The Undertones, Dana, Phil Coulter) – Strabane (Paul Brady) - Gweedore (Enya/Clannad) – Kincasslagh (Daniel O’Donnell) - Enniskillen (Neil Hannon) -Ballyhaise Co. Cavan (Lisa O’Neil) – Dundalk (The Corrs).
- **The Spiritual Way:** Newgrange (Petroglyphs) – Monasterboice (stone iconography) – Rostrevor, southern Mourne (C S Lewis Narnia) – Armagh (Dean Jonathan Swift) – Downpatrick & Saul (St. Patrick) – Coney Island (Van Morrison) – Bangor (St. Columbanus).
- **The Critical Way:** Derry (Seamus Deane, Nell McCafferty) – Omagh (Benedict Kiely) – Enniskillen (Vivian Mercier).
- **The Warring Way:** The Boyne – Cooley Peninsula (Táin) - Crossmaglen, Kingsmill, South Armagh (The Killing Fields, The Troubles) – Eaman Macha (Cuchulainn and the Red Knights).
- **The Wilde Romantic Way:** Enniskillen as Wilde Island Town (WIT). A walking route through Oscar Wilde’s Happy Prince with 150 little golden swallows showing the way (Oscar Wilde).

Among the events taking place this spring:

- The **Samuel Beckett Biennale (SBB)** is a new festival which will explore Beckett’s work through experimentation, stretching into specific locations in Ireland and Great Britain associated with Beckett’s life and work. It will present one work in one place at one time, across the span of a year; key plays closely linked to specific places will be revisited at the same location every two years but with markedly differing productions.
 - When actor Malcolm Sinclair opens the first Biennale this March, he’ll be joined by a thirty years-younger audio version of himself. De-aging technology will manipulate Sinclair’s voice for a new presentation of **Krapp’s Last Tape**, in which the older character interacts with a recording of his thirty-year-younger self. It’ll be staged at the Whale Theatre at Greystones on the Spring Equinox, when the younger Krapp recorded his tapes.
 - Also in March, Derry~Londonderry hosts the first Ulster-Scots translation of Beckett’s masterpiece, **Waiting for Godot**, in two consecutive days of ‘open rehearsals’ and performances at the Playhouse and Ulster University. The production marks the 250th anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence, three of whose signatories were Ulster Scots immigrants.
- **FrielDays - A Homecoming 2025-2029**, is an unprecedented five-year theatrical celebration of one of Ireland’s great literary figures, Brian Friel (1929-2015). Five plays will join the FrielDays roster in 2026, meaning that nine innovative productions will take place across the counties of

northwest Ireland where Friel spent his life, as FrielDays continues on its path to presenting all 29 of Brian Friel's published collected plays in 2029, his centenary year. FrielDays began in 2025 with new productions of five plays - Dancing at Lughnasa, Translations, Faith Healer, Volunteers and The Home Place - in resonant locations across Donegal, Tyrone and Derry. Four of these will return in 2026.



Produced by **Arts Over Borders**, Ireland's leading producer of cross-border north-south arts festivals, the SBB succeeds the highly acclaimed annual *Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival*, which ran from 2012 to 2022.

Conceived by **Artistic Director Seán Doran** and co-developed with his long-time artistic colleague **Literary Director, the late Liam Browne**, it follows the launch of the five-year *FrielDays 2025-2029* event, marking the centenary of playwright Brian Friel, and completion of Arts Over Borders's largest project to date, the pan-European *ULYSSES European Odyssey 2022-2024* project which celebrated James Joyce's masterpiece in 18 European cities.

Seán Doran said, "This is a new way of celebrating the literary richness as gold in the earth at the liminal intersection of the northern and southern parts of the island. Each Literary Way criss-crosses the border, revealing a staggering concentration of literary giants. Experientially, for the culturally curious, it is an espresso literary hit, if you like."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

Arts Over Borders has presented 13 cross-border literary multi-arts festivals in Ireland from 2012-2022 including the internationally acclaimed **Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival** (EIBF) which brought The Berliner Ensemble to Ireland for the first time (since 1939) with Georg Tabori's controversial *Warten Auf Godot* and which involved other international artists including theatre directors Robert Wilson and Peter Stein, actors Toby Jones and Klaus Maria Brandauer, choreographers Maguy Marin and Mark Morris and the work of visual artists Antony Gormley, Tacita Dean, Joseph Kosuth and Steve McQueen. Other AOB festivals have included **A Wilde Weekend** in Enniskillen and the **Lughnasa FrielFest** celebrating the work of playwright Brian Friel (1929-2015) in Donegal & Derry involving actors Maxine Peake, Imogen Stubbs, Alex Jennings, Rory Kinnear and Tamsin Greig.

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