

Resident Alien: A Conversation with Eamon Grennan

Don Stap

EAMON GRENNAN IS AN IRISH CITIZEN, born and raised in Dublin. He attended University College, Dublin, and came to the United States in 1964 to study at Harvard University where he received his Ph.D. He taught at Vassar College from 1974 until his retirement in 2004, returning to Ireland in the summers and when on leaves from teaching.

His books of poetry include *What Light There Is & Other Poems*, *Twelve Poems*, *As If It Matters*, *So It Goes*, *Relations: New & Selected Poems*, *Still Life with Waterfall*, *The Quick of It*, and *Matter of Fact*. He has also published a collection of essays on Twentieth century Irish poetry, *Facing the Music*, and two books of translations: *Leopardi: Selected Poems* and (with Rachel Kitzinger) *Oedipus at Colonus*. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation, and *Still Life with Waterfall* received the 2003 Lenore Marshall Award from the Academy of American Poets.

Don Stap spoke with Eamon Grennan at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, Florida on the morning of October 20, 2008.

The Florida Review: I've read that there weren't very many books in the house when you were growing up, so I'm wondering where your love of language came from.

Eamon Grennan: The short answer is I don't know. There were very few books, at least of a literary kind—I remember a nice set of Dickens that had been my grandfather's. I don't remember any books of poetry. My father was engaged with science as a teacher, and then as a school inspector. He read novels but my mother didn't read much at all. She read light novels and that sort of thing. There was really no poetry. It's very odd to me. I think it must have started somehow in boarding school. I went to boarding school at thirteen and I had become a reader by then, but a reader of kids' books, so nothing very elaborate, nothing precocious at all. And I'd go to the library in a place called Rathmines not far from where I lived, and ever since I've always thought of the library as a great haven for the young ones.