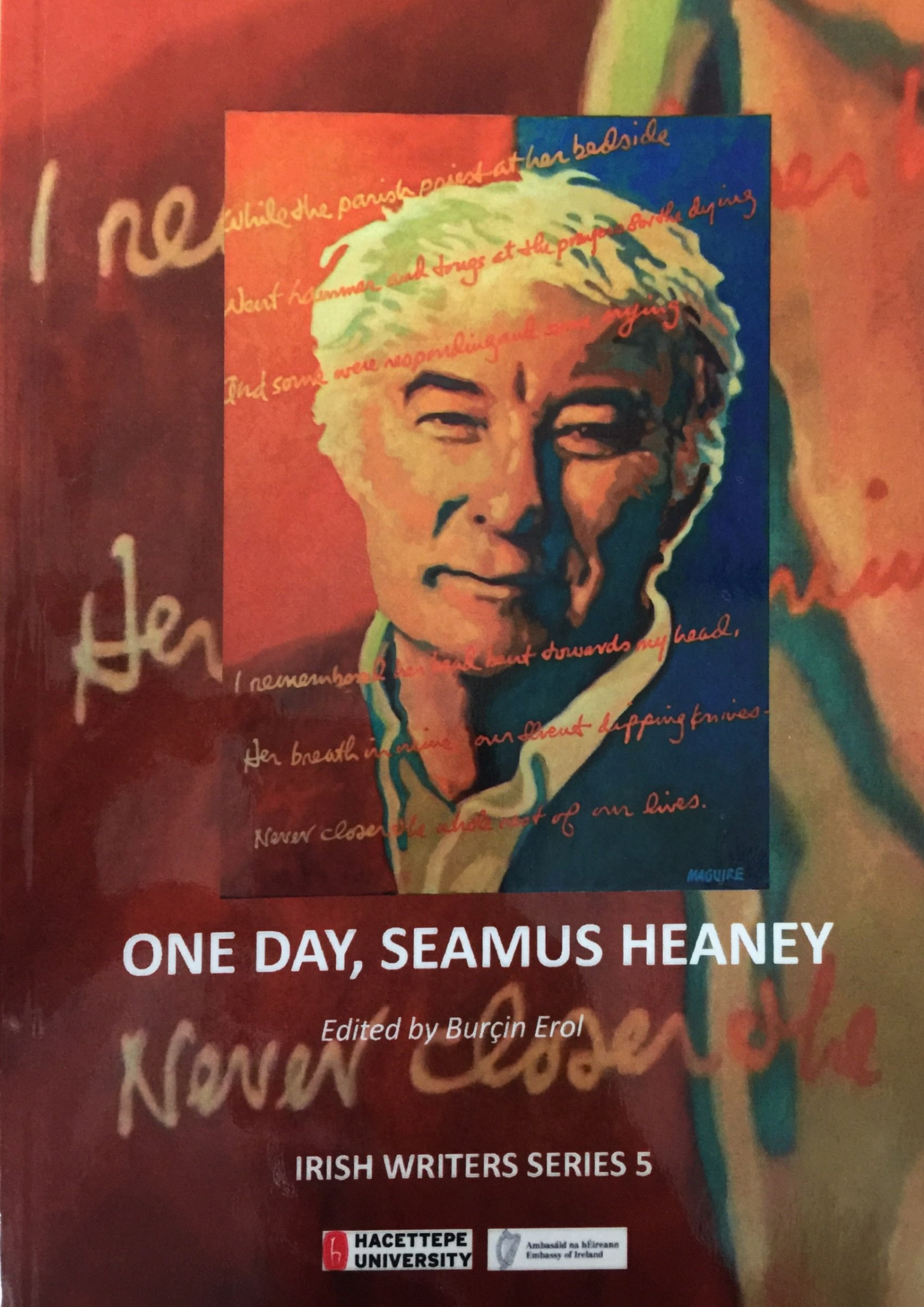


# ONE DAY, SEAMUS HEANEY

*Edited by Burçin Erol*

IRISH WRITERS SERIES 5

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY

Ambasáid na hÉireann
Embassy of Ireland

# One Day, Seamus Heaney

Edited by Burçin Erol

Department of English Language and Literature
Hacettepe University

and

Embassy of Ireland

**Irish Writers Series: 5**

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## Foreword

The chapters in this volume are based on the papers presented at the "One Day, Seamus Heaney" Conference held at Hacettepe University in 2015 with the collaboration of the Embassy of Ireland.

This volume intends to bring together the works of P.J. Matthews and the scholars in Turkey who specialise in and have published on the works or have translated the works of Seamus Heaney. The Irish nobel laureate was a poet, playwright, translator and lecturer. He was regarded as Ireland's national poet and his poetry readings were very popular. Being born in the North and coming from rural backgrounds and later being educated in the Republic of Ireland and Belfast he straddled both the rural and the industrial as he himself pointed out. Later he taught at Harvard and Oxford and hence established ties both with the USA and England. He won many prestigious prizes. His works are studied as a well established part of the canon in all English literature departments in Turkey also. Unfortunately just a few of his poems have been translated into Turkish by Cevat Çapan in an anthology of contemporary English poetry (*Çağdaş İngiliz Şiiri Antolojisi*, İstanbul: Adam,1985) and a few other translations have appeared in some journals. Heaney's *Beowulf* translation has been translated into Turkish by Nazmi Ağıl, and it is the first Turkish translation of the epic.

The first chapter by P.J. Mathews sets the ground for the following sections by presenting the three poets, namely, Moore, Yeats and Heaney, who all claimed the title of "Ireland's national poet," and Mathews compares Heaney with Moore and Yeats emphasising the common aspects. Huriye Reis in the second chapter discusses Heaney's understanding and definition of poetry and the

role of the poet through a detailed study of the poet's own statements in *Stepping Stones* and the other interviews undertaken with the poet. Nurten Birlik deals with the conception of time and space in Heaney's early poetry concentrating on *Death of a Naturalist, Door into the Dark, Wintering Out* and *North* and she argues that Heaney in these early poems tries to "rehome himself in a psychic timespace." Margaret Sönmez presents some observations on Heaney's language in the poetic representations of dead and dying bodies, focusing on the death scenes from six poems. These poems focus on death occurring as a result of age, disease and accident and they do not present mythical death instances or the death of historical or literary characters. Nazmi Ağıl, the translator of Heaney's *Beowulf* into Turkish, who is himself a poet, pòints out the challenges of translating the Anglo-Saxon epic into Turkish dwelling on the task of bridging both the cultural and linguistic and time gap. Osman İşçi focuses on Seamus Heaney's Troubles poetry and illustrates the special emphasis the poet puts on the act of listening and the skill and necessity of listening as a means to learn, perceive and understand the world and also as a method to reach his audiences.

I hope that this volume will contribute to the studies, understanding and appreciation of Seamus Heaney by providing new approaches and ways of reading his poetry.

**Burçin Erol**

**2017**

# 1

# Bards of Erin: Moore, Yeats, and Heaney

**P.J. Mathews**

Long before Seamus Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1995 he was widely regarded as Ireland's national poet and, unusually for a poet in contemporary times, managed to establish himself as a household name. His poetry readings were remarkable occasions which always attracted full attendances in large venues. His appeal, too, was cross-generational: not only did he attract a more senior audience than we might conventionally associate with poetry gatherings but he also had a huge draw on the young. I attended his readings many times but remember one in particular he gave at University College Dublin in the late 1980s. The largest lecture theatre on campus was crowded to overflowing with undergraduates and graduate students as much as with academics—all energised by Heaney's charismatic performance as they filed out of the theatre.

Very few writers over the past two centuries have laid indisputable claim to the title, "Ireland's national poet." To my mind only three figures have been so considered: Thomas Moore in the

nineteenth century, William Butler Yeats in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and Seamus Heaney in contemporary times. As such, it may be an interesting exercise to consider Heaney's role and influence as a pre-eminent figure in relation to his predecessors previously regarded as Ireland's national bard. In some respects Heaney combines salient elements of those two key literary ancestors, and in such comparisons there are interesting points to be made about the formation and trajectory of literary careers, and opportunities to investigate significant thematic overlaps and concerns.

Like Seamus Heaney, Thomas Moore was incredibly popular in his day both within Ireland, and internationally. In fact it could be argued that no Irish poet since Moore gained such levels of recognition until the emergence of Heaney almost a century later. Moore's triumphant homecoming to Ireland in 1835 was met with the kind of popular adulation that any latter day celebrity would envy. In terms of his work, Moore was primarily known for his *Irish Melodies,* which were published between 1808 and 1834. These lyrics, written to musical accompaniment, were not only circulated in print form but were widely performed in drawing room and concert hall, making a lasting impression on the popular culture of Moore's own historical moment in Ireland, Britain and beyond. Indeed it may not be too fanciful to suggest that in many ways Thomas Moore's life anticipated that of a latter day celebrity pop star. As Terence de Vere White noted:

> No poet, before or since, has ever been accorded such a welcome in Ireland. For Yeats, after the award of the Nobel Prize, there was a private dinner in the Shelbourne Hotel. Only a cup-winning football team or, perhaps, an Olympic medallist would call out such a crowd to-day.[1](de Vere White 244)

Heaney shared with Moore this phenomenal popularity: the two of them outsold many of the most distinguished poets in the English-speaking world in their time, and both of them had a purchase on the popular mind unrivalled by their contemporaries.

Both poets also seemed to traverse class and cultural boundaries with ease. Heaney came from a small farming background in Co. Derry but moved well beyond the purview of the community that nurtured him. Educated at St Columb's College,

[1] See also Ronan Kelly, *Bard of Erin: The Life of Thomas Moore* (Dublin: Penguin, 2008) 519-26.

Derry and at Queen's University Belfast, he achieved a distinguished international profile and taught at Harvard and Oxford. Yet Heaney sustained a deep engagement with the forces at work in his native locale. He was intimately connected with the places and people caught up in the Northern Irish conflict from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. A neighbour's son, Francis Hughes, was the second man to die in the H-Block hunger strikes in the 1980s. Although he lived in the Republic of Ireland during these years he was proximate to many of the key events and significant figures of the conflict. His early collection, *North* (1975) is a compact response to the crisis, even though it views the dark violence though the lens of ancient primal forces and patterns. Although much of Heaney's poetry reflects on the darkest hours in that bloody conflict it is, in fact, infused with a profound uncertainty about the proper response of the poet to the intractable conflict. Heaney's poems about "The Troubles" are assiduous and meticulously considered, and often say as much about the function of poetry as they do about contemporary events. In his poem, 'The Flight Path' he clearly articulated his distaste for any attempt to coerce him to represent tribal views:

> So he enters and sits down
> Opposite and goes for me head on.
> 'When, for fuck's sake, are you going to write
> Something for us?' 'If I do write something,
> Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself.'
> And that was that. Or words to that effect.
> (*Open Ground* 412-3)

For the most part, his work endeavours to avoid two extremes: he is careful, in the first instance, not to inflame partisan opinions. It is significant that he did not read his early poem "Requiem for the Croppies"—notable for its overtly nationalist tone—during the years of conflict. Secondly, there is a discernible aspiration in his work not to be too consoling and hopelessly optimistic about the possibilities of cultural harmony. Such an approach sometimes left Heaney open to the charge of being too removed from the conflict, of not adequately representing the grievances of his own people—the northern nationalist community.

Heaney's antecedent, Thomas Moore, was born into the ranks of the Catholic middle-classes in 1779. He aspired to inhabit the privileged sphere of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy but also harboured a deep resentment of the injustices which that class perpetrated on his fellow Irishmen and women. It is this ambivalence which informs many of his better-known works and which infuses the *Irish*

*Melodies*. He associated himself with what were considered to be dangerous and seditious revolutionaries but he also cultivated the favour and patronage of wealthy members of the British establishment, among them Lord Moira. He was at once a key figure in Irish cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century and a welcome guest in London society. In his most popular work he managed to capture something of the gothic mystique of old Ireland while appealing to the genteel conventions of British taste. He was a master at trading on his liminality, offering a sentimental portrait of Gaelic defeat to his British admirers while appearing to his Irish supporters as an active member of the nationalist revolutionary underground. Moore navigated the uneasy relationship between the British establishment and Irish nationalism with particular skill. Heaney likewise traversed these treacherous waters over the course of his career. In 1983 his Field Day pamphlet, "An Open Letter" protested against his inclusion in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* against his wishes. In now famous lines he wrote:

> ... be advised
> My passport's green.
> No glass of ours was ever raised
> to toast *The Queen*'. (25)

Yet nearly two decades later he would produce a widely acclaimed translation of *Beowulf*—the foundational text of English literature—which signalled a more relaxed attitude towards the English literary canon and its influence upon his work.

Like Heaney, Thomas Moore lived through times of political violence but had a more direct connection with one of the major Irish revolutionary figures of his time—Robert Emmet, the leader of the failed uprising of 1803. In contrast to Heaney, however, there is a reticence in Moore's lyrics to deal overtly with political themes. If anything, Moore is the master of ambivalence; his views are hedged and covert. He is often most political when he draws attention to what cannot be said. He is acutely aware of the impediments to articulation in the Irish context. One of the best examples of this can be found in the lyric "Oh Breathe Not His Name," a poem which reflects on the death of the revolutionary, Emmet.

> Oh, breathe not his name, let it sleep in the shade,
> Where cold and unhonored, his relics are laid;
> Sad, silent and dark be the tears that we shed,
> As night dew that weeps on the grass o'er his head.

> But the night dew that falls, though in silence it weeps,
> Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps;
> And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls,
> Shall long keep his memory green in our souls.
> (*Irish Writing* 131)

Here Moore can be credited with introducing the idea of the spectral or ghostly presence of the lost leader into modern Irish literature in English—the title, of course, referring to Emmet's famous speech from the dock when he famously declares: "When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then let my epitaph be written" (*Irish Writing* 23). The withholding of the epitaph ultimately suspended closure on Emmet's death, and took him into the realm of the undead, where he exercised an influence on Irish politics well beyond the moment of his execution. On the face of it the lyric seems to draw a line under the events of 1803; "let Emmet rest in peace," it seems to suggest. However, the word "shade" conjures up an image of the ghost or spirit of Emmet whose memory must be kept alive, though unarticulated. If tears are to be shed they must be silent and shed under the cover of darkness. At first glance it appears that Moore is indulging in stereotypical and disabling notions of Irish sentimentality. The closing couplet, however, bears a potent and ominous political message. If anything, it gestures towards the existence of an underground or parallel universe of clandestine revolutionary solidarity that will draw strength from the memory of Emmet. This is a classic example of the ambiguity of intention that characterises the *Melodies* and makes them available to a number of different, often competing readings.

Moore's lyric presents a narrative of the Irish nationalist struggle as a continual rising from the dead. From the seventeenth century onwards Ireland constantly produced charismatic nationalist leaders who inspired rebellions against British rule. Even though they ended in defeat, the memory of past resistance repeatedly inspired later revolutionary moments. In 1798 the rebellion of the United Irishmen was easily defeated by British forces but within five years the Irish rebelled again, this time led by the compelling figure of Robert Emmet. Emmet was hanged for treason by the British and, as already noted, in that famous speech before his execution he prophesised that his influence would live on long after his death.

There are, undoubtedly elements of this teleology at play in one of Heaney's early poems, "Requiem for the Croppies." This pre-Troubles poem was written in 1966 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising. The focus of the poem, however, is

the earlier rebellion of 1798, which inspired many of the rebels to occupy Dublin's General Post Office in 1916. Yet both historical moments collapse into one as the poem foregrounds the heroic sacrifice of a poorly equipped, hastily assembled militia against the military power of the British forces. Significantly, the poem aligns with the gothic version of Irish historical memory so evident in Moore's "Oh Breathe Not His Name":

> Terraced thousands died, shaking scythes at cannon.
> The hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave.
> They buried us without shroud or coffin
> And in August the barley grew up out of the grave.
> (*Irish Writing* 22)

The bloodshed and defeat of the revolutionary moment, the poem suggests, will never be erased but will extend its reach into the future. Once again the idea of resurrection from the dead re-appears as a central trope in Heaney's early homage to the revolutionary tradition. Indeed, this very idea is prominently expressed in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, which underwrote the 1916 Rising. That foundational document begins as follows:

> In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom. (Kiberd and Mathews 104)

Heaney's poem of 1966 recapitulates this narrative and seeks to locate the spirit of 1798 at the heart of the 1916 enterprise.

Another significant feature of Moore's *Irish Melodies* is his recurring preoccupation with Irish inarticulateness. The systemic impediments to eloquent cultural expression is a singular interest of his. As we have just seen, his concern with what cannot be expressed can be traced back to the revolutionary politics of his own moment. It surfaces elsewhere in Moore's work, however, around the recurring symbol of the harp. In lyrics such as "Dear Harp of my Country" and "The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls" the instrument appears as silent or broken. The severed strings of the mute harp become emblematic of Ireland's linguistic difficulties in the nineteenth century, as Moore reflects on a culture in profound linguistic flux, caught between two languages, and hesitant in both.

The theme of inarticulation appears again in Heaney's work—most forcefully in his early poem, "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing." In the context of the Northern conflict, the poem seems to suggest, conscious inarticulation has become a strategy of survival. The poem's third section describes a place where "Religion's never mentioned" and you are best advised to "hold your tongue." The "tight gag of place" leads to a culture of "whatever you say, you say nothing":

> Smoke-signals are loud-mouthed compared with us:
> Manoeuvrings to find out name and school,
> Subtle discrimination by addresses
> With hardly an exception to the rule
>
> That Norman, Ken and Sidney signalled Prod
> And Seamus (call me Sean) was sure-fire Pape.
> O land of password, handgrip, wink and nod,
> Of open minds as open as a trap, (*Open Ground*)

There is a clear critique here of the Northern Ireland statelet where coded into the society is a sense of privilege for one community. This is a place of silent exclusions and secret codes—the act of naming carrying with it profound social repercussions. There is in this poem too, perhaps, a degree of autocritique, as Heaney becomes aware of his own inability to overtly name the forces of oppression and exclusion acting upon him and his community ("Yet for all this art and sedentary trade/I am incapable"). There is a sense of frustration here that the poet lacks the moral courage to articulate a critique of such injustice. Yet, unlike Moore, there is no sense of the poet taking comfort in "the revolutionary underground." Once again, Heaney's anxiety about the place and function of his own art in a divided society is to the fore.

II

Before the end of the nineteenth century, Thomas Moore's status as Ireland's national poet was being assaulted by a young William Butler Yeats who had designs on that title himself. In his *Autobiographies* Yeats, who had a clear vested interest in discrediting his poetic precursor and rival, was quite explicit in his dismissal of what he described as Moore's "convivial Ireland with the traditional tear and smile" (207). Elsewhere he criticised Moore's highly popular verses for being "artificial and mechanical" (Foster 146). He also critiqued Moore for what he regarded as a capitulation to the mores

of the London drawing room and his indulgence in maukish sentimentality.

Yeats dominated the field of Irish poetry during the early decades of the twentieth century and, as the leading figure behind the Irish Literary Revival, easily established himself as the new national poet for the twentieth century. Indeed, there are many interesting points of comparison between Yeats and Heaney beyond the Nobel honours that they both received. The two men quickly achieved recognition nationally, and later forged successful international careers as poets. Both began their imaginative journeys invested in place—Yeats in Sligo, Heaney in Derry—and deployed late-romantic modes in their engagements with the rural. Yet both lived during tumultuous times of political violence and offered important public responses to the challenges of their own historical moments. Yeats occupied a central position during the Irish Revival as a founding director of the Abbey Theatre; a cultural initiative which had huge political ramifications in its own time. Heaney, on the other hand, was a leading member of the Field Day movement—a hugely influential project that inspired new thinking and promoted cultural and intellectual exchange as a response to the crisis in Northern Ireland.

Early in his career, Yeats produced a major statement on tradition and influence in nineteenth century poetry. "To Ireland in the Coming Times" is very clear about the bardic company he wished to keep:

> Know, that I would accounted be
> True brother of a company
> That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong,
> Ballad and story, rann and song; (*Collected Poems* 56)

However in the second stanza he very pointedly omitted any reference to Thomas Moore, preferring instead to be counted "With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson."

At this early stage in his career Yeats confidently aligned himself with what he considered to be the best of the nineteenth century poets while at the same time distancing himself from their literary methods and aspirations. "My rhymes more than their rhyming tell," he wrote, "Of things discovered in the deep" (*Collected Poems* 57). This poem is informed, therefore, by Yeats's belief that Ireland had not been transformed by the homogenizing forces of industrial capitalism as Britain had over the course of the nineteenth

century. Furthermore, it challenges the ideas of utilitarian thinkers like Jeremy Bentham who regarded the rise of the newspapers and the spread of industrialization as a victory of reason and progress over the forces of myth, superstition and folk beliefs. From Yeats's perspective such modernizing forces were to blame for emptying the world of the elements of mystery and imagination that he celebrates in this poem.

Heaney's poem, "Personal Helicon," provides and interesting companion piece to "To Ireland in the Coming Times." It is, likewise, an early statement of poetic intent in which the poet discovers things in the deep. Recalling his youthful love of old wells, Heaney savours one in particular for its profundity ("So deep you saw no reflection in it"). The poem draws to a close with a meditation on his artistic vocation:

> Now, to pry into roots, to finger slime,
> To stare, big-eyed Narcissus, into some spring
> Is beneath all adult dignity. I rhyme
> To see myself, to set the darkness echoing.
> (*Open Ground* 15)

This self-conscious statement of intent is less grandiose and apparently less egotistical than Yeats's. Yet there is an ambitious commitment here to the cultural aggrandisement of his own people. In his Nobel speech Heaney presented himself as:

> ... the eldest child of an ever-growing family in rural Co. Derry, we ...lived a kind of den-life which was more or less emotionally and intellectually proofed against the outside world. ("Crediting Poetry" 2)

In "Personal Helicon" he positions himself as both the representative voice and the apotheosis of his people. Heaney is the lad from the small farm, cut off from the world of letters all his life but still able to draw from the wellspring of the world's great literary sources. The poem suggests that there is something inherently pre-modern about his background that makes his imagination amenable to the great forces of creativity, stretching back to the Greeks. In a manner that recalls Yeats's earlier poem, Heaney is at pains to locate himself in his world as the poet who will "set the darkness echoing."

The Irish Revival that was spearheaded by Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge was famously parodied by the generation that immediately followed it. Patrick Kavanagh, for example, wrote that

"the so-called Irish Literary Movement which purported to be so frightfully Irish and racy of the Celtic soil was a thorough-going English-bred" (306). He was sceptical of what he regarded as the dominance of privileged Anglo-Irish figures at the heart of the movement. A later generation including Heaney and his contemporary Thomas Kinsella seemed to have a more temperate understanding of that period of cultural achievement. In Heaney's work the Revivalist impulse to engage with the cultural energies of Gaelic Ireland is still an important feature. The tendency to infuse Irish poetry in English with the themes, moods and motifs of Gaelic Ireland is present from the start. Heaney is not self-consciously showy in terms of his use of Irish but an awareness of the language and its inheritance clearly informs his work from the start. In this regard, his famous inaugural poem, "Digging" can be seen as a reworking of the well-known anonymous Gaelic poem from the seventeenth century, "Aoibhinn Beatha an Scolaire" ("The Scholar's Life").

Sweet is the scholar's life
busy about his studies;
the sweetest lot in Ireland
as all of you know well

No king or prince to rule him
nor lord however mighty;
no rent to the chapter house
no drudging, no dawn-rising

Dawn-rising or shepherding
never required of him;
no need to take his turn
as watchman in the night

He spends a while at chess
and a while with the pleasant harp;
and a further while wooing
and winning lovely women

His horse-team hale and hearty
at the first coming of Spring;
the harrow for his team
is a fistful of pens.(*Duanaire* 16-17)

Heaney's "Digging" describes his growing sense of alienation from the world of his father in terms that recall the juxtaposition of the privileged life of the scholar-poet and the world of manual labour

portrayed in the earlier Gaelic poem. Noteworthy in the earlier Gaelic poem is the striking comparison in the final lines of the harrow to the pen, suggestive of Heaney's analogy of the pen and the spade.

A more overt reflection on the nature and influence of the Irish language and its troubled relationship with the English tongue is given in his poem "Traditions" from *Wintering Out*. This poem, in three movements, progresses from a reflection on sounds, to language, to the literary text. It ends with an acknowledgement of the role that modern Irish literature in English has played in displacing the stereotypes of the stage Irishman:

> MacMorris, gallivanting
> round the Globe, whinged
> to courtier and groundling
> who had heard tell of us
>
> as going very bare
> of learning, as wild hares
> as anatomies of death:
> 'What ish my nation?'
>
> And sensibly, though so much
> later, the wandering Bloom
> replied, "Ireland,' said Bloom,
> 'I was born here. Ireland.' (*Wintering Out* 22)

Heaney, in this instance, plays particular tribute to the cultural achievement of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which he regards as some measure of compensation for the cultural fragmentation that resulted from the processes of colonisation and the loss of the Irish language. The open-ended idea of Irish citizenship represented by the Jewish outsider, Bloom, contrasts significantly with more narrow conceptions of identity promoted by Yeats. In later poems such as "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" the elder poet championed the spiritual immersion in place as a worthy national characteristic:

> John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought
> All that we did, all that we said or sang
> Must come from contact with the soil, from that
> Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong.
> We three alone in modern times had brought
> Everything down to that sole test again,
> Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.
> (*Collected Poems* 369)

This Yeatsian virtue of "contact with the soil" is interrogated, revised, and re-imagined by Heaney who is, likewise, a great poet of the soil and earth. Significantly, Heaney replaces Yeats's hierarchical ideas of the noble and the beggar-man with the idea of the soil as a great horizontal repository. This approach shifts the emphasis away from the concepts of a unity of culture and unbroken race memory, so favoured by Yeats, to a more complex and more accommodating notion of random cultural accretion and fragmentation that defies origins and final definitions. This is an idea that bursts forth in a huge creative surge in his collection, *North,* but is present in embryo in an early poem like "Bogland":

> The ground itself is kind, black butter
> Melting and opening underfoot,
> Missing its last definition
> By millions of years.
> They'll never dig coal here,
> Only the waterlogged trunks
> Of great firs, soft as pulp.
> Our pioneers keep striking
> Inwards and downwards,
> Every layer they strip
> Seems camped on before.
> The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage.
> The wet centre is bottomless. (41)

Archaeology provides Heaney with a potent way to deal with the gapped and fragmented nature of the Irish past—not the mythic past of Yeats nor the sentimentalised past of Thomas Moore, but the material past. It also provides a way of circumnavigating the difficulties of historical narrative. Unlike the historical record, which can be selective and partisan, the earth preserves everything in sequence, in a simple undisturbed series of layers—oldest at the bottom, youngest at the top. In this regard the work of the archaeologist, for Heaney, becomes a richly symbolic procedure for negotiating the complexities and discontinuities of the Irish past. It also provides him with a way of accommodating the multiple strands and influences that make up Irish culture—Celtic, Gaelic, Viking, Planter—while reconciling his vocation as a poet with his rural, agrarian background.

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# 2

# Seamus Heaney: The Poet in the Interviews

**Huriye Reis**

History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.
(*The Cure at Troy* 77)

Published in 2008, missing the publication of Heaney's last poetry collection *Human Chain* (2010) by two years, Dennis O'Driscoll's *Stepping Stones*: *Interviews with Seamus Heaney*, as the most recent and comprehensive book of Heaney in interviews presents Heaney's many interests as a poet and his engagement with poetry in accordance with his definitions and expectations. The title *Stepping Stones* derives from a definition of poetry by Heaney himself in his Nobel lecture in 1995 in which he insists that poetry is rather a journey than a destination. Poetry is, in Heaney's words, a journey "into the wideness of language...in which each point of arrival ...turned out to be stepping stones rather than a destination"

("Crediting Poetry"). In the interviews conducted hence Heaney produces what he calls a "narrative" of that journey of stepping stones produced "just by answering" questions of the interviewers as he does in *Stepping Stones* (126). This chapter on Heaney the poet in the interviews is accordingly concerned with Heaney's poetics as he himself explains and examines his poems as a poet and critic in his interviews with O'Driscoll and a few others. Heaney significantly develops a poetics of his own as the interviews revolve around some main theories and ideas about poetry written by Heaney and provide space for Heaney to contemplate his own practice and work as a poet in relation to main poetic traditions at home and abroad as well as his relationship with his culture as a Northern Irish Catholic poet. This study accordingly reviews Heaney's self-presentation in the interview collection of O'Driscoll's *Stepping Stones* as the main text of Heaney's poetics and argues that Heaney interviews reveal an understanding of poetry that is closely associated with the poet's self and experience as an Irish Catholic who lived on both sides of the border. Moreover, Heaney foregrounds an understanding of poetry as an art of truth and hope. In the interviews, hence, Heaney's definitions of poet and poetry are grounded upon a necessary link with his country of origin and the responsibility such origins lay upon poetry. Heaney, hence comes to embrace a poetic position that complicates and intensifies the poet's search for definitions.

As an "unignorable major figure" (Kennedy 245-46) in contemporary Irish poetry, Seamus Heaney is not easy to define or categorise. Born as a Northern Irish Catholic, Heaney made a notable shift from his rather humble beginnings as a "farm boy" to an internationally acclaimed poet, critic and academic. Born on April 13, 1939, at Mossbawn, his family's farm in County Derry, west of Belfast, to a Catholic family and a divided Northern Ireland, Heaney was the eldest of the nine children of his cattle dealer father and housewife mother. Although born as a farm boy, Heaney became a university student, studied English language and literature, went on to become a school teacher to teach English, and held academic positions as professor lecturing at Harvard, Berkeley and Oxford. He wrote poetry with about twenty books of poetry to his name, the first *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and the last *Human Chain* (2010). He was also a critic and a translator. Seamus Heaney is not only a national poet of Ireland but also the laureate of language and literature. He is positioned accordingly, in an address, by President Michael D. Higgins of Ireland, for his "contribution to the republics of letters, conscience and humanity" (Fox n.pag.). Similarly, Enda Kenny, the Irish Prime Minister, considers Heaney's death as the cause of "great sorrow to Ireland, to language and to literature" (Fox n.pag.). Paul Muldoon, a poet and friend of Heaney, stated of him

upon his death in 2013 that "It was almost like he was indistinguishable from the country. He was like a rock star who also happened to be a poet" (Fox n.pag.). When he won, in 1995, the Nobel in literature, it was for his "works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past" and also for his "clear-eyed analysis of the Northern Ireland conflict" (Michelle Feldman n.pag.).

Heaney explains, however, that his early recognitions of himself and development of his "feeling into words" were shaped not solely by his Northern Irish Catholic background but by the hybrid culture produced by the presence of the British there. In his 1974 lecture, "Feeling into Words" Heaney states that his poetic sensibility "began very early when [his] mother used to recite lists of affixes and suffixes, and Latin roots, with their English meanings, rhymes that formed part of her schooling in the early part of the century" (qtd. in Michelle Feldman). Moreover, the poetic career and the fame he earned as a result do not fit his marginal national and class background. Heaney in fact, views his poetic career as a battle won, "between Heaney and hegemony."[1] According to Heaney, his success as a poet who delivers poetry lectures as the Oxford professor between 1989-1994 shows how "a farmer's son from Derry ended up behind the lectern in the Examination Schools" (*Stepping Stones* 431). His development of a poetic self out of this marginal and unconventional background involves a sense of freedom which he describes quite unequivocally: Heaney's self seems to thrive for freedom and peace symbolised by the albatross and is also cognisant of the necessary involvement with life as a corrective agent. If defined as an animal, Heaney would "enjoy being an albatross, being able to glide for days and daydream for hundreds of miles along the thermals. And then being able to hang like an affliction round some people's necks" (Cole n.pag.).

O'Driscoll finds Heaney in 2001, the time of the interview request that eventually becomes *Stepping Stones*, battling with the overwhelming burden of being a major Irish poet with the Noble Prize to his name along with many other awards and books. Heaney's life then is characterised by "the daily arrival of ... a sackful of requests, invitations, proofs, academic enquiries, personal letters, manuscripts in-progress and glossy new books [in] a house where neither phone nor fax enjoys a moment's respite." Heaney's "presence at a book launch, his speech at an art gallery opening, his presence at a Friday night diner table, his reading, his lecture, his review, his blurb, his oration, his nomination, his reaction to some public event-everyone

[1] Heaney states that his class consciousness eventually diminished (*Stepping Stones* 99).

has plans that involve snatching him away from his poems" (*Stepping Stones* vii). Although Heaney as such seems to have little time to concentrate on writing poetry, in his interviews, often given on occasion of the publication of his poetry collections, or, as in the case of *Stepping Stones*, tracing the development of the poet and his poetry through the collections, Heaney not only talks about how he wrote his poems but also actively and systematically speaks about his definition of poetry and his position as a poet. To the questions about the use of poetry and its contribution to society and the poet's benefit from poetry Heaney gives several answers but mainly he develops and confirms his position that "poets themselves are finders and keepers, that their vocation is to look after art and life by being discoverers and custodians of the unlooked for" (*Finders Keepers* ix).

Although the questions multiply as the poetry collections multiply, it becomes clear that there is a, albeit ambivalent and elusive, poetic agenda Heaney sets himself to realise in his poetry. Heaney's responses to narrative prompts of the interviews steer off issues like gender and religion and seem to present a view of the Irish poetic tradition and Irish poet as predominantly and powerfully male.[2] His understanding of poetry, as he later is prompted to admit, is shaped in a cultural environment that both gave him a heteropatriarchal view of the world and of literature. Heaney interviews gather and develop a similar poetic stance resistant to the pressures of postmodern theorisations of poetry as unreliable fictional representations. Heaney believes in subject matter in poetry, and he "cannot conceive a poetry that hasn't a subject to deal with," he is disappointed with the state of the poetic language today, and advocates a plain style in poetry (*Stepping Stones* 449-50). On the one hand, there is the recognition of the change in his poetic style as observed in his expression of and direct engagement with the remembrance of things past in *Human Chain* published in 2010. It is clear, however, that, for Heaney, such personal experiences are always conveyed in a language and context of national significance. As Heaney states, one of the important items on his poetic agenda concerns the poet and his place in relation to his country and culture and as such this interest in defining the poet and his poetry links productively back to the relationship between the poetic self and the poet as a person. As Quinn states, Heaney's poetry develops out of the several binaries of his culture as a Northern Irish Catholic poet: "the binaries of Catholic and Protestant, politics and art, Irish

[2] For Heaney's sexual politics, see Nigel Alderman "Myth, History and the New Poetry" p. 68. Also Henry Cole's interview makes comments about "the feminists' attack on *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing.*" Also Fran Brearton's "Heaney and the Feminine" in *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney* Ed. Bernard O'Donoghue pp.73-91.

and English" (132). Indeed, as in "A Personal Helicon," whose title itself "announces the importance of autobiography," in Heaney's poetry (Quinn 136). Heaney's poetry sometimes is inscribed with the autobiographical involving the cultural and the national. His poem reads: "I rhyme/ To see myself, to set the darkness echoing" (*Poems* 40). As Heaney insists that poetry is an instrument of truth as well as being a guide to truth, the close relationship between his experience and the poetic truth his poems represent bear further significance. Indeed, Heaney furthers such affirmative classical positions about poetry by suggestions that poetry functions as a help and helps the poet in his endeavour to help others.

In this context, his poem "Digging" in *Death of a Naturalist* became his poetic manifesto. Having received a predominantly English education and being shaped by the English poetic tradition, Heaney defines himself as someone who "was at home with, personally and poetically ...in the British collective ... , published by Faber, poems appearing in the *London Review of Books*, friends with Blake Morrison and Crag Raine" (*Stepping Stones* 417). Yet his poems mark the historicity of such a position and attempt to redefine his relationship with the British collective. Indeed, an important conviction of Heaney with regard to his poetry is that, as stated in *Stepping Stones* and other interviews, Heaneyean poetics is generated largely by a close relationship between his poetry and his life in Northern Ireland, in which Northern Ireland and its people function as poetic inspiration and subject matter.

Accordingly, Heaney interviews present a poetics that acknowledges a regenerative bond between the poet's personal self and poetic self. The two Heaneys naturally collide and cooperate in his work: One Heaney constitutes in his Irishness, his birthplace, his childhood and his life on the farm, famously known as Mossbawn, and his parents and his education, while the other is concerned more with the person writing poetry and reviewing and interpreting poetry. Heaney, as he fondly remembers and critically reinvents it, considers his early life and its relation to poetry from a poet's perspective and allows an assessment of his poetry in the Irish poetic tradition and its political engagements through a viewpoint shaped by his first hand experience of life in Northern Ireland. He then subscribes to a view of poetry shaped by the American poet Robert Lowell's instruction "Why not say what happened?" (*Stepping Stones* 198).[3] According to Heaney, as a poet, he came to assume such a composite identity with two selves after the publication of his first poetry book, *The Death of a Naturalist* in 1966, which he considers to

[3] About the autobiographical poetry and Lowell's advice "State what happened" see Quinn pp.136-37.

be the beginning of the development or growth of another self. Heaney is aware that the "autobiographical creature begins to be implicated in the textual masquerade" (*Stepping Stones* 61). Still, his poetic achievement is also very much of a struggle between the two: "you begin to read and hear about this composite who has written the books, and sounds very like yourself, although there is going to be a certain stand-off between the pair of you" (*Stepping Stones* 61).

This collision that forms a significant part of his poetics, moreover, complicates his understanding of poetry as political. Heaney, on the one hand, recognises the political aspect of his poetry as almost compulsory because of his life as a Northern Irish Catholic. Once allowed space in his poetry, the autobiographical constituent in his poetry can be strong and tend to foreground a politics of minority. Still, Heaney insists that his poetry was "true to my spots" and was clearly an illustration of the kind of truth he aspired in poetry (*Stepping Stones* 66-67). As a result, Heaney's views on poetry seem to be characterised by a duality that his poetry, too, exhibits. Heaney does not seem to be troubled by the fact that recognising a strong connection between poetry and politics as an inevitable outcome of his background as an Irish Catholic involves some contradictions. It seems equally possible for Heaney to subscribe to an understanding of poetry that privileges self-revelation, and adopt a poetic position as one of romantic self-revelation, for instance.[4] According to him, the close connection between his poetry and his own is because he is not a self-concealing person[5] (*Stepping Stones* 475). On the other hand, he argues that the personal in his poetry carries significance only in relation to its contribution towards the revelation of the general truth: "but what goes on in self-presentation is no simple matter and one's analysis of one's own case can never be the whole case" (*Stepping Stones* 475).

Similarly, Heaney explains in a 1991 interview with *The Economist*, that for poetry to function properly and help moral improvement, it is important that "the poet is on the side of undeceiving the world, .... It means being vigilant in the public realm. But you can go further still and say that poetry tries to help you to be a truer, purer, wholer being" (qtd. in Feldman). Accordingly, poetry not only civilises and improves society but it, at the same time, educates the poet. Therefore, he is confident that poetry is an instrument of truth and it explores and expresses truth. In his reply to the question "What has poetry taught you"? Heaney

[4] Popularly acknowledged in criticism, Heaney's romanticism forms the initial establishment of his legacy as a poet. See John P.Waters, p. 98. For a critical comparison of such poetic authenticity see also Peter Middleton pp. 246-47.

[5] For Heaney's theory of poetic self and its relation to society see Johnston pp.121-22.

firmly states that poetry confirms that "there's a thing as truth and it can be told, slant" (*Stepping Stones* 467).

However, despite his emphasis on the significance of poetry as truth and the poet as truth bearer, Heaney does not engage with the definition of truth. It seems that truth is defined by common sense and is basically what can be observed and recorded as real and happening. As such, it is clear that Heaney's truth is accessible, explicable and single, something that can be observed in his representations of Ireland and life in Ireland in his poems. That is, Heaney's truth consists of his experience of life in Northern Ireland and his interpretation of it, as he turns his subjective experience into an observable universal truth. Accordingly, Glanmore, "the first place where my immediate experience got into my work," (*Stepping Stones* 198) and, an early poem, "Digging", he describes as when his "roots got crossed with" his reading (*Stepping Stones* 55) are equally representations of truth. Heaney, as Johnston states, introduces "Digging" as a poem that shows him, as a poet, "finding a voice" (121),which means, according to Heaney, that "you can get your own feeling into your own words;... a poetic voice is probably very intimately connected with the poet's natural voice .... A voice is like a fingerprint, possessing a constant and unique signature" *(Preoccupations* 43). As Heaney admits, his poetry of truth is thus "more or less autobiographical, based on memory" and requires a recognition of the poet as the ultimate source and instrument of poetry. Still, "the autobiographical content per se is not the point of the writing. What matters is the shape-making impulse, the emergence and convergence of an excitement into a wholeness" (Cole n.pag. ). Heaney explains that, for instance, in the *Station Island*, "the speaker ... was consonant with the writer behind it. There was a sense of public confessing" (Cole n.pag.). Although Helen Vendler argues that it was the Troubles that "forced Heaney ... into becoming a poet of public as well as private life" (1) Heaney insists on a definition of poetry that emerges from a close relationship between himself and his culture and characterizes his entire poetry.

Personal can be highly political, for instance. In his poem "An Open Letter", Heaney contests the validity of him being defined as British and being included in an anthology of British poets. The poem reads "my passport is green" and distinguishes the Irish Catholic poet from the British subjects. In retrospect, Heaney admits that he held a British passport until his move to the South in 1972 and had a summer job in the Passport Office in London and that he was conscious of "biting the hands that led me to the limelight" (*Stepping Stones* 416). Moreover, his problem with the definition of him as a British poet seems to have been generated by the

circumstances of the time. It was in 1982, Thatcher was in power, hunger strikes were going on etc. Still, it is clear that he identifies himself as a Northern Irish Catholic poet and subscribes to a collective national response in his rejection of the British as a defining characteristic. Indeed, Heaney's response is highly political. He states, "people from Ireland always felt there was a coercion when the 'British' word was applied to them ... the word may have been a mere convenience. In Ulster it was an imposition and intended as such" (*Stepping Stones* 416-17). Heaney's lines, at the same time, illustrate his belief that poetry is "to tell the truth", since such corrections are a matter of speaking and remaining silent. His Gaston Bachelard epigraph to "An Open Letter" suggests that hesitating to speak is the very source of the problem the Irish have: "What is the source of our first suffering? It lies in the fact that we hesitated to speak" the epigraph reads (*Stepping Stones* 419). "An Open Letter" thus serves as a poem of endorsement of the right to speak and speak at the same time of matters politically significant for the Northern Irish in and through poetry. Heaney insists that he "badly needed to serve notice that the British term was a misnomer" (*Stepping Stones* 419). Heaney recognises, in the same way, the importance of such politically expressive poetry in the development of Irish conflict towards agreement and recognition on both sides. For instance, it is one of the "stepping stones" that eventually brought the present day "Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Good Friday Agreement, and the slow, messy advance to a power sharing assembly and full acknowledgement of an Irish dimension in Northern Ireland Affairs" (*Stepping Stones* 419).

In relation to the complex relationship between his political background and his poetry, Heaney admits that "the simple fact of belonging to Catholic minority did not alone make him a poet, but once a literary aspiration developed, it took account of the hurtful conditions" (*Stepping Stones* 65). Accordingly, his Catholic perspective, in this context, is not a position taken "consciously" although "undoubtedly the work was affected by the bonding" (*Stepping Stones* 66) since, he adds, "you didn't grow up in Lord Brookesborough's Ulster without developing a them-and-us mindset" (*Stepping Stones* 66). Still, Heaney does not consider his poetry particularly tilted towards the "unfranchised" but admits that particularly in the early 1970s he identified with the Catholic minority (Cole n.pag.).

On the other hand, Heaney seems to have concerns about the results of such a definition of his poetry. In the first place, defining his poetry by its political interests represented by his minoritydom seems to narrow and limit his readership to the Catholic minority. Whereas, Heaney writes a poetry more universal in its concerns and

appeal. Hence, his principal interest, he defines, as "the reader in posterity" (Cole n.pag.). The reader he tries to address can be secured by flying "under or out and beyond those radar systems" such as Catholic or Protestant politics and present your work to "some just, disinterested point of reception. A locus of justice, a kind of listening post and final appeal court" (Cole n.pag.).

Consequently, Heaney positions poetry rather favourably. He is convinced that poetry deserves a high esteem as a vocation. Poetry is based on inspiration and it generates prophetic guidance. Heaney establishes a link between poetry and freedom, perhaps it is a link between his poetry and his aspirations to achieve such freedom through poetry. Poetry's thus elevated status requires that poetry is not coerced. On the contrary, it needs to be, like the poet himself, an albatross of freedom and peace and a reminder of injustice, freely. As stated above, Heaney's poetry hence can freely focus on representing his first hand experience of life in Northern Ireland as the basic material for his poetry and follow the poetic principle of truth and sincerity by representing "what happened." Such commitment to representing in poetry "what happened" constitutes equally a fundamental political position, too, which Heaney both confirms and evades. Poetry, Heaney insists, as in the classical period, on the one hand, both civilises and refines. It fulfils such a noble function by telling the truth. It is the task of the poet to produce a poetry of truth by exercising fidelity to reality. Heaney maintains that "the poet as witness ... represents poetry's solidarity with the doomed, the deprived, the victimized, the under-privileged" *(Government of the Tongue* xvi).

In addition to his definition of poetry in terms of Romantic self-revelation and subjective experiential truth, Heaney contends that poetry is inspirational and spontaneous. As he states in *The Paris Review* interview by Henry Cole, poetry is something that "happened" to him, something that "arrived" in his life and changed him for the better. Poetry for him "would come as a grace and would force itself through whenever it needed to come." Heaney hence celebrates his gift of poetry. He states, "The fact of the matter is that the most unexpected and miraculous thing in my life was the arrival in it of poetry itself—as a vocation and an elevation almost" (Cole n.pag.; *Stepping Stones* 456-57). Heaney's experience of poetry does not allow the poet's agency or active involvement in deciding upon a poetic career. It is rather that poetry "chooses" the poet, rather than the poet deciding to write poetry "with a sense of election or purpose or ambition. My pseudonym at Queen's, in the magazines where I published, was Incertus—Latin for *uncertain*—I was just kicking the ball around the penalty area, not trying to shoot at the goal" (Cole

n.pag.). That poetry is vocational rather than professional is something he advocates for the nature of poetry.

Accordingly, in an interview conducted at the time of the first production of the *Cure at Troy*, (a verse adaptation he says he decided to do because it represents a conflict similar to the one in Northern Ireland) he states, "I'm not a political writer and I don't see literature as a way of solving political problems" (*Stepping Stones* 382). Still, he expresses strong confidence in the power of poetry to effect a change in the point of view of the people. In this sense, he likens poetry to "the line Christ drew in the sand, it creates a pause in the action, a freeze-frame moment of concentration, a focus where our power to concentrate is concentrated back upon ourselves" (*Stepping Stones* 383). Heaney, in fact identifies the relevance of poetry to social and cultural life. He dismisses the label "political" but he would like to be considered as a "public" poet (*Stepping Stones* 385) and explains that "public poetry of the sort springs from the poet's inner state and gives vent and voice to a predicament as well as addressing the poet's world" (*Stepping Stones* 385).[6] Heaney explains that what attracts you to a poet is "that you're in safe hands, artistically speaking, and the work embodies knowledge of life" (*Stepping Stones* 386). Although "no poem is strong enough to stop a tank" (*Stepping Stones* 407), poetry still has responsibility to perform in order to affect politics and guide life. Indeed, according to Heaney, poetry's use can be harvested in what he defines as poetry of "good politics": Heaney contends that throughout the Troubles all poets, Protestant poets, Catholic poets had some notion that "a good poem was 'a paradigm of good politics', a site of energy and tension and possibility, a truth telling arena but not a killing field" (*Stepping Stones* 123). Similarly, in "The Flight Path" he relates a confrontation by a childhood acquaintance on the Dublin–Belfast train who challenges: "When, for fuck's sake, are you going to write / Something for us?" and Heaney replies "If I do write something, / Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself" (*The Spirit Level* 22). He explains that as a member of the Catholic minority in the North (Northern Ireland) he felt the need to speak up for the rights of the people but the involvement of the IRA changed everything for the worse: "You felt that being a spokesperson for the shift was honourable and, indeed, imperative. But all that certitude got complicated once the IRA began to speak on your behalf with an exploding bomb" (Cole n.pag.). Hence, Heaney describes his own stance as maintaining "a hygenic distance" and having "some non-confrontational but still contrarian stance" (*Stepping Stones* 387).

[6] Quinn states, "Issues such as this are never finally resolved – not for Heaney, not for anyone. Their significance ebbs and flows in relation to historical events"(137).

Heaney's political in-betweenness, his refusal to take sides and employ his poetry in the service of a political cause won the enmity of many people because of their conviction that he is "not sufficiently in-between." Heaney admits that "Some people in Northern Unionist quarters, for example, might see me as a typical Irish nationalist with an insufficient sympathy for the Unionist majority's position in the North. The in-betweenness comes into play more problematically in relation to the nationalist and republican traditions in Ireland" (Cole n.pag.).

It is in this context that Heaney compares the role of poetry to the healing effect of religion or a healer. As in the case of the parable of Jesus writing on the sand, Heaney argues that "In Northern Ireland, for example, a new metaphor for the way we are positioned, a new language would create new possibility. I'm convinced of that .... That's something poetry can do for you, it can entrance you for a moment above the pool of your own consciousness and your own possibilities." The kind of corrective power he associates with poetry, however, is not something to be activated on demand, as "the good that poetry does cannot be coerced. It is akin to the kind of intervention of a healer, a doctor or prayer that occurs slightly mysteriously" (*Stepping Stones* 388). As stated above, poetry itself is almost instantaneous and is not subject to volition of the poet. The poet is prompted to write a poem by "a subject, a memory, an image, a word. Even a photograph," however poetry is produced "... never deliberately. The accident factor, the surprise factor, the oops factor is important. On the other hand there are things that are in your memory for years" (*Stepping Stones* 408). Indeed, the political stance in his poetry is subordinated to the spontaneity of poetry as well.

His insistence on the centrality of Irish experience to his poetry seems to have a wider significance, in fact. Heaney suggests that his poetry as the poetry of "a Northern Irish Catholic with a nationalist background" is indeed an attempt to make the central tradition of English poetry absorb the experience of this minority as they absorbed the English tradition at college and university (*Stepping Stones* 90). This position also explains and justifies the share of the English and other (particularly American) literary traditions in his poetic career. According to Heaney, both the Irish and the English tradition benefited from his situation. In fact, Heaney considers his move away from his country and his consequent American experience, too, as important contributions to the development of Irish poetic tradition. He states, for instance, that, his Berkeley experience and the "Californian distance" led him "back into the Irish memory bank" encouraged by the Native American poetry, Japanese and Chinese poetry (*Stepping Stones* 144). California seems to have clarified, in this sense, his situation as "a Northern poet more in

relation to the wound and the work of Ireland as a whole." Heaney admits that "there has been change...in the world that produced me and change has also been effected in me by what I've lived through in the Republic and in America, and poetry is bound to manifest the reality of change" (*Stepping Stones* 170).[7] Still, he argues there is an essential element that does not change. He uses the metaphor of ripples to explain his poetry: "In a way, no matter how wide the circumference gets, no matter how far you have rippled out from the first point, that original pulse of your being is still travelling in you and through you, so although you can talk about this period of your life and that period of it, your first self and your last self are by no means distinct" (Cole n.pag.). For Heaney, the connection between his personal and public image can be explained through the ripples image. He states that his own achievement as a poet has brought down some of the barriers for the development of Irish poetry: "I used to think that if you came from a background like mine, your approach to the muse was shyer than if you came from a more bookish or artistic family but now I am not very sure" (*Stepping Stones* 99).

Heaney quotes his poem "Mycenea Lookout" to state that there is "No such thing/as innocent/Bystanding" (*Stepping Stones* 409) and that "You cannot distinguish between your condition as a creature of the times and your action as a scribbler." His poem "An Afterwards" reads "You aspired to a kind, /Indifferent, faults- on-both-sides tact" (*Field Work* 40) while his poem "Terminus" affirms "two buckets were easier carried than one/ I grew up in between" (*Haw Lantern* 4). Similarly, his poem "The Harvest Bow" suggests "The end of art is peace" (*Field Work* 55). His *Station Island* poem V states, "For what is the great moving power and spring of verse? Feeling, and in particular, love" (*Station Island* 73). In "Station Island XII", he is instructed "to write for the joy of it ... let go, let fly, forget/ You have listened long enough. Now strike your note" (*Station Island* 93). Heaney states that he wanted to do something different, strike a different note as a poet and it seems that that is what he achieved. His different poetry observes a strict commitment to truth, aims to please no one but the poetic urge and responsibility, avoids experimentalism although he as a poet is cognisant of the new movements and changes in poetry.[8] Such a change that complicates

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[7] See Quinn pp.141-142 for the kind of change that developed in Heaney's attitude to his position as a Northern Irish Catholic poet writing in English.

[8] He adds in his interview with O'Driscoll in 2008 "To Set The Darkness Echoing" that "Each poem is an experiment. The experimental poetry thing is not my thing. It's a programme of the avant-garde basically a refusal of the kind of poetry I write." Also in *Stepping Stones* p. 408.

a poet's definition of poetry as well as its main objectives comes with political and cultural change. Heaney identifies himself as an Irish poet writing Irish poetry at a time when Irishness was and still is much contested and had a large degree of ambivalence for the people living in Ireland. In fact, he hesitates to claim Irishness when "there are different versions, different narratives, as we say, and you start out in possession of one of these. Maybe righteously in possession, as one of Yeats's Anglo-Irish, say,—'no petty people'—or as one of my own 'big-voiced scullions' " (Cole n.pag.). According to Heaney, his in-betweenness and his inability to embrace one of the several options arises from his conviction that "surely you have to grow into an awareness of the others and attempt to find a way of imagining a whole thing. That really is the challenge, to open the definition and to make the domain of Irishness in Ireland—... open and available, and by now I think it really is a bit like that" (Cole n.pag.). Heaney clearly redefines Irish poetry and its achievements when he offers that there is a need for "our understanding and our culture and our language and our confidence to be Ireland-centered rather than England-centered or American-centered" (Cole n.pag.).

In conclusion, Heaney's definition of poetry as "visitation" albeit it is admittedly "an old fashioned understanding of poetry" (*Stepping Stones* 202)[9] grieves the fact that "reading your poetry as a bread winning activity ... commits some sin against the freedom of poetry" because poetry is still "in the realm of the gift and in the realm of the sacred" (*Stepping Stones* 202). Writing poetry allows you to "give out and keep to yourself at the same time" (*Stepping Stones* 204). Poetry is more about an artlessness and spontaneous direct address (*Stepping Stones* 193) and "the sound the word makes is crucial." Heaney interviews consequently aim, in Quinn's terms, "to generate enthusiasm in his listeners and readers for the work in question. He does not bring new historical contexts to bear on the poetry and he does not use poetry to theorise about the larger relations between art and society" (139). Heaney is rather "an advocate" to use another term by Quinn, and he advocates the view that the poets are responsible for guiding the new poets and developing and educating an audience for poetry. That is, "a poet does have a role and responsibility" (*Stepping Stones* 353). Significantly, in the Irish case, it seems this is kind of satisfaction with poetry Heaney expresses after the Good Friday Agreement in 1994: "Ourselves again, free willed again. Not bad" ("Tollund" *The Spirit Level* 69).

[9] See Livingston, James and Sarah Hilbert for Heaney's conservatism and Romantic legacy in poetry, p. 87.

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# 3

# Time and Space in Heaney's Early Poetry

**Nurten Birlik**

Poetry serves for rehabilitation of the lost connection with his roots for Heaney. Though this rehabilitation process is not as unproblematic as it seems at first sight, and though one can also detect a kind of anxiety about such a reconnection with his roots, we can still say that this rehabilitation process is a constitutive dimension of the speaker's being in and relating to the world. In this rehabilitation process, the dialogue between the educated man and his background of a rural likeminded community occupies the centerpiece and there is an ongoing concern with "the tight gag of place/And time" ("Whatever You Say, Say Nothing" 61-62). Although in the course of his poetic career his conception of time and space underwent a certain metamorphosis from a conventional one towards a more ryhzomatic one, we can still say that his connection with his "roots" remains intact. This paper deals with his conception of time and space in his early poems and looks at four early collections of Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist, Door into the Dark, Wintering Out* and *North*. I will concentrate mostly on the memory poems in which he relates either to his personal history or collective memory of his "tribe" in these collections. I will also make a very brief reference to *Station Island*.

In these early poems the speaking voice and the poet himself are not detached from one another and the speaker acts like "an artful voyeur" on his personal and collective history. This voice is an observer in isolation and represents the poet's historical self. This process of observation embodies in itself his present consciousness, his past memories and the intersection of the two, therefore: his poetry is "immediately connected to the world of his own direct experience" (Murphy 137) and this speaker reveals "the searching-out of private epiphanies lost in the all but unconscious memories of childhood" (Stevenson 47). His search for a stable ground of identity in his occupation as a poet mingles with his exploration of time and space within the context of this search. Thus place (immediate surroundings or temporally distant places), time (the past or the immediate living present) and issues of identity are the recurrent concerns in his poetry. At this point one cannot help referring to Eugene O'Brien, who says that Heaney "is willing to grant the gravitational power of place, language and history in the constitution of different forms of identity ..." (2). All of his memories which are constituted in the intersection of time and space could be summed in one heap and there are two distinct forms of being in these poems. Translating these memories and the experience of the rural man into the language of the educated, the speaker creates a dialogue between a community of likemindedness and a self-inflicted exile.

In these memory poems we can still talk about semantic and linguistic stability; about a deeply embodied epistemological certainty and idealism and a belief in celebration of the rural and social Irish context. There is a lack of linguistic self-consciousness as these poems do not destabilize the assumed potential of language to represent reality. In other words, we are given mimetic representations of empirical reality as he does not problematize the contradictions between sign and its referent. Due to this correspondence, there is a strong assumption about the self-integrity of the poems as coherent and complete. He uses language as a tool of communication and "constantly attempts to bring notions of place and identity under the complicating influence of the act of writing" (Eugene O'Brien 8). Thus, there is no aesthetic detachment as in Modernist poetry.

In these early poems, the speaking voice is not located in an unmapped no-man's land and the empirical reality he depicts is linked to social forms of collectivity and intersubjectivity, and the subject is still embodied and located in a familiar space which is characterized by relational elements. Despite all the differences between the subjective position he occupies and that of his

father/roots, he can still achieve contact with them but there is the underlying anxiety that these contact points are elusive and he may not re-experience them in near future. Still, there is no sign of a fragmented external reality as in Prufrock's case since the speaker is not dislocated from his empirical reality. This speaking voice emphasizes the particular contact points with the rural landscape and community spirit. In this emphasis, the subjective and the collective are linked and their intersection is poeticized. In these memory poems, he refers to himself as a self-inflicted exile or "an inner émigré" as in "Exposure" in which he says:

> I am neither internee nor informer;
> An inner émigré, grown long-haired
> And thoughtful; a wood-kerne
>
> Escaped from the massacre. ( *Poems* ll. 30-33)

Despite the underlying anxiety, we do not have a sense of solipsism in Heaney's speakers who are not locked into their consciousness and who are trying to communicate their psychologized material to the listeners. In these poems we have stable egos trying to communicate with readers with a similar ego unity. Thus we need to analyze the time and space in his early poems against the background of such poetic selves and such an assumption about the potential readers.

The speaker in his poems can sound at times nostalgic and troubled but he always speaks from a unified consciousness which is assumed to be the vantage point from which the external reality is rendered. This functioning stable self with a unified ego is coherent, autonomous, in control of his actions and thoughts. Due to the above mentioned mimetic nature of the poems and the unitary conception of the self, both the speaker and the poem appear as synthetic and aesthetic unities. This unitary conception of the self as in Cartesian cogito which is built on the split between the subject and the object, and the mind's ability to "know" the external world does not question the ontological certainty of external truth. Thus we can say that he is an empiricist as he relies on the potential of his mind and senses and takes what they report to him as truth. In other words, in his lines "the interchange between subjective inside and objective outside" (Emig 4) still counts. This unitary conception also implies that the world he reflects in his poetry is anthropocentric and as in Mathias's words "the centre of Heaney's poetry is always human: the emphasis is on the boy's imagination, on the shaping of the natural world by increasing skill and

understanding, in the end on the naturalness of man's centrality in his chosen environment" (16). There is grim irony in the depiction of animals as victims of natural forces. Regarding nature and animals, his representation of the external space mostly humanizes it:

> Heaney has no interest in a Nature whose systems, checks and balances, whose onsets of death and means of survival continue independently of Man. He is not concerned with the elucidation of any kind of biological order. The poet himself, and beyond him his family, his family's tradition in one particular place, and the terms on which that tradition has been hacked out, so to speak, from the natural environment- these are at the centre of Heaney's poetic intention. (Mathias 16)

The unitary self of the speaker reveals a systematic and stable representation of the space around himself. Therefore, his poetry does not drift away from a Cartesian understanding of space which is fixed and stable, as a container of human relations and natural phenomena. In this space he claims "a poetic value for the everyday and the commonplace" (Murphy 137). He depicts a range of experiences revolving around physical and material facts in the Irish rural life. A case in point is *Door into the Dark*, about which Douglas Dunn said that the poems in it were "loud with the slap of the spade and sour with the stink of turned earth" (qtd. in O'Donoghue 3). Likewise about *Field Work* Cavanagh says that the collection reflects "a side of Heaney that equates the use of imagination with honest labor and with a fidelity to loved ones and to the past" (136).

"It is a critical truism that much of Heaney's inspiration stems from home and memories of home" (Eugene O'Brien 44). Thus most of the time, physical space in his poetry metamorphoses into a psychic space in which he tries to reconnect to his remembered home. However, it would be unfair to take his poems as an attempt to reconnect to only his personal past. In *Door Into the Dark* for example, he "opens his proper door into 'the matter of Ireland,' by imagining history as an experience rather than a chain of events, by dramatizing his own imaginative experience of history, by discovering within his home-found a myth that fits the inconclusiveness both of memory and of Irish history, and by fusing the psychic self-searching of poet and nation" (Longley 68). The remembered home he is trying to go back to is also a collective cultural space which constitutes the past of his race: "Heaney is constantly unraveling the bonds that bind race to place while always acknowledging the strength of those

bonds and taking into account that they can never, and should never, be completely severed" (Eugene O'Brien 3). Conor Cruise O'Brien is in the same line of thinking when he says; "I had the uncanny feeling, reading these poems, of listening to the thing itself, the actual substance of historical agony and dissolution, the tragedy of a people in a place: the Catholics of Northern Ireland" (qtd. in Longley 65). When it comes to Heaney's conception of place, Murphy establishes parallelism between Heaney and Kavanagh: "he was a writer whose 'sense of place' differed markedly from that of the Revivalists, being drawn from rooted and immediate living experience. What Kavanagh offered Heaney was a sense of locatedness with which he could identify in a direct and immediate manner" (137). O'Donoghue relates Heaney's conception of place to his use of language and childhood memories, particularly, in *Wintering Out*: "the descriptive precision was put to further purposes: to evoking the places of his upbringing, often through a semantic dismantling of their etymologies, in the 'placename poems' such as 'Broagh' and 'Anahorish' " (3).

We can divide Heaney's memory poems into two, as having a linear and a non-linear evolution. In the poems in which he specifically refers to his personal history, temporality is a straight line and is expressed through spatial images. In these poems, the specific and personal time is given and there is an attempt to go beyond the place-independent specificity of modern notion of time toward a more place-related specificity. Against the backdrop of such Irish spaces, there are smooth switches between different time schemes and a gradual linear move from past to present or from present to past. Eugene O'Brien takes this interaction as grounded in his search for identity: "he posits a complex interaction between the givens of the past and the possibilities of the present and future, an interaction which is grounded in the enunciation of issues of identity, language, history, and culture" (3). Thus, due to this linearity and due to the above mentioned unitary conception of the self, there is a fully functioning memory devoid of any non-linear implications. Because of these switches between different time schemes, Heaney creates timespaces in his memory poems in which time is multiple but space is mostly stable. In these timespaces there is an emphasis on the interaction between imagination, emotion and intellect.

In the bog poems in which he refers to his tribe's past, however, there are implications of the mythical time, that is, a more cosmic sense of time is employed to convey the universality of the experience of violence. As Thwaite says, "Seamus Heaney has found a myth which

allows him to articulate a vision of Ireland" (qtd. in Longley 65). In these poems, at times, he is in a temporal limbo where he experiences an epistemological rupture and feels both connected and disconnected at the same time to his past and future. In such instances, we can problematize how he perceives the present moment in the bog poems. Some time ago I wrote on Heaney as follows:

> In "Digging" the first poem of his first collection *The Death of a Naturalist*, Seamus Heaney feels disconnected from his origins as he cannot dig with his spade as his father or his grandfather did. This is a source of anxiety for him as he feels uprooted and the spade is replaced by the pen in his world, but in the end he says that he will dig with his pen. If one looks at Heaney's poetic career one can easily say that he does dig with his pen in different terms. He metaphorizes the act of digging into a mythic and a psychic quest for the lost origin. In such a context, even a simple act of potato digging is enough for him to integrate his poetic material to the matter of Ireland or to the fusion of Catholic experience and the national history. To recapture the lost sense of wholeness he pushes "back/through dictions" and steps "through origins" and follows "into the mud." His poetry becomes "a dream of loss/and origins." While digging into a personal and a mythic past, the significance of art is double layered for him: on the one hand it leaves him rootless, cut off from his familial and rural history, on the other hand it offers him the opportunity to recover from the sense of rootlessness created by this disconnection.
> (180)

After going back to the same poems now I have a slightly different view of this rehabilitation process of search for a contact point with the lost origin. Now I think that, on the one hand this search promises him a kind of epic wholeness, a reunion with his roots, on the other hand it threatens his present egotistical unity. In such instances I feel that this rehabilitation process is a source of *jouissance* in Lacanian sense due to its implications of a promised wholeness, a response to his sense of Lack experienced in the present Symbolic register. On the other hand, it has an abject position as it is both very familiar and threatening as in "Blackberry-picking" in which Heaney deals with the inability to maintain the pleasure in life in relation to the blackberries and this idea of

transitoriness of good things is related to his childhood experience. In "Death of a Naturalist" he gives us a series of disgusting details like "gross-bellied," "slap and plop," "obscene threats," "farting," and "slime kings" and nature appears ugly. These ugly details remind us of the Kristevan idea of the abject which is "an uncanny effect of horror, threatening the logical certainty of either the subject/object or self/not-self binary. Abjection is thus the psychic experience of a slippage across the boundaries of the self, and with that a partial erasure of the borders of the psyche which define the ego." Abject is also a threat to the sense of unity experienced in community at large as it is essential to all culture and "is the fluid locus of forbidden desires and ideas whose radical exclusion is the basis of cultural development" (Wolfreys et al. 3). Such ugly details remind us also of Freudian idea of the uncanny which implies a "feeling of discomfort and strangeness which arises in the self without warning" and which "comes about in places where one should feel most secure, or which one is most familiar, this sensation of "not-at-home" or "unhomely" occurs within the idea of the home" (Wolfreys et al. 99-100). In such a context, we agree with Cavanagh who says: " 'Two-mindedness' in Heaney can sometimes mean blending, reconciliation, and fusing, but equally often, and perhaps more frequently, it means doubleness, antagonism, and competition" (68).

Another element that we observe in these poems is the teleological narrative as the metaphorized physical movement is usually vertical (as in "Digging" or "Follower") and as there is a linear flow between past and present. In the poems in which he includes his father, there is always a hierarchical situation between himself and his father. There is a yearning to go back to his personal and collective origin as the male body of the father is depicted in the act of digging or stooping into the motherly texture of the earth. In these poems, we see a troubled attachment to the father, as a biological and a metaphorical figure. The ending of "Follower" poeticises this troubled attachment beautifully:

> 2.
> I wanted to grow up and plough,
> To close one eye, stiffen my arm.
> All I ever did was follow
> In his broad shadow round the farm.
>
> I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
> Yapping always. But today
> It is my father who keeps stumbling
> Behind me, and will not go away. (*Poems* ll.17-24)

The same vertical motion of stooping or digging also occurs in "At a Potato Digging" in which he says: "Processional stooping through the turf /Recurs mindlessly as autumn" (*Poems* ll. 12-13).

In these poems, the workers are in contact with the Earth-Goddess, "a seasonal altar of the sod" ("At a Potato Digging" l. 16) However, the references to this Earth Goddess are multilayered and become another illustration for the abject, as she is at times "bitch earth" or "the black mother" or "the famine god." She is both the provider of a sense of origin and a phenomenon that threatens the wellbeing of the labourers. In other words, he is aware that the earth as the origin is deceptive. Being bottomless, it might be far from implying an origin. In such instances we cannot help agreeing with Cavanagh, who says that in Heaney "origins can be elusive" (46). Lyoyd makes a similar statement when he says that Heaney's references to home are not returns to "origins and the consolatory myth of a knowledge which is innocent and without disruptive effect" (qtd. in Eugene O'Brien 41). "Bogland" illustrates how Heaney problematizes his own search for an origin:

> Butter sunk under
> More than a hundred years
> Was recovered salty and white.
> The ground itself is kind, black butter
>
> Melting and opening underfoot,
> Missing its last definition
> By millions of years
> They'll never dig coal here,
>
> Only the waterlogged trunks
> Of great firs, soft as pulp.
> Our pioneers keep striking
> Inwards and downwards,
>
> Every layer they strip
> Seems camped on before.
> The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage.
> The wet centre is bottomless. (*Poems* ll.13-28)

This teleological narrative is epitomized by the concept of omphalos or its cognate terms, as the lost but still yearned for childhood or the origin is frequently represented by this term in Heaney's poetry. In *Preoccupations,* he says:

> I would begin with the Greek word, omphalos, meaning the navel, and hence the stone that marked the centre of the world, and repeat it, omphalos, omphalos, until its blunt and falling music becomes the music of somebody pumping water at the pump outside our back door ... the pump marked an original descent into earth, sand, gravel, water. It centred and staked the imagination, made its foundation the foundation of the omphalos itself. (52)

As stated above by different critics, for different reasons, Heaney's poems can be taken as part of a search for the lost origin or omphalos of the earth. Among these critics, Eugene O'Brien talks extensively about the centrality of home in Heaney's poetry (32). The titles of his collections reveal this search beautifully as they refer to a timespace on the move, *Wintering Out, Door into the Dark, North,* and *Station Island.* In these collections North, like omphalos, as a word seems to represent his lost but deeply desired sense of belonging. It is both the literal North, North of Ireland and the mythical North, Jutland as in "The Tollund Man" or "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" or "North." In "North" he says:

> I faced the unmagical
> invitations of Iceland,
> the pathetic colonies
> Of Greeneland, and suddenly
>
> those fabulous raiders,
> those lying in Orkney and Dublin
> measured against
> their long swords rusting, (*Poems* ll. 5-12)

Moving northwards implies a search for a home which is in imagination rather than on the map. A case in point is "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" in which he says:

> Come fly with me,
> come sniff the wind
> with the expertise
> of the Vikings- (*Poems* ll. 64-67)

On the other hand, we should also acknowledge that he feels deeply disturbed in this imaginary and psychic quest, as he says in *Preoccupations*: "When I wrote this poem, I had a completely new sensation, one of fear. It was a vow to go on a pilgrimage and I felt as

it came to me ... that unless I was deeply in earnest about what I was saying, I was simply invoking dangers for myself" (21). Here we cannot help remembering the Kristevan idea of the abject again.

*Station Island*, the title of his 1984 collection, is intricately linked to the North theme as it is a reference to the place of pilgrimage, Lough Derg, in the North. In the course of the poems Station Island as an expression refers to different forms of transitions, elusive spaces difficult to capture, a subjective but also a collective topography, an unmapped space in the north which invites but at the same time which is characterised by the uncanny elements. The ancestral ghosts that appear in this elusive timespace are familiar but also threatening. This encounter brings consolation to him as it implies an encounter with one's roots but it also implies a sense of guilt as these voices from the past force him to come to terms with the present reality. This guilt is both personal and collective. His cousin Colum McCartney in *Station Island* rebukes him as follows:

> I accuse directly, but indirectly, you
> Who follow atone perhaps upon this bed
> For the way you whitewashed ugliness...
> And saccharined my death with morning dew.
> (*Poems* ll. 73-75)

The references to Sweeney Astray, too, reveal a similar questing psyche which moves between different time schemes, locale, and imaginative planes, or different linear and nonlinear timespaces. Likewise, in "Funeral Rites" the speaker gives a funeral procession to Boyne Valley which has resonances in the Irish collective imagination as a form of omphalos. In this poem, time is both linear and non-linear at the same time, linear as it refers to a historical digging, non-linear as it refers to recurring atavistic atrocities throughout history. Interestingly enough, in these poems in which he tries to get connected to an imaginative form of omphalos, death is an important theme but in his handling of transcendence Heaney acts on rational grounds. There is distrust of Cartesian consolation and easy sentiment: "Even Eliot would have agreed, I think, that Heaney's personal impressions rarely make concessions to sentimentality" (Stevenson 132).

By way of conclusion, we can say that the attempts of the self to rehome himself in a psychic timespace characterize Heaney's early poems. This rehoming which is to be achieved promises a sense of psychic even epic wholeness to him but it also threatens his present

consciousness or unitary ego with its primordial implications. On the part of the speaker in the poems, there is a describing involvement in what he sees and depicts but, at the same time, one can feel the distance between the poetic material and the poet. So the poems become depictions of what Ireland had gone through in its history but, at the same time, they become a poeticized form of his troubled attachment to this history. In other words the readers can see both the particular, the personal, the local and also the national resonances. Then the space and time are both Irish and non-Irish, personal and impersonal. The fact that he is tracing the past of the Tollund Man to a Danish not an Irish ancestor to recapture this sense of wholeness consolidates the idea that this search takes place in slippery timespaces which belong to no place on the map but which are integral parts of the poet's psyche. The Tollund Man is from the alien North but his experiences are deeply rooted in his psyche. An encounter with the origin means an encounter with the repressed past of the subjective but also the collective material. Then what he traces after through the Tollund Man is his past as well as his present: accordingly he says: "In the old man-killing parishes/I feel lost /Unhappy and at home" (*Poems* ll. 42-44).This is a search for a sense of belonging or omphalos of the earth which would organize his personal/collective present reality for him. There are multiple interactions of different time schemes and double consciousness in Heaney's early poems but this double consciousness doesn't lead to dualism and disintegration as in the case of Eliot's Prufrock. This unified self reveals his impressions about an anthropocentric natural environment and they are constituted by the observational knowledge within the frame of a Cartesian perception of space. Mimetic nature of language and the unified self in the speaker in his poems contribute to a Cartesian conception of space and a teleological flow in time; and the poems themselves remain synthetic and aesthetic unities being devoid of any sense of fragmentariness as in Modernist poetry.

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# 4

# Heaney's Language in Poetic Encounters with Death

**Margaret J-M Sönmez**

Death is everywhere in literature and when describing encounters with the moment of death or with dead bodies writers and speakers often show altered or unusual patterns of language. This study presents some observations about Heaney's language in poetic representations of dead or dying bodies: what I shall (rather clumsily but, I hope, clearly) call 'death scenes'.

Heaney's poetic oeuvre is steeped in references to everyday death from age, disease and accident. These are most frequently introduced into the poems by verbalised memories of the dead, often by remembering their words or by addressing the now-dead figure. Much of the poetry is elegiac, if only because of being haunted by voices from the near or distant past: Ramazani (alluding to Yeats as do so many commentators on Heaney's elegiac mode) recognizes that, unlike many contemporary poets, Heaney "resumes old-fashioned poetic codes in elegies for friends and family, depicting the dead as singing masters of the soul" (xii), for instance. He also presents death as part of social life: there is a heritage of death and

there are death-related customs in every community. Violent death is also referred to in many of his poems, but this is usually done indirectly, often through multiple veils of allusion and only rarely are death scenes directly and visually presented. These rare scenes are most often (though not always) renditions of historical deaths – the killings of the bog people for instance, or references to figures from myth and literature. This study will not examine such mythical deaths or the demise of historical or literary characters, even though they may be seen as transferred representations of other, actual and more contemporary deaths. It will present language-centred readings of the death scenes from six poems.

There is a fair amount of consensus in scholarly and critical discussions about the language of Heaney's poems. Out of a list of the main areas of Heaney's language that have been identified as critically pertinent, a few items may be said to characterise the death scenes in particular. Only these features of his language will be introduced in the following paragraphs, with explanations that have been kept as brief as possible.[1] These are:

- "Heaneyspeak": a preponderance of material referents and of grammatical substantives, with sounds reflecting substances.
- Etymology, a device used for historicizing, localizing and/or distancing.
- Use of dialectal, informal, or colloquial expressions that emphasize the local and communal aspects, or the shared humanity and everyday aspects, of the poetic message.
- "Making strange" of both language and perceptions by use of expressions that may elsewhere seem familiar but are suddenly shown as unfamiliar, or perceived as if they were unfamiliar (a device that is the subject of the poem of this name).

"Heaneyspeak"[2] is a term that expresses the generally felt sense that his language is so highly individual as to be instantly recognizable; but the term fails to explain what it is in the language

[1] It may surprise some readers to see that I have excluded from this list Heaney's famed employment of sounds in moulding his meanings as much phonetically as through visual imagery or overt explanations. I am not paying attention to this precisely because it is so central to his poetic gift: it is a constant feature of all the poems, not something that is treated in a significantly different way in the death scenes; O'Donoghue calls it "the inextricability of sound and meaning which has been the basis of Heaney's poetic from the first" (129).

[2] The term was first used by Philip Hobsbaum (Curtis, 37). O'Donoghue calls it a "flush of eloquence" (12).

that makes it so characteristic, and this is because although it is easy to identify, "Heaneyspeak" is, itself, far from simple and in fact covers several distinct linguistic practices. As used by various critics, the term seems to refer to the bringing together of sounds with named material things which together make, or evoke, meaning. More than this, though, Heaneyspeak makes eloquent use of a literally substantive language (words referring overridingly to material things in the substantive form of nouns);[3] references to objects frequently replace abstract nouns, just as nouns often replace verbs. Another way in which this language is rendered more concrete is by regularly composing verbless sentences and by elsewhere using verbs made from nouns (O'Donoghue 130). Similarly evoking the static and stative is a preference for passive, participial verbs over active verbs. I will only occasionally refer to these and other semantic connotations of grammatical forms, but , they are, there throughout the poems - we will see in "The Strand at Lough Beg," for example, that the turn from past to present indicative plays a significant role in creating a dream-like atmosphere.

In Heaney's poems, reconciliation happens on the grammatical and etymological levels as well as phonetically (bringing together substance and sound)—and as a pervasive mood. In his hands the lyric becomes, time and again, a space for many different kinds of encounter and imminent reconciliation, leading to poems in which reconciliation is also immanent. Reconciliation is recognized only when two elements meet, and the familiar and the unfamiliar are the elements often brought together both linguistically and thematically in the poems. This is why "making strange" can, perhaps counter-intuitively, be an important step in reconciliation, and it is something that Heaney often represents linguistically, by presenting dialect or colloquial expressions that are as strange to one party as they are familiar to another, and allowing the strange and the familiar to meet, sometimes to enact or produce a compromise, sometimes even to cross over.

Turning to the scenes in which death is depicted, the first of these to be discussed id "Mid-Term Break." This is an early poem representing the death and dead body of a young boy- Heaney's little brother-who died after being hit by a car. The poet's recalling of his first close encounter with death is introduced gradually, starting with familiar sounds, moving to voices that are familiar and estranging at the same time, and progressing towards the core meeting or

[3] This interpretation is a combination of comments, mostly from O'Donoghue.

depiction of the dead body. At this point, we will see that Heaney does something that is at once very like and very unlike Yeats,[4] and that also adapts and incorporates classical funerary and poetic elements. By the end of the poem the lyric voice shows how the bereaved brother learns to understand this death, or rather to "acquire awareness" of it (in Hufstader's terms)[5] and to become reconciled to it through an altered perception.
Here is the first half of the poem:

> I sat all morning in the college sick bay
> Counting bells knelling classes to a close.
> At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home.
>
> In the porch I met my father crying—
> He had always taken funerals in his stride—
> And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.
>
> The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram
> When I came in, and I was embarrassed
> By old men standing up to shake my hand
>
> And tell me they were 'sorry for my trouble'.
> Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,
> Away at school, as my mother held my hand
>
> In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.
> (*Death of a Naturalist* 15)

Starting with a formal entry into elegiac mode, where school bells are presented as a different sort of curfew tolling the knell of passing time, the poem takes us quickly into the very topic of how

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[4] In "Easter 1916": I refer here to Yeats's shift of focus from scenes of the living community to metaphoric use of nature imagery and a sentimental depiction of death, before returning to acknowledgement of brutal fact of death, and ending with acknowledgement of the traditional role of the poet. Heaney's poem similarly introduces familiar scenes and people, presents a lacuna at a point where closer acknowledgement of death is demanded, and picks up when the body has been arranged to allow a conventional scene of death as sleep (here merged with the nature imagery); the intrusion of the shock of death is brief in this tender poem, and less dramatic having been introduced not by the drum beat of a refrain but by memories of the bemused child's sense of how the familiar context has been "all changed, changed utterly" with a sad acceptance of unfamiliar death into a new normality.

[5] Hufstader uses this expression when describing "The Tollund Man", which he says "enacts a process of acquiring awareness" (37). This is very similar to the tendency that O'Donoghue finds enacted or expressed in many, perhaps most, of Heaney's lyric poems.

death is verbalised by different people, and it is through the local people's utterances alongside gestures like crying and sighing, hand-shaking and whispering that the social and emotional meaning of death is represented: it is "a hard blow" according to "Big Jim Evans" and a "trouble" for family members to bear, according to others, while the grief-stricken mother is able only to "cough [...] out angry tearless sighs." Other people whisper in the presence of the bereaved—for them, conventionally, a muting of speech seems appropriate to the circumstances around death, and all of this seems strange to the young boy whose first experience of death close-up this is. The baby, still in a state of innocence, equally unaware of death and language, is the only one vocalising naturally, as it coos and laughs and rocks the pram.

Then, in contrast to the infant safely ensconced in a pram, "... the ambulance arrived / With the corpse, stanched and bandaged by the nurses" (15). There is no hiding from the physical presence of the dead body here, the inanimate ambulance and equally lifeless "corpse"[6] are suddenly there, and this intruding body is in an unfamiliar form, having been made to look like the product of a hospital. No comment is made about this arrival. The stanza break that follows these lines also marks a break in time, and in that interval on the page—and in the remembered experience (one night has passed)—both the body and how it is perceived have been transformed:

> Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops
> And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him
> For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,
>
> Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,
> He lay in the four-foot box as in his cot.
> No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.
>
> A four-foot box, a foot for every year. (15)

Typical of the early poems, which present memories of a young mind developing an understanding of the world through things (rather than through words), it is in a re-understanding of the material body through which the young poet's perceiving mind is

[6] Heaney's "Grauballe Man" poem makes a distinction between the words "corpse" and "body" thus: "Who will say 'corpse' / to his vivid cast?/ Who will say 'body' / to his opaque repose?" (*North* 29).

shown to make sense of the new experience—but making sense of it all took a little time and a change in the physical context and presentation of the object (the dead boy). At first death is a stranger and an intrusion, for what arrives is an object, an unfamiliar and inanimate thing belonging to the Latin-rooted language of hospital and mortuary: "the corpse stanched and bandaged by nurses."[7] The familiar brother, rather than the strange corpse, is not seen until the next morning when he is presented in both more familiar surroundings (the room, a cot-like place of rest) and more familiar words: "I saw him . . . paler now."

The poem ends with variations on conventional elegiac elements:[8] there are tender allusions to the classical topos of symbolic funerary flowers (here the bruise which has become a "poppy" and the snowdrops, which are suitably white, cold, small, early blooming, and pure in form) and the last line a variation on the classical and neo-classical conceit of finding a parallel between the age of the dead child and some other element in the poem – here the four years of age being referred to by the four-foot length of the coffin.[9] The intrusive coffin (also a word of classical etymology)[10] being now 'familiarised' in the poet's consciousness into the simpler terms of "cot" and then, less consolingly, "box". The poet does not openly express the ancient trope of death as sleep, but his poem shows it, and the change from "cot" to "box" shows the same jolt of recollection to reality that Yeats, in "Easter 1916" had enacted with his sudden cry of "dead not sleeping." To a child, "box" is, nevertheless, a more familiar word-than "coffin", and, in more everyday encounters, it is a less disturbing object than a coffin. In this way the word "box" presents a perception that is a compromise between the estranging and almost incomprehensible world of ambulances, corpses and coffins, and the family home with its pram, its sleeping child, and the cot. It represents a potential reconciliation between the finality of the coffin and the comfort of the cot.

The actual scene of death is presented with just five words that form a clause subordinate to the observation that the dead body appears undamaged, that it has "no gaudy scars." The death scene is

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[7] Ambulance < Lat noun *ambulantem, ambulans > ambulare* to walk; nurse < Late Lat *nutricia*; Corpse < Lat *corpus*; Stanch < Vulg Lat *stancare*. But bandage < OFr *bander* 'to bandage' <*bande* "a strip"<OHGm *binda*.

[8] This could also be seen, as Hufstader sees it in the Bog poems, for example, in "Punishment" as the poet "draw[ing] away" to "distant kinds of metaphor" (41)

[9] For example, the "seven years"for which Ben Jonson's first child was "lent" to him referring to the fact that he died on his seventh birthday.

[10] <Lat *cophinus* (basket, hamper) < Grk *kophinus* (same meaning).

simply this: "the bumper knocked him clear." And here the word "clear" evokes at least four meanings. First, the body, as has just been described, is "clear" or unblemished, an image of a pure and innocent body that will soon be reinforced by association with the simple form and pure white colour of snowbell blossoms; secondly it refers idiomatically to the fact that the body had been pushed away from the car's trajectory, out of its way; next, the word is also regularly associated with clarity of thought or understanding, in a religious understanding of death the boy could be seen as having been knocked into the presence of God and the clarity of understanding assumed to be gained after death; finally and less controversially, presenting the moment of death as being knocked into clarity is very close to representing the instant of death as a sudden change into a pure emptiness, an idea that is pursued in "Clearances". As a final note on the use of the word "clear" to express something about death, I would like to add that in "The Tollund Man in Springtime" (*District and Circle* 53), death is described as a "clear alteration".[11]

In the 2006 collection *District and Circle*, which appeared forty years after the publication of "Mid-Term Break", Heaney returns to this loss and to his enduring love for his brother, with the poem "The Blackbird of Glanmore." He again represents the dead brother[12] through association with nature, here in the form of a bird. His memories of the boy as "a little stillness dancer / ... / cavorting through the yard / so glad to see me home" are conflated with the greeting of the "hedge-hop" (or blackbird), "On the grass when I arrive . . . In the ivy when I leave." In this poem as in "Mid-Term Break", again the poet's memories of the boy's death are associated with local utterances, as he

> . . . think[s] of a neighbour's words
> Long after the accident;
> "Yon bird on the shed roof,
> Up on the ridge for weeks –
> I said nothing at the time
>
> But I never liked yon bird (76)

The poem both accepts and refutes the association of the bird with his lost brother, addressing the bird with "it is you, blackbird, I love."

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[11] Here too, the word "clear" appears in a natural scene that veils or replaces a death scene ("when they chose to put me down") with images of birds and water: "Panicked snipe offshooting into twilight, / Then going awry, larks quietened in the sun, / Clear alteration in the bog-pooled rain"

[12] now a spirit/memory, or "haunter son, lost brother," no longer a body.

The death of Heaney's mother is represented in "Clearances" in *The Haw Lantern* (1987), a sequence of eight nostalgic sonnets.[13] The point of death is described in the seventh sonnet, Here again, a familiar and local idiom precedes the encounter with death itself: "He called her good and girl. Then she was dead." (31) In this poem (after the line "the searching for a pulse beat was abandoned") the swerving away from the physicality of death and into nature imagery is more marked than in "Mid-Term Break," and marks also a move towards almost-abstraction and almost-transcendence. The abstract and transcendental are not entirely verbalised because they are represented as a lack of named material things, rather than being named as abstract entities:

> And we all knew one thing by being there.
> The space we stood around had been emptied
> Into us to keep, it penetrated
> Clearances that suddenly stood open.
> High cries were felled and a pure change happened.
> ("Clearances" 7, *The Haw Lantern* 31)

At the same time, these lines are highly evocative of the complex emotion of mourning while once more nodding towards Yeats' "Easter 1916" ("all changed, changed utterly / a terrible beauty is born") and Auden's "In Memory of W B Yeats") ("The provinces of his body revolted, / The squares of his mind were empty, / Silence invaded the suburbs, / ... he became his admirers" (14-17).

As with the two poems referring to his brother's death, Heaney brings death into a context that is linguistically identified as a community, and where the local linguistic forms also evoke "the contours of normal behaviour" (Hufstader 28); here it is the intimate language of a husband addressing his wife in terms that would only have been used in the domestic circle. In fact the negotiations of family relationships in and through shared language is something explored in earlier sonnets of this sequence, which show an affectionate awareness of the difference between the type of language used by his parents and that which the university educated poet now speaks.[14] The register of speech embodies the intimacy, and all of this is what is lost with the next words: "Then she was dead." After that loss no more words are reported; there may be "high cries" but

[13] O'Donoghue calls these sonnets "as concrete as he ever gets" (112) (but I do not entirely agree).

[14] The earlier sonnets show how he and his mother "agree on a 'middle voice' to avoid the difficulties of pretension or condescension", a voice that involves the poet "govern[ing his tongue]," as he puts it in Sonnet 4 (O'Donoghue 112-3).

these are presented in embodied forms: objects that can be "felled"; they are natural and temporary, like trees to be cut down; not just silence but a felt emptiness follow the death.[15]

The sensation of emptiness, and its penetration into the breasts of the family, is surely a masterful representation of one of the complex emotions we experience in mourning, as well as an adaptation of the Auden line "he became his admirers." It is elaborated and explored in the following sonnet, the last of the sequence, through substantiation or embodiment – perhaps again we could use the word transference – in memories of the chestnut tree that was planted at the time of the poet's birth, but which has now been chopped down, or 'cleared'. The (lost) chestnut tree, being "coeval" with the poet is an emblem of his particular (and now lost) relationship with his mother:

> I thought of walking round and round a space
> Utterly empty, utterly a source
> Where the decked chestnut tree had lost its place
> In our fronthedge above the wallflowers.
> . . .
> Deep planted and long gone, my coeval
> Chestnut from a jam jar in a hole,
> Its heft and hush become a bright nowhere,
> A soul ramifying[16] and forever
> Silent, beyond silence listened for.
> ("Clearances" 8, *The Haw Lantern* 32)

The death of yet another family member is commemorated In "The Strand at Lough Beg" (*Field Work*), and like the poems we have already seen this poem uses images from nature and different registers of language in his exploration of his topic; but it is a very different kind of death that lies behind this poem. The poem does not start with memories of everyday or ordinary life, but with an attempt to imagine how McCartney was taken and killed on a road by the Lough of the title. The first stanza refers to the "bloodied heads" of a "demon pack" pursuing Sweeney in the old Irish tale are followed by other foreshadowings of violence, being the repeated word "Blaze" ("blazed,"

[15] I should just mention here that in the two lines that give the sonnet sequence its title ("Clearances") the transference of the death scene to a generalized image from nature is a version of Yeats's remarkable shift between stanzas that depict the daily lives and later memorialization of the Easter 1916 political martyrs – the violence of their deaths is hidden away behind scenes of rolling clouds, flying birds, a flowing stream and passing horse and death (or, perhaps, sadness) remains "the stone in the midst of all."

[16] "to divide into branches or branch-like parts ETYMOLOGY example

"blazing"), the redness of the imagined traffic light, and the mention of "cold-nosed guns" whose coldness makes the reader horribly aware of the feel of a gun on the flesh, perhaps even on a bloodied head.

The second scene takes us to the poet's memories of the man in his rural setting (guns are still here, but for duck-shooting this time) and to their shared family and its way of life, with a line that binds the two men closely (but not intimately – the link is between "you and .... Mine", not "you and .... I") through the unusual device of placing four personal pronouns in one line and through the concept of access to a shared language: "For you and yours and yours and mine fought the shy, / Spoke an old language of conspirators" (17). This is the part of the poem in which local and colloquial language is used to evoke a context of communal normality and, specifically, non-violence:

> For you and yours and yours and mine fought the shy,[17]
> Spoke an old language of conspirators
> And could not crack the whip or seize the day:
> Big-voiced scullions, herders, feelers round
> Haycocks and hindquarters, talkers in byres,
> Slow arbitrators of the burial ground.
> (*Field Work* 17)

The third stanza starts in a same peaceful, almost timelessly rural mode (cows in the early morning mist). It is timeless because the tense has changed from past to present, even though the scene described is a memory or imagined scene from the past. Walking together in this scene, both men are alive. Then it transforms almost uncannily into the death scene[18] of this poem; the passage is on this:

> I turn because the sweeping of your feet
> Has stopped behind me, to find you on your knees
> With blood and roadside muck in your hair and eyes,
> Then kneel in front of you in brimming grass
> And gather up cold handfuls of the dew
> To wash you, cousin. I dab you clean with moss
> Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud.
> I lift you under the arms and lay you flat.
> With rushes that shoot green again, I plait
> Green scapulars to wear over your shroud.
> (*Field Work* 18)

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[17] I can find no explanation of this wording, and think it must be a local variant of 'to fight shy', ie to avoid the issue.

[18] Vendler calls it the "lurid" "death-vignette of Heaney's murdered cousin (60)."

Prefaced by the knowing phrase "I turn," the remembered "squeaking" noise of their moving through sedge has become a "sweeping" noise. The "turn" of the poet is a turn of imagination, a turn to a new scene and at the same time a turning back to the first stanza in which the imagination attempts to reconstruct scenes of his cousin's death. That unusual collocation "Sweeping feet" does not—in fact cannot—refer to any sort of footstep; it brings to mind the sounds of a ghost-like drifting along or of a body being dragged along, its feet inertly sweeping the ground. Having turned, the poet sees the ruined figure of his cousin, "on [his] knees / With blood and roadside muck in [his] hair and eyes." For all the mention of blood on his face (echoing the "bloody heads" of the first stanza), this scene and its continuation is a significantly softened and very indirect representation of McCartney's murder. Instead of picturing the shooting of McCartney, the dead man has first been presented a soft, companionable sound. His kneeling corpse seems to be frozen in time, and the poet kneeling in front of it is both an act of grief-stricken companionship and one of devotion; the poet represents himself as a worshiper in front of the image of a dead saint, an allusion to the sanctity of the martyred body that is reinforced in the last line of the poem; the ritualization of this death scene is furthered with its poeticized version of the laying out and cleaning of the body, the lyric voice stating that he washes him "clean with moss / Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud" and "lay[s him] flat" (18).

While the other elegies examined in this paper used natural imagery to "cover" or "soften" the representation of death metaphorically, in this imagined scene the poet uses moss and morning dew to clean the body, and young rushes to—literally—cover the dead man. The symbolic function of these images is underscored by the dream-like quality of this scene. It brings together an impossible mixture of things and words: sweeping feet, the appearance of the dead man alone, the convenient abundance of morning dew, the sudden appearance of an unexpectedly learned term alongside the instant creation of these "scapulars,"[19] made out of regenerated rushes, and the sudden appearance of a shroud on the body that just a few lines back was kneeling and bloody. Just as "I turn" looks, janus-like – to both the poet figure in the poem and the poet figure as writer of the poem, so do the two layers of man-made covering (shroud and rush-scapulars) refer to objects in the poem and something that the poem itself is doing. These two coverings have funerary, religious and ritual significances, and at the same time they represent the poet's attempt to "cover" the raw facts of his cousin's murder with the conventional shroud of an elegy and

[19] Scapulars are simple coverings of religious significance, that hang from the shoulder.

the mythologizing forces of poetry and martyrology (the green rushes also represent this death as the start of a natural and spiritual process of rebirth). There is nothing "ordinary" about this death scene, but it is nevertheless a transformed and explicitly unrealistic rendition of McCartney's murder.

"The Strand at Lough Beg" further departs from the other poems that we have seen in presenting no quoted speech and in imagining two alternative murder scenarios in the very first stanza[20], *before* moving to the poet's memories of the person and to their shared memories of place in the following stanza.

Towards the end of Poem VIII in *Station Island* the poet "pleads" with his dead cousin to understand the transformations he had made in the earlier poem "The Strand at Lough Beg." He represents himself as saying "I kept seeing a grey stretch of Lough Beg / and the strand empty at daybreak. / I felt like the bottom of a dried-up lake" (83). And McCartney as replying:

> 'You saw that, and you wrote that – not the fact.
> You confused evasion and artistic tact.
> The Protestant who shot me through the head
> I accuse directly, but indirectly, you
> . . .
> for the way you whitewashed ugliness and drew
> the lovely blinds of the Purgatorio
> and saccarined my death with morning dew.'
> (*Station Island* 83).

It is only now, with this poem that a direct and unadorned version of the death scene is given: the dead man simply states that he was "shot in the head". Only if both poems are read together (and that could not happen until *Station Island* was published) can a more complete image of a realistic killing be completed: the car, the cold-nosed gun, the head bloodied with blood and roadside muck in the eyes. The *Station Island* poem is itself distanced from events, though, by being a belated and imaginary conversation between the poet and his cousin, and by its short death scene being presented as part of an argument rather than as the subject of a depiction.

In "Keeping Going" in *Spirit Level*, the last poem in this essay, there is no "artistic evasion" in its depiction of the "gruesome event" of a sectarian murder.[21] The poem raises the question of whether it

[20] (one with a fake road block, the other with a car flagging McCartney's car down)

[21] Hufstader uses these terms when referring to "The Strand at Lough Beg" in *Field Work* (55). This poem is an elegy to Colum McCartney, Heaney's cousin.

is possible to use "make believe" as a way of "keeping going", and although endurance is presented as almost unbearably brave, the "make believe" that some types of endurance use is associated with the past and with childish play. The ambiguity of using imagination to cover up reality while also making something clean and good out of ugliness is presented through the poem's central image of whitewash and the whitewash brush.[22] This poem first of all establishes memories of Heaney's brother Hugh entertaining the family with, among other things, a whitewash brush. Descriptions of whitewashing walls and then of the house, and images of shared but everyday life move in the next stanzas to more unsettling, foreshadowing words and topics (fire and fear, for instance) in stanzas which continue to describe scenes from a rather hard life at the old home. The warnings or portents in these stanzas include the poet recalling "the dread / When a strange bird perched for days on the byre roof" (14) (cf "The Blackbird of Glanmore"). The last of these pre-murder-scene stanzas which starts with a reference to Macbeth's witches and their fire, includes the remembered voice of the poet's mother "Don't go near bad boys / In that college that you're bound for. Do you hear me? / Do you hear me speaking to you? Don't forget!" (14).

In the time represented by the transition from these lines to the beginning of the following stanza, real "bad boys" have come and gone, and we now have the death stanza which picks up, abruptly and bloodily, on the result of the bad boys' visit, before moving slightly backwards in time to fill in the gap. This is one of the few poems in which a death is described in detailed, documentary form:

> Grey matter like gruel flecked with blood
> In spatters on the whitewash. A clean spot
> Where his head had been, other stains subsumed
> In the parched wall he leant his back against
> That morning like any other morning,
> Part-time reservist, toting his lunch-box.
> A car came slow down Castle Street, made the half,
> Crossed the Diamond, slowed again and stopped
> Level with him, although it was not his lift.
> And then he saw an ordinary face
> For what it was and a gun in his own face.
> His right leg was hooked back, his sole and heel
> Against the wall, his right knee propped up steady,

[22] "Heaney's murdered cousin [is] the subject of [this] elegy", and this cousin is represented as "inveigh[ing] against that poem" in *Station Island* (Hufstader 71).

> So he never moved, just pushed with all his might
> Against himself, then fell past the tarred strip,
> Feeding the gutter with his copious blood.
> (*The Spirit Level* 11)

For all their departure from the gentler death scenes we have seen, these "sixteen slow-motion lines [devoted] to the gory event" (Hufstader 71) resemble the other death scenes in their use of colloquial language to create sense of "ordinary" everyday-ness, a linguistically familiar context into which the brutal event intrudes: the unnamed victim had been "toting" his lunch box where 'toting' is a word used in informal register,[23] often in combination with reference to a gun, as in the expression "gun-toting", given in *Collins English Dictionary*, and the car which drove up "slow" (not "slowly", as the standard form should be) was "not his lift"; furthermore, it "made the half" (a local dialect expression), and readers are expected to share the local knowledge of what "the Diamond" is (it is "an open area in the centre of [any Irish] town, typically used for car parking").[24]

In conclusion, we may feel that it is hard, and some may say wrong, to attempt any sort of reconciliation with death by act of malice; and to transfer contemporary violence into the mythic past or to use consolatory images from nature in the representation of the "unnatural" act of murder risk accusations of misrepresentations, that " 'whitewash[...]' the brute fact of murder and 'saccharine [...] ' the total annihilation of death" as Vendler (96) puts it, quoting Heaney. The enactment of art (creation and performance) in a time and place where murder has intruded can seem grossly inappropriate and at the same time hugely important. It could be an act of "culpable indulgence," (Heaney, *Government* xiii) an "offence against [the] suffering" of the victims and their families (xii) and an "affront to life" (xiii)—or to death. Poetry is needed, however, in the immediate and later aftermath of unspeakable events: for various artists "lyric action" can "constitute [...] radical witness" (xx) and can even be "expiatory" (xvii); it presents an almost triumphant "impulse to elevate truth [above beauty]" (xviii). The urgency of these issues is great enough to mould the first essay in Heaney's collection of lectures titled *The Government of the Tongue*, in which he presents poetry as a place in which artists "survive amphbiously in the realm of 'the times' and the realm of their moral and artistic self-respect" (xx-xxi), and cathartic in function, providing "an experience of

[23] With the meaning "to haul or lug" (thefreedictionary/toting).
[24] <Fawbie.com/2015/06/01/keeping-going/>. Accessed 16th Nov 2015.

release" (xxii) for the poet; but although the essay explores tensions between "song and suffering," they are not resolved.

As this study has indicated, Heaney's mode of reconciliation is a consequence of his linguistic genius as much as of his poetic message, and it operates in his elegies, even in those dedicated to murdered friends. The poet's response to the potential conflict of poetic directions outlined above is to question *within elegies themselves* whether the indirectness of his references to violent killings could be judged as a confusion of "evasion and artistic tact" (*Station Island* 81-82), and whether poetic re-enactment is mere make-believe and whitewash, or an essential prop to help humanity "keep going." Undoubtedly death as a subject is approached in the majority of Heaney's poems indirectly, and even the few and brief death scenes to be found in his elegies often use a language in which extended passages of metaphor may divert the mind's eye away from the physical realities of death while embedding them in the larger themes and meanings of the poems. I hope I have shown how the language of these passages operates in the making of their meanings.

I should like to conclude by adding one more comment to the "tact or evasion" discussion: in any poetic representation of violence and death, a message is made about these terrible events beyond a mere reporting or verbal repetition of their occurrences. Such poems do not ignore or divert attention away from the violence and death that underlie the work, for to touch upon the subject, however indirectly, is to acknowledge its existence. But there are many, very good reasons for touching upon the subject from a distance, amongst which Heaney's proferred suggestion of "artistic tact" should not to be underestimated. Artistically, too, we should note that there were good reasons for the Greek tragedians keeping deaths and bloody violence off-stage, not least amongst which is avoidance of the "polluting stain" (*Oedipus the King* ll. 114,165,1634) that curses any community that allows killings within its own territory. "Lustral Sonnet" in *Seeing Things*, which expresses worry about cutting up an old bed, shows Heaney's awareness of these ancient beliefs and may refer to a very good reason for not letting sectarian killings into his poetry: destruction in the domestic setting is "A bad action / So Greek with consequence" (35).

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# 5

# Translating Heaney's *Beowulf* into Turkish

**Nazmi Ağıl**

Although all literature is a product of its age and its people some works stand out among them for being more representative of the culture and the times they were written in. Interestingly, these works reach beyond their temporal and spatial boundaries and serve as conveyers of the essential human facts and values to future generations. The Old English *Beowulf* is such a one, and that is why, I believe it should be included in the "works to be translated" list of all languages for the transmission of world heritage. Today, I feel happy because I have done this job for my mother tongue. Below, you will find out about my adventure as exciting, scary and also enjoyable if not as dangerous as the hero's.

These poems were oral legends about their native lands, which they put down on paper after they settled in Britain and converted into Christianity. The longest of these surviving texts tells about the adventures of the Geat hero Beowulf, who might have lived between the fifth and the seventh centuries. The first part of the poem presents him as a young warrior, sailing to Denmark to free the Danes from a man-eating fiend called Grendel and then his mother

who comes to revenge her son's murder. In the second part, Beowulf appears as an old king, who has to fight this time a dragon guarding a treasure. He comes out of the fight again as the winner but loses his life too (Greenblatt, 5-6).

Originally, the poem is in the Anglo-Saxon language and so far, there have been more than sixty translations into modern English. In the introduction to his translation of *Beowulf*, Heaney explains how he accepted the job in the following words:

> This was during the middle years of the 1980s, when I had begun a regular teaching job in Harvard and was opening my ear to the unmoored speech of some contemporary American poetry. Saying yes to the *Beowulf* commission would be (I argued with myself) a kind of aural antidote, a way of ensuring that my linguistic anchor would stay lodged on the Anglo-Saxon sea-floor. So I undertook to do it. (Heaney, "On *Beowulf*")

The result of his attempt did not satisfy him and he abandoned it, turning his attention to other works. But in time, he says:

> An understanding I had worked out for myself concerning my own linguistic and literary origins made me reluctant to abandon the task. I had noticed, for example, that without any conscious intent on my part certain lines in the first poem in my first book conformed to the requirements of Anglo-Saxon metrics. These lines were made up of two balancing halves, each half containing two stressed syllables – 'The spade sinks into gravelly ground: / My father digging. I look down ...' – and in the case of the second line there was alliteration linking 'digging' and 'down' across the caesura. Part of me, in other words, had been writing Anglo-Saxon from the start.
>
> This was not surprising, given that the poet who had first formed my ear was Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins was a chip off the Old English block. (Heaney, "On *Beowulf*")

That surely is not enough to explain his success when the book finally came out in 1999, and won the highly respected

Whitbread Award for the book of the year (*BBC News*). Maybe a very important factor to account for the decision was the way he rendered the ancient poem into everyday modern English, thus showing its continuing relevance to his time and making it available to the public in an accessible language. About his method Heaney says:

> I came to the task of translating *Beowulf* with a prejudice in favour of forthright delivery. I remembered the voice of the poem as being attractively direct, even though the diction was ornate and the narrative method at times oblique. (Heaney, "On *Beowulf*")

Literature is a garden where paths often cross. I was introduced to Heaney's poetry during my university years, 1980s and like many people through his poem entitled "Digging", but it took years for me to see its relevance to my own life. This poem tells about the relationship between his father and himself. While the old man is working in the garden by the poet's window, digging the soil, the poet thinks though it does not look so, he is actually taking over his father's heritage or mission. The difference is only on the outside, and he is, indeed, digging with his pen, if not with a spade like his father. In the meantime, I had translated some of Heaney's poems myself, including this one too.

Like Heaney, I come from a rural background. I worked in the fields all along my childhood and school years, and when I was at the university, I got alienated from that kind of manual work, feeling that I belonged more to the intellectual world. This is reflected in my volume *Beni Böyle Değiştiren* (Ağıl, 134-196) where there are two parts, the first telling about my direct experience with nature as a child and the second about my visit to my village as an intellectual and as a poet, with many prejudices and deceptions in my mind. So, I think, I found something that appealed to my nostalgic side.

My first memory of *Beowulf* goes back to the first year at Boğaziçi University, Survey of English Literature course. We had a senior professor, Mrs. Flemings, who was so lively and so energetic. When she was reading passages from the text, she was acting and bringing the scene alive in front of our eyes. I still remember her skinny hands in the air while she shouted "I don't need a sword, I will kill Grendel with my bare hands." It was my first serious introduction to literature in English and I, like many friends, regretted the fact that there was no Turkish translation available. For years after that, it was

a mystery in my mind why nobody ever produced a translation of this poem. As for my own excuses for this delay: I think the most important was that I could not decide about what phase of Turkish would be proper to render this ancient text. For some reason, I felt that the language of the early Oguz Turks, as in Dede Korkut tales, would be the proper match with its harsh sounds and with its directness of expression. Yet, I never felt competent in this.

However, when I saw Heaney's version, I changed my mind. I felt how the natural ease of reading brought me closer to the poem, which I had read many times before. "Why make it old?" I began to ask myself, "Alliterations, repetitions and other stylistic aspects would already distance the text from today's habits of reading, why add more to it?" The poem is plot-driven, the reader who is curious to find out more about what happened next, could feel frustrated by all such formal obstacles. Besides, there was that cultural problem too, how true would it be to juxtapose two very far cultures living in distant geographies? So, retelling *Beowulf* in daily language seemed to be the best choice.

I believe in coincidences. When I came to Ankara for some job, I visited our beloved professor Talat Sait Halman in his office at Bilkent University. He told me that he had begun translating *Beowulf*, -I must say his favorite version was not Heaney and he was planning to create a Turkish version using three different texts- and he also had plans to translate Shakespeare's long poems- which came out from İş Bankası Publishing – and *Paradise Lost* too. I felt bad comparing my own lethargy with his enthusiasm at the age of 81. Upon my return to İstanbul, I wanted to make an attempt to translate Heaney's version. Seeing that the few lines I put into Turkish worked well, I could not sleep, and the first thing I did the next morning was to call Talat Hoca. I asked him how he was doing with *Beowulf*, he said he was fine, but he wished a brave man would take that burden from him, I laughed and said I volunteered. And so it was how I began, I sent him the first page and he encouraged me greatly to continue. Heaney says:

> Words in a poem need what the Polish poet Anna Swir once called 'the equivalent of a biological right to life.' The erotics of composition are essential to the process, some prereflective excitation and orientation, some sense that your own little verse-craft can dock safe and sound at the big quay of the language. And this is as true for translators as it is for poets attempting original work. (Heaney, "On *Beowulf*")

Another problematic element in translation was the alliterations. Turkish readers were not used to hearing such frequent use of alliterations and I could not know if it would sound monotonous. I discovered the solution in Heaney's following words:

> I don't always employ alliteration, and sometimes I alliterate only in one half line. When these breaches occur, it is because I prefer to let the natural 'sound of sense' prevail over the demands of the convention: I have been reluctant to force an artificial shape or an unusual word choice just for the sake of correctness. (Heaney, "On *Beowulf*")

Old words from Ottoman language might be useful when you need alliteration but I did not let this ease tempt me too often.

When he tells about how after about twenty years of postponement he gathered courage again to translate *Beowulf*, Heaney says that it all started with a word that he discovered was common in both English and his native tongue in Ulster. He also saw that the word "*þolian*", that meant "suffering", was also used in various other languages in faraway lands and thought that languages were not closed in systems but were the commodities of all the world and that translation would open new windows to him, to other languages. I also have a word that functioned as a key to unlock the whole translation experience. *Beowulf* begins with the word "Hweat!" which means, "listen" and is used by the oral poet to attract attention to his tale before he begins his recitation. In Turkish we use "Evet" in the same way, a word that sounds very similar to "Hweat". "Evet" also means "so, let us now continue from where we left" to an audience who already know the context of the tale. I took this coincidence as a sign that *Beowulf* was meant for Turkish. The first two lines of my translation as follows: "Evet. Mazide yaşayan Mızraklı Danlar / ve kralları gözü pek adamlardı, görkemliydiler" (Heaney 39). The alliteration can be heard here too, it is not disturbing at all, but there were also occasions where I lined up words that began with the same letter, like: "kudret kazandı, kendini kanıtladı" (39). Such intensive use helps give the sound of Old English, alongside with such glottal words, hard to pronounce, especially when they come together: "Veliahtı büyük Halfdane" (40), or as in "ahdimizi Halfdaneoğlu" (81), but sometimes it can be too much, when one loses oneself in the music of his own voice. I went over the text many times, and tuned down some places, pruning such fits of zeal.

Heaney says that he wanted to bring together the "consonantal rock of English and old soft vowel of Ulster" (Heaney, "On *Beowulf*"). That is why, I not only paid attention to consonants but also to the inner harmony of vowels in the lines, as in "kurtulan aman deyip uzakta kaldı" (76), Grendel "soluğu Heorot'ta aldı, daldı salona" (48), "neseplerini, geliş sebeplerini" (48) or as in "dalga desen, kırp diye kesen kılıcımı" (82).

One aspect of the Old English text is its repetitions. I think I created a similar effect when I used words in which a big part of the previous word is repeated, sometimes with a similar and sometimes with a totally different meaning, as can be seen in the following examples: "tadını çıkarın beraberliğin ama çıkarmayın hatırınızdan getirdikleri onca hediyeyi" (73), "akıl almaz bir yağmaydı ama yağma yok" (84), "canlarına kıydığı tam o yerde. Ama yerde koymadım kanlarını" (84), or finally, "Grendel'in soyundan tek bir soysuz bile" (97).

As I have already pointed out, one aspect of *Beowulf* is its directness of expression and also its preference for concreteness rather than abstractions. Hence, in my translation, I consciously avoided metaphorical or idiomatic expressions. Turkish is a heavily idiomatic language, and it requires serious effort to write in direct, concrete terms. Still, to give the true air of the conversations and of the oral recitation I made use of some idioms like "el pençe divan durmak" (89), bir eli yağda bir eli balda olmak" (94), "yediden yetmişe" (76), "tuz biber ekti" (76), or "kazın ayağı farklı" (53). Idioms are ready expressions, invented by ancestors to easily express a certain state or a mood in the best way. So they are great help for a story teller. And that matches the oral formulaic nature of *Beowulf* in a way, that is, the way the poet employs some ready-made phrases, used commonly to tell or describe certain things. Similarly, to make Beowulf not so much of a stranger, -though not as a strategy- I also resorted to some local ways of saying things, like: "Neyleyim, kaderi yolundan eylemek olmaz" (51) (meaning you cannot escape fate), like an Anatolian sage speaking, or "eskilerle yetinmez, hep yerinir yok diye / sırt dönüp geleneğe altın maltın dağıtmaz" (89), "hoş gelmişler, safalar getirmişler Danimarka'ya" (49), "Hayır ve şerrin kaynağı" (44) or "oflaya puflaya" (86). The following are also examples to this approach: "Bu dönek dünyadan çekip gitmişti bu gezgin canavar" (86), (this "dönek", "fickle") is my addition, as we often describe the world so in Turkish. Such additions I think gave some flesh and bone to the Beowulf in my mind as a real character.

Language is something we inherit from our parents and from our cultural environment. Heaney borrows words from his Irish roots, remembering how they were used by his relatives. In my text too there are words I heard from my parents when I was a child: For example the word "devşirmek" (127), (to gather), "borda kapı" (58) (street door) or the expression "hah diyemeden" (90) (before having a restful moment). I think words like "tekkol düzeni (80), teçhizat (91) and zayiat (97)" come from my military past.

This does not mean that I borrowed all from the older generations, on the contrary, what I like about doing translations is the fact that it gives me the chance to be inventive, it is a great pleasure to create a new word or a phrase or a new synthesis of a proverb yourself. For example, we have a saying "gözünü budaktan sakınmaz" (he does not spare his eye from the branch) meaning someone "brave and jumping into action without considering the results," just like Beowulf. But there is also Hrothgar's nephew, who talks with a similar bluntness, so I called him someone "who does not spare his word from his palate," in Turkish "sözünü damaktan sakınmaz Unfert" (72). Another example might be what I did with a saying that means "when you die all your treasure, which you cared so much for, goes to the wind," using the idiom "har vurup Harman savurmak" (90), meaning "to waste away all your treasure": "Çok sürmez çatar ecel, /çöker emanet beden, ölüme çerez, / ataların mirası ve yığdığı mücevherler / harvuran ellere harman olur" (90). Apart from these, I enjoyed calling the dragon "kanatlı kertenkele" (111) (winged lizard) or "yakarca" (114) (a little fly that bites and gives a sense of burning).

Each language has its own richness and happy coincidences. And in *Beowulf* too, there are some occasions like this, where the possibilities of Turkish add to the meaning. But the one I like most is when I described how Grendel left his hand behind after the first fight with Beowulf: "Grendel kaçtıysa da geride bir el bıraktı" (99), it is as if the word "el" meaning "hand" was torn apart from the word Grend-el, like a graphic illustration of what actually happened. My second best might be: "Fakat güneş yürüyüp gün ağarınca / hepsi **masal** oluyor / boş **masal**ar kalıyor geriye" (52).

Heaney tells us that when he was an undergraduate at Queen's University, Belfast, by studying *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poems he developed not only a feel for the language, but he also came to like the melancholy and courage that characterized the poetry (Heaney, "On *Beowulf*"). Indeed, it is a sad tale, the overall tone is melancholy, the reasons for this may be that these pagan

people did not have a belief in the after world, and the thought that all will end with death made them sad; or the climate and all the other living conditions were extremely hard for these people, and they were living precarious lives among diseases and frequent feuds and wars and they had little to be happy about. This mood brings the poem closer to the Turkish context, where the arabesque culture is deeply rooted.

However, there is also a humorous side of this tough hero. For example, when Unferth belittles Beowulf saying that he lost against Breca in a swimming match, he replies back: "Well Friend Unferth, you have had your say / About Breca and me. But it was mostly beer / That was doing the talking. The truth is this" (ll. 530-533). His humour led me to translate "the truth is" as "kazın ayağı farklı," ("the goose's foot is different from a bird's as it has a web," meaning that Unferth's account of the match was wrong) to make it more informal. Or in the same way, the sporadic rebellion of the devils against God is told as "they strove with God, time and again, until he gave them their reward" (l. 110). I translated this as "Tanrıyla dövüşürlerdi durup durup / Ağızlarının payını alıp otururlardı sonra" (42). "Bēot" is the Anglo-Saxon word for ritualistic boasting in epic tradition. So, Beowulf is often seen boasting of his feats, in a way that may sound embarrassing to a modern reader. For example he prides himself on how he killed some sea monsters, saying: "My flesh was not for feasting on / There would be no monsters gnawing and gloating / Over their banquet at the bottom of the sea" (ll. 562-564). I translated these lines as "Şölen sofrası sanmasınlardı bedenimi, /derimi dişleyen, etimi didikleyenlere / tahammülüm yoktu derinde" (54). Here I imagined Beowulf a little too capricious, perhaps expressing a bit of an exaggerated disgust.

Sometimes, Heaney seems to revel in the over use of alliterations to the effect that his lines sound absurdly comic, as in "He is hasped and hooped and hirpling with pain, / limping and looped in it... (ll. 975-76). Terry Eagleton comments that such lines "that the young Heaney might well have written in earnest, are really an ironic postmodern quotation, a self-parodic hint of the racket the whole poem might make if you bound yourself too grimly to its form" (Eagleton). And I agree with Eagleton that there is an intentional effort here to make it sound humorous, which can also be observed in the following lines describing Grendel's first attack on Beowulf's crew: "He grabbed and mauled a man on his bench, /Bit into his bone-lappings, bolted down his blood /And gorged on him in lumps (ll. 739-742), which I rendered as below, trying to create the same effect:

Hücum etti yaratık ve yerde yatan
Adamlardan birine geçirdi dişlerini,
Kemiklerini gümletti, kanını güpletti,
Löp löp yuttu etlerini. (59)

Lastly, I want to point out to a word that keeps disturbing me even today. It is the word "Hall" meaning Heorot. I thought of all the alternatives like "han," "konak," or "saray." Each had its own connotations that somehow did not match with the picture of that wooden building where Hroathgar had his throne and held ceremonies, but did not live in. "Han" is like a place where travellers lodge, "konak" is generally a big mansion with at least two or three stories whereas Heorot is only one floor and "saray" is too luxurious for such a primitive building. I decided on "salon" finally but I am afraid it sounds too modern.

Whenever we study an old text, I ask my students how it relates to their lives. So I thought also of *Beowulf* and what it and my decision to translate it means today and to my people and came to the following conclusion: In modern Turkish poetry, the narrative line is not that strong. One of the most common complaints is that poems lack coherence, and the preference is for each line introducing new and shocking metaphors or images. Besides, in many poems you cannot have a sense of what they are talking about, they are like abstractions. As a beautiful verse story full of concrete imagery *Beowulf* could be refreshing to Turkish readers and inspiring to Turkish poets too. Besides, for some time now, the world seems to have forgotten the word "sacrifice" and "heroism." The selfish individual of the capitalistic modern times is not willing to put anything before himself. Beowulf could be a model for him with his readiness to take every risk to help not only his own people but also those in faraway lands. Finally, in the poem, the real problem for the people is in fact shadowed by the monsters, though, of course, Grendel can be read as the embodiment of human pride, his mother that of desire for revenge, and the dragon as greed or avarice. Still a bigger danger is the feuds that threaten the nations, which is also true for the modern world. Therefore, I believe it is time to remember the long-lost values like promise, honour, respect, love and generosity upheld in *Beowulf*.

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# 6

# Listening to the Troubles in Seamus Heaney's Poems

**Osman İşçi**

Seamus Heaney is a poet who cannot be easily introduced particularly in respect to his literary work. No introduction can claim comprehensiveness about his life as a literary figure. As a productive poet, Heaney writes about various subjects such as rural life, the beginning and end of life, memories, family and civil war in Northern Ireland. Heaney's poetry is shaped by his close relationship with nature and his society. He represents contemporary issues in his poems from different aspects and through various lenses such as nature, mythology, and personal experience. Heaney represents contemporary incidents in Northern Ireland since he closely follows what happens in his homeland, Northern Ireland. The poet pays special attention to violence that resulted from the Troubles that erupted in the late 1960s. Thomas George McGuire in his PhD dissertation entitled "Seamus Heaney and the Poetic(s) of Violence" states:

> Much of this [Heaney's] poetry of violence has at its core some act of physical force or coercion that is

> politically or religiously motivated (the two being often inextricably intertwined), or it focuses on the psychological and bodily effects of culturally and politically-cultivated hatreds and antagonisms. These poems typically allude at some point to specific historical and/or contemporary acts of brutality, and then move, sometimes tentatively and other times decisively, to a conclusion in which Heaney seeks to better "understand the exact tribal revenge." (3)

As McGuire notes, Heaney, like other Troubles poets, writes about different forms of violence that the two communities viz Catholics and Protestants faced during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Heaney is a poet who is against violence irrespective of its perpetrators, be it the British Government or the IRA. He objects to violence irrespective of its origin. His attitude towards the violent incidents in Northern Ireland is helpful in getting an idea about the dynamics of the Troubles. Schirmer comments on this aspect of Heaney's poetry and he says: "Heaney has sought to create an imaginative space in which the historical forces behind the conflict, often read and misread in ways that fuel sectarian and political animosities, can be better understood" (353). Heaney is a poet who deals with the Troubles in his poetry not as a tool to support any ideology but as a device to understand the Troubles and to provide a better understanding of the Troubles.

This study is about how Heaney responds to the Troubles in Northern Ireland in his poetry and argues that Heaney is a poet who deals with the Troubles in his poetry to provide a clearer picture of his contemporary society rather than to promote any ideology. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the aspect of listening in Heaney's Troubles poetry. It may be beneficial to give the definitions of the Troubles and the Troubles Poetry. Gordon Gillespie provides the following definition for the Troubles:

> [it] is the term used to describe the violent conflict in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s until the late 1990s between members of the Protestant unionist community and Catholic nationalist community. The same term is also used to refer to the period of conflict between nationalists and unionists in the early 1920s at the time of partition. (249)

It is a conflict that affects every single aspect of life and leads to serious casualties on both sides of the community. Not only

Catholics but also Protestants suffered from the Troubles in the last quarter of the twentieth century. There are various violent practices as Gerry Kearns states: "road blocs, army searches, petrol bombs, car bombs, warnings of car bombs, swaggering sectarian marches, punishment beatings of neighbours, sectarian and reprisal killings, 'peace walls', and increasing religious segregation" (26). The Troubles is a period which started in the form of civil rights movement and turned into violence. This violent atmosphere led to deaths, injuries not only in Northern Ireland but also in Great Britain and Ireland. People from both Catholic and Protestant communities were subjected to violent attacks that led to deaths, injuries and suffering. With regard to the figures of these deaths, injuries and suffering Landon Hancock notes:

> The Troubles have been protracted and costly in every sense of the word. From the time of the first civil rights marches in 1968 the cost, in both human and material terms, has been steadily mounting. Between 1968 and 1994, over 3,500 people died and over 35,000 were injured in Northern Ireland as a direct result of the fighting. Robberies, bombings, assassinations, and terror tactics spread to engulf Great Britain and the Irish Republic, greatly decreasing the common person's sense of security and impinging on the populace's personal freedom. (par. 1)

The advent of violence redefined daily life, relationships between the conflicting parties namely IRA and Security Forces (Unionist Government and the British Army), and the two communities, that is, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. All forms of violence be it physical, structural or cultural affected almost everyone in society. Life was directly shaped by the Troubles. Catholics and Protestants were fully aware of their different religious identities and conflict between these two sects (MacEoin 36). People attended different schools, churches, and went to different shops. They did not live on same streets. There was a deep gap between the two communities during the Troubles in Northern Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s. Catholics and Protestants did not communicate with each other due to barriers in the streets of Northern Ireland and more importantly in their minds. The lesser contact with the other community led to the higher tension and more violence in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Violence related to the Troubles was not used by security forces only but also other non-state actors who were active on the ground.

As a result, violence led to more violence in Northern Ireland. This fact created more tension in society and fear among ordinary citizens. Heaney, sharing his personal observation of violence in an ordinary day in Northern Ireland says:

> If it is not army blocks, it is vigilantes. They are very efficiently organized, with barricades of new wood and watchmen's huts and tea rotas, protecting the territories. If I go round the corner at ten o'clock to the cigarette machine or the chip shop, there are the gentlemen with flashlights, of mature years and determined mien, who will want to know my business. How far they are in agreement with the sentiments blazoned on the wall at the far end of the street I have not yet enquired. But 'Keep Ulster Protestant' and 'Keep Blacks and Fenians out of Ulster' are there to remind me that there are attitudes around here other than defensive ones. [...] I walk back-'Good-night now, sir'-past a bank that was blown up a couple of months ago and a car showroom that went three weeks ago. (*Preoccupations* 31)

Northern Ireland suffered from hatred, enmity and armed conflict in this period. The Troubles, however, did not erupt overnight in 1969. The history of Ireland (and Northern Ireland later)-within the context of its relations with the United Kingdom-is full of all forms of violence that is defined as the Troubles. The Troubles' history goes back to earlier centuries in this land. In this regard, Gary MacEoin notes "From the beginning of the Anglo-Norman invasion, every effort was made to destroy the Irish system of learning and way of life" (118). There was an attempt to destroy the Irish people through structural and cultural forms of violence since learning and way of life are significant constituents of structural and cultural life. Throughout Irish history, there has been a detailed programme to exercise these forms of violence in Ireland since:

> Fifteenth century legislation known as Poynings Law provided that all acts of Irish parliaments were to be subjected to review or abrogation by the English king and his council, and that the Irish Parliament had no control over the executive named for Ireland by the English king. In addition, it forbade the use of Irish law, Irish names, Irish dress, and the Irish language by the English settled in Ireland. (MacEoin 118)

Literature, in this case poetry, is not free from this phenomenon and is shaped by the Troubles.

Another term that needs to be defined is the Troubles Poetry. There is no clear-cut and widely accepted definition of the Troubles Poetry due to the complexity of the problems in this land. This difficulty is directly related to the scope of the Troubles. Given the depth of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, it is not easy to draw a framework for Troubles Poetry. The following definition indicates the wide scope of Troubles Poetry; "any poem by a Northern Irish poet since 1968, on whatever subject could be termed a Troubles poem, in that it may, consciously or unconsciously, reflect the context in which it was written" (Ormsby xviii). In other words, any poem written during the Troubles period is considered to be a part of the Troubles Poetry. The political situation in Northern Ireland affected also the literary atmosphere, and the works. This troubled political atmosphere constitutes one of the main themes in the Troubles Poetry. Violence is one of the most common subjects that the poets deal with in their poems. As Lloyd asserts "With the possible exception of greenness, no quality has more frequently and repetitiously been attributed to Ireland than violence" (125). Lloyd draws attention to the dominance of violence in literature related to Northern Ireland. The poets' mind and as a result literary productions are shaped by contemporary incidents.

Hufstader states that "In the mid-seventies, Northern Irish poets began most explicitly to respond to the events of the province" (5). There was no way to stay away from the Troubles or to be free from its impact in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Violence resulting from the Troubles inspired numerous literary works in this period. Denis Donoghue remarks "much of Irish literature has been provoked by violence of the Troubles," (184) in other words, the Troubles was one of the main dynamics of literature. As a result, the Troubles Poetry is particularly concerned with severity of violence, discrimination, unemployment, enmity and hostility between the peoples from different religious sects, and economic, social and cultural rights in Northern Ireland.

Heaney deals with the Troubles from different angles and provides significant insights into the problems that Northern Ireland experienced in the 1970s. The Troubles Poetry of Heaney is about the sorrows, inequalities, gap between the communities resulting from the Troubles. Listening is an important aspect of the Troubles Poetry of Heaney. In fact, listening is important for the poet himself. Heaney talks about listening in his 1995 Nobel Lecture entitled "Crediting

Poetry." In this lecture, he foregrounds the function of listening in his literary career, and how it shaped his poetry. After talking about silence regarding nature in his living area while he was young, Heaney refers to the social atmosphere of World War II. He says he was learning what was happening around the world through hearing, in fact overhearing. The voice of the radio served as a source of information for Heaney. While he learned through overhearing during his childhood, listening gained a significant place later in his life. Overhearing is replaced with listening in his life. In this regard, Heaney says "Then as the years went on and my listening became more deliberate, I would climb up on an arm of our big sofa to get my ear closer to the wireless speaker" ("Crediting Poetry"). As stated in this quotation, Heaney observed what was going on around him through overhearing, hearing and listening. Listening, unlike overhearing and/or hearing, is deliberate and requires attention. Therefore, listening is one of the crucial elements of perceiving and understanding a subject. Richard Rankin Russell, in his analysis of Heaney's poem "Digging," a poem from the *Death of a Naturalist,* notes: "This listening represents Heaney's typical poetic posture that he displays time and again in his poems" (180). Listening, which started in the form of overhearing, was significant for Heaney because he broadened his understanding of the world through this medium.

Heaney is aware of his focus on the listening aspect in his poetry. Listening, for Heaney, is a way to learn and internalise a subject for his poetry. In other words, he uses his listening skills as a meditation method and to delve into the core of the Troubles. He refers to the significance of listening skills in his poetry and remarks: "I have always listened for poems, they come sometimes like bodies come out of a bog, almost complete, seeming to have been laid down a long time ago, surfacing with a touch of mystery" (*Preoccupations* 34). The poet relies on his listening to observe, understand and interpret the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Listening is one of the skills to learn, perceive, and understand what is happening in our world. Learning what is happening around himself is important for Heaney since it improves his understanding. In this regard, Michael Parker writes:

> Throughout the 1970s and 1980s when the Northern conflict was at its most intense, Heaney's antennae had been consistently turned to foreign stations, to voices, times and cultures far removed from his own, not simply as a means of extending his poetic range

> but in order to enrich his understanding of others' history. (370)

The reference to "understanding of others" in this quote can be expanded to the conflicting parties in Northern Ireland. Thus, listening is a tool to understand for Heaney. Moreover, Heaney applies the listening skills, in the form of auditory imagery, to convey his poetic message. Heaney is not a passive listener because he targets his audiences' listening skills in his Troubles Poetry. The listening skill becomes a method to reach his audience.

The listening skills have two different, though equally significant, functions for Heaney's Troubles Poetry. These functions are observing the Troubles in Northern Ireland and reaching his audience in this regard. Heaney uses sound devices, and targets listening skills in the forms of auditory imagery and metaphors. Therefore, this study will use the terms auditory imagery and metaphors to analyse the relevant parts of some of his poems.

Although much of Heaney's early poetry can be considered as Troubles Poetry, and it is easy to notice social problems or the Troubles, this study will analyse four poems: "Funeral Rites," "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing," from *North* (1975) and, "Casualty" and "The Toome Road" from *Field Work* (1979). *North* is a collection that clearly addresses the Troubles in Northern Ireland. While Heaney represents problems of religious identity, the language issue in his previous collections, *North* is a work that directly focuses on the Troubles. "Funeral Rites" from *North* is an elegy and is about dead relations, violence and sectarian division in Northern Ireland. "Funeral Rites is a tripartite poem . . . [and] deals in the first section with childhood memories of "dead relations" (3), before moving into the present-day violence of the Troubles in the second part" (Marklew 27). The beginning of the second section of "Funeral Rites" gives the description of the Troubles. The section underlines that people are killed by their neighbours. These murders resulting from the sectarian violence create sorrow in society.

In this section, Heaney depicts the funeral ceremonies of his time in Northern Ireland, he says "Now as news comes in / of each neighbourly murder" (ll. 32-33). These "neighbourly murders" (l. 33) is about the physical violence of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Physical violence, which is also defined as private and direct violence, is the most common form of violence that Northern Ireland faced in this period. Willem Schinkel defines this form of violence as follows: "private [physical] violence is a form of violence the executive

agency of which can be located at the level of one or more individual agents. Individual persons may be such agents, but organizations can as well" (175). This form of violence usually takes place at the individual level yet it does not mean that physical violence affects only individuals who are subjected to it. Physical violence creates a sense of fear among almost all members in a community because its results are easy to notice and as a result it threatens everyone. In addition, this form of violence targets the whole community though it affects individuals. In Northern Ireland this form of violence was dominant and the majority of the society suffered from its negative aspects. People from both Catholic and Protestant communities were subjected to violent attacks that led to deaths, injuries and suffering. The social atmosphere, and sectarian murders in Northern Ireland are depicted through "neighbourly murder" (l. 34). Similarly, "Now" (32) is about Heaney's time in the 1970s and due to sectarian division people do not come together even for funerals. The poet uses auditory imagery to convey his message in this poem. Unfortunately, there were no "temperate footsteps" (l. 37) any longer during the funerals in the 1970s since most of the funerals were considered a ceremony to promote ideological, religious positions in Northern Ireland. People were not neutral but biased towards funerals. Heaney referring to the gap between the communities in Northern Ireland uses the term "each blinded home" (l. 39). This part is about how people reacted to funerals from the *other side* of the community. People, mainly those who were actively involved in the Troubles, took a position according to the religious sect of the deceased. This biased position resulted from the physical violence that occurred in the forms of killing and injuring, and beating or even torturing people from the "other" community and sometimes even from the same community. The poem continues to target listening skills when the speaker says:

> purring family cars
> nose into line,
> the whole country tunes
> to the muffled drumming
> of ten thousand engines. (ll. 45-49)

This part of the poem is directly about listening to the Troubles, because the speaker describes the funeral rites using sound devices. There is silence among people who attend the funeral rites but the sound of the engine is heard which is described as "purring" (l. 45). It is ironic that the speaker uses purring because it is a sound made by cats when they are satisfied and happy. Unlike cars, which mechanically operate, people were aware of the dark period that

Northern Ireland faced. The poet draws the readers' attention to this stark reality through this contrast. People try to learn what was happening since the whole of Northern Ireland was under the influence of the physical violence. People were trying to perceive and understand the dynamics of the Troubles that were affecting their lives. In a normal society, people are sensitive to making no noise during the funeral rites out of respect for the deceased. However, there was no silence in funeral rites any longer in Northern Ireland since these ceremonies were considered a tool for political, religious position to indicate differences. People cared more about the identity of the deceased. No one listened to the other due to the gap in the society. This poem deals with the physical violence of the Troubles referring to what was missing in these funerals: unity, and respect for each other. There was no respect because no one was indifferent any more, on the contrary everyone was cautious about any type of marching including funerals. The poet or the speaker in the poem imagines a funeral ceremony which brings the whole country together but it is not the reality. Women do no attend funerals and stay at home since there is a danger of clash even in these funerals. Women "left behind, move / through emptied kitchens" (ll. 51-52) because the physical violence led to the murder of their relatives. Houses were emptied since people, particularly young men, joined the armed conflict or they were already killed. Heaney creates this sense of loneliness, and sadness through auditory metaphors. Similarly, "Quiet as a serpent" (l. 55) describes the mood of the people who joined the funerals. In fact, serpent as an image points to the potential danger and risks of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. There are similarities between the mood of society and the serpent imagery. A snake is silent, sly and deadly that means people should be careful about it and take necessary precautions to stop it. The serpent imagery refers to silence and dangers in the society. These people were walking in a quiet manner in fear of another clash during the funeral ceremonies. Auditory metaphors are used to give an idea about the mood of the people in Northern Ireland because these metaphors are about how women feel at home when they are left alone and how people act while they are marching to the cemetery. The speaker uses sound devices and metaphors to highlight the depth of sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. Heaney writes about uncontrollable power of the division in his society, and describes the situation in the following words "At one minute you are drawn towards the old vortex of racial and religious instinct, at another time you seek the mean of humane love and reason" (*Preoccupations* 34). The poet is deeply worried about the barriers between the Catholic and Protestant communities in his homeland and represents this problem through auditory metaphors.

In a similar way, listening dominates "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing" which is about those who only talk about the Troubles. The speaker of the poem criticises these people since the violence resulting from the Troubles in Northern Ireland needs more attention than just talking. It is a poem that describes the situation through a famous expression in Northern Ireland as Grant states "The title repeats a well known bit of Northern Irish folk wisdom " (49). The title of the poem refers to an Irish saying about how Irish people are advised to act if there is a complicated issue. According to the Irish saying it is better not to talk in a clear manner if one faces a complicated situation. The poem criticises the passivity of the people, particularly those who have power in regard to the Troubles in Northern Ireland. There are various parts that target the listening skills in this poem. The speaker of the "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing" describes the social and the political atmosphere of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and says "bad news is no longer news" (l. 4) that means there was too much violence in Northern Ireland. This violence was related to the Troubles that affected the whole community. As a result, people particularly politicians and journalists were discussing the Troubles at the public level. "Expertly civil-tongued with civil neighbours / On the high wires of first wireless reports" (ll. 17-18) are the two lines that give an idea about the profile of those who were talking about these issues. These people are good at talking since they are intellectuals. They know how to express their ideas in kind words, and reach people when they appear on TV channels or radio stations. They do not hesitate to express that they disagree with the violence resulting from Troubles. These people, however, reveal their real opinions when they talk about people from the *other side* of the community. The speaker criticises these people since they stop using kind words when they talk about the Troubles. The line "The 'voice of sanity' is getting hoarse" (l. 24) underlines these people's attitude towards the Troubles in Northern Ireland. These speakers' voices were not normal since they usually talked in a loud voice. The reason why these people talked in this manner deserves attention: their discussion did not touch upon the essence of the problems. They were aware of this fact and talked loudly in order to hide their fault and responsibility for the Troubles. These people change the tone of their speech and do not keep a civil-tongue in their head anymore. The speaker in the poem criticises the attitude of the politicians and journalists who are *civil* yet do not act in line with their position to solve the Troubles. In fact, the position of the press was problematic and was criticised for its slanted reporting of the Troubles. Of course, there were some exceptional media companies though they did not make a substantial change. This problematic position of the media is described as follows:

> The British press, dominated by Conservative interests, had long adopted an attitude similar to that of the London Government. It avoided any questioning of the decisions of Stormont. The picture it presented its readers was the official picture of a loyal majority constantly harassed by a disloyal community. The blackout continued during the years of peaceful efforts by the civil rights leaders from 1964 to 1968. The little space that was given to events in Ireland was almost entirely from the slanted perspective of the Stormont government. Only when the conflict erupted into major violence was it deemed worthy of extensive coverage, and even then the reporting lacked depth and understanding. This was continued by the press in subsequent years, with the notable exception of two London newspapers, *The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian*. (MacEoin 93)

This slanted reporting of the Troubles is represented in Heaney's poem "Whatever you say, say nothing" through addressing listening skills. Those who have or are supposed to have the ability of reasonable thinking and speaking get angry since they do not listen to the *other side* of the community and, as a result, do not or cannot understand the experience of the people. The poet expresses that the root of the Troubles is not differences in terms of religious sect or political view but lack of listening to each other, understanding, and ability to solve these problems. "Men die at hand. In blasted street and home / The gelignite's a common sound effect" (ll. 25-26). These lines indicate that physical form of violence was common in Northern Ireland. "Blasted" (l. 25) refers to bombing attacks related to the Troubles in Northern Ireland and is a clear sound device to draw the readers' attention to the physical form of violence in this land. Similarly, "gelignite" (l. 26) is a substance to cause explosions and the people in Northern Ireland faced explosions almost every day in this period. "When amplified and mixed in with the bangs / That shake all hearts and windows day and night" (ll. 37-38) no one had the chance to escape from the violence in this land. There was a danger of attack at any time. Bang refers to the noise made by a gun. All these words refer to violent actions that the people suffered from the Troubles. Similarly, "The gelignite's a common sound effect" (l. 26) is an important statement since it underlines that these violent actions were common in Northern Ireland. In fact, the speaker uses these terms to draw attention to physical forms of violence in Northern Ireland. Later, he says: "Last night you didn't need a stethoscope / To hear the eructation of Orange drums / Allergic

equally to Pears and Pope" (ll. 42-44). The stethoscope which is used to diagnose health problems that medical doctors cannot recognise without listening and focusing on the problem. The poet, however, says there is no need to have a "stethoscope" (l. 42) to notice the problems between Catholics and Protestants for these problems dominate everyday life. Unlike, "blast" (l. 25), "gelignite" (l. 26) and "bangs" (l. 37), the "stethoscope" (l.42) can be linked to both sound and silence. Heaney uses "stethoscope" in the middle of this poem and this imagery serves as a transition from sound to silence which the poet elaborates in the next section of the poem. In regard to the silence, Heaney writes the following lines: "Religion`s never mentioned here," of course. "You know them by their eyes," and hold your tongue (ll. 53-54). Religion was the source of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The poet uses "hold your tongue" to give an idea about how people suggested reacting to the problems in their society. He says "Hold your tongue" to imply that people were hesitant to talk about the Troubles and their identity in Northern Ireland. This part of the poem uses citizens' silence or hesitation in talking about the violence in their society. While "Hold your tongue" points to an attitude among some people in this society, the poet draws attention also to another form of silence in Northern Ireland. Unlike, hesitation in talking, some people were prevented from talking about the Troubles. Heaney describes the pressure on people to remain silent no matter what happened in Northern Ireland when he writes: "Northern reticence, the tight gag of place" (l. 61). "Gag" is used to emphasise that no one could talk about the complicated situation in Northern Ireland. The poet uses "the tight gag of place" to indicate the difficulty of talking and the impossibility of listening to the *other side* of the community. "Whatever you say, say nothing" (l. 64) is the repetition of the title indicating that it is not easy to talk about the problems in the Troubles.

Also, through their onomatopoetic qualities "Blasted" (l. 25), "gelignite" (l. 26), and "bangs" (l. 37) refer to physical forms of violence. However, on the other hand, there are also references to cultural forms of violence in this poem that is depicted in the following lines: "Last night you didn't need a stethoscope / To hear the eructation of Orange drums / Allergic equally to Pears and Pope" (ll. 42-44). Heaney uses "Orange drums", [Patrick] "Pears", "Pope" , and "religion's never mentioned" to indicate another form of violence that the people faced in Northern Ireland. This form of violence is called cultural and/or symbolic, and is related to cultural/symbolic values such as religion, language, education, and ideology. C. David Mortensen, in his book chapter "Linguistic Constructions of Violence, Peace and Conflict," states that this form of violence is an issue of relations between individuals, communities and "religion, ideology,

language, or empirical science, are used to justify acts of physical violence. In effect, the symbolic constructions of violent acts are intrinsic features of the violent actions themselves" (337). Northern Ireland, unfortunately, experienced the cultural forms of violence in the sphere of religion. As a result, Catholics did not have the chance to practise their religion as they wished. Bombings, murders, and discrimination in housing and jobs were conducted on the ground of religious differences between Catholics and Protestants. Cultural forms of violence, unlike the physical one, is not easy to notice. However, this form of violence is observed in communities that suffer from a system of unequal relations. All forms of violence are connected to each other. In other words, there is a vicious circle with regard to the different forms of violence. If there is no physical violence, cultural form of violence loses its effect. Cultural forms of violence are related to all components of cultural life such as religion, language, and the flag.

The second collection that will be discussed is *Field Work* which was published in 1979. It is a collection of poems again on the Troubles. As Elmer Andrews notes, the victims, who are characters in these poems, are no longer unknown people, they are friends, and relatives. Now, violence is so dominant that there is no way to escape from it (112). The collection is about the contemporary political and social situation in Northern Ireland. Aytül Develi draws attention to a significant quality of this collection and notes:

> Though the book depicted the violent atmosphere in Ireland, it differed from other volumes greatly. Heaney had a spirit-passion which was still rooted in the Irish history but also rooted in contemporary Northern Ireland. [...] When the content of the poems shifted from the invaders to the contemporary troubles with which the people of his land were soaked, the people in Northern Ireland approached them in a different manner and this is where one of the reasons of his success lies. He wrote for the people not for himself. (111)

While previous collections explore the Troubles mainly with reference to earlier times and mythological stories, there is a substantial change in this collection because Heaney represents the Troubles through examples that he knew and most probably his contemporary readers knew. There are several poems that can be analysed in terms of listening in other words auditory imagery and metaphors in *Field Work*. Due to the limited space, only two of these

poems will be analysed. The first poem is "The Toome Road" which is about the experience of a speaker when s/he notices that the army vehicles enter into her/his town. The poet uses again auditory imagery to represent structural forms of violence exercised in the Troubles. Structural violence is related to the basis of the system. Its roots can be observed in the essence of the social structure. Similarly, economic and social inequalities, and military presence are important elements to be considered in this form of violence. Structural violence is the source of other forms of violence. This form of violence spreads everywhere but it is not easy to notice or bring its perpetrators to justice. Structural violence is exercised through various social system and is related to economic inequality in a society (Schinkel 188). The subject of the poem is explained in Michael Parker's words as follows:

> The poem depicts a depressingly recurrent scene from Irish history, a foreign army moving at will, violating the integrity of the territory. The traditional, agricultural world of the ballads invoked in the poem's first three words - 'One morning early' - has been invaded by the contemporaneity of 'armoured cars' - unlyrically 'warbling along on powerful tyres' - and 'headphoned soldiers'. (158)

There is a speaker who wakes up early in the morning and plans to continue with her/his ordinary life in her/his farm. However, s/he notices and hears military vehicles and tells her/his experience. The first part of the poem, which uses sound and silence to convey its message in the form of auditory imagery, is as follows:

> One morning early I met armoured cars
> In convoy, warbling along on powerful tyres,
> All camouflaged with broken alder branches,
> And headphoned soldiers standing up in turrets.
> How long were they approaching down my roads
> As if they owned them? The whole country was sleeping.
> (*Field Work* ll. 1-6)

This part of the poem has four auditory images, while two of them are related to sound two of them are related to silence. "Warbling" (l. 2) is about the sound-in fact noise-that military vehicles make while they are approaching the village. Military vehicles make noise that is not attractive. Similarly, "headphoned soldiers" (l. 4) describes soldiers who join this military operation. Headphones are a technological device to listen to something including music and

speech. Heaney uses this imagery to give a better description of the soldiers' mind. These soldiers use headphones to listen to orders from their superiors and to stay away from other sounds. In other words, headphones are used as a tool to move these soldiers in a way their superiors wish and cut them off from the sounds of the community. They listen only to the command of the perpetrators of violence. The poet uses sound elements and listening to convey his message which is about structural violence in this poem. In this regard, Kirsty Williams says ". . . as 'The Toome Road' demonstrates a feeling of violation is caused and perpetuated by state apparatuses. This recurs in particular relation to the major police and army presence in Northern Ireland in the 1970s" (109-10). "Toome" comes from Irish word *Tuaim* and means tumulus. This fact indicates that Heaney chose toome on purpose. He aimed to underline that soldiers did invade this land and killed people also in the past. The poet and the speaker of the poem listen to the Troubles and they tell the story by using this device so that the readers, audience listen to the Troubles, too. "One early morning" refers to peace and harmony in the speaker's homeland that is Ireland. Heaney creates this sense via an auditory image though there is no direct sound element. There is a contradiction between Ireland and Britain. While Northern Ireland represents fixity or silence, British forces represents violence or disruption. The speaker underlines that it was early in the morning and people were "sleeping." This image indicates that Irish people were innocent and not violent because they were not ready to defend, let alone to fight for their homeland. Sleeping is also about silence since it is a prerequisite to fall into sleep. McGuire states "Registering his outrage over the violation of his land as he wakes to see and hear his land invaded by British occupying forces, the speaker emphasizes the disjuncture between the pastoral scene and the invasion of his pastures. Instead of birdsong, what greets his ear is the perverse 'warbling' of armored vehicles" (ll. 127-28). Heaney uses these auditory images to highlight violence resulting from the Troubles in Northern Ireland. There are some other expressions to underline violence related to the Troubles in this poem. "Armoured cars" (l. 1), "turrets" (l. 4), and "headphoned soldiers" (l. 4) are related to the military and refer to military presence in Ireland. The existence of "armoured cars," "turrets," and "headphoned soldiers" are enough to create a sense of fear. These soldiers do not need to kill any civilian in this land because their presence symbolises power. The military presence is about the structure of the society based on inequality. In this poem, structural violence is represented through auditory imagery. Unlike physical violence, this form of violence is not a direct one that can be easily observed in society. The military presence is depicted by means of silence versus disruption in "The Toome Road."

It was a fact that ordinary life during the Troubles in Northern Ireland was familiar with soldiers in the streets. Sharing his personal observation and experience about the military presence, Heaney says:

> And we have to live with the Army. This morning I was stopped on the Falls Road and marched to the nearest police barracks, with my three-year-old son, because my car tax was out of date.... It hasn't been named martial law but that's what it feels like. Everywhere soldiers with cocked guns are watching you-that's what they're here for-on the streets, at the corners, from doorways, over puddles on demolished sites. At night, jeeps and armoured cars groan past without lights; or road-blocks are thrown up, and once again it's delays measured in hours, searches and signings among the guns and torches. As you drive ways, you bump over ramps that are specially designed to wreck you at speeds any maybe get a glimpse of a couple of youths with hands on their heads being frisked on the far side of the road. Just routine. (*Preoccupations* 30-31)

There is almost no difference between the picture that the poem draws and Heaney's personal experience in his real life. Furthermore, Heaney also refers to military vehicles on the streets and noise made by these vehicles, and also armed soldiers in the depiction of his personal experience. Heaney shifts his focus from past and mythology to contemporary events most probably because of his personal observations in the 1970s. This shift results from a fact: life was surrounded by all forms of violence. Heaney lost his personal friends due to the Troubles in his homeland. He observes incidents through listening and represents them through auditory imagery and metaphors. Although there is no reference to killing or shooting anyone in this poem, there is the representation of violence that Northern Ireland experienced in the 1970s. The poet uses auditory imagery to achieve a better effect on his reader when he describes soldiers who are approaching the town. Structural forms of violence prevent different segments of a society from knowing each other. Those who exert violence, usually, hide their identity the poet refers to this fact when he writes "all [soldiers] camouflaged with broken alder" (3). The soldiers were aware of the fact that their presence cannot be justified and did not want to reveal their identity. There was no communication between the soldiers and the local people. Nor did the soldiers listen to the local people. The soldiers listened only to each other so as not to be contaminated by the unknown

others. "Headphoned soldiers" is an important image for this poem not only because it refers to listening but also it underlines that these soldiers did not listen to local people but only their own headquarters. These facts, namely hiding their identities and not listening to the other segments of the society, constitute the basis of structural violence that Heaney represents and criticises in this poem. One of the main problematic aspects of structural violence in Northern Ireland is the gap between those who are subjected to violence and those who are perpetrators, and also the people outside Northern Ireland. There were not only walls that divided the two communities in Northern Ireland but also borders and walls in the minds of the people. The only way to fill the gap is through knowing each other and familiarisation. The more people learn about each other, and the more they listen to each other the better relations between the communities will be.

The last poem that this study will discuss is "Casualty" that is an elegy for a fisherman whose name is not mentioned in the poem. In addition to "Casualty," there are two other elegies "The Strand at Lough Beg" and "A Post Card from North Antrim" in *Field Work*. All these poems are written for individuals whom Heaney knew personally. Heaney writes elegies for these individuals yet he represents the general characteristic of the political, social atmosphere during the Troubles in Northern Ireland in these poems.

Before analysing "Casualty" from this collection, it might be beneficial to talk about a common characteristic of this poem and the two other poems, namely, "The Strand at Lough Beg" and "A Post Card from North Antrim." These three elegies are exemplary cases of physical forms of violence in Northern Ireland. Eugene O'Brien analyses these three elegies and states that Heaney writes elegies for the victims of the Troubles. These people vary from sports fan to fisherman (125). These innocent victims were killed by the soldiers and IRA.

Heaney commemorates the murders of these innocent people during the Troubles through these elegies. Undoubtedly, there could be more examples since life was surrounded with all forms of violence. There were numerous innocent victims of the Troubles because violence made no distinction between militants, activists, military officers and civilians. As long as there is violence, there is no ordinary and normal life. Violence shapes political, economic and social life. "Casualty" is a poem that is about the murder of an innocent civilian who was not interested in the ideological positions of the conflicting parties but led-or tried to lead-his individual life.

Siobhan Campbell indicates that it is an elegy written for Louis O'Neill, who was the fisherman who died in an IRA attack to take revenge of the Bloody Sunday (133). Heaney's Troubles Poetry uses these individual cases to comment on other murders. In this regard, Naomi Marklew states:

> The second section of the poem [Casualty] recalls the funerals of the thirteen dead-victims of Bloody Sunday: 'Coffin after coffin / seemed to float from the door / of the packed cathedral ...'(5-7). This helps to set the context for the individual death mourned in the poem, as well as extending the elegy to mourn for the communal losses suffered as a result of the Troubles. (34-35)

After learning the murder of this fisherman, the speaker in this poem remembers the time that they spent together. Then, he narrates how the incident happened. This part of the poem reads as follows:

> He was blown to bits
> Out drinking in a curfew
> Others obeyed, three nights
> After they shot dead
> The thirteen men in Derry. (*Field Work* ll. 38-42)

"Blown" describes how the victim was killed in a bomb attack. There is also the curfew which is a form of violence restricting personal freedom of movement and was a common practice in the Troubles in Northern Ireland. In addition to the murder of Louis O'Neill, the thirteen Catholic people who were shot on Bloody Sunday is referred to demonstrate that violence and death were dominant in Northern Ireland that there was danger of murder for all people in the society at any time. Consequently, everyone may experience the loss of a relative and friend in this society. This violent and dangerous atmosphere created a society whose psychology was not normal. Everyone was scared of being killed or injured as a result of violence. With regard to the dominant psychology and mood of society, Heaney makes the following comment "There are few enough people on the roads at night. Fear has begun to tingle through the place. Who's to know the next target on the Provisional list? Who's to know the reprisal won't strike where you are? The bars are quieter" (*Preoccupations* 31). This description provides a clear picture of the individual's mood throughout the Troubles. There was a climate of fear that shaped daily life in Northern Ireland. People did not feel comfortable with circumstances that dominated their lives. There

was risk of being killed in this territory due to the Troubles. Heaney shares his personal observation of physical forms of violence in Northern Ireland again through auditory imagery. He says "Here the explosions literally rattle your window day and night, lives are shattered blandly or terribly, innocent men have been officially beaten and humiliated in internment camps-destructive elements of all kinds, which are even perhaps deeply exhilarating, are in the air" (34). Heaney's observations in his daily life demonstrate that violence was common and everyone was scared of being subjected to it in Northern Ireland. There were guns, shootings, bomb attacks, beatings in this land. In fact, this is an exemplary quotation because it provides the full picture of the Troubles: there were innocent people who were threatened, beaten and killed, and were subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment.

The speaker did not attend the funeral but learned about the rites later. This part of the poem reads as follows:

> I missed his funeral,
> Those quiet walkers
> And sideways talkers
> Shoaling out of his lane
> To the respectable
> Purring of the hearse... (*Field Work* ll. 84-89)

Like, "Funeral Rites," there is a funeral ceremony in this poem. The speaker could not attend the funeral though the victim was a friend. It was not a death by natural causes since the victim lost his life as a result of a bomb attack. "Quiet walkers" (85) indicates how people acted during the funeral. Those who attended the funeral did not make any noise because they showed respect to the victim and also they were scared they could be the victim of the next attack in their homeland. Heaney uses a combination of silence and sound element to describe these people's movement. "Sideway talkers" draw attention to people who talked to each other. They were talking most probably about the tragic murder of O'Neill and also the murder's impact on the society including themselves. "Purring" refers to noise made by the car that was carrying the victim. The poet points out that there are various muffled sounds in this funeral. However, there is a sharp contrast between people's talk and the car's noise. While the former was useful to understand the Troubles and to some extent to solve the problems in Northern Ireland, the latter made no impact on the Troubles for being a mechanical noise only. Heaney implies that talking, which requires a listener, was a way to overcome the Troubles. The speaker and the victim were involved in the Troubles

even if they were not interested in this problem. Although there is no reference to the victim in the poem, the readers know that Heaney commemorates Louis O'Neill who "has been killed because he has broken the curfew regulations of IRA and was in a Protestant pub when it was blown up by the IRA troops and though he was drunk he had gone to the pump" (Develi 121). Heaney criticised violence used by the IRA, which claimed to act on behalf of all Catholics. Heaney did not approve of any form of violence irrespective of the perpetrator.

In conclusion, Northern Ireland experienced all forms violence in a period that is called the Troubles in the 1970s. The violence affected various aspects of life in this land. A sense of deep fear and loss permeated people's daily life in Northern Ireland. Heaney, as a Catholic member of the society, observed the Troubles in the 1970s. These personal observations must have led Heaney to represent the Troubles in his poetry. Neither political, social life nor cultural, and literary productions are free from the Troubles. The poetry of Northern Ireland is affected by this violence, too. Heaney, as a poet writing in the 1970s, responds to this violence from different angles and through various literary devices. Heaney relies on auditory imagery, metaphors, and onomatopoetic words in his poems. Listening is a device for Heaney to observe what is going on around him and also an experience to benefit from while he represents the Troubles. He uses this device to understand the factors in the Troubles as well as to make them clear for his readers. Heaney follows a path from overhearing to hearing, and to listening in his personal life. Listening requires constant attention and is a crucial element of understanding a subject. Heaney is fully aware of the function of the listening skills for his poetry. The poet observes the Troubles in Northern Ireland, among other methods, through listening. Readers observe that there are many sound elements in Heaney's Troubles Poetry that offers readers a similar path from listening to understanding the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

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