

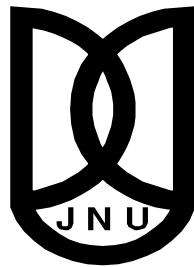
**HISTORY, MEMORY, AND THE POST-COLONIAL
IDENTITY: A STUDY OF SEAMUS HEANEY'S *DEATH
OF A NATURALIST* (1966), *DOOR INTO THE DARK* (1969),
AND *WINTERING OUT* (1972)**

Dissertation submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

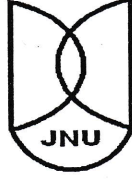
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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Date: 20 July 2018

CERTIFICATE

This dissertation titled “**HISTORY, MEMORY, AND THE POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY: A STUDY OF SEAMUS HEANEY’S *DEATH OF A NATURALIST* (1966), *DOOR INTO THE DARK* (1969), AND *WINTERING OUT* (1972)**” submitted by **PRAJAKTA SIMON**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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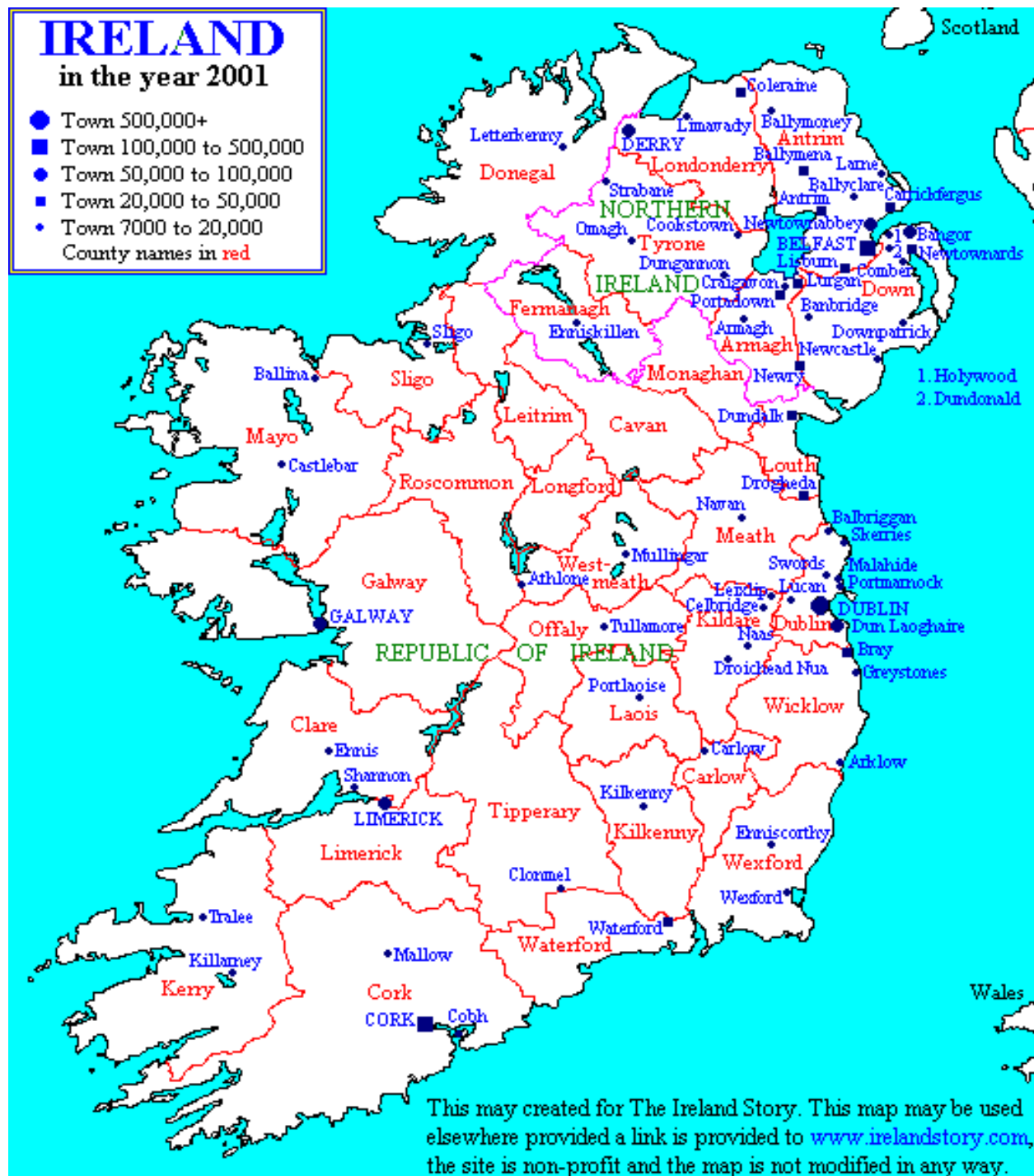
I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Udaya Kumar who provided me with insightful observations at the juncture of my initiation into the field of Irish studies.

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¹ Map of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland (Free Maps of Ireland)

¹ http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/maps/island_2001.gif
Web. 2 July. 2018

Introduction

“You always start somewhere but that somewhere is never just anywhere.”²

With the firm belief in Shakespeare’s words, that one can “by indirections find directions out,” (*Hamlet* 2.1), the present dissertation will examine through the readings of Seamus Heaney’s early three collections of poems, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1969), and *Wintering Out* (1972), how issues around identity formation and cultural assertion within the Irish postcolonial society demand crucial rethinking of the concepts of memory and history mediated by language.

Seamus Justin Heaney was born on 13th April, 1939, and raised in Castledawson, County Derry, Northern Ireland, to Patrick Heaney and Margaret Kathleen McCann. County Derry where he grew up was a society driven by masculinist codes. Michael Parker observes that “taciturnity” as expressed through emotional detachment was something that always had prevailed in the consciousness of people of Northern Ireland. To add, Michael Longley takes cognizance of the features of a common Ulsterman and observes that he shares “down-to-earth realism, a dislike of unnecessary frills, a distrust of verbiage. He doesn’t speak for the sake of decoration, but prefers to search for the facts at the core of any matter.”³

Patrick Heaney was a Catholic farmer and dealt in cattle, while his mother, Margaret Kathleen McCann was a ‘warm’ and ‘imaginative’ woman who rekindled in Heaney the fondness for language and etymology. In *Preoccupations* (1980), Heaney recalls his first encounter with the world of words. He writes, “May be it began very early when my 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....”⁴ In an essay entitled, “Feeling

² See, Bennington, Geoffrey. and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida: Religion and Postmodernism*. University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 19

³ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993, p. 2

⁴ See, Heaney, Seamus. *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980. p. 45

into Words,” Heaney expresses how with his mother’s influence he was awakened to the interest in words as “bearers of history and mystery.”⁵

Heaney had always looked up to his father, Patrick Heaney as a “stocky” and “resolute individual” who possessed great skill in the art of “digging.” As he was a staunch Catholic, brought up strictly with masculine codes it was very difficult for Patrick to communicate with his son, for verbiage would expose him to weaknesses. This sense of isolation turned grave with Heaney’s departure from the family tradition of farming and taking up University education. It was Heaney’s mother, Margaret who had always inspired religious sensibility of patience, reverence, endurance, and sacrifice in him. Irish Catholicism is centered on the feminine presence of Virgin Mary, and this is the reason why Heaney’s upbringing made him sympathetic towards women. The sacrificial nature of woman as a mother and wife are evoked in his poems like “The Wife’s Tale,” “Honeymoon Flight,” and “Elegy for a Still born Child.”

Heaney had attended primary school at Anahorish, from 1945-1951, located in County Derry. It served as a common ground for Catholics and Protestants students. Later he shifted to St. Coulomb’s College, Derry, in the year 1951 for his secondary education. He joined Queen’s University, Dublin, in the year 1957, and graduated in 1961. The year 1964 was a turning point in his life as his poems “Scaffolding,” “Digging,” and “Storm on the Island,” got published in the *New Statesman*. The following year Heaney met the light of his life, Marie Devlin and later on Michael, his first son was born. The same year Heaney’s happiness knew no limits when his first collection *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) got selected by Faber and Faber. Thereafter, poetic imagination of Heaney knew no bounds and he started producing prolifically. The year, 1969, saw the production of Heaney’s second collection, *Door into the Dark*.

The surface tensions and sectarian divisions that fermented into the three decades of violence and killings in Northern Ireland had their roots in social and cultural conflicts lurking in the ordinary lives before the first bullets were fired in 1969. The subsequent formation of the provisional IRA, the extremist paramilitary group, dedicated to Irish republicanism believed that political violence was necessary to achieve the goal of United Ireland. Driven by left wing ideology the conflict between the IRA and the then government unleashed an era of violence and

⁵ Ibid, p. 45

terror in the North of Ireland commonly called as “Troubles.” It had disturbed Heaney so much so that he decided to take a temporary position at University of California, Berkeley. When he came back he decided to move permanently to the South, Glanmore County, Wicklow. In the year 1988, he was honoured with the position of Professor of Poetry at Oxford and in the year 1995 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in the year 1995 for “works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past.”⁶

In *Transitions: Narratives of Modern Irish Culture* (1987), Richard Kearney makes an insightful observation that cultural crisis in the twentieth century Ireland was motivated by the ideological conflict between the claims of revivalism and modernism. On ideological level, both emanated from the “prevailing sense of discontinuity, the absence of a coherent identity, the breakdown of inherited ideologies and beliefs, [and] the insecurities of fragmentation.”⁷

Unsurprisingly, the concern of contemporary Irish writers could not gloss over the issues of Identity. Identity in Postcolonial Ireland is grounded in the politics of omission, exclusion, and misrepresentation. The redefinition of identity within the paradigm of post-colonial studies demand crucial understanding of the post-colonial from the lens of Ireland rather than Ireland being viewed from the lens of the post-colonial.⁸ This enterprise requires rethinking of the concepts of irony, enculturation, and appropriation. The fundamental guiding spirit that would motivate critical understanding of Heaney’s identity politics within the framework of Irish cultural and historical studies would be “revisionism.”

Heaney who is generally seen as preoccupied with the past attempts to dismantle the fixation to the narratives derived from memory and history by attempting to revise the default accounts that defines what does it mean to be an “Irish.” Heaney undertakes the project of revisionism using “memory” and “history” as weapons of mediation to deconstruct the monolithic narrative that authorize Ireland’s exclusion from the paradigm of representation. The act of deconstruction entails teasing out of “strains, fractures, aporias, and antinomies that have been attenuated by the narrative sweep.”⁹

⁶ Refer to, <https://www.nobelprize.org/laureates> Accessed: July 20, 2017

⁷ See, Collins, Floyd. *Seamus Heaney: The Crisis of Identity*. University of Delaware Press, 2003. p.18

⁸ See, Flannery, Eoin. *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009

⁹ See, O’Brien, Eugene. *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers*, London: Pluto, 2003. p.2

For Heaney, homogenization of the Irish with Scottish and British forms the first hurdle towards realization of the “lost native identity.” The retrieval of the “lost identity” through memory and history evokes the processes of deterritorialization of Irish identity from the labyrinth of the past and subsequent reterritorialization with enactment of representation with difference. Heaney’s relationship with the colonizer is well defined within the matrix of deterritorialization¹⁰ followed by reterritorialization. According to David Lloyd, Seamus Heaney saw deterritorialization as an act on the part of the colonizers that impacted the national consciousness by way of acculturation. Deterritorialization that precedes reterritorialization has been categorized by Thomas Davies¹¹ into three: a) in relation to identity and the territory, b) in relation to place name and the territory and, c) in relation to people’s history and the territory. It is language that mediates each of these relationships that help the poet to forge an identity not only of himself but the community as a whole.¹²

“At the level of epistemology, identity is precisely the bond between a people and a place, a bond whose constituents are historical, cultural, religious and social, and which is created and cemented mainly by language. It is through language that I express my sense of identity as an Irish person, and it is through language that my notions of Irish history, culture, selfhood and place are transmitted. My relationship to the place called “Ireland” is a huge factor in my sense of self, and in any subsequent relationship with alterity, and consequently, any probing of identity must be carried on in terms of the linguistic constitution of this relationship”¹³

Heaney’s attitude to identity is very much concentrated on the enculturation of the landscape that transforms consciousness and generates an array of imaginative response to the immediate reality. The landscape of his childhood times, Mossbawn farm, County Derry, Northern Ireland, has proved to be an important factor in the enlargement of the poetic consciousness of Heaney. In his Nobel lecture, *Crediting Poetry*, 1995, Heaney talks about County Derry where he lived a “den-life...emotionally and intellectually proofed against the

¹⁰ See, Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, *Anti- Oedipus*, 1972.

¹¹ See, “Our National Language”, *Nation*. April 1, 1843. p.394

¹² See, Lloyd, David. “Pap for the Dispossessed: Seamus Heaney and the Politics of Identity.” *New Casebooks: Seamus Heaney*. Ed. Michael Allen. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997. pp.158-159

¹³ O'Brien, Eugene. “Introduction.” *Seamus Heaney and the Place of Writing*. *Academia.edu*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2017. p.4

outside world.”¹⁴ It was “ahistorical,” “pre-literate” and “pre-sexual” world that suspended between the archaic and the modern.

In the Irish psyche, “the backward look,”¹⁵ an act of revivalism, parallel with the Romantic mode of going back to one’s origins has been a potent force in shaping identity not only of the self but rather the entire community. From the very start of his poetic career, we see acts of reclamation of the “authentic,” intentionally, exploring the frontiers between the conscious and the subconscious. The way in which Seamus Heaney reclaims the “landscape” not only in its natural or raw form, but also recreate it as a mental space mediated by language to represent the concrete reality is suggestive of the fact that he can repossess the “lost” only by way of “rhetoric of compensation.”¹⁶ This according to Seamus Deane, leads Seamus Heaney to replay the ‘backward look’, a romantic mode of going back to one’s ancestry for complete self-possession and identification of his “self” and his community. Edna Longley, too positions him in a Romantic schema where the boundary between conscious and the unconscious fuses into the metaphysical realm. This realm becomes a potential site for the poet to redress historical, political, cultural and literal disjunctions.

In retracing the temporal history through memory with the purpose of recuperating the timeless vacuum out of which new order would sprout, Seamus Heaney makes what Mercia Eliade would call “the eternal return.”¹⁷ James Joyce calls this meditative act of return to be ritualistic, forming a cycle or circular motion, “gravitating toward the ‘centers’ in order to repeat the profane as well as sacred acts of creation”¹⁸ that are destructive by nature.” The landscape in a way becomes a memoryscape providing historical account of invasion and domination, the archetypal pattern that defines the relation between the colonizer and the colonized.

Identity in postcolonial space is the product of intricate interaction between history and memory. Memory is a bond that connects one to the past, it is “eternal present” and History is a

¹⁴ Heaney, Seamus. *Opened Ground: Poems, 1966-1996*. Faber and Faber, 1998. p.466

¹⁵ Note: Frank O’ Connor has argued that this is stereotypical of Irish Literature.

¹⁶ Lloyd, David. “Pap for the Dispossessed: Seamus Heaney and the Poetics of Identity.” Ed. Michael Allen, *New Casebooks*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1997, pp.155-183

¹⁷ See, Hart, Henry. *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progressions*. Syracuse University Press, 1993, pp.44-45

¹⁸ See, Hart, Henry. “The Poetry of Meditation.” *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progressions*. Syracuse University Press, 1993. p.45

‘dead memory,’¹⁹ a reconstruction of the “presence of the past.” In the construction of memory, people are actually focused more on establishing their memory as “authentic.” Its authenticity is unreliable as it is rooted in subjective experience of the objective reality. The reality which it purports through the acts of commemoration and monumentalization promises time travel to the past. In doing so, memory contests with history. In reciprocation, history promises retreat to the archival version of the past. Memory reenacts the past events. In a way it scaffolds history but it does not impact the way history pursues the past. It is because of the differential methodological framework that it employs. History works on evidence, archival authenticity while memory works on the conscious life of the subjects. Memory rarely gives authenticity and history is discriminatory as it is driven by the hegemonic tendencies of those in power. If both are unreliable then why should they be ever approached? Why do we read history? It is because it is remedy to counteract forgetting. Now the question arises why do humans tend to forget? It is because humans are action-oriented and unconsciously our mind repels the information which is deemed redundant by our conscious self. The gap between history and memory brings the issues of delusional nature of the present, insecurities of the past and promise of the future rooted in the past.

The “spatial turn” as Hannah Ewence calls it , in the field of historiography and memory studies emphasises the importance of analysis of the textual, visual and oral representations of the past vis-à-vis landscape. According to Susan Sontag, Individual memory is “unreproducible-it dies with each person.” Therefore, there is a need to spread individual memory to the collective so that memory in itself becomes history. Thus, collective memory is not a remembering anymore rather a stipulating. It allows for actualization of the past and positing resistance by negating the hegemonic power structures. This in consequence, leads to the formation of a homogenized subculture against the hegemony of those in power.

In an essay entitled, “The Sense of Place,” (1977), Heaney talks about Irish identity which is the core theme of his works. For Heaney, identity is very much associated with place. The shift from space to place is central to his works. From the very start of his poetic career, Heaney lays bare his home place to the wide expanse of the world. The home place for Heaney is site of pluralisation of identity. Historically too, the “Irish places become ideologically dense

¹⁹ See, Halbwachs.

signifiers of cultural and political association: one's place of origin determined much of one's political identity."²⁰ To add, Robert Buttel comments on the "depth of the immersion of the poetry within the home environment adding that the exactitude of the vocabulary makes it difficult to draw a clear line separating poetic artifice and physical reality"²¹

In an introduction to *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (1990), Seamus Deane argues that colonialism is an act of dispossession, be it, political, cultural, economical, or linguistic. Ireland poses itself as both postcolonial and non-postcolonial. It is both the colonizer (its complicity in British colonialism) and the colonized. It neither forms a part of the group of first world countries nor the third world. It does not really fit into the binaries of colonialism. These points suggest flaw in "epistemological structure of postcolonial paradigm."²² Seamus Heaney in *Preoccupations* (1980) investigates central concerns of post-colonialism such as identity, place, historical distortion, cultural dispossession, and the relationship between poetry and politics. In *The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures* (1995), Heaney discusses how poetry can be "of present use." "The Government of the Tongue", often touted as Heaney's *Ars Poetica* discusses the epistemology of poetry citing that alterity, a call to the "other" is central to his poetry. The contradiction between the self and the non self is seen as the province of poetry and politics respectively. Discussing the paradigmatic epistemology of Poetry, Heaney in "Government of the Tongue," writes: "The purpose of poetry is to remind us how difficult it is to remain just one person, for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors, and invisible guests come in and out at will."²³ In writing this, Heaney expresses his central concern about poetry, "If poetry is to be of value, it must avoid the 'consensus and settlement of a meaning which the audience fastens on like a security blanket.'"²⁴

This study centrally argues that Heaney's postcolonial take on the issues of identity formation through a detour to memory and history mediated by language is driven by rejection of the dialectics of "Manichean binarism." Abdul Jan Mohamed in an essay entitled "The Economy

²⁰ See, O'Brien, Eugene. "A Bright Nowhere": The Deconstruction of Place." *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers*. London: Pluto, 2003. p.113. Print.

²¹ See, Buttel, Robert. *Seamus Heaney*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975.p. 38

²² See, O'Brien, Eugene. "Postcolonial Complications." *Seamus Heaney and the Place of Writing*. *Academia.edu*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2017. p. 196

²³ See, Heaney, Seamus. *Government of the Tongue*. Faber and Faber, 2010

²⁴ O'Brien, Eugene. *Seamus Heaney as Aesthetic Thinker: A Study of the Prose*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2016.p.111. Print.

of the Manichean Allegory,” (1995), states that colonial literature subverts “the traditionalist dialectic of self and other” and vouches for a ‘fetishized nondialectical fixed opposition between the self and the native.’” (1995). Heaney in *An Open Letter*(1983), declares his refusal to conform to the rigidities of Manichean binarism which charts out essential differences between the self and the other, British and Irish, and colonizer and the colonized. Heaney, an “inner émigré,” embraces his betwixt position and highlights the epistemological flaw in the postcolonial paradigm. He eschews the binary oppositions and acknowledges the other, the embodiment of alterity. It is through the act of openness to the other, the transformation of selfhood to embrace otherness, acknowledgement of the past to direct towards the future that postcolonial paradigm of Ireland and Heaney’s oeuvre could be better understood.

In this context, the first chapter, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and the Relic of Memory , would argue how Heaney in tracing his personal and collective history perceive ‘memory’, the tool to return to the past, not as a repository of past fragments, rather, as a Utopic process, which is all progressive.

In the second chapter, *Door into the Dark* (1969) and Smell of Ordinariness, Heaney makes a major shift from being a local poet and expands his area of poetic investigation, celebrating the self-fulfilling pre-colonial Irish history and juxtaposing it with Irish modernization.

The third chapter, *Wintering Out* (1972) and the dislodged slab of the Tongue, introduces for the first time, the political persona of Heaney, who voices his apprehension about the contemporary turmoil in Northern Ireland through words. The etymological roots of words become site of resistance. The words become an index to the formation of Irish identity.

It is within the matrix of binarisms which usually define post-colonial literature that Heaney wishes to carve out space for Ireland, where oppositions dance together to the tunes of harmony and brotherhood.

Chapter 1

Death of a Naturalist (1966) and the Relic of Memory

Seamus Heaney's first collection of poems *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) emerges as a manifestation of combined effects of the spirit of initiation and exploration of the "presence of the past" that arises from anxiety to legitimize the experiences of the "present." For him, the present realized as a mnemonic space is a continuum of tension and fear incarcerated into the liminality of reenactment of the past and servitude to the future. The presence, as a constant experience of disappearance of every "lived moment" presupposes the "absences" that goes unrecorded in the realm of representation. Thus, Ranjan Ghosh in an article "It Disturbs Me with a Presence" argues "presence is a state of pre narration; it is also implicated in post narration".²⁵ The experience of the presence has a pre narrative quality. In other words, the action of conscious human subjects has a pre narrative context that does not exclude the awareness of such motivations that dictated our actions or conduct. This is to say that, "presence" is originally experienced as "disconnected and fragmentary"²⁶ and not as a fully manifested structure. Thus, "presence" is a repository of unarticulated pre narrative experiences that evoke a certain return to the past predicated upon the real and the material.

Walter Benjamin says that "the past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption."²⁷ In other words, articulation of the past through strategic selection of particular moment(s) is intimately related to taking hold of memory as it "flashes up at a moment of danger."²⁸ To simplify, Jeffrey K. Olick, an American Sociologist, suggests that after the decline of utopian visions post war, the nation states returned to the past because the future could no longer legitimize their present. The past served as a vault of possibilities that had potential to

²⁵ See, Ghosh, Ranjan, and Ethan Kleinberg. *Presence: Philosophy, History and Cultural Theory for the Twenty-First Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2013. Print..

²⁶ See, Jurgen, Straub. "Narrative, Identity, and Historical Consciousness" Volume 3: *Making Sense of History*. Berghahn Books, 2005, p.8. *Google Book*. Web. 17 August. 2017

²⁷ See, Benjamin, Walter, Harry Zohn, Hannah Arendt, and Leon Wieseltier. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections EBook*. HMH, 1968. Web. 20 May 2016.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

liberate the present. The act of recovering or reterritorialising the past as a site of history and memory paved the way for quest for identities and claims to unfulfilled legitimacy.

Death of a Naturalist (1966) reflects the view how the present orients the past to direct towards the future. The collection reflects the poet's sheer anxiety to legitimize the present by invoking the memories of his childhood experiences. The farmland of his childhood times, Mossbawn, County Derry, Northern Ireland, serves as a ground emblematic of a sense of belonging and identity. In *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978*, (1980) he starts with "omphalos." The word has its roots to Greek word for "navel," meaning the centre of the world. Likewise, Mossbawn marks the centre of Seamus Heaney's world of half- dream and half- imagination. He calls it the "first place." It serves as a kind of initiation into the world of history, memory, culture and, identity. In *Exposure, 1965-1975*, Michal Parker suggests that Seamus Heaney starts unpacking the response to the repercussion of colonization by not confining Mossbawn as an index to trace the historicity of the Catholics.²⁹ Rather, from the very beginning he starts exposing the colonized and confined space of Mossbawn to the "wideness of the world."³⁰ The act of advertent exposure becomes an attempt on the part of the poet to overturn the process of colonialism. Michael Parker sees Mossbawn as a "family gesture" against colonialism, an idea that is most akin to David Lloyd's notion of reterritorialization. It is the act of reterritorialization that opens the possibilities of returning to the origins of consciousness that keeps swinging between the realms of local, national, and global.

Digging, influenced by Daniel Corkery's *The Hidden Ireland* (1924) the first poem of *Death of a Naturalist* begins as a journey towards excavating the world of "words" as the manifestation of the eternal truth. In "Feeling into Words," he writes, "Digging" was the first poem "where I thought my *feel* had got into words."³¹ The poem deals with the cultural memory of the collective where the anthropological purpose of the poet is quite evident. He writes, "a good poem has the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds."³² He further adds that the poem had the "force of an initiation" that marked his admission to the world of "poetry as a dig,

²⁹ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. Springer, 12 Oct, 1994.

³⁰ See, O'Brien, Eugene. *Seamus Heaney and the Place of Writing*. *Academia.edu*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2017. p. 48.

³¹ See, Heaney, Seamus. "Feeling into Words." *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-78*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Sep 1, 1981. p. 42.

³² *Ibid*, p.41.

a dig for finds that end up being plants.”³³ The idea of poetry as an archaeological dig implicates a close relationship between place and memory. The poem starts with the theatricality of the pen symbolically metamorphosed into a gun. It hints at Heaney’s complicated inheritance which he wants both to embrace and depart from. He writes:

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests; snug as a gun. (line 1-2, *Digging*, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The acknowledgement of the tension between his cultural inheritance and solitude as a poet in the opening lines brings together the personal and cultural memory. Jonathan Allison in an essay entitled “Seamus Heaney and the Romantic Age,” observes that *Digging* is a “poem of solitude, even if it is also written out of a strong sense of community.” The anxiety of being uprooted and dislocated from the point of origin propels the poet to delve into the memory of his father and grandfather as a ritualistic commemoration. Sadly, there is no single feminine presence as Derry was driven by masculinist principles. Usually Seamus Heaney fixes himself symbolically into the “matrix of reference.” And here it is the childhood memories of his farmland that become a point of reference which he exploits to juxtapose the ever widening struggle between memory and history to justify his identity as a poet.

The pen/spade analogy as a tool to dig through the “gravelly ground” of layers of history transports the poet to the memory of his father, Patrick Heaney, who possessed magical strength and skill in digging. The father figure becomes a source of authority. The typical masculinist ideology does not lead to any communication between the father and the son. The tight –lipped silence serves as a fertile ground to expose the vulnerabilities of division that existed between them. The symbolic act of digging on the part of the poet establishes a disjunction between the past and the present. It is this disjunction that inspires Seamus Heaney for continuity. Using the pen, as a metaphorical spade the poet wishes to achieve continuity despite several disjunctions.

Taking cue from Jurgen Habermas, every act of communication with the past on the part of the subject is an attempt to make validity claims. From a Habermasian mode of thinking, memory expresses the claim to authenticity while history expresses the claim to the truth. The struggle between the “truth” and the ‘authentic’ makes memory compete with history to provide

³³ Ibid, p. 41.

an allusion of reality. In the construction of memory, there is a tendency to establish memory as real. Akin to this notion, Seamus Heaney too tries to give an allusion of reality by promising time travel to his ancestral history. He writes, “I felt that I had let down a shaft into real life.”³⁴ He recalls his father digging:

He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep

To scatter new potatoes that we picked,

Loving their cool hardness in our hands. (12-14, Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

At this juncture, the father who was digging alone gets accompanied by his son as evidenced by the word “our.” The palpability of potatoes as expressed in “cool hardness in our hands” creates a sense of perception that was experienced in the past and is continued in the present. This nullifies the discontinuity and the continuum of the spatial-temporal index and initiates the poet’s quest for self-definition. He makes use of sensory perceptions of sight, smell, touch, and hearing to create a realistic picture of the traditional work of his father and grandfather.

The inadvertent dislocation from the origin makes the poet inclined to stay connected to his home place and the family tradition of excavating. The poet regrets that by taking to the act of writing he is set apart from the family and its tradition. He writes:

Through living roots awaken in my head.

But I’ve no spade to follow men like them. (27-28, Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The roots to his origin, ancestral history, and tradition are still alive in his mind by taking to writing. Recalling them, he is paradoxically awakened to the realization that he is metaphorically cut from his community. Although the memory gives consolation but it testifies to the fact that he is displaced from the community. The realization that he has no spade to follow unleashes a wave of nostalgia for the old order. But he firmly determines that:

Between my finger and my thumb

³⁴ Ibid, p. 41

The squat pen rests.

I'll dig with it. (line 29-31, Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The return to the pen as a spade and not as a gun testifies that he intends to reject the idea of writing as aggression. He will rather instrumentalise the pen to both embrace and depart from his history to justify his own poetic identity. Recalling his grandfather, who “cut more turf in a day”:

Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods

Over his shoulder, going down and down

For the good turf. Digging. (line 22-24, Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

He acknowledges and awakens to the fact that he will use the pen as a tool of excavation to dig and “dabble into verses.”³⁵ He becomes an outsider, “the other” to the community he belongs to by taking a different profession. It is only after examining his subjectivity in relationship with the alterity that he can create his own independent self.

Cicero once wrote- “Magna vis admonitionis inest in locis” meaning great is the power of memory that resides in places. Noted romantic critic, Robert Langbaum sees “place” in the works of William Wordsworth as “the spatial projection of psyche, because it is the repository of memory.”³⁶ Further he adds that, “ we can understand the relation in Wordsworth between the themes of memory and growing up, once we understand that for Wordsworth you advance in life by traveling back again to the beginning, by reassessing your life, by binding your days together anew.”³⁷ John Wilson Foster too writes about Heaney that in *Death of a Naturalist* he assumes the role of a “folklorist, recalling old customs that survived into his native Derry of the 1940s... Heaney is no longer at one with his country origins, and so his rehearsal of the customs he witnessed or participated in as a child assumes the quality of incantation and commemoration.”

³⁵ Ibid 10, 41.

³⁶ See, Langbaum, Robert. “The Evolution of Soul in Wordsworth’s Poetry.” *PMLA* 82.2 (May,1967): p. 271. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 June. 2018.

³⁷ Ibid, p.271

The title poem *Death of a Naturalist* is a memory poem that ritualises the experience of the past and commemorates the metaphorical death of youthful innocence. The temporal and experiential distance between childhood and adulthood generates this poem. Memory and landscape inextricably intertwine to evoke a sense of threat to the childhood territory of young Seamus Heaney. The sensuous and ugly beauty of nature penetrates through the mind of the young poet like an art. The sumptuous description of the flax-dam that has begun rotting suggests the decadent youthful consciousness as it crosses the periphery of childhood piety. But this decadence has spread its tentacles right through the community:

All the year the flax-dam festered in the heart
 Of the townland; green and heavy-headed
 Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods. (line 1-3, *Death of a Naturalist*, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The personal recollections of the “bluebottles” that “wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell,” “frogspawn that grew like clotted water,” “the fattening dots burst into nimble-swimming tadpoles” and “the mammy frog” that “laid hundreds of little eggs and this was frogspawn” express a vital connection between human subjects and the elements of nature based on primordial fear or terror.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
 With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
 Invaded the flax-dam: I ducked through hedges
 To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
 Before. (line 22-26, *Death of a Naturalist*, *Death of a Naturalist*).

This marks the shift from personal childhood memory to collective adult memory after Miss Wall’s natural science lessons on reproduction. This shift also marks a tremendous change in vocabulary, action, and tone. The landscape of experienced consciousness gets invaded with “obscene threats.” The act of frogs invading the territories of the consciousness of the young poet

reverberates with deeper ramifications. The hostility between the human subjects and the bullfrogs alludes to impending violence on the Edenic territory of County Derry. Thus, the poem reflects how memory is all about envisaging dire repercussions.

The idea of memory profoundly based on primal emotion of fear develops in “The Barn” and reaches its crescendo in “An Advancement of Learning”. “The Barn” depicts the darker side childhood memories. The poem shows how place exudes with demonic or apocalyptic terror. But this apocalypse does not have any negative connotations rather “Heaney’s creed is what one may call Humanist and for him nature’s at times savage power is not something to daunt human beings, but something that aids the liberation of human potential.”³⁸ In his poetry “darkness” stands for mystery and most importantly for the hidden unconscious. The unconscious is the seat of undiscovered self, history and culture. The poet gives minutest description of the objects kept in the barn. They assume war-like and spooky quality once the child’s imagination is let free. The ordinary farming tools become tools of weaponry:

Threshed corn lay piled like grit of ivory

Or solid as cement in two- lugged sacks.

The musty dark hoarded an armoury

Of farmyard implements, harness, plough-socks. (line 1-4, The Barn, *Death of Naturalist*).

This suggests that agricultural landscape no longer bears soothing effect rather in the face of impending mechanized world has come out to be instruments of torture that invades the innocent mind of the child.

The fearsome state of the child gets reflected in his imagination of the barn as horrendous. The floor seems “mouse-grey,” where all the summer “zinc burned like an oven.” The sharp objects like “scythe’s edge,” “a clean spade”, and “a pitchfork’s prong” illuminated creepy in the effect of light and darkness enough to panic the child:

Then you felt cobwebs clogging up your lungs

³⁸ See, Xerri, Daniel. *Seamus Heaney’s Early Work: Poetic Responsibility and the Troubles*. Dublin: Maunsel & Company, 2010.

And scuttled fast into the sunlit yard- (line 12-13, *The Barn, Death of a Naturalist*).

The claustrophobic atmosphere in the barn imprisons the body of the child but his imagination is given a free rein:

....where bright eyes
 From piles of grain in corners, fierce, unblinking
 The dark-gulfed like a roof-space. I was chaff
 To be pecked up when birds shot through the air-
 slits. (line 15-18, *The Barn, Death of a Naturalist*).

Unlike the child-observer of *Death of a Naturalist* who escaped the vengeful “slime kings,” the child here is left numbed and fails in his attempt to overcome the fear:

I lay face-down to shun the fear above.
 The two-lugged sacks moved in like great blind rats. (line 19-20, *The Barn, Death of a Naturalist*).

The invasion of the child’s mind by the fearsome blind rats corresponds to the colonial consciousness of the people. The fear and horror generated on the face of changed circumstances actually leads to the growth of the poet’s mind. The childhood memory of the trauma actually turns out to be an outlet to tap his creative potential and assert his poetic identity. Noted critic Elmer Andrews observes that though fear gives persistent threat to his identity but Seamus Heaney is set free from rigid norms “of rational thought and enters into a state conversant with infinity”, so that “in fear and darkness the growth of the poet’s mind begins.”³⁹

Though in “The Barn” the child could not overcome his fear but a kind of triumph is experienced in “An Advancement of Learning.” Francis Bacon’s *The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning* inspires the title of the poem. It recalls significant “spots of time” in

³⁹ See, Tobin, Daniel. *Passage to the Center Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2015. p. 32. Print.

the development of poetic consciousness from childhood to adolescence. The flashback to childhood memories of an encounter with the rats help Seamus Heaney scrutinize how memory plays a significant role as an ethical responsibility to the ‘other.’ In this poem, the child as a subject expresses his revulsion to the rats by establishing them as an object of ‘alterity.’ The poet’s revulsion extends to the nature where he refers to the river as, “Pliable, oil-skinned, wearing / A transfer of gables and sky” (line 4-5, An Advancement of Learning, *Death of a Naturalist*). It leaves the impression as if the decayed and mechanized countryside has imprinted its impression and polluted the beauty of the water/nature. His distaste for the rats gets expressed when he exploits successive onomatopoeia to give minutest details of the rats. The first encounter with the rats happens by the sound when:

Something slobbered curtly, close,

Smudging the silence: a rat

Slimed out of the water and (line 9-11, An Advancement of Learning, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The instinctive fear of the rats make his “throat sickened so quickly that,” he turns “down the path in cold sweat, But God,” a typical Irish to invoke God, leaves a deeper impact on his mind. The second encounter with the rat benumbs his sense of fear and horror when he recognizes the rats as responsive creature. The poet gathers his courage to stare them out. He begins to describe them more objectively:

He clockworked aimlessly a while,

Stopped, back bunched and glistening,

Ears plastered down on his knobbed skull,

Insidiously listening. (line 21-24, An Advancement of Learning, *Death of a Naturalist*).

For a while he forgets how he used to panic at the sight of these rodents and finally overcome his fear. The emotional distance and hostility created between the subject (child) and the object (rat) paves the way for creating and establishing the identity of the child as an independent subject. The psychic consciousness of the child as manifested in his revulsion and distaste for the rats create a perceptible image of the “self” against the hostile “other.” This unreal and yet believable projection of the self taps the opportunity to question and contest the authority of the ‘other.’ This reveals the subject’s desirability to affirm his identity by being responsible to the ‘other.’ The intrusion in the territory of the child finds close resemblance with the territorial acquisition as a part of the colonial process. The act of staring out the ‘rats’ is potentially a radical gesture towards reclaiming the ‘authentic self’ from the shackles of the torturing other as experienced through the childhood trauma. The memory of the childhood trauma thus has a liberating potential. The overcoming of the fear as realized through return to the past operates as a psychological cure.

The soothing effect that the agricultural landscape provided in the poems like “Digging” is subverted in “The Early Purges.” The present poem charts out the poet’s liminal betwixt situation that forms the ground to probe the roots of his identity predicated on a shift from the infinite limits of one’s existence to the newer levels of meaning. The haziness of the fissure between the child/adult, rural/urban, individual/collective, innocence/ experience, cyclic/linear, and state/people is drawn as a powerful response to the feeling of disjunction that stems out of the antagonism between history and reality. The incursion of the “real” as realized by the experienced subject into the historical consciousness of the child has political implication.

The poem recede us to *Death of a Naturalist* with apparent anti-pastoral subject. The word “purges” in the title suggests the cathartic act of getting rid of the past. The past that carries with itself the traumatic memories of childhood weighed down with guilt complex. The poem opens graphic flashback to the time when the poet was a child, “I was six when I first saw kittens drown” (line 1, *The Early Purges*, *Death of a Naturalist*). As a child such gory incident of drowning the kittens would have certainly impacted his unimpaired consciousness that he turns out to be so exact in meticulously furnishing the details of the heinous act of crime. His elder

cousin, the ruthless Dan Taggart, gets into ‘one – man pogrom’⁴⁰ of indifferently exterminating the pests to maintain the smooth functioning of the farm. The victims of the wrathful executioner are constantly dehumanized in the succeeding stanzas by the use of the words “soft paws,” “tiny din,” “snou,” reflecting on the emotional distance that is required to be maintained highlighting that the executioner cannot succumb to agony and distress of eliminating the pests.

The distressed psyche of the child protagonist, the passive sole witness to the act, finds its projection the way in which extermination is carried out. It is as if the child is violently trying out to escape the gory spectacle but is soon “soused” as the kittens and concedes to their silencing:

Soft paws scraping like mad. But their tiny din

Was soon soured. They were slung on the snout

Of the pump and the water pumped in. (line 4-6, The Early Purges, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The word “early” in the title brings to the readers the covert side of the poem. The ruthless Dan Taggart now turns to be benevolent in eradicating the kittens prematurely, giving them an escape from the unspoken harsh realities of the farm life. He says, ““Sure, isn’t it better for them now?”Dan said “(line 7, The Early Purges, *Death of a Naturalist*). And the kittens are finally transmogrified into strange beings:

Like wet gloves they bobbed and shone till he sluiced

Them out on the dunghill, glossy and dead. (8-9, The Early Purges, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The child at their eventual compromise to death feels guilty:

⁴⁰ See, Cash, Peter. “Seamus Heaney: Death of a Naturalist”, *English Association Longer Poem Bookmarks*, UK: NO.7.

Suddenly frightened, for days I sadly hung

Round the yard, watching the three sogged remains

Turn mealy and crisp as old summer dung

Until forgot them. But the fear came back (line 10-13, *The Early Purges, Death of a Naturalist*).

As the child grows up to be an adolescent and as reason begins to cast its shadow on his innocence, his sentiments for the drowned kittens, “big rats,” “snared rabbits,” and, “shot crows” harden and affirms to the fact that:

Still, living displaces the false sentiments

And now, when shrill pups are prodded to drown

I just shrug, ‘Bloody Pups’. It makes sense (line 16-18, *The Early Purges, Death of a Naturalist*).

The sheer insensitive attitude as the child sheds leaves of innocence and blossoms *de novo* into an experienced subject has deeper political implication and raises important questions. The “‘one’ man pogrom” of Dan Taggart is simply representative of the mass killings, bombings, surprised attacks that Seamus Heaney had witnessed as a child post formation of Irish Republic Army (1922-69) the anti-treaty paramilitary movement which refused to recognize both the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland and deemed them as the offspring of British Imperialistic tendencies. It is obvious that Seamus Heaney must have imagined all these as a backdrop to the poem. Massacre as a strategized action of the state or an organization to pour in the fear among the masses raise an important ethical question “whether man’s inhumanity to man was the result of our evolution, whether massacre was simply an aberration that did not normally happen in civilized societies?”⁴¹ (Mark Levene and Penny Roberts) Philip G Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan

⁴¹ See, Levene, Mark, and Penny Roberts. *The Massacre in History*. New York: Berghahn, 1999. Print.

argue that massacre is an act of performance where the mutilated bodies of the executed serve as a stage on which suffering is thrust or imposed. In the given poem, the bodies of the drowned kittens serve as a stage where the scraping paws of the kittens in the bucket make “a frail metal sound,” their noise making, “tiny din” is “soused,” they bob like “wet gloves” and their “soggy remains turn mealy and crisp as old summer dung.” The incursion of reason as the poet matures and his acceptance of death as a needful and inadvertent process on the farm makes him realize:

‘Prevention of cruelty’ talk cuts ice in town

Where they consider death unnatural

But on well-run farms pests have to be kept down. (line 19-21, *The Early Purges, Death of a Naturalist*).

The childhood experience which traumatised the poet for long gets purged as the poet pens his “feelings into words” making the act of writing itself therapeutic. His assertion that the incident does not impact him any longer and yet he revisits the same maintaining the garb of having forgotten those incidents leads one to ponder is there any loss of individuality in the act of forgetting? Has the poet in the act of forgetting put the readers in the danger of becoming insensitive to human suffering in general? Reading *Adorno on the Destruction of Memory*, Brian O’ Connor says that for Adorno “denial of certain memories is the first stage of the process of reconciliation between the subject and object.”⁴² Here the subject being the experienced adult poet and the act of cruelty as the object of scrutiny. For Adorno this reconciliation is a kind of affinity that happens in the “activity of knowledge” and without this affinity the subject can never have truer knowledge of the object in question. The poet’s experience of catharsis as he gets rid of the illusionary phase of childhood and his coming into realization and affirmation of death as the inevitable “final act” made him impart long-term knowledge to his wife on his deathbed “ Do not be afraid.” The ending of the poem unravels the sophisticated layers of “apocalyptic dimension within Ireland’s historical consciousness”⁴³ that marks confrontation with

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ See, Tobin, Daniel. *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. p.32. Print.

his own sense of identity. Fear as primordial to the awakening of state of being retreats to uncover psychic roots that unites the shared experiences of commonality and pushes forward “a sense of nationhood that is structured on common experiences: a history that unites all generations, and the earth that is presented as the Irish people’s mother.”⁴⁴ This is quite evident in the poem “At A Potato Digging”, which begins with Seamus Heaney’s literal capturing of the historical moment and provoke the readers for the need of continuous reinterpretation of history embedded in the disparity between “word” and “flesh.”

“At A Potato Digging” pre-empts the apocalyptic bog poems of the *Wintering Out* (1972) in its metaphorical reading of the “potato” as a symbol of association of atrocious cyclical history and a landscape inscribed with sacrifice of the human consciousness. Eugene O’ Brien in *Seamus Heaney: Creating Ireland’s of the Mind* (2002) observes that “there is a change of pace, as the digging is no more done with a spade but by a mechanical digger which cracks the drill.” (12). The poem starts with:

A mechanical digger wrecks the drill,

Spins up a dark shower of roots and mould.

Labourers swarm in behind, stoop to fill

Wicker creels. Fingers go dead in the cold.

Like crows attacking crow-black fields, they stretch

A higgledy line from hedge to headland; (line 1-6, At a Potato Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

These lines reflect Seamus Heaney’s reading of Patrick Kavanagh’s magnum opus *The Great Hunger* (1942):

⁴⁴ See, Xerri, Daniel. *Seamus Heaney’s Early work: Poetic Responsibility and the Troubles*. Dublin: Maunsel & Company, 2010.

Clay is the word and clay is the flesh

Where the potato gatherers like

mechanised scarecrows move

Along the side-fall of the hill-Maguire

and his men. (line 1-5, *The Great Hunger*).

Patrick Kavanagh's poem is "about a man who did not follow the hints of his imagination... rage against the dying of the light."⁴⁵ It narrates the suppressed consciousness of Patrick Maguire who leads a life deprived of sexual gratification. It reflects on Kavanagh's growing frustration with the values of the State which he saw as "the sterile life of current pieties and religious hypocrisy which degenerated into a claustrophobia of popular devotion."⁴⁶ Patrick Kavanagh shows in Patrick Maguire the repercussions of the suppression of human desires. The titular hunger is not merely physical rather emotional and spiritual. The supposed separation of the State and the Church could not succeed in dissolving the traditionalist set up of the society and it manifested itself in the form of Censorship Act of 1929 that ran along the path of conservative Catholic values. For example, there was a tradition that a man could not marry until his parents were living. Prohibition on forming marital alliances and procreation in service of the God is challenged by Patrick Kavanagh in the introductory lines, "Clay is the word and clay is the flesh," (line 1) which is a perverted version of John1:1, "The Word was with God and the Word was God." The substitution of the "God" with "Clay" indicates Patrick Kavanagh's questioning of the myths that surrounds Man's origin. He asks, whether man was created to serve God or earth? Man in reverence to the earth finds God in the land and it is the land which is imbued with the power to sustain life, not God. In this way, the clay acquires attributes of godliness. The poem ends with "apocalypse of the clay" that alludes to Revelation 13:11-17. It suggests how without definitive end to natural urges and giving vent to imagination the spirit of a

⁴⁵ See, Heaney, Seamus. "From Monaghan to The Grand Canal: The Poetry of Patrick Kavanagh." *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Sep 1, 1981. p. 122.

⁴⁶ See, Agnew, Una. *The Mystical Imagination of Patrick Kavanagh*. Dublin: The Columba Press, 1998. p.41.

person and a place would be decimated. This relates to the annihilation of the cultural expression that Seamus Heaney talks about in the essay “From Monaghan to The Grand Canal: The Poetry of Patrick Kavanagh.” For him, *The Great Hunger* is “the hunger of a culture for its own image and expression.”⁴⁷ He cites the example of Stephen Dedalus’s metaphor of nets to discuss the circumstance of Maguire. He quotes, “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets”. Patrick Maguire’s conformity to the norms of the society caused non-fulfillment of his own natural urges. In the act of questioning the State and the Church both Seamus Heaney and Patrick Kavanagh outrightly reject the romanticisation of the Irish peasant as “noble savage.”

The title of the poem conventionally relates to the famine of 1845-49 that decimated the most of the impoverished Irish population who largely survived the potato crop. Michael Parker writes, “...the killer fungus, *phytophthora infestans*, struck in September 1845, and by February of the next year three-quarters of the crop had been destroyed and typhus raged in twenty-five of the thirty-two counties. The inadequate and inept responses of the British Government to the crisis are well documented in Cecil-Woodham Smith’s book of 1962, *The Great Hunger*. The famine left the Irish psyche permanently scarred.”⁴⁸ The callous and inhuman treatment of the Irish by the British policy of ‘Malthusian neglect’ led to migration of the Irish population to America in large numbers and consequently the use of indigenous Gaelic language and folk customs began declining. Seamus Heaney in this poem moves beyond the personal history, memory and identity to embrace the collective historical consciousness, cultural memory and shared notion of postcolonial identity. The potato as a symbolic landscape dynamically serves as a ground for the poet to engage with the imaginative infinities to express the collective consciousness of Irishmen yet at the same time he cannot go beyond the original limits of personal and historical past. This dilemma of being an ‘inner émigré’ puts the poet in the danger of self-definition deeply influenced by solipsism. The epistemology of ‘inner emigration’ further destabilises the notion of essential Irishness and makes way for the ‘hybrid and multi-cultural

⁴⁷ See, Heaney, Seamus. “From Monaghan to The Grand Canal: The Poetry of Patrick Kavanagh.” *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Sep 1, 1981. p.126.

⁴⁸ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. Springer, 12 Oct. 1994. p. 69.

identities.”⁴⁹ Thus the poet escaping the imperfect limits of solipsism broadens the notion of Irishness incorporating multiplicity of identities and places his work in communion with the international readership in an attempt to elude the “imaginative bind” that forms the root crisis of his works.

In the present poem, he liberates himself from the personal limits by invoking the notion of paganism as manifested in “the black mother” and the “bitch earth.” Thomas B. O’Grady in an essay entitled “Seamus Heaney’s Great Hunger,” comments “his (Heaney) interest in the tribal dimension of Irish experience is manifest throughout his representation of the laborer’s unconscious perpetuation of an antediluvian ‘worship’ of this unheeding provider”. The subservience to the pagan god/goddess as expressed in the poem:

Heads bow, trunks bend, hands fumble towards the black

Mother. Processional stooping through the turf

Rekurs mindlessly as autumn. Centuries

Of fear and homage to the famine god

Toughen the muscles behind their humbled knees,

Make a seasonal altar of the sod. (line 11-16, At a Potato Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

brings together the pagan and Christian to give power to a subculture and elude the Irish identity from the danger of being polarised. The “mindless” or unquestioned devotion of the devotees dehumanises them and it is this reduction of individuality that let the poet comment on the savagery let loose by British policies of Malthusian neglect.

⁴⁹ See, O'Brien, Eugene. "Seamus Heaney and the Place of Writing." *Academia.edu*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2017. p.34.

The second stanza focuses on the “potato” crop which has turned dead like stones, “Flint-white, purple. They scattered / like inflated pebbles...” (line 17-18). The potatoes are compared to the corpses and are “piled in pits” like resting “live skulls.” The potatoes are “blind eyed” because they are incognizant of the atrocity that was meted out in the 1840s wherein they were an important participant. The humans have shrunk to skeletons due to persistent starvation. The people went so wild due to starvation that they ended up consuming the rotten potatoes thereby poisoning themselves. As a consequence of which, “Millions rotted along with it” (line 37), suggesting innumerable victims of the Irish famine. The cultural collective comes to the fore in a concrete version when the poet writes, “A people hungering from birth” (line 42), and the memory of the collective atrocity is so alive till present that the:

Stinking potatoes fouled the land

pits turned pus into filthy mounds

and where potato diggers are

you still smell the running sore. (line 46-49, At a Potato Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The last stanza is unusually optimistic as it is replete with sense of abundance. The poet writes:

Down in the ditch and take their fill,

Thankfully breaking timeless fasts;

Then, stretched on the faithless ground, spill

Libations of cold tea, scatter crusts. (line 54-57, At a Potato Digging, *Death of a Naturalist*).

In the act of bringing together the pagan and Christian, Thomas O’Grady comments that “Heaney had his workers finally break their ‘timeless fasts’ as prostrate on the ‘faithless ground’, they spill, libations of cold tea, scatter crusts.”

The poem “Ancestral Photograph” detours to the opening poem of the collection *Death of a Naturalist*. The pursuit of the past through mnemonic representation shifts to the realm of “visual” in “Ancestral Photograph.” Seamus Heaney deposits the visual memory in the form of images and photograph onto the landscape of his poetic vocation and reposit it in textual narratives that work as historical source in want of evidence of documented material. Susan Sontag, a noted Memory Studies critic, is of the view that the individuation of memory is irreproducible since “it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating.” In other words, memory is simply not a repository rather a meditational process of creating conducive condition for indiscriminate social consciousness.

In the given poem, though the individual memory of Seamus Heaney’s father and his grand-uncle is traced in a generalised manner, it is visual index of the subject that catches hold of the social body. The memorialisation of his grand-uncle through visual imagery as a proud Irish countryman whose:

Jaws puff round and solid as a turnip,

Dead eyes are statue’s and the upper lip

Bullies the heavy mouth down to a droop. (line 1-3, Ancestral Photograph, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The portrait suggests “a stocky resolute individual, a figure from the lost world.”⁵⁰

A bowler suggests the Stage Irishman

Whose look has two parts scorn, two parts dead man-

⁵⁰ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*, Springer, 12 Oct. 1994. p 80.

His silver watch chain girds him like a hoop. (line 4-6, Ancestral Photograph,
Death of a Naturalist).

The accessories of his father's uncle such as the "bowler," "silver watch" render him the look of a theatrical stage Irishman, a "creature" of the past. The mention of the "stage Irishman" is significant as a postcolonial gesture. It was a fabrication of the British bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century that distinguished not only "between Englishmen and Irishmen, but also between human beings and apes."⁵¹ The imagination of the Irish as wild was corroborated by the guilty consciousness of the British responsible for the Great Famine of 1840s. The fate of the Stage Irishman as a symbol of hilarity was contested by playwrights like J M Synge. He foresaw that the satiric representation of Irishmen had a tinge of tragic intensity embittered with tragedy of mistaken identity. He exploded the myth of romanticisation of Irish peasantry to reveal the fact that "their besetting vice was not pugnacity but paralysis." (See, Declan Kieberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 1995, 30) The theatrical representation of the grand-uncle as a stage Irishman was to show how the British romanticised the Irish peasantry and unfortunately plight of the peasantry was such that they easily succumbed to these stereotypes as suggested through the given accessories.

The process of subsequent fall of the stage Irishman is revisited in the given poem when Seamus Heaney writes about the removal of the portrait leaving a faded patch:

Long fixed in sepia tints, begins to fade

And must come down. Now on the bedroom wall

There is a faded patch where he has been

As if a bandage had been ripped from the skin,

Empty plaque to a house's rise and fall. (line 8-12, Ancestral Photograph, *Death of a Naturalist*)

⁵¹ See, Kieberd, Declan, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, 1995. pp. 39-60.

Walter Benjamin, in “Short History of Photography” comments photography is an “optical unconscious,” which mechanically replicates and hence naturalises the visual space by evoking the emotive materiality. The framed picture on the wall that carried historical and cultural value might lead to suffocation as well. The act of putting down the portrait that hung on the wall is spatial in nature and it is this spatialisation that renders the photographic encounter as the moment of exposure and vulnerability. The portrait located “on the bedroom wall” becomes an important (semi) public space for the onlookers. The viewers of the portrait are themselves exposed to reviewing their assumed identities while they tease out the historical and cultural materiality of the family photograph. The surly presence of the past contained within the squared frame plays a definitive role in “confirming and challenging the identity and history of their users.” (Patricia Holland) Sahika Erkonan in an essay “Photography and the Construction of Family and Memory” discusses Roland Barthes’ concept of photographic encounter and writes that for him, *stadium* means that the spectator of a photographic image is involved within its cultural context, while *punctum* is a piercing moment derived subjectively from the photographic image by its viewer. The photographic encounter provides a productive detour to understanding the hegemony that essentially reflects on the ways of repressive state apparatus. Sekula, a noted critic, exposes how photographic practice has historically excluded the subjectivity and consciousness of the working class. Seamus Heaney challenges photography as hegemonic practice by revisiting the memory of his father and father’s uncle who dealt in cattle trade”

Until my father won at arguing

His own price on a crowd of cattlemen

Who handled rumps, groped teats, stood, paused and then

Bought a round of drinks to clinch the bargain. (line 15-18, *Ancestral Photograph, Death of a Naturalist*).

As the Uncle- nephew enjoyed fair days the poet watched them “sadden when the fairs were stopped.” The poet ends the poem:

Closing this chapter of our chronicle

Take your uncle's portrait to the attic. (line 29-30, Ancestral Photograph, *Death of a Naturalist*).

The irreparable loss and the need to move on to reconcile his displaced subjectivity as an intellectual performer leave him an “inner émigré.” Seamus Heaney in presenting familial relations as a united entity advocates against the nuclear. In a chaotic world which is ripped with factionalism and disjunction everything seems to be fragmented.

The tracing of the collective memory of his ancestors allow for actualisation of the past and positing resistance by negating the hegemonic power structures. This in consequence, leads to the formation of a homogenised subculture against the power of the subsuming dominant culture of the coloniser. The resistance to the hegemony of the colonizer turns stronger in the next subsequent collection where unlike *Death of a Naturalist* where he traced personal history and memory to add meaning to his poetic identity, in *Door into the Dark*, Heaney embraces his local community and posits their silent revolution against the colonizers.

For *Death of a Naturalist*, Richard Kearney rightly observes that “all of Heaney's writing is informed by an awareness that the poet as a resourceful dweller in language has replaced the naturalist as an innocent dweller in nature. So that if Heaney occasionally seeks to retrieve the experience of the ‘naturalist’, it is always as a ‘post-naturalist’: as someone who, at best, hankering after something that he knows full well is irretrievably lost.”⁵²

⁵² See, Kearney, Richard. “Heaney and Homecoming.” *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture*. Manchester University Press, 1988. p.104

CHAPTER -2

Door into the Dark (1969) and Smell of Ordinariness

The second collection of poems *Door into the Dark* (1969) prompts an enlarged poetic consciousness. It marks a significant shift from the *Death of a Naturalist* where the poet took inspiration from childhood memory and personal history to explore the terrain of his poetic consciousness while in *Door into the Dark* the poet's consciousness expands to embrace the literal and imaginative space beyond Mossbawn.

The year 1966 was *annus mirabilis* for the Heaney family. It saw the birth of Heaney's first son, Michael. Heaney was appointed a lecturer at Queen's University. Thereafter, he chanced upon to meet his future poetic partners, Derek Mahon and Michael Longley. The year 1967 witnessed the establishment of Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association in Belfast that campaigned against discrimination in elections, employment, public housing, and abuse of the Special Powers Act. Unfortunately, the demise of Patrick Kavanagh, whose funeral Heaney had attended with Mahon and Longley created inspirational vacuum in him. To overcome such a lack of poetic inspiration, Heaney revisits his 'former textual self' to embrace his children, wife, mother, rural craftsmen and tradesmen and speak on their behalf to provide a distinct touch to Celtic identity and Irish Consciousness.

Blake Morrison comments that "*Door into the Dark* is more promise than fulfillment, more hovering on the threshold than a decisive arrival."⁵³ There is significant limitation to the way in which Heaney politicises the aesthetic and political conscience. He is well informed of the assertion made by Robert Lowell that "every serious artist knows that he cannot enjoy public celebration without making subtle public commitments." Heaney focuses on poet's role as 'conscience' which is anarchically confused. Thomas Docherty comments that Seamus Heaney validates "poetry of confusion." It refers to "anarchic confusion by being precisely incomprehensible, a poetry whose tongue is ungoverned".⁵⁴ This relates to the evasive political

⁵³ See, Morrison, Blake. *Seamus Heaney*. London: Methuen, 1982. p. 33

⁵⁴ See, Docherty, Thomas. "The Sign of the Cross: Review Government of the Tongue". Ed. *New Casebooks: Seamus Heaney*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997.

gesture of which he was acutely accused of. The dilemma of being caught between the commitment to politics and poetics makes Heaney's ideology Ireland centered. An army motivated by atrocious ideology puts moral obligation on Heaney to reach to a concrete conclusion. In a self-ironising manner Heaney finds a solution to this creative bind by striking out the singularity of the "silenced subalterns" for he believes that poetry operates as a powerful silence. This gets reflected in his attempt to give voice to the 'silent figures' an emancipation from the self and moving towards the "not self."

In this collection, Heaney writes that "words themselves are doors".⁵⁵ They provide point of entry into "the dark centre, the blurred and irrational storehouse of insight and instinct, the hidden core of the self."⁵⁶ Darkness is approached as a landscape of investigation to probe into the deeper levels of consciousness. The dark prevails in the consciousness of the Christian people of. Heaney relies on the "acts of faith" to give meaning to Irish identity. The opening line of the poem 'The Forge' provides Heaney with the title of the second collection. Historically, the forge was located at Hillhead Road near Castledawson. The forge was owned by a local blacksmith called Barney Devlin and Heaney had got an anvil from there for his performance as a blacksmith for Bellaghy Dramatic Society Production about the rebellion of 1798. The forge formed an essential part of rural Irish community. The art of blacksmiths have been glorified as they played significant role in building up an ancient civilization. They served the farmers with horseshoes, sharpened ploughshares and made tools made of iron to be used for farming. Heaney as a boy was fascinated with the unnatural darkness of the forge inside which the blacksmith used to grant divinity to the objects he crafted with his immense power of artistic creativity. In *Poetry Book Society Bulletin* Heaney writes that the poem implements the symbol of the dark as the centre of liberating energy for the purpose of shaping new art forms. The shed of the Blacksmith becomes the metaphorical symbol of spade with which he will beat the real iron. Thus, the art of the blacksmith is compared with the art of the poet who digs into the word.

The poem 'The Forge' is no longer about the "presence of the past" rather the "past." The poet transcends the threshold of confined personal memory and history to look into the lives of those who are on the verge of extinction. This is an attempt on his part to emancipate his 'self'

⁵⁵ See, Heaney, Seamus. *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-78*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Sep 1, 1981. p. 52.

⁵⁶ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. Springer, 12 Oct. 1994.

which cannot have cognizant of its own until it has acknowledged the “non self.” All he has is a door that leads him into the “unfathomable darkness” that has numinous quality to it. The dark is the untamed energy which has the full potential to push the “self” beyond the “accustomed perceptions” and help in the evolution of the consciousness of the “self.” (Tobin). Heaney writes: “All I know is a door into the dark” (line 1, *The Forge, Door into the Dark*). The exterior of the forge seems like an ordinary rural workplace, “Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting:” (line 2, *The Forge, Door into the Dark*) but on the inside there is “...the hammered anvil’s short-pitched ring” (line 3, *The Forge*) which unleashes “The unpredictable fantail of sparks / Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water” (line 5-6, *The Forge*). As the poet moves beyond the anvil through the door into the dark his conscious self achieves salvation as he witnesses the blacksmith as a “maker” or “artist-God.” The door alludes to the Bible’s “I am the door: by me if any man shall enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9), the place where salvation is promised to people by Christ. The poet is driven by the “ecstasy of the quest” to catch the glimpse of the forgotten past in the form of the blacksmith working “To beat real iron out...” (line 14, *The Forge*).

The forge turns out to be a sacred place of worship with the anvil at the centre “Horned as a unicorn, at one and square, / Set there immoveable: an altar / Where he expends himself in shape and music.’ The journey towards the ‘dark’, a realm of the unconscious blinds the poet to the ‘unknowable.” (line 7-9, *The Forge*). The anvil at the centre resembles Heaney’s idea of “omphalos” located at the centre of the world. It is the seat of both destruction and creation. The blacksmith’s creativity adds to the rich cultural heritage of the Irish history which needs to be preserved but the community as a whole is no longer compatible with the modern industrial world and thus are on the brink of obsolescence. This is the reason why Seamus Heaney as a poet takes his conscious self to the world of the blacksmiths, the not self, to speak on their behalf.

Blake Morrison writes that University education embarrassed Seamus Heaney as he felt indispensably alienated from his rural Irish community. He felt sad that the historical onslaught had silenced his people and therefore he “found himself in the position of valuing silence above speech, of defending the shy and awkward against the confident and accomplished, of feeling

language to be a kind of betrayal.”⁵⁷ The blacksmith is a silent figure deeply indulged in his artistic creativity uninfluenced by the world outside the door. The preoccupied blacksmith rejects the materialistic values of the world and instead indulges in spiritual fulfillment. It is the poet who brings the outside modern world to the inside world of the forge for the reader to be illuminated with the sparks of the dying creative world. The immovable anvil is the metaphorical symbol of the permanence in a transitory world. “

Heaney’s quest for aesthetic freedom gets hindered with the intrusion of his function as a social outsider. On the one hand he wants to show solidarity with his people and on the other hand he has to function as a poet with social responsibility. This dilemma hampers development of own poetic voice. To avoid such a situation Seamus Heaney mentions silent figures such as blacksmiths who are anonymous. He avoids giving names so that the anonymity is preserved and therefore memorialised. As the subaltern community remain anonymous so his poetic voice. The exclusion of historic specificity gives easiness to Heaney to exercise his poetic responsibility without being politically attached to them. It lets him to celebrate their craftsmanship and suggest how modernisation has killed the artistic and cultural heritage of his community.

Similarly in the poem ‘Thatcher’ the poet lends his voice to the man who makes roof. He is unaware of his own impending obsolescence and therefore it becomes essential for Heaney to compensate for the loss of his livelihood and identity by memorialising him. Unlike Heaney he cannot speak. Therefore, silence becomes instrumental in positing resistance to the British hegemony. And Seamus Heaney does this by deconstructing the imperialist project by giving importance to silence over speech. Helen Hennessy Vendler writes “if writing about labourers engaged in archaic occupations is one way for a modern poet to submerge his own adult identity in anonymity, another way is to leave his own historical moment, to speak as ‘I’ or ‘we’ from another era.”⁵⁸ This is exactly what Heaney does by the end of the poem. His outsider state is present to them and not ‘us’. The way in which the Thatcher:

Then fixed the ladder, laid out well-honed blades

And snipped at straw and sharpened ends of rods

⁵⁷ See, Hart, Henry. *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progressions*, Issue 1 of Irish Studies, Irish Studies: Syracuse University Press, 1992. pp. 32-73.

⁵⁸ See, Vendler, Helen Hennessy. “Anonymities.” *Seamus Heaney*. Harvard University Press: 2000. p. 21.

That, bent in two, made a white-pronged staple
 For pinning down his world, handful by handful.
 Couchant for days on sods above the rafters,
 He shaved and flushed the butts, stitched all together
 Into a sloped honeycomb, a stubble patch,
 And left them gaping at his Midas touch. (line 9-16, Thatcher, *Door into the Dark*).

The poet glorifies the skill of the Thatcher by registering his art into the chronicle of names lost in history. Heaney like a “tribal apologist” taps their history for the sake of succeeding generations. By chronicling the fading identities of these silent figures Heaney is “able to write about the presence of these atavisms, some of which, as a member of his own particular tradition, he can understand, without granting them any ethical or juridical warrant.”⁵⁹

Karen Marguerite Moloney writes that for Seamus Heaney the root cause of sterile and fragmented state of post colonial Irish society is excessive dependence on the “solidity” and “rationality” of the male psyche and this is the reason why *Door into the Dark* sees a major shift towards marriage as the union between man and woman that would lead towards balance between reason and emotion. Unlike ‘The Forge’ where the male psyche dominates and shows that the creative process is the outcome of brutal act of destruction, Heaney brings to the fore the woman psyche in ‘The Wife’s Tale’ whose isolation from the affectionless husband makes it evident that the seemingly unproductive or not so creative act of laying out lunch for her husband and his fellow labourers in itself binds the generations of farmers together.

‘The Wife’s Tale’ is a dramatic monologue of a farming woman which has its source in ‘Homage to Pieter Breghuel.’ In *Poetry Book Society Bulletin* Heaney expresses his desire to “write about a woman bringing tea to a harvest field. Earlier I might have set down the picture and trusted that it was redolent of the emotion it evoked for me.”⁶⁰ It gives glimpse of the dark

⁵⁹ O'Brien, Eugene. "Seamus Heaney and the Place of Writing." *Academia.edu*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2017.p.98.

⁶⁰ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of a Poet*. Springer, 12 Oct.,1994. p.80.

marriage where woman is dispossessed of her husband since the man has become one with the land he works on. This suggests the Irish idea of the marriage of the man with the land he tills. As the woman spreads the food on linen cloth and invites her husband with other labourers the lack of affection in the husband for his wife is disclosed:

When I had spread it all on linen cloth

Under the hedge, I called them over. (line 1-2, *The Wife's Tale, Door into the Dark*).

The woman – narrator becomes a silent observer. Her husband highlighting his own sexual importance asks her:

He lay down and said, 'Give these fellows theirs,

I'm in no hurry,' plucking grass in handfuls

And tossing it in the air. 'That looks well.' (line 8-10, *The Wife's Tale, Door into the Dark*).

Though the female persona narrates the event in the poem it is the male persona who prevails over the hegemonic relationship between the sexes. The male persona celebrates his own utility by expressing pride in his work as he gathers the 'good clean seed' while the woman in want of manly affection is left alienated:

'It's threshing better than I thought, and mind

It's good clean seed. Away over there and look.' (line 16-17, *The Wife's Tale, Door into the Dark*).

The woman acts as the supporter and nourishes the husband without getting love in return. This poem highlights the hubris of the man who takes pride in his work and this detaches him from his wife who acts as life-support"

... 'There's good yield,

Isn't there?' - as proud as if he were the land itself-

‘Enough for crushing and for sowing both.’ (line 29-31, *The Wife’s Tale*, *Door into the Dark*).

The patriarchal dominance in the poem incorporates the female’s role in nurturing the masculine society. Once the labourers had their fill the woman was no longer needed on the field:

And that was it. I’d come and he had shown me,

So I belonged no further to the work.

I gathered cups and folded up the cloth

And went... (line 32-35, *The Wife’s Tale*, *Door into the Dark*).

As if her care for her husband was as natural as her duty to him. The wifely duty and natural care as a woman remains undistinguished. The poem thus highlights that a balance should be maintained between man and woman.

In contrast to the passive woman in “*The Wife’s Tale*,” the female narrator in “*Undine*” is assertive, “a water-spirit who has to marry a human being and have a child by him before she can become human.”⁶¹ Commenting on the title, Heaney writes that “if our auditory imaginations were sufficiently attuned to plumb and sound a vowel, to unite the most primitive and civilised associations, the word ‘undine’ would probably suffice as a poem in itself.”⁶² The poem is about a water-spirit symbolic of potential creation. It stresses how artistic creativity stems out of energetic reciprocation and responsiveness. The water-spirit narrates:

He slashed the briars, shovelled up grey slit

To give me right -of-way in my own drains

And I ran quick for him, cleaned out my rust. (line 1-3, *Undine*, *Door into the Dark*).

⁶¹ See, Geaney, Seamus. “Feeling Into Words. *Preoccupations: Selected Prose* 1968-1978. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Sep 1, 1981. p.53.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.52-53.

This relates to Heaney's recalling a man who cleared out the mud from the drain and let the water channels run free. This ordinary event gathered into Heaney's consciousness as a liberating event that humanised the water channels. The release of the water from the blocked drain alludes to creation of poetry as a result of release from the natural realm. As the human subject walks by the water-spirit she "ripples" and "churns" to grab his attention. The sexual encounter between the human subject and the water-spirit would secure her a soul:

...I rippled and I churned

Where ditches intersected near the river

Until he dug a spade deep in my flank

And took me to him... (line 6-9, *Undine, Door into the Dark*).

Heaney gives voice to the water-spirit which is the source of unnameable energy guiding the cultivation of poetry with its dark pool of sound. The spirit is a repository of power of language. The appropriation of water-spirit into human is an act of controlling and humanizing the water channels. When human culture tames the water into irrigation canals, the primal rights of water to be let free is controlled. Similarly, when the water-spirit is humanised by virtue of sexual encounter with a human subject, the water-spirit symbolic of pool of sound is liberated from the realm of primal formlessness and is captured by the poet for the sake of artistic creativity. Thus, the female figures serve as a way of validating the poet's identity by being culturally voiced as the subjugated Irish community.

In the "Requiem for the Croppies", the anonymity granted to the common men lost in history gradually shifts to historical specificity. The poetic voice turns to 'we' from individuated 'I'. The given poem is a rebuttal to Geoffrey Hill's 'Requiem for the Plantagenet Kings.' It celebrates the 1798 rebellion. It is a self-epitaph by the croppies who "rejoices in the seeds of liberty sown during the 1798 rebellion, when a largely Protestant leadership led the dispossessed Catholic masses in an abortive attempt to free Ireland from English domination."⁶³

Seamus Heaney traces the history of Irish rebels who were defeated by the English troops at Vinegar Hill. They were called croppies because they cut their hair short as a sign of resistance

⁶³ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*, Springer, 12 Oct, 1994.p. 85.

to the English colonizers. Historicising the conflict between the English and the Irish, Michael Parker writes that “ten thousand government troops, with twenty pieces of artillery, encircled the twenty thousand wretched rebels herded together around the green standards on the summit and bombarded them with grape-shot and the new explosive shells.”⁶⁴ The first three lines of the poem indicate how the Irish rebels led a nomadic life in pursuit of freedom of Ireland from the clutches of British Imperialism. Heaney celebrates the solidarity of the Irish rebels by lending voice to them as “we.” As they are on constant run from one place to another, they must carry food with themselves stored in their long coats with meager probability of setting up a permanent camp with the purpose of taking rest in middle of the war.

The pockets of our greatcoats full of barley-

No kitchens on the run, no striking camp-

We moved quick and sudden in our own country. (line 1-3, *Requiem for the Croppies, Door into the Dark*).

The phrase “we moved quick and sudden in our own country” (line 3), suggests the ironical situation of the Irish who have become refugees in their own country, since Ireland dominated by the English is their own country and yet not so their own. Not only the Irish rebels but also the Catholic priests are bound to hide from the English troops. The Irish troops were unorganized set of people motivated by the nationalist feelings. They were ill equipped with primitive weapons against the technologically advanced army of the British:

A people, hardly marching-on the hike-

We found new tactics happening each day: (line 5-6, *Requiem for the Croppies, Door into the Dark*).

The Irish rebels with the primitive knowledge of the weapons disrupted the English army by finding new tactics every day. The Irish troops tried hard to resist the superior forces of the British:

Until, on Vinegar Hill, the fatal conclave.

⁶⁴ Ibid, page, 86.

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. (line 10-14, *Requiem for the Croppies*, *Door into the Dark*).

In the closing lines of the poem, the poet approaches the cyclical mode of history of rebellion of 1798 in the form of the barley seeds which eventually grew up out of the graves of the rebels into a new plant. The poem sustains the truth that “there is no bloodless myth will hold.” The resurrection of the rebels in the form of new plants validate the cyclical mode of history that not only memorializes the Irish rebellion but also carries its pastness in the present with the intention of positing a silent revolution against the political imperialism of the British. The croppies were not given dignified burial as they were touted as terrorists. Their revolutionary fervor has been documented in British history as that of radical extremists. Therefore Heaney revisits and rewrites their history to establish them as an epitome of patriotism. The intention behind celebrating the rebellion was to show how atrocious policies of British Government did not benefit the Irish people. In the concluding lines of his book, *The Year of Liberty* (1969), Thomas Pakenham observes, “Forty years later the stench of history is overpowering. Catholics have remained poor, politically powerless, and alienated from government.” The optimism with which the Irish rebels fought the war continues to inspire the present Irish community as “each element of nightmare...succeeded the dream of hope.”

While in the earlier poems Heaney claims a right to collective identity and history. In ‘The Peninsula,’ the poet -narrator assumes the role of a perceptual observer with no claims to history, ethnicity, religion or family. Helen Vendler comments that the poem is a stipulation to overcome the sense of inarticulacy which the poet feels in case of emotional fear. Heaney’s reliance on the primary senses to ‘uncode’ truths about the geographical landscapes actually leads him to comment on the material actualities of the world which has slowly begun to absorb the untarnished beauty of pre-Celtic Ireland. The poet assumes the role of an archaeologist who traverses through the peninsula emblematic of Irish geography and history. Heaney recalls that the drive to the peninsula actually originated from the drive along with his wife, Marie, Michael

and Edna Longley when they “were all getting to know each other and getting to know the countryside around Belfast.” “The Peninsula” recommends the reader a drive through the Ards peninsula in County Down:

When you have nothing more to say, just drive

For a day all round the peninsula. (line 1-2, *The Peninsula, Door into the Dark*).

Here the peninsula is metaphorical symbol of entrancement to the world of poetic possibilities where an inarticulate soul would find influx of new words to express itself. Here it is to be noted that Heaney shows complete reliance to the physical landscape as the source of imaginative accuracy. The physical landscape appears to be untouched by mankind’s material expansion. It is devoid of all manmade incursions of speech and writing.

The land without marks, so you will not arrive

But pass through, through always skirting landfall. (line 4-5, *The Peninsula, Door into the Dark*).

Here, Heaney seems to be motivated by T. S. Eliot’s idea of necessitating instability of the poet’s mind being either everywhere or nowhere. The ‘land without marks’ illustrates the link between memory, land and the act of deterritorialisation. The poet creates the vastness of the landscape which absorbs the linguistic emptiness of the poetic self and thus leads to necessary purgation of the soul:

At dusk, horizons drink down sea and hill,

The ploughed field swallows the whitewashed gable (line 6-7, *The Peninsula, Door into the Dark*).

The horizon is personified which seems to be drinking the landscape as the poet must absorb the immediate atmosphere as a source of a new encoding for literary revival.

And you’re in the dark again.... (line 8, *The Peninsula, Door into the Dark*).

Like in “The Forge”, this poem too stresses on the virtues of “backward look” to the pre-Celtic era to take inspiration for writing poetry. The imaginative return resonate the return of the self to

the origins of poetry with intensity.” Heaney’s poetic consciousness would develop on his ability to uncode all landscapes with sheer responsiveness like the water-spirit in “Undine.” The poet with the “eternal return” (Mercia Eliade) comes back to the dark repeatedly with the desire of “linguistic renewal” of the poetic consciousness. Heaney’s meditative drive back home resonates with Mercia Eliade’s notion of ‘eternal return’ in which the poetic self seeks to “abolish temporal history (Father Time) in order to recover the timeless void (the Eternal Mother) out of which new order or ‘cosmos’ burgeons.”⁶⁵

The dislocation of the poet’s conscious self is obvious. The nomadic movement around the peninsula with no clear destination in mind serves as a means to comprehend memory and meaning. The journey itself provides meaning.

It demonstrates the temporality of the vision as the foreshore is subject to change. The ever changing ‘foreshore’ recounts the connection of landscape with deterritorialisation. The act of reclaiming the land calls into question the capability to add meaning to geographical and spatial index.

And drive back home, still with nothing to say

Except that now you will uncode all landscapes (line 13-14, *The Peninsula, Door into the Dark*).

The solitary drive to the peninsula with the motive to cure oneself of poetic block or inarticulacy pre-empts uncoding of the landscapes and it suggests that there must be a code to the landscape already. The act of uncoding makes the landscape appear as a text to which uncoding should be affirmed as both acceptance and rejection of the predefined codes.”Using memory as a nomadic exploration of the territory demonstrates Heaney’s affirmation of the world of infinite words emerging from the chaos of language. Uncoding, therefore calls for removal of given meanings dictated by specific authority or power. Helen Vendler in her book *Seamus Heaney* comments that “the poem is caught between rush of a moment’s pure visual satisfaction and the frustration of its transience, goes beyond the ecstatic to a definition of selfhood so fugitive as to be

⁶⁵ See, Hart, Henry. “The Poetry of Meditation.” *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progression*. Syracuse University Press, 1993.p. 44

insubstantial.” As the poetic subject admits the status-quo of being ‘neither or there’, Heaney emphasizes the temporality of meaning. He affirms the deterritorialisation of the landscape by challenging it to be constructed or appropriated by any specific ‘code.’

“A Lough Neagh Sequence” has been touted as the most intricate work of Seamus Heaney in *Door into the Dark*. It was first published by Harry Chambers in the Phoenix Pamphlet Series, January, 1969. The sequence is considered to be the precursor to the bog poems of *Wintering Out* and *North*. Heaney comments, “ I envisaged this sequence as a kind of Celtic pattern; the basic structural image is the circle- the circle of the eel’s journey, the fishermen’s year, the boats’ wakes, the coiled lines, the coiled catch and much else.”⁶⁶

In the first poem of the sequence, ‘Up the Shore,’ the overpowering force of nature is depicted by repetition of the line ‘The lough will claim a victim every year’ both in the opening and closing stanza. The immensity of the powerful nature scales down the capability of man who succumbs to its domineering spirit. But with the advent of industrialisation and expansion of commerce and trade, man has started to claim its superiority over every aspect of nature. The British colonisers exercise their control over the Lough Neagh by restricting the ebb and flow of the water channels. They have taken control of the small town beneath the Lough Neagh populated by eels.

The British trading Company owned the monopoly over the right of catching eels on Lough Neagh. They constructed the gates so that they could enjoy the handsome catch of five hundred fishes in one go. They are not even least concerned that such humongous catch would horribly disturb the life cycle of the eels. What they care is for the economic gain that those eels would earn for the fishing co-operative. The British colonisers exploited the Irish fishermen because they expressed empathy with the elements of nature even though it was their profession to catch eels. The poem describes how the Irish fishermen came in confrontation with the British fishing co- operative because their own resources no longer belonged to them.

The fatalistic fishermen risk their own lives by drowning into the water even though they themselves appear to be pulled by the gravitational force of the water that claims a victim every year. The lough is a small world where fishermen are the sympathetic beings who form an

⁶⁶ Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. Springer, 12 Oct, 1994. p.83.

important part of a pre-historic world of birth, death and resurrection. The victimisation of the eels is resurrected through the drowning of the fishermen who in pursuit of catching their fellow victims one by one refuse to learn to swim. In short, the Lough Neagh demonstrates a world where the opposing world of modernity and tradition collide.

The second poem “Beyond Sargasso” is a shape poem that traces the life- journey of male eels from mid-Atlantic to the Bann estuary. It creates a remarkable visual and aural effect on the senses of the readers who runs along the rapid movement of the eel through the lough sequence.

Benedict Kiely rightly draws analogy between the “eel with its instinctual longing for adventure, and ‘hungering’ for home, and the poet feeling the ‘insinuating pull’ of his own contradictory, Celtic nature.” The poem sees a major shift from the ‘human’ historic to ‘pre-human’ pre-historic time. After moving away from the Sargasso Sea the male eel, a muscled icicle, begins to follow its own path.

As the dark lures the eel towards a new arrival, similarly the poet follows the path charted out by the eel to quench his thirst for new landscape of consciousness. The eel in Celtic iconography is the symbol for the soul. Like the meandering eel, the soul of the poet would find solace once it arrives to the pre- historic world of Ireland, the place of his origin. Here, again it is the eel, the creation of darkness, the hidden core of ‘insights’ and ‘instincts’ that would deliver him ‘hungering down each undulation.’

The third poem, ‘Bait’ brings back the idea of darkness to the fore which correlates the poet’s journey to the world of his origins in pursuit of artistic freedom and quest for identity. The ‘Bait’ retreats to the world of humans and traces the ritual of fishermen who hunts for worms during night-time. Heaney in his fanciful imagination compares the three fishermen to rustlers.

The men follow their nose and move stealthily like eels to hunt for the ‘innocent ventilators of the ground.’ From the poet’s point of view, the “worms are invested with the same telluric aura that haunts the eels and the entire landscape.”⁶⁷ The idea of victimisation is reiterated in this poem which depends not on desire but need. The entire life cycle revolves round the idea of

⁶⁷ See, Tobin, Daniel. *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015.p 57
57.

victimisation in which there are preys and predators. The humans have become the biggest predators as they have controlled almost every aspect of nature both technologically and economically. Here, the fishermen predate the worms by producing food as bait. They make the worms their victims in the moment of their 'need.' It is this idea of victimisation that dictates Charles Darwin's law of survival of the fittest:

The fourth poem, 'Setting,' evokes Darwin's law of survival to its fullest. Here the merciless fishermen meet the same destiny as their victims. The unsympathetic fishermen's "hook" turns out to be "deadly lines." The hook line is "paid out" suggesting that the cycle of victimisation and redemption continues as it 'claims a victim every year.' The bouquet becomes a miniature of the real world which incarcerates the victims cheated of his life in a moment of particular need. Still, the life cycle of victimisation and retribution continues. Akin to their victims, the fishermen continue to work in natural rhythm without being aware of the brutality their action would inherit.

The fifth poem, "Lifting," with resonates Hopkins or Hughes idea of *haecceitas* of a creature and the corresponding event. The deadly line of "The Bait" transforms into a "filament of smut." In the process of catching the fish, "wakes are enwound as the catch/ on the morning water" confuses the fishermen as they are not able to distinguish 'which Boat was which?' this suggests that in the cycle of victimization and retribution, everyone loses its particular identity. The linear movement of the boat as evoked in 'Setting' is mere an illusion. It is the catch which determines the particular existence of being.

Seamus Heaney draws ironic comparison between the victims and victimizers as in the process of survival they become indistinct. This heightens the sense of divinity as manifested in nature of which the poet is a part.

Unlike the other poems of the Lough Sequence where we have male eels, in "The Return," Heaney features female eel symbolic of resilience. It will continue its journey from the ocean through the 'weltering dark' to lay the spawns 'ten thousand feet down in her origins.' The eel will resume the dark vicious cycle of life, death and resurrection. The male and female eels unites only in the last two poems of the sequence to suggest "natural rhythm and Heaney's poetic

ideal.” ‘The Return’ suggests the cyclical nature of history to which Heaney as a poet returns as a source of his origin. This ‘eternal return’ echoes the final descent into the dark, the unknowable:

Who knows now if she knows

her depth or direction? (The Return, *Door into the Dark*).

The eel like movement of the poet in his quest for home inevitable returns to his personal history and identity.

“The Vision,” the last poem of the sequence completes the cyclical movement of history that started from “Up the Shore.” The poem opens with a superstitious Heaney who believed that:

Unless his hair was fine-combed

The lice, they said, would gang up

Into a mealy rope

And drag him, small, dirty, doomed,

Down to the water. (The Vision, *Door into the Dark*).

The ‘mealy rope’ of lice recalls the ‘hook’ the deadly line which pulled the eels towards the dark pool of cyclical nature of history that encompasses life, death and resurrection. The dark and threatening life cycle haunts the imagination of young Heaney. It is noteworthy that as the sequence returns to the point of origin similarly the adult identity of Heaney recoils to his childhood memory. The Lough Neagh Sequence demonstrates that Heaney approaches the cyclical nature of life not only from historical point of view but also cosmological. The poetic self in an eel like movement moves to renewal and resurrection. Heaney undergoes metaphorical cycle birth and death only to be illuminated with the enlarged poetic consciousness. Richard Rankin Russell observes that “A Lough Neagh sequence displays a remarkable knowledge of the life cycle of the eel, enabling him to claim the title of a naturalist.”⁶⁸

In “The Plantation,” the concept of circles continues to haunt the imagination of the poet. Elmer Andrews observes that the ‘circles’ subscribes to the poststructuralist project implicating a

⁶⁸ See, Russell, Richard Rankin. *Seamus Heaney: An Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press, 2016. pp. 53.

“mysterious zone of being where there are no certainties and no limits.” The poem starts with echoing Dante’s flame of eternal destruction and creation and ends with fairy-tale of Brothers Grimm. The first few lines apparently allude to St. Augustine’s concept of God as circles. He was of the view that the entire universe is made up of circles, creating a band of unending field of force that incessantly pulls the matter of the world towards itself. This results in creation of an imaginary vacuum on the periphery that always delude the human imagination to be gravitated towards the introspective center. This center emerges as the centripetal point of unresolvable mystery. The center is omnipresent and unremitting while the periphery is prone to variation. This idea is echoed in the following lines by Heaney:

Any point in that wood

Was a centre, birch trunks

Ghosting your bearings,

Improvising charmed rings

Wherever you stopped. (The Plantation,*Door into the Dark*).

The centre exists as a ghostly presence in the human imagination that needs to be disturbed. The incessant whirlpool of mystery the centre upholds needs to be unearthed. Thus the plantation as an interior space of darkness bearing “birch trunks”, “toadstools stumps,” and, “charmed rings” needs to be explored as the ultimate source of creativity. This enterprise of revealing the secret creative forces of the dark asks for the poetic consciousness to be spiritually propelled. The spiritual journey towards the centre, which is God, the seat of the ultimate knowledge, suggests that the journey is more about the awareness of the ‘non-self’ than the ‘self.’ Heaney writes:

And having found them once

You were sure to find them again.

Someone had always been there

Though always you were alone. (The Plantation,*Door into the Dark*).

The solitary spiritual journey towards the knowledge of the ‘self’ could only be possible with the knowledge of the ‘non self’ and this is the reason why Heaney with an aim to understand his own ‘poetic self’ forges a complicated initiation into contemplating the ‘self’ and the ‘non self’ having different consciousness. Heaney cites Robert Pinsky’s comment from an essay ‘Responsibilities of the Poet’ and expresses that a serious artist does not need an audience to make his work valuable rather he requires a “need to feel an answer, a promise to respond.”⁶⁹ This desire to respond to a particular situation already presumes the presence of the other, and this brings Heaney in direct connection with Derrida’s notion of identity. For Derrida, identity exists as a dialectical fluctuation between the ‘self’ and the ‘non self.’ This periodic fluctuation or suspension makes Heaney to focus on the self as the responsive being paving his way towards achieving the metamorphosis of humans imaginatively. Derrida explains “the identity of a culture is a way of being different from itself; a culture is different from itself; language is different from itself; the person is different from itself. Once you take into account this inner and other difference, then you pay attention to the other and you understand that fighting for your own identity is not exclusive of another identity, is open to another identity, And this prevents totalitarianism, nationalism, geocentricism and so on.”⁷⁰ In other words, in the act of reciprocating to the other or the ‘non self’, the poet is creating the space for development of his selfhood. As Heaney hedges the road, “To the hush and the mush / Of its whispering treadmill” (*The Plantation, Door into the Dark*).

And as he transcends the “hum of the traffic,” he finds himself caught in the fairy-tale world of Hansel and Gretel. The mythic world of Hansel and Gretel who were remarkable for inspiring the ‘breadcrumbs’ as an important navigation tool provides Heaney with points of reference that would allow him to keep track of the solitary journey he wishes to undergo.

The last stanza reiterates the concept of circles suggesting that the poem itself has confined the poetic consciousness within the limits of circularity and from which there is no possible exit point. Not surrendering to the field of force the circles engenders, Heaney exhibits his tenacity that the poet as a serious artist can never lose his control to his immediate surroundings. He strategically brings the oppositions in the same line in order to fulfill this idea. He writes:

⁶⁹ See, O’Brien, Eugene “Poetry and Transformation.” *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers*. London: Pluto, 2003. Print. p. 69.

⁷⁰ Ibid 77.

You had to come back

To learn how to lose yourself,

To be pilot and stray- witch,

Hansel and Gretel in one. (The Planation, *Door into the Dark*).

The plantation also refers to the Elizabethan plantations of Ireland by British that dispossessed the indigenous Irish from their native soil. The hostile relationship between the Scots settlers and the Native Irish as a result of sheer exploitation and cultural imposition inadvertently conjoins them into the mesh of vicious circle of colonialism. Elmer Andrews comments that as it is quite natural for the plants to escape the cultivator's project of controlling nature by way of trimming and cutting, likewise, the Irish tenants also tends to refuse to bow down before the Scots settler's enterprise of controlling the Irish natives by way of economic and political control. Thus, the hostile relationship between them is viewed by Heaney as an important marker of historical and political distortion. Their relationship inscribed within the circles of exploitation and extermination seems limitless. Heaney time and again takes a backward look to make an 'eternal return' to the landscape of plantations blotted with historical distortion to reclaim the dispossessed land. Thus, the landscape serves as an important centre of consciousness for Heaney to come back to it time and again to find himself as a part of historical landscape imbued with consciousness.

"The Salmon Fisher to the Salmon," retreats to the metaphysical poems of Robert Lowell based on the act of fishing. The given poem resonates with the sacrificial act of fishermen of "The Lough Sequence." In this poem too the poet becomes the Fisher King, who sacrifices his life in Christ like manner for the sake of the others. The fish in the poem is attracted by the centripetal force of the water deep down the ocean in the bottomless centre. The bottomless centre stands for the eternal unification of the 'victim,' and the 'victimizer,' i.e., fish and the fisherman, who becomes one in the eternal cycle of victimization on which rest Darwin's law of survival of the fittest. The objective of this eternal unification is to show that progress happens only when the contraries come together. Heaney writes:

The ridged lip set upstream,

you flail
 Inland again; your exile in
 the sea
 Unconditionally cancelled by
 the pull
 Of your home water's gravity.
 And I stand in the centre,
 casting. (The Salmon fisher to the Salmon, *Door into the Dark*)

The moment of need that encircles both the fish and the fisherman revolves round the idea of recurrence in which creation and destruction becomes an unavoidable part. The fish is humanized and the poet turns out to be a fish. The fisherman and the fish are together “annihilated with the fly,” and it is in this moment of mutual need that the fisherman’s old ‘self’ comes to the cognizance of the fact that they both share a common destiny. He writes:

Hartman points out that “true individuality is achieved when (conscious) ego and (unconscious) self are reconciled by means of centroverson... the self as the center of the unconscious to which the ego turns in any effort of regeneration.”⁷¹ The self of the fisherman dies as he finds himself intricately linked with the fish. This dying of the ‘self’ of the fisherman to embrace the ‘non self’ of the fish implicates that the self is unstable and its desire to keep itself confined to the limits of narcissistic pleasure would eventually die down. This is to say that the quest for self- definition is unremitting and goes like a spiral that has no finishing point. Heaney affirms to this central idea in his foreword to *Preoccupations*, “the self is interesting only as an example.”

The eventual metamorphosis of man to fish to fly creates an “intimate space between human self and non human other, which opens up the shared coexistence of cultural and natural

⁷¹ Hartman, qtd in Tobin, Daniel. *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015. p.51

agency as creative force-field of the text.”⁷² Heaney lays out the trajectory of binaries between sameness and difference to make a telling remark about human history. The law of victimization in which the knowledge of the self is implausible without the knowledge of the other and in which eternal destruction and creation are inevitable parts, Heaney makes a telling remark that within the circle of history of colonization submission and domination, mastery and enslavement, territorialization and deterritorialization were indispensable phenomena. Here, Heaney seems to be critiquing the fact that ancient civilizations have created a misapprehension by forging different levels of oppositions and binaries to establish one’s supremacy over the other by complacently believing in one’s own superiority and demeaning the other. Following Neil Corcoran, Eugene O’ Brien rightly observes “Heaney’s binary thinking necessitates some form of connection between the binarisms, and this connection will in some way change the relationship between them, at least in the consciousness of writer and reader.”⁷³

The collection’s last poem, ‘Bogland,’ is dedicated to Seamus Heaney’s friend, T.P. Flanagan (1929-2011), a landscape artist. It is a rebuttal to Theodore Roethke’s ‘In the Praise of Prairie.’ Writing about the origination of ‘Bogland’ Seamus Heaney recounts, “I had been vaguely wishing to write a poem about bogland, chiefly because it is a landscape that has a strange assuaging effect on me, one with associations reaching back into early childhood... So I began to get an idea of bog as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in and to it... Moreover, since memory was the faculty that supplied me with the first quickening of my own poetry, I had a tentative unrealized need to make congruence between memory and bogland and, for the want of a better word, our national consciousness. And it all released itself after ‘We have no prairies...’- but we have bogs.”⁷⁴

The bogland is symbolic of Irish identity, geography and history. Boglands are valuable wetlands and not wastelands. It is fundamental to Irish landscape with its ‘moistness,’ ‘softness,’ ‘fertility,’ and ‘primitive past.’ It takes the motif of darkness to the fullest level which is

⁷² See, Hubert Zapf. “Connecting Patterns and Creative Energies .“ *Literature as Cultural Ecology: Sustainable Texts*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016.

⁷³ See, O’Brien, Eugene “Poetry and Transformation.” *Seamus Heaney : Searches for Answers*. London: Pluto, 2003. pp. 64-65. Print.

⁷⁴ See, Heaney, Seamus. *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Sep 1. 1981. pp. 54-55.

fathomless. The dark marshy land preserves physical and cultural history and childhood memory of Heaney. Heaney writes that “I had a tentative unrealized need to make a congruence between memory and bogland and...our national consciousness.” To this, Edna Longley comments, “if the bog becomes a symbol of national consciousness, it is not in the manner of an insular, self-righteous nationalism. Heaney is mindful of the fact that the lost homeland is less a territorial locality than an ontological locus whose universal dimensions forever elude the boundaries of a particular nation. (...) The bogholes or receding memory lead back to a fathomless ocean flow which transcends our contemporary grasp. (p.106.)”⁷⁵

Heaney begins the poem with a negation: “We have no prairies.” This establishes a stark contrast between North America’s prairie region which is so vast in scale that ‘slice a big sun at evening’ and the encroaching horizon of the Irish landscape that is “wooded into the cyclop’s eye / Of a tarn.”(line 6-7) Comparing the ‘tarn,’ a small pond like structure to a ‘cyclop’s eye’, again reiterates Heaney’s idea of establishing the relation between landscape and myth. It would be interesting to know that what would cause Heaney to compare the Irish landscape with that of American Prairies. To which Heaney answers that in the year 1969, when the poem got published, he was teaching at Queen’s University, Belfast, and had been going through the Western literature exploring the west as a significant American Consciousness to which Heaney had a counterpart- the bog, the central part of Ireland and integral to Irish myth. If the American Prairies are an expression of expansion and transcendence beyond the geographical limits, the Irish bogs constrict the human imagination to the wet and bottomless centre, digging ‘inwards and downwards.’ The ‘encroaching horizon’ hints at the preserving quality of the bog which both hides and opens up the past of shared memory and belonging. As the bog has a wet centre, its fluidity remains intact and render it ever-changing to which no specific meaning could be assigned. Some critics read the bog as the repository of ‘human psyche’ that remains unfenced. Following this logic, the bog is also interpreted as a metaphor for deep seated ‘unconscious’ extended to ‘national consciousness.’

⁷⁵ See, Longley, Edna. “Heaney and Homecoming” *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture*, Dublin: Wolfhound.(ed.) Richard Kearney 1988, pp. 101-122.

The matter of national consciousness has always remained a troublesome project for Irish poets like Seamus Heaney and James Joyce because it implicates the unnatural relationship with England and thwarted desires of United Ireland. The dividedness of the country and the mind creates a conflict in Heaney. The shifting nature of the bog that turns to thick crust each day and moistens every night suggests that bog as a metaphor for Ireland is a place for change to which no distinct signification could be assigned. Heaney writes:

...Our unfenced country
Is bog that keeps crusting
Between the sights of the sun. (line 6-8, *The Bogland, Door into the Dark.*)

The image of the skeleton of the ‘Great Irish Elk’ buried beneath the bog creates an assuaging effect on the mind of young Heaney that makes him time travel to memory of his early childhood. It is then that he began associating the bog with the memory of the landscape that preserved material and physical history. Since he enjoyed the summer days at the bogland with his family he always felt a sense of ‘being in migration’ which later on develops into what Edna Longley calls ‘an inner émigré.’ The physical beauty of the bogland represented a thing of marvel to be enjoyed by a poetic mind. Its sublimity released the poetic consciousness from the pressures of history, polity and identity.

Butter sunk under
More than a hundred years
Was recovered salty and white.
The ground itself is kind, black butter (line 13-16, *The Bogland, Door into the Dark.*)

The bog crusts itself over the moist peat and the relics of history such as the ‘Great Irish Elk’ like a salty butter to preserve them for millions of years. The bog nurtures the deep buried coal that gathers not only the imagination of human psyche but also the route to national consciousness. The “kind black butter” draws the pioneers of Ireland to “keep striking/ Inwards and downwards”(line 23-24). The fluid bog which has no definite shape alludes to post-colonial

psyche of Irish people to whom no single signification could be assigned. In other words, the individual consciousness of the poet that reaches up to the consciousness of the nation could not be reduced or downscaled to a single meaning. The ‘coal’ a symbol of solidity could not be dug from the bog, ‘they’ll never dig coal here, because the marshy land could only produce ‘...the waterlogged trunks / Of great firs, soft as pulp.’”(line21-22). Heaney by the end of the poem again draws contrast between the American pioneers who discover and expand horizontally, The Irish pioneers work vertically, they dig ‘Inwards and downwards’ exploring the Celtic past. But the discovery never turns out to be complete because it is a whirlpool of new findings that never exhausts, “Every layer they strip / Seems camped on before.”(line 25-26).

The final stanza links the bog’s “bottomless centre” with the unfathomable pool of human imagination. As the human imagination knows no boundaries similarly the bogs unravels itself with unbounded findings and discoveries. In his attempt to forge a relationship between bogland, memory, and, national consciousness, Heaney was trying to make successful comparison between the victims of ancient Jutland who were sacrificed as a consequence of fulfilling the fertility ritual and those innocent people who were massacred during the violent era of the ‘Troubles.’ “Bogland” cyclically returns to the poem ‘Digging’ with the desire of unearthing the deep rooted memory, history, and myths of his place of origin.

“Bogland,” marks a major shift from his earlier poems as it becomes suggestive of communal identity. It also marks shift from modernism to postmodernism. Imitating his precursors like W.B. Yeats’ idea of tradition and James Joyce’s modernity, Seamus Heaney turns to rejection of boundaries and conventions and embrace postmodernist technique to reach to the unfathomable consciousness of the ‘self.’ Since memory was the immediate authority that provided Heaney to time travel to the deep seated consciousness of Irish community as a whole, it is no wonder that Heaney saw great potential in extending the individual and collective memory to national memory. Though the possessive pronoun ‘we’ in the opening line indicates at collective identity for the Irish people, it is without doubt that it hints at post-colonial national identity of the Irish. Now, the idea of national memory raises complicated questions about which and whose nation does it talk about. To this, Heaney in an interview with Edward Broadbridge makes a remarkable point by hinting at the word ‘remember’ which is potent in Irish history and

politics. He establishes the relationship between remembering and national history by throwing pivotal marks for reference. Heaney is very well aware of the complication of formulating national memory. It is because of the anomalous state of Ireland which has strained relationship with England and unrealized united Ireland, and yet he produces single national narrative for his homeland in the bog poems like “Bogland.”

Chapter-3

Wintering Out and the Dislodged slab of the Tongue

Daniel Tobin observes that narcissus was the deity that dominated the *Death of a Naturalist*. In the act of voicing the silenced subalterns derived primarily from the memories of his childhood, Seamus Heaney explores the communal history by digging into his place of origins with a metaphorical ‘pen/spade.’ Tobin further points out that Janus is the new presiding deity in *Door into the Dark*. Following the footprints of Janus, Heaney makes a backward look to the sources of consciousness harboring secret forces of creative energy that would shape his poetic identity. It is in the third collection of poems, *Wintering Out*, published in the year 1972, that, “the experience of autochthony- the feeling of belonging to a place cosmically, beyond family or ancestral solidarity,”⁷⁶ begins to shape Heaney’s poetic consciousness.

Wintering Out as Michael Parker says is “all about adjusting to the pain and horrors of the events that followed the Troubles of 1968.” Heaney had tried hard not to be influenced by the ‘politics of polarisation’ that had emerged as the result of the collision between Catholic Civil rights activists and police and the radical Protestants. The clash had become so grave that the then government of Northern Ireland had no alternative other than pleading for incursion of the British troops into their territory. Heaney who had kept his feelings at bay hitherto could not resist and he became an activist persona following the outbreak of violence of Ulster. He even participated in the civil rights marches of 1968 and expressed his infuriation in *The Listener*, “the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland at large, if it is to retain any self-respect, will have to risk the charge of wrecking the new moderation and seek justice vociferously.”⁷⁷ In the year 1970, he surprised everyone with his decision to leave Belfast for a temporary job at University of California, Berkeley. His time in California led him to find an intricate relationship between the primordial and the modern world. After his return from California in the year 1971, he was deeply hurt by the new bombing campaign of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, a paramilitary group, whose ideology was influenced by left-wing nationalism. Heaney, then

⁷⁶ See, Tobin, Daniel. “A Poetry of Geographical Imagination: Wintering Out” in *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*. University Press of Kentucky, 1991. pp. 68.

⁷⁷ See, Hart, Henry. *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progressions*, Syracuse University Press, 1993. p. 49-50.

decided to move to the South permanently. People in large thought that Heaney's *Wintering Out* published in the year of his shift from the North, that is 1972, was an escape. His play with words and poetic creation was just a mask to shield his 'political betrayal.' The 'politics of polarisation' forced him to embrace staunch Catholic position in order to evade people's critical remarks.

Heaney, as a poet was aware of the fact that he was being unethical in maintaining his deliberate Catholic stance. He even once confessed to Robert Druce, "I'm always thinking to myself-'when people are killing one another, what are you doing?'... And I came to this notion that, in a time of politics or violence, it wasn't the artist's function just to be liberal and deplore it, but if you believed in one set of values over the other, to maintain those values in some way. You needn't necessarily maintain that belief by writing political poetry or writing deploring the army... But I think you can write about, or out of a sensibility or a set of images which imply a set of values."⁷⁸ Michael Parker points out, "rather than focusing directly on incidents from the present, he (Heaney) concentrated primarily on the origins and hinterland of the conflict in *Wintering Out*, through elegiac poems celebrating the identity, history, territory and tongue of his people, the Northern Catholic Irish."⁷⁹

In the dedicatory poem, "For David Hammond and Michael Longley," Heaney traces out the political turmoil post introduction of internment without trial in Northern Ireland in 1971. Even though caught amidst the violence of Northern Ireland, Heaney's attitudes surpasses his ideological footing. As he describes the journey through the political crisis:

This morning from a dewy motorway
I saw the new camp for the internees:
a bomb had left a crater of fresh clay
in the roadside, and over in the trees

⁷⁸ See, Hart, Henry. "Poetymologies." *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progressions*. Syracuse University Press, 1993. pp.50- 51

⁷⁹ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. Springer, 12 Oct, 1994.p. 89.

machine-gun posts defined real stockade. (line 1-5, For David Hammond And Michael Longley, *Wintering Out*).

Here it is the language that serves as a conduit to probe into the ongoing sectarian violence. As Declan Kiberd claimed, “the struggle for self-definition is conducted within language.” The choice of the words such as “internees,” “bomb”, and “machine-gun” themselves hint at physical, political and psychological ramifications. Heaney describes the contemporary political turmoil where “we have to live with the army” where “we survive explosions and funerals” and where “soldiers with cocked guns are watching you.”⁸⁰ The post internment violence as described in the poem is compared to a Second World War films gesturing towards the ‘collective fate’ of the people:

There was that white mist you get on a low ground
 And it was déjà-vu, some film made
 of Stalag 17, a bad dream with no sound. (line 6-8, For David Hammond and Michael Longley, *Wintering Out*).

Heaney echoes the Belfast Graffiti written in a nationalist area that says “Is there a life before death?” His Catholic teaching of endurance and perseverance gets reflected in the swerving of the ‘I’ submerged into the ‘we’ of his community. It is here that Heaney is aligning himself with the people of his community. He writes:

...Competence with pain,
 coherent miseries, a bite and sup,
 we hug our little destiny again. (line 10-12, For David Hammond and Michael Longley, *Wintering Out*).

⁸⁰ Heaney, Seamus. qtd in Eugene O’ Brien’s *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers*, Pluto Press, 2003. p. 83.

By accepting their ‘collective fate,’ Heaney posits an “emotional and articulate response to centuries of political, military and linguistic domination.”⁸¹ But the emotional response to the turmoil does not weigh down his political hold on the situation. He makes deliberate choice of those words, whose etymology itself contributes in making and un-making history.

Seamus Heaney himself comments that *Wintering Out* “tries to insinuate itself into the roots of political myths by feeling along the lines of language itself. It draws inspiration from etymology, vocabulary, even intonations- and these are all active signals and loyalties, Irish or British, Catholic or Protestant, in the north of Ireland, and they are things I had an instinctive feel for as a writer and as a native of the place.”⁸²

In ‘Fodder,’ Seamus Heaney depicts how etymology serves as a vehicle for investigating into his linguistic origins. For Heaney, etymology itself is history as it encapsulates the trajectory of linguistic and cultural appropriation and distortion.

Or, as we said,

Fother, I open

my arms for it

again. (line1-4, The Fodder, *Wintering Out*).

The word “Or” as the starting point hints at Heaney’s refusal to conform to the linguistic dispossession and instead posits his anti-colonial resistance to speak in his mother tongue like James Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus who speaks in his own tongue. Here, language as a field of force helps Heaney to reveal linguistic colonization of Ireland. The Irish pronunciation, fother, for fodder, depicts the intricate relationship between language and identity. It is the use of Irish dialect that Heaney associates his phonetic identity with. It is the dialect pronunciation that catches hold of the poet’s consciousness. The embracing of the Irish pronunciation suggests how the colonized Irish appropriated the English Language. Language in itself exerts both constructive and constricting force on the development on identity. In *The Government of the*

⁸¹ See, Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*. Springer, 12 Oct, 1994..p. 94

⁸² See, Tobin, Daniel. *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015. p.69

Tongue (1988), Heaney explains how the tongue is governed by social, political, cultural, and linguistic constraints. The poem suggests how English tongue would always serve to highlight the cultural difference between these two communities. The poet's English tongue reminds him that every single utterance has a political context to it. The imposed English language acts as a 'graft' to Gaelic community which is unnatural to them. Heaney, in the act of appropriating the English language that carries the etymological root to Irish posits anti-colonial gesture to rapacious England.

'Anahorish,' an etymological poem, tends to resist linguistic dispossession of the Irish. The poem is highly read as positing anti-colonial perspective. The poem projects the idea of transliterating the words as a political gesture. 'Anahorish,' brings to the fore the idea of *dinnseanchas*- "poems and tales which relate the original meanings of place names and constitute a form of mythological etymology." (*Preoccupations*, 131) This immediately forges a relationship between place and language. In *Sense of Place*, Heaney writes, "Irrespective of our creed or politics, irrespective of what culture or subculture may have coloured our individual sensibilities, our imaginations assent to the stimulus of the names, our sense of the place is enhanced, our sense of ourselves as inhabitants not just of a geographical country but of a country of the mind is cemented. It is this feeling, assenting, equitable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind, whether that country of the mind takes its tone unconsciously from a shared oral inherited culture, or from a consciously savoured literary culture or from both, it is this marriage that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation." (*Preoccupations*, 132)

The poem begins with anglicised transliteration of the title- Anahorish: My 'place of clear water.' This immediately leads back Heaney to his childhood memory of a small townland called Anahorish, which was also the name of his primary local school that he attended between 1945-1951. The most remarkable fact about the school was that both Catholic and Protestants attended the school together. This is of particular interest to Heaney as Anahorish, which stands true to its meaning, a place of purity, served as a fertile ground to bring together the two hostile communities. In the act of transliterating the Irish place names, Heaney is carried back to the original townland which now exists only in the imagination of the poet as it has been trampled

by the foot of the imperial conquest. Historically too, Anahorish was demolished after Heaney had left it.

Anahorish,' attempts to "recuperate pre-colonial language and culture." (Ashcroft et al 1989, 30). The decolonization of language and culture operates within the framework of rewriting the 'territorial graphematics.' In such a project, the original linguistic signifiers are revisited to reveal the linguistic codes they nurture. 'Anahorish,' as noted in *Preoccupations* originate from a "forgotten Gaelic music in the throat." Heaney wishes to capture the ancient Gaelic culture by the act of naming it as a part of 'cultural reterritorialization.' (See, David Lloyd, 1993)

My 'place of clear water',
the first hill in the world
where springs washed into
the shiny grass (line 1-4, Anahorish, *Wintering Out*).

The vision the surrounding of the place conjures, reminds one of Edenic purity. Robert Buttel describes the scene as "'prelapsarian' pastorality, a pastorality that points towards a myth of place which is innocent of political and ideological connotations."⁸³ Anahorish, (anach fhor uisce) is described as 'soft gradient of consonant, vowel- meadow.' David Lloyd sees the phrase as "the adequate vocable in which the rift between the Gaelic world and its English equivalent is sealed in smooth, unbroken ground, speech of the landscape." This implies that the poem in the act of fusing the language and land transgresses the relationship between "cognition and phenomena, a relationship that is valorized by poetic language." The contradiction which Heaney depicts between Vowels as Irish, feminine, Gaelic, Catholic and Consonants as English, masculine, Anglo or Scots, Protestant serve as structures to tease out the differential connotative signification embedded in language and topography. This differential connotative signification embodies the antinomy present within the speech system of Ireland, which corresponds to the divisiveness present in Ireland.

⁸³ See O'Brien, Eugene. "Seamus Heaney and the Place of Writing." *Academia.edu*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 June 2017. 72.

Heaney had read about the mound people those described in Peter Vilhelm Glob's *The Mound People: Danish Bronze-age Man Preserved*, 1974. It is from here that Heaney draws inspiration to archaeologically probe into the puns on 'barrows' (mound erected on Viking graves) and 'mound-dwellers' (fieldworker as well as prehistoric Scandinavian 'mound people'). He writes:

those mound -dwellers
go waist-deep in mist
to break the light ice
at wells and dunghills. (line 11-14, Anahorish).

Tracing the history of the 'mound-dwellers' Heaney probes into primordial ancestry and engages into romantic transformation of the prelapsarian world of Anahorish as 'the first hill in the world.' This becomes a sacred place, the *omphalos*, the centre of the world, thereby subverting the binary that maintained Britain as the centre and the rest as on the periphery. By repossessing Anahorish as the centre which is possible only within the domain of language system, Heaney deconstructs the received binary system and overturns the hierarchy of the colonizers. This brings Heaney closer to Derrida's concept of Deconstruction, who notes, "Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a field of non-discursive forces...Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated."⁸⁴

However, the word, 'anahorish,' 'place of clear water' does not form a part of the *langue* of English language. Rather, it is a mixture of vowels and consonants, *anach fhior uisce* which bears no direct signification in Irish language too. This is to say that the word refuses to conform to the centrality to linguistic and cultural discourse. The very name and etymology of the word 'Anahorish' embodies the complex nature of difference. This implies that linguistic constructions

⁸⁴ See, O'Brien, Eugene. "Poetry and Politics" in *Seamus Heaney's Searches for Answers*, Pluto, 2003. p. 100.

in the post-colonial paradigm are social and political production of the direct interaction between the colonizer and colonized.

‘Broagh,’ also called the land-language poem, starts with transliterating its title, riverbank. Henry Hart (quoting John Wilson Foster) observes that the name ‘Broagh’ is anglicized version of the Gaelic *bruach*. He further points out that the word *bruach* itself was an English phoneme that almost vanished in Modern English period. The name-place serves as an index to uncode identity and the processes of difference. It acts as a reference to mark the difference between what is indigenous and foreign. This operates in political terms to alert the readers towards shaping of nationalist consciousness. In a way it seems to speak the “‘absolute anchorage’ of the centres of nationalist identity.”

Heaney tries to reterritorialise the linguistic uprooting of the Irish by seventeenth-century Scottish planters by going back to the originary words such as ‘rigs’(Scottish for furrows), and ‘docken’ (Scottish for docks). Neil Corcoran observes that “community of pronunciation is an implicit emblem for some new political community.” The name ‘Broagh’ is a phonetic tattoo that has been grafted on the language system of the native Irish. As tattoo is not natural to the skin of the body, likewise, the English phonetic system is unnatural to the native Irish. ‘Broagh’, reverberates with the residual sounds of the ‘gh’ that strangers find difficult to manage.

in *Broagh*
 its low tattoo
 among the windy boortress
 and rhubarb-blades

ended almost
 suddenly, like that last
gh the strangers found
 difficult to manage. (line 11-16, *Broagh*).

Noted critic Ronald Tamplin observes that ‘gh’ sound is native to Gaelic phonetic register which ‘strangers,’ British cartographers found difficult to pronounce. The unpronounceability of the native phoneme implicates that “Ireland, before the advent of the English invasion was an ‘ur-Ireland.’ This linguistic and pronounciational assertion of alterity can be located within the post-colonial discourse.”⁸⁵ Eugene O’ Brien writes “Given the difficulty of the Gaelic phonetic system, as we have seen, British cartographers transliterated many such names into the British phonetic and graphological system; hence the transliteration from ‘bruach’ to ‘broagh.’ ‘Broagh’ then, like ‘Anahorish,’ is *not* a Gaelic word, but rather it is a transliteration of the Gaelic word ‘bruach’ by the very ‘strangers’ who are deemed to find it so ‘difficult to manage’ in the first place. The ‘strangers’ who found the original pronunciation ‘difficult’ have altered it, changing the phonetic area of the difficulty into another sound that, almost by the definition, they will be able to manage.”⁸⁶

Heaney takes pride in the fact that the etymological words themselves pose a form of linguistic and political resistance. The transliteration of the word, ‘Broagh’, as ‘riverbank’ is identical to neither the Irish nor the English language. Instead, the word embodies pluralisation of language as opposed to singular meaning. Daniel Tobin points out that ‘Broagh’ is a shibboleth, common both to Unionist and Nationalist. It automatically excludes the colonizers and paves way for a common ground for the two hostile political communities i.e. Unionist and Nationalist. Language itself assumes the common ground. This enables Heaney to envisage a reconciliatory ground for the two inimical communities and elevate them together before the colonizers as anti-colonial gesture.

The garden mould
bruised easily, the shower
gathering in your heelmark
was the black O
in *Broagh* (line 5-8, Broagh).

⁸⁵ Ibid, 93. Page 84.

⁸⁶ , O’ Brien, Eugene. “Poetry and Politics.” *Searches for Answers: Seamus Heaney*. Pluto Press, 2003. p. 96.

The letter O plays a great role in radically distinguishing between the intimate and the stranger. The ‘black O’ signifies absence because it is absent in the native phonetic register ‘*bruach*.’ While the ‘O’ present in the word ‘Broagh’ belongs to the phonetic system of the English, the signifier, which is strange and alien to the native Irish dialect. Bernard O’ Donoghue goes on to discuss that ‘O’ and ‘gh’ in the word ‘Broagh’ underscores the mark of difference that has become part of the linguistic landscape of Ireland. The ‘black O’ evokes vowel sound of ‘broagh’ embodying feminine characteristics whose feminine heel would heal the fissures of distrust created by the torturous history. Heaney employs Edward Said’s idea, “If there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical element.” The ‘black O’ recaptures the lost identity by evoking it as the sacred centre, that is ‘*omphalos*.’ For Heaney, ‘*omphalos*’ evokes the notion of centrality and home. In the act of reenacting the ‘*omphalos*’ as the centre from where the relationship with the alterity would be governed, Heaney acknowledges the transformative potential of his non-English origin to give voice to post-colonial angst of reterritorializing the landscape and the language. Heaney following Edward said recuperates “the geographical identity of the land lost through imperialist incursions.” Being aware of Edward Said’s notion of ‘overlapping territories’ and ‘intertwined histories,’ Heaney explores his deep affinity with the language of the land that is intricably related to his post-colonial identity.

Seamus Heaney in penning down these land-language poems expresses how these poems were an assertion of difference. He spoke to his critic friend, Seamus Deane, about these poems and claimed, “I had a great sense of release as they were being written, a joy and devil-may-careness, and that convinced me that one could be faithful to the nature of the English language-- for in some senses these poems are erotic mouth-music by and out of the Anglo-Saxon tongue— and, at the same time, be faithful to one’s own non-English origin, for me that is County Derry. That glimpse is enough to convince me that this is a proper aspiration for our poetry.” (Deane 1977, 70)

‘Toome’ again brings back the memory of a small townland in County Derry which was popular for its archaeological finds. The name ‘Toome’ derives its name from the Irish dialect register ‘*Tuaim*’, which means ‘a burial mound.’ The ‘Toome’ was the site of rebellion where

Wolf Tone's United Irishmen, the precursors to Irish Republican Army (IRA) fought against the troops of the government in the year 1798.

My mouth holds round
the soft blastings,
Toome, Toome,
as under the dislodged
slab of the tongue (Toome)

As the poet chants 'Toome, Toome' he immediately forges a deep connection between the place which resonates with a typical native sound and the history it embodies. This chanting echoes the explosions of the rebellion of 1798 encapsulated in the phrase 'soft blastings' that break the ominous silence of the mind and motivates the poet to take a backward temporal journey to an imaginary space of the pre-lapsarian world of Ireland. By repeating the word 'Toome' Heaney imaginatively dislodges the tongue of the colonizer. He transposes the 'dislodged slab' of the English tongue into a 'souterrain.' The word 'souterrain' refers to the narrow underground chamber where all valuable items were often preserved. Such secretive chambers were built all across Ireland to keep valuables hidden from the foreign attackers. They were first built during the late Bronze Age (1000-500 B.C.) This 'souterrain' symbolically serves as a psychic realm where Heaney wishes to dig into his lost tradition and culture until he reaches the threshold to his linguistic and historical origins.

He writes:

I push into a souterrain
prospecting what new
in a hundred centuries' (Toome)

The time travel to the history and memory of the 'Toome' entraps the place with linguistic and political ramifications. The 'I' of the poem is predictive of Heaney's sense of belonging to his home and community. The transformation of the 'I' to 'we' not only marks his ideological and political transformation but also the spatial as the 'we' encapsulates the notion of place as a particular point of reference.

loam, flints, musket-balls,
 fragmented ware,
 tores and fish-bones,
 till I am sleeved in

alluvial mud that shelves
 suddenly under
 bogwater and tributaries,
 and elvers tail my hair. (Toome)

While ‘flints’ and ‘musket-balls’ refers to Wolf Tone’s United Irishmen, the ‘elvers’ alludes to image of the eels in ‘A Lough Sequence.’ As the eels enwound both the place and the poet within the field of force of gravity, likewise, the place in ‘Toome’ encircles the poet within the field of gravity that pulls him into different directions of place and belonging. His emotional attachment with the sound of the place has transformed him into a ‘Medusa’ figure. Henry Hart makes a very interesting point about the ‘Medusa’ figure. He writes, “The image of ‘Medusa’ may have come from Anne Ross’s *Pagan Celtic Britain*, which he had read before writing the poem and which argues that Medusa heads were originally solar symbols for the early Celts. Later the heads became associated with evil-averting guardians and healing springs. Heaney transforms the Medusa into a symbol for Mother Ireland, whose ‘terrible beauty’ can turn even the most well-intentioned hearts to sacrificial stones, as well as heal them.”⁸⁷ . ‘Medusa’ who turned her onlookers to stone assumes an important dimension of place as positions of fixity.

Eugene O’ Brien sees the difference between the intimate and stranger getting blurred in the Medusa figure as the poet’s bodily form begins to assume the aspects of place. The place is seen as a fixation in the tracing of history. Symbolically, this fixation in terms of place leads to ossification of the landscape and also the political affiliations as one gets stuck with a particular place and here the poet gets attached to Northern Ireland. The poem discursively talks about

⁸⁷ See, Hart, Henry. “Poetymologies.” *Seamus Heaney, Poet of Contrary Progressions*. Syracuse University Press, 1993. Page 64.

nationalism tradition of exclusion and colonization. Heaney's gradual decentring of the place of the centre (Britain) in terms of revisiting the forgotten townlands of 'Anahorish', 'Broagh', and 'Toome' marks a significant step towards the process of reterritorialisation of land, language and history. Heaney also makes a valid point in saying that these place-names derive their origin from various linguistic registers such as Scots, Irish, and English. He again attunes to Derrida's idea "Any politics based on a supposed intimate or Cratylistic connection between land and language must take account of such pluralistic and polyglossic frames of reference. The pluralistic etymologies of place feature as a deconstructive lever in the essentialist conflation of place with a particular political, ideological or linguistic tradition."⁸⁸

Heaney's project of decentring the place is motivated by the idea of textualisation. Textualisation is constitutive of differences and it is these differences that attributes to it heterogeneity. It is the absolute forces of inherent heterogeneity that tends to annihilate the complexity of textualisation. Thus, Heaney's enterprise of decentring the place as a polyglossic structure gradually begins to deconstruct the ideological hegemony of the colonizer by stressing connection to the place as a site of formation of identity of a person in relation to his culture, language, and nation. It is the particularity of difference that shapes Heaney's relationship with the other. As Derrida claims "dissociation, 'separation, is the condition of my relation to the other."⁸⁹ Heaney is then adjudicating the binary opposition between the self and the other by "attempting to define the culture of Irishness in a way which is 'to be not identical to itself' but rather to be 'different with itself."

Heaney engages with the post-colonial enterprise by crucially deconstructing the hegemony by recognizing the differences between Ireland and Britain. As Graham points out "Rethinking concepts such as irony, hybridity, mimicry, the 'contact zone' and transculturation in the Irish context will produce readings of Irish culture which arise out of a recognition of the claustrophobic intensity of the relationship between Ireland and Britain. It can also allow for the fractured range of complex cross-colonial affiliations which have existed within the British/Irish cultural axis....It is these abilities to read culture as ideological, while criticizing the

⁸⁸ See, O'Brien, Eugene. "The Deconstruction of Place" in *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers*, London:Pluto , 2003. p. 123. Print

⁸⁹ Ibid, 104.

homogeneity of ideology, and to prioritise cultural interchange within a colonial structure, which makes post-colonial theory an essential critical tool for understanding Irish culture.”⁹⁰

‘Traditions,’ dedicated to Tom Flanagan, whom he had met at Berkeley. He comments on the dedication saying “It was Tom’s poem because I lifted the conclusion of it from his book on the Irish novelists (*The Irish Novelists 1800-1850*). The epigraph to that book juxtaposes MacMorris’s question in *Henry V* () with Bloom’s answer in *Ulysses*... (Bloom’s reply) seemed to cut through a lot of the Identity crisis stuff that surrounded us in the early seventies so I stole it for the end of the poem.”⁹¹ Heaney uses language to resist linguistic colonization in overtly sexual terms.

Our guttural muse
was bulled long ago
by the alliterative tradition. (Traditions, *Wintering Out*)

In these lines, ‘bulled’ hints at rapacious nature of British who ravished the ‘guttural muse’ of Irish language by ‘alliterative tradition’ of English form. Aisling Maguire comments that ‘bulled’ suggests forced copulation. Heaney deliberately uses the ‘alliterative tradition’ because it was a form of metre employed in English poetry which prevailed during Anglo-Saxon and Middle English period. The femininity of ‘guttural muse’ was forcefully made to copulate with masculine aggressor, Elizabethan English. To this, Blake Morrison comments, “The hard masculine, consonantal language of England has invaded and displaced the soft, fluid, feminine language of the Gaelic vowel. Andrew J. Auge argues, “... it takes the form of a colonial usurpation of an indigenous culture, a hierarchical act of appropriation that seems to call forth a countervailing revival of repressed element.”⁹²

her uvula grows

⁹⁰ Ibid, p124.

⁹¹ See, Fawbert, David. Quoted from fawbie.com

⁹² See, Auge, Andrew J. “A Bouyant Migrant line: Seamus Heaney’s Deterritorialized Poetics” in *Literature Interpretation Theory*, Taylor and Francis Inc, 2003. p. 279.

vestigial, forgotten
 like the coccyx
 or a Brigid's Cross
 yellowing in some outhouse

while custom, that "most
 sovereign mistress",
 beds us down into
 the British isles. (Traditions,WO)

The linguistic rape of the Gaelic has dismantled the sound organ 'her uvula grows vestigial'. It is no longer remembered as it has been put aside as 'coccyx', the final bone of the spinal cord that fuses in the vertebrae, leading to its weakening as a redundant Irish catholic emblem 'Brigid's Cross yellowing in some outhouse.' It thereby leads to linguistic diffusion as Ireland conforms to its 'bedding with England.' The first stanza uses sexual metaphors to locate the colonial condition of Ireland within the historical and political context of Shakespearean Age. It is because historically, the Elizabethan invasion and uprooting of indigenous Irish farmers happened during the lifetime of William Shakespeare.

We are to be proud
 of our Elizabethan English
 "varsity", for example
 Is grass-roots stuff with us; (Traditions,WO)

The poem shifts from positing binaries as the source of conflict to linguistic intermingling as the Irish ironically, seem to be self-congratulatory about taking pride in the language of their conqueror. The English have shortened many words and Heaney gives us an example: 'Varsity' as the shortened form of 'University.' The irony is that it is spoken by a slim percentage of the population and still it has been forced upon the Irish people as Heaney writes that 'varsity' is 'grass-roots with us:' the usage of the shortened form is emblematic of the

hegemonic relationship between the dominant (English) and submissive (Irish). This is further exemplified in the lines:

we “deem” or we “allow”
when we suppose
and some cherished archaisms
are correct Shakespearean. (Traditions,WO)

The linguistic intermingling is further problematised in the lines which say:

Not to speak of the furled
consonants of lowlanders
shuttling obstinately
between bawn and mossland. (Traditions,WO)

There are many English lexicons which do not form a part of the Gaelic dialect. Also, to add, there are some words of Scottish origin that have been grafted on the Ulster dialect. Heaney further complicates this linguistic diffusion by his ambivalent attitude towards the English lexicons by adapting and appropriating it. ‘Correct Shakespearean’ brings back his affirmation to his declaration that ‘Irish’ as a language failed. It immediately reminds him of his place of origin, Mossbawn, an etymological mixture. Heaney writes, “Our farm was called Mossbawn. *Moss*, a Scots word probably carried to Ulster by the Planters, and *bawn*, the name the English colonists gave to their fortified farmhouses. Mossbawn, the planter’s house on the bog. Yet in spite of this Ordinance Survey spelling, we pronounced it Moss bann, and *Ban* is the Gaelic word for white. So might not the thing mean the white moss, the moss of bog-cotton? In the syllables of my home I see a metaphor of the split culture of Ulster.”⁹³

Heaney in articulating his ambivalent attitude towards these linguistic oppositions attempt to create a hybrid identity. Eugene O’ Brien comments on this “Heaney does not privilege one

⁹³ See, Heaney, Seamus. “Belfast” *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Sep 1, 1981.p. 35

meaning over the other. Instead, meanings interact, gesturing towards a new fusion of languages and culture, and paralleling the trope of anastomosis.”⁹⁴ To counter the hegemony of the British and recuperate the bygone pride of the Irish, Heaney retrieves the literary figure of Macmorris from Shakespeare’s *Henry V* and James Joyce’s Leopold Bloom from *Ulysses*.

MacMorris, gallivanting
around the globe, whinged
to courtier and groundling

“What ish my nation?”

And sensibly, though so much
Later, the wandering Bloom
replied, “Ireland,” said Bloom,
“I was born here. Ireland.” (*Wintering Out*)

Here, Macmorris is evoked as the barbaric Irishman who in quest for his cultural identity asks Fluellen, the Welshman, “What ish my nation?” Heaney invokes Leopold Bloom to assert his faith and pride in a Hungarian Jew, who claims “Ireland is my nation. I was born here”. Leopold Bloom, the Hungarian-Jewish other, is a cultural outsider who in *Ulysses* is forced to accept his linguistic and cultural inferiority imposed upon him by his own nation. His claim to ‘Irishness’ as if it was his birthplace makes Heaney pay his homage to James Joyce for his remarkable contribution to Modern Irish Literature. By juxtaposing Shakespeare and James Joyce, “Heaney is in effect setting out a paradigm of identity which is pluralistic, ethically driven and which refuses to be hidebound by hypostasized traditions and instead, remains open to the voice and language of the other who may come into contact with the self. There is transformative imperative at work here, as the Ireland to which Bloom lays claim is in effect transformed by that very claim into a locus of plural identity.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ See, O’ Brien, Eugene. “Heaney’s Prose” in *Seamus Heaney: Searches For Answers*, Pluto Press, 2003. p. 17.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.18.

‘In Backward Look,’ Heaney laments the deadening of the Gaelic language. He explores linguistic adulteration as a consequence of cross-breeding of cultures. The poem could also be interpreted as an allegory for cultural appropriation and abrogation. Daniel Tobin points out, “It derives its title from Eliot’s ‘The Dry Salvages’:

the backward look behind the assurance
of recorded history, the backward half-look
Over the shoulder towards the primitive terror (The Dry Salvages)

The poem begins with echoing W. B. Yeats’s *Leda and the Swan*. The sudden beating of wings of the Swan has been transposed on to the snipe. The divinity of Yeats’s Swan has been brought down to a snipe. The terror the fluttering of swan’s wings creates in the mind of Leda, the same terror has been echoed in this poem. Symbolically, it is the terror of torturous history that motivates the gradual progression of the poem. It talks about the repeated invasions that caused mass displacement of the native people. The historical dispossession as a result of gradual linguistic and cultural cross-breeding gets reflected in the suddenness of the snipe’s flight and disappearance from the place of its ‘roots.’

A stagger in air
as if a language
failed, a sleight
of wing. (The Backward Look, *Wintering Out*)

The ominous silence that followed the defeat of a linguistic culture expressed in ‘as if a language failed’ initiates the poet’s exploration into the origins of poetic language. The sudden flight of the snipe with a pleading voice reflects its helplessness. This helplessness is reflected by Heaney as he reduces the majestic beating of the Swan’s wings to ‘snipe’s bleating’. The uprooting of the snipe from its habitat symbolizes extinction of the Gaelic language as a consequence of historical dispossession. The flight of the snipe registers the displacement from the place of its origins to an enculturated realm.

A snipe's bleat is fleeing
 its nesting -ground
 into dialect,
 into variants,
 transliterations whirr (WO)

The snipe no longer feels at home and its new habitat is of foreign dialects and variants. So, even its flight sounds strange: 'transliterations whirr on the nature reserves.' The call of the snipe laments the decaying of its native language as its:

drumming elegies
 in the slipstream
 of wild goose
 and yellow bittern
 as he corkscrews away
 into the vaults

 that we live off, (WO)

Heaney writes an elegiac piece for the decaying Gaelic dialect, hints towards the Battle of Boyne which resulted in unleashing of violence and terror as a consequence of suppression of Gaelic dialect. The cry for 'wild goose' also refers to the Irish patriots who were defeated by William III at the Battle of Boyne. The defeated patriots were given an option. They were asked either to take oath of allegiance to William III, and become members of English army to serve England or flee to France as expatriates to join the self-exiled James. As Daniel Tobin points out the lamentation of the uprooting alludes to "flight of the wild geese, the dispossession of the indigenous Irish chieftains and all those forced to emigrate throughout Ireland's long colonial history."⁹⁶

⁹⁶ See, Tobin, Daniel. "*Wintering Out*" in *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, University of Kentucky Press, 2015. pp. 72.

The snipe in the new enculturated space is surrounded with etymologically stronger linguistic inhabitants ‘in the slipstream/of wild goose/and yellow bittern.’ The snipe’s time travel to the place of its origins is reflected in the lines ‘as he corkscrews away’ into the ‘vaults’ of Irish history and culture. Heaney maps the trajectory of colonial culture in :

... his flight,
through the sniper’s eyrie

disappearing among
gleanings and leavings
in the combs
of a fieldworker’s archive.

The term ‘fieldworker’s archive’ captures special attention as it makes Heaney’s intention in writing the poem very clear. Heaney had read the philological work of John Braidwood. He was highly inspired by Owen Barfield and Braidwood. He writes, “‘I did own Barfield, but the more important imprinting was a first arts course in the history of the English language, given by Prof. John Braidwood at Queen’s University. That covered the ground from Anglo-Saxon up to Ulster English, and wakened something in me’ (letter to the author, 4 June 1987) ... John Braidwood explains, ‘Some of the most imaginative bird names are translations from Irish—*Little Goat of the Evening* [gabhairin oidhche] or *Air Goat* [mionnan aeir] for the snipe, from its plaintive call (in Munster it is called *gonreen-roe* [gabhairin reo, little goat of the frost])’ (1969, 26) ... Braidwood shows how the three main dialects in Ulster conform to a pattern of invasion by land-hungry Scottish and English pioneers, and how ‘dialect, or local accent, is the mark of our history on our tongues’(4) causing sympathy or suspicion depending on the allegiances of those addressed.”⁹⁷

In tracing out the work of Braidwood, Heaney using etymology as a history reveals the “poetic fossil within the linguistic ore.” In envisaging the disappearing snipe into the ‘fieldworker’s

⁹⁷ See, Hart, Henry. “Poetymologies” in *Seamus Heaney, Poet of Contrary Progressions*, Syracuse University Press, 1993. p. 59.

archive' Heaney points out that as a result of enculturation or cross-breeding of culture, the Gaelic terms have been modernized to suit to the convenience of British speakers. As a consequence of which, the entire Gaelic phonetic register gathers dust in the obscure archives which is accessible only to scholars and researchers.

In 'The Other Side,' Heaney depicts how uprooting impacts the lives of both the colonizer and the colonized. Heaney addresses the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland dating back to the era of 1940s. It presents the benign encounter between Heaney's family and their Protestant neighbor, Johnny Junkin. Heaney charts out a time-period when Protestants and Catholics lived in solidarity but as Michael Parker points out their solidarity was based on hate. The strained relationship between the Catholic Heaney and Protestant neighbor hints at inability of the communities to forge a reconciliatory ground to settle their distrust for each other. Urban Protestantism posed itself as a threat to the rural Catholics. Their self-righteousness is too much to handle. The way in which Heaney talks about the frontier separating them it depicts that the feelings of distrust and religious conflict could not be easily sidelined. The language of the poem is very much attuned to creation of the binary opposition. Heaney begins the poem:

Thigh-deep in sedge and marigolds,
a neighbor laid his shadow
on the stream, vouching (WO)

From the very start, the narrator presents stark contrasts between his family and the Protestant neighbor. The poet undercuts the presence of the Protestant neighbor by deeming his presence as 'shadow'. Heaney seems to be disdainful of his arrogant Protestant neighbour and so he writes:

'It's as poor as Lazarus, that ground,' (WO)

The declaration: 'It's as poor as Lazarus foregrounds not only the neighbor's land as menacing but also deems the presence of the neighbor as 'ominous.'

I lay where his lea sloped

to meet our fallow,
 nested on moss and rushes, (WO)

The neighbour possesses ‘promised furrows’ rather than ‘scraggy acres’ and this is the reason why he describes his own land as land of plenty while that of Heaney as barren. It is the language, religion and culture that separate the Protestant neighbour and Catholic Heaney. He overwhelms Catholic Heaney, who is all endearing, with:

his fabulous, biblical dismissal,
 that tongue of chosen people. (WO)

The Protestant neighbour take pride in the fact that he is one of God’s ‘chosen people.’ He has the authority to speak his own ‘tongue.’ This authority has been granted to him by the book, i.e. The Bible.

Heaney goes on to paint the character sketch of his protestant neighbour to highlight the stark differences between them. He takes notice of the rigid standing posture of the man. This rigidity of the posture also refers to the rigidity of differences that separates the two communities. This rigidity is a psychic condition that makes the sectarian conflict stronger to break. The notion of the indigenous and the foreign gets reflected in the following lines:

When he would stand like that
 On the other side, white-haired, (WO)

The neighbour makes a prophecy that Catholic Community will be at a disadvantage in the near future. He refers to plentiness of his own land against the untilled fallow of Heaney. Heaney writes:

swinging his blackthorn

 at the marsh weeds
 he prophesied above our scraggy acres,

then turned away
 towards his promised furrows
 on the hill, a wake of pollen
 drifting to our bank, next season's tares. (WO)

The neighbour's ironic prophecy that 'the wake of pollen' from his 'promised furrows' would drift to the bank of his neighbour leading to 'next season's tares.' This engenders threat to the 'unchosen' people. Michael Parker comments, "Despite this unintentional act of agricultural 'vandalism', and despite his abrupt manner, his 'fabulous' archaic turns-of-phrase make him an object of wonder for the young of the family, rather than a potential source of menace."⁹⁸

In the second part of the poem, Heaney discusses how he and his siblings rehearsed their Catholic teachings of notable male figures:

For days we would rehearse
 each patriarchal dictum:
 Lazarus, the Pharaoh, Solomon

 and David and Goliath rolled
 magnificently, like loads of hay
 too big for our small lanes,
 or faltered on a rut- (WO)

The allegation on the Catholics by the Protestants that they ignore the lessons of the Bible stems from his narrow-understanding of the religious text. As the neighbour declares:

'Your side of the house, I believe,
 Hardly rule by the Book at all.' (WO)

⁹⁸ See, Heaney, Seamus. "Exposure" in *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*, Springers, 12 Oct, 1994p.102.

Eugene O' Brien observes, "the identity of the neighbour is ...couched in the language of an established order, both in terms of his own speech, and also in terms of how Heaney envisions him and his identity." Interestingly, the binary opposition is depicted from both hostile communities. The 'your side of the house' refers to the Catholic neighbours. This shows that the idea of an "'other side' presupposes a figure where there is also a same side: the very title of the poem sees the protestant neighbour as relationally connected to the 'I' of the poem." Heaney reacts to the allegation of the Protestant neighbour with all civility and endurance, he observes:

His brain was a whitewashed kitchen
hung with texts, swept tidy
as the body o' the kirk. (WO)

In the third section of the poem, Heaney reiterates his neighbour's prejudiced mind-set by uncovering his susceptibility:

Then sometimes when the rosary was dragging
mournfully on in the kitchen
we would hear his step round the gable (WO)

Here the 'we' is not used to symbolize collective unity rather it marks exclusion of the Protestants against the Catholics. The 'rosary' evoked here is significant "as culturally and semiotically this precise form of language exercises a defining imperative in terms of what constitutes selfhood and alterity."

His casual nature would be exposed in the 'casual whistle' 'on the doorstep':

... 'A right-looking night,'
he might say, 'I was dandering by
and says I, I might as well call.' (WO)

The youngster ignores the rituals of the family to ‘stand behind him/in the dark yard, in the moan of prayers.’ Embarrassed with himself he finds himself suspended between either to return to the family rituals or forge a common ground for the reconciliation, peace process to happen. The only reaction to the sectarian difference that Heaney could possibly imagine is the realm of silence. This silence reflects his catholic upbringing which gives utter primacy to ‘primmed-lips.’ But Heaney uses this silence of dilemma to posit a common ground for the two communities:

Should I slip away, I wonder,
or go up and touch his shoulder
and talk about the weather

or the price of grass-seed? (WO)

The poem ends with an unresolved dilemma. Heaney rather than attempting to blur the difference between the communities actually teases out the limits of binaries that formed the building blocks of such an inimical relationship. The ‘grass-seed’ indicates a reconciliatory ground for their strained relationship. The poem subverts the otherness to counter the colonizers.

Eugene O’ Brien observes, “it is significant in this context that this conversation is optative: it does not take place...Edna Longley sees this poem as entering into the ‘idiom of the other side’ and also as spanning ‘two languages to create a third’ (1986:201)...the poem itself...ends not in a further language but in silence.” However, silence, is seen as an index for developing ethical relationship with the other as it forges ‘intersubjective communication.’ Therefore, silence necessitates a desired relationship between the ‘self’ and the ‘other.’ The ‘I’ in the ‘slip away’ is a decisive marker of determining whether he should touch the shoulder of his neighbour before talking to him. The decision to ‘slip away’ or ‘touch his shoulder’ etches out personal ethics of ‘self’ and ‘other.’ Heaney follows Derrida who notes that silence, “non-response conditions my responsibility, there were I alone must respond. Without silence, without the hiatus, which is not the absence of rules but the necessity of a leap at the moment of ethical,

political or juridical decision, we could simply unfold knowledge into a program or course of action.”⁹⁹

Thus, for Heaney the trope of silence is important. As silence helps achieve ethical step towards politics, religion and culture which are fundamental to the shaping of identity, ‘The Other Side’ creates a transcendental realm oriented towards the future.

Seamus Heaney had read *The Bog People*, by P.V.Glob, published 1969, the year of the outbreak of the sectarian violence. The book concerned the bog bodies preserved in the east coast of Jutland, since Iron Age, “naked, strangled or with their throats cut...The author, P.V. Glob, argues... ‘The Tollund Man’, whose head is now preserved near Aarhus in the museum at Silkeborg, were ritual sacrifices to the Mother Goddess, the goddess of the ground who needed new bridegrooms each winter to bed with her in her sacred place, in the bog, to ensure the renewal and fertility of the territory in the spring... the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles. When I wrote this poem, I had a completely new sensation, one of fear.”¹⁰⁰

The study of the bog bodies provided him with befitting emblems of adversity, paralleling the sacrificial rituals with the sectarian conflict in Ireland in the 1970s. The archaeological case study of the bog people was crucial for Heaney as he found ‘common ground’ between the Iron Age Jutland and history of Ireland. Since then, Heaney “began to get an idea of bog as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in and to it...Moreover, since memory was the faculty that supplied me with the first quickening of my own poetry, I had a tentative unrealized need to make a congruence between memory and bogland, and, for the want of a better word, our national consciousness.”¹⁰¹ The parallels between the Jutland and Ireland enabled Heaney to confront the terror of ‘Troubles.’ ‘Bog’ in Heaney’s formulation serves as a potential site for double exploration, a) The marshy land as a physical structure which preserves the history and past within itself, and, b) the landscape as a

⁹⁹ O’Brien, Eugene. *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers*. London: Pluto, 2003.p. 90.

¹⁰⁰ See, Heaney, Seamus. “Feeling into Words” in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978, 1980*, pp. 58.

¹⁰¹ See, Heaney, Seamus. “Feeling into Words” in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978, 1980*, pp. 54-55.

mnemonic realm preserving memory of the past of the community seen in larger terms as symbolic of nationalist consciousness.

‘The Tollund Man’, the first bog body to appear in Heaney’s oeuvre offers itself as a site for horrific recreation of the sacrificial past. Heaney in an interview with James Randall, commented, “I wrote ‘Tollund Man’ and it was extremely important poem for me to write...And when I wrote that poem I had a sense of crossing a line rally, that my whole being was involved in a sense of- the root sense- of religion, being bonded to do something, being bounded to do something. I felt it a vow; I felt my whole being caught in this. And that was a moment of commitment not in the political sense but in the deeper sense of your life, committing yourself to do something. I think that brought me to a new possibility of seriousness in poetic experience...the bog images... [were]... a deeply felt part of my life, a revelation to me.”¹⁰²

‘The Tollund Man’ was the result of search for “images and symbols adequate to our predicament.”¹⁰³ Thomas Docherty observes, the poem is an example of ‘anamnesis’, a recollection of the past, that brings with itself its internal historicity that disrupts the sense of continuity in the present. The poem heightens Heaney’s religious intensity with the deployment of mythic rituals. The invocation to Nerthus, the goddess that demanded sacrificial bridegroom to bed her every fall in promise of rich harvest, had great potential to stir the emotions of the young Irish devotees. This image stirred Heaney to immediately draw parallels with the contemporary sectarian killing in Ireland of 1970s.

In ‘The Tollund Man’ Heaney empathises deeply with his subject. This empathy deepens as he declares his intention to visit Aarhus, Danish town at the east coast of Jutland, to pay homage to the bog body. The makes the mood of the poem as futural, oriented towards the future. In the introductory stanza, Heaney imagines himself watching the relic of memory and history embodied in the bog body. He writes:

Some day I will go to Aarhus

¹⁰² See, Koch, Stefan. *Dichtung als Archaologie: Die lyric Seamus Heaney’s*, Munster: LIT, Verlag, 1991.

¹⁰³ ¹⁰³ See, Heaney, Seamus. *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978*,. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Sep 1, 1981.

To see his peat – brown head,
The mild pods of his eyelids,
His pointed skin cap, (WO)

The mildness of the bog body stands in stark contrast with the violence inflicted on him as a part of sacrificial ritual. The gentle swellings on his face and the drooling eyes creates an image that the sacrifice was well-desired by the victim. His helplessness seems evident from the trace of little amount of food that he had consumed before his killing and his nakedness that exposes his vulnerability to the harsh condition which he had struggled against:

His last gruel of winter seeds
Caked in his stomach,

Naked except for
The cap, noose and girdle, (WO)



https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=i&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi2-9752JvcAhUUTn0KHcm7A4sQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.amusingplanet.com%2F2014%2F12%2Ftollund-man-2400-year-old-bog-body.html&psig=AOvVaw2_cZLsXMOJ-11YZEBo9rL5&ust=1531558062506980

The sacrificial victim as the 'Bridegroom to the goddess,' Nerthus, evokes the idea of the marriage between the man and the geographical land. When his bride, Nerthus:

...tightened her torc on him
And opened her fen,

Those dark juices working
Him to a saint's kept body, (WO)

The Tollund man becomes a thing for public display as at Aarhus he is kept in reposed state for centuries. The vision of 'repose' stands in complete opposition with the violence as reflected in the 'cap,' 'noose,' and 'girdle.'



<https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=i&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjAm sKK5pvcAhUWb30KH Y8EB eMQjRx6B A gBEAU&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.crystalinks.co>

m%2Fmummiesdenmark.html&psig=AOvVaw2_cZLsXMOJ-11YZEBo9rL5&ust=1531558062506980

Michael Parker comments, “for the poet...he (The Tollund Man) is potentially an active spiritual entity, forgiveness and reconciliation to the now unholy ground of Ireland.”(Parker). In the second part of the poem, Heaney risks blasphemy in the act of elevating the pagan deity, Tollund, to the level of saints. He transfigures the goddess of the ground, Nerthus, to Kathleen Ni Houlihan, the symbolic Mother Ireland. He consecrates and pays his reverence to the sacred excavation site of the bog and pray to Tollund to germinate the corpses of the labourers who became victims to the eternal cycle of life and death. With the act of germination of the victims of Jutland, Heaney recreates the brutality of sectarian murder of 1920s which massacred the political devotees of Mother Ireland. He writes:

I could risk blasphemy,
 Consecrate the cauldron bog
 Our holy ground and pray
 Him to make germinate (WO)

The scattered, ambushed
 Flesh of labourers,
 Stockinged corpses
 Laid out in the farmyards, (WO)

Heaney juxtaposes the civilized ritual sacrifice of the Tollund man “which could at least claim the dignity of a religious purpose”...with the atrocity of the 1920s that wiped out the entire generation of a family. Heaney is reminded of the four Catholic brothers who were mutilated and put to death by the Protestant Paramilitary troops. Michael Parker comments, “whereas the Tollund Man was forewarned of his death, perhaps accepted its justification, and was left physically intact by his ‘executors’, the young brothers were ‘ambushed’, slaughtered for no

conceivable ‘common good their bodies broken and shredded. It is as if only fragments of what were human beings remain to disclose their fate and indict their murderers.’¹⁰⁴

In the third section of the poem, Heaney completely locates himself in the bogland because he is carried away by its history. The identification with the Tollund Man makes Heaney imagine the ‘sad freedom.’ Daniel Tobin observes, “‘The Tollund Man’ as a symbol of the locative attachment to place enables Heaney to make the utopian journey away from the consuming powers of home. Home, the tribal centre, is eschewed for the solitary drive outside accustomed limits into a land and language that are foreign. And so home, the center, is displaced into the imaginative quest itself.”¹⁰⁵

Out there in Jutland
In the old man-killing parishes
I will feel lost,
Unhappy and at home. (WO)

The last line of the poem, expresses paradoxical nature of Heaney. ‘Unhappy and at home’ suggests both an escape and return to history. It also suggests both embracing of the home and dislocation from it. This dilemma which is central to Heaney is well described by Daniel Tobin when he talks about the idea of dispossession in context to the centre. He observes, “For the center to remain an enabling source and not an object of nostalgia Heaney’s poetry must willingly embrace dispossession, the very dispossession it seeks to overcome. In doing so, he dislodges the center from his geographical home and takes it, imaginatively, into exile. Hope rests therefore in a process of identification founded on a kind of sympathetic distance through which the tragedy of the historical predicament gives rise to a compassion that knows no sides.”(Tobin)

‘The Tollund Man,’ is retreat to the memory of the past. In doing so, the poet repeats the Irish history to orient the present towards the future. As Peter Mackay in an essay entitled, ‘Memory,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 126.

¹⁰⁵ See, Tobin, Daniel. “*Wintering Out*” in *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, University of Kentucky Press, 2015. p 94.

the Bog, Seamus Heaney' comments, "The impression of repetition in Irish history is less an indicator of actual historical pattern than of the dominance of a preferred narrative in which the future continuously holds the promise of newness... a future departure from the pattern will finally allow Ireland to 'come to its own.'"

Conclusion

It's the game of etymology that dictates Seamus Heaney's first three collections *Death of a Naturalist*(1966) *Door into the Dark*(1969) and *Wintering Out*(1972).

In the first chapter, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and *Relic of memory*, Heaney claims roots to his personal identity as a poet by taking a detour to personal history and memory. The word 'digging' becomes the tool to deterritorialise the distorted layers of history, memory and language. The act of deterritorialisation becomes a post-colonial gesture on Heaney's part to reveal the misrepresentation and omission of native Irish history and identity. On poetic level, the etymological roots to Gaelic history and language makes Heaney reterritorialise the pre-lapsarian world of Mossbawn to envisage an ideal Ireland devoid of politics of binarism and opposition that has been dictating the fate of Ireland.

In the second chapter, *Door into the Dark* (1969) and *Smell of Ordinariness*, Heaney recuperates the lost history and identity of craftsmen and tradesmen by revisiting their memory that Heaney cherished as a child. The artist-Gods, as Heaney calls/reverses them who laid the first bricks of building an ancient civilization have themselves been rendered redundant in the age of modern technology. Their skills have been reduced to a self-functioning machine and are on the verge of extinction. In tracing their history Heaney posits a passive resistance to modernisation, an offshoot of colonialism. It is here that by the act of anamnesis, recollection of these silenced subalterns from the realm of imaginative past, that Heaney deterritorialises the history and identity of native Irish.

In the third chapter, *Wintering Out* (1972) and *the dislodged slab of the Tongue*, Heaney's idea of foregrounding 'words' as a subtle ground for resistance comes into play. He charts out the intricate relationship between landscape and wordscape by bringing in Irish tradition of *dinnseanchas*. The intonation, lexicon and pronunciation distorted by historical intervention are reterritorialised to posit resistance to linguistic colonization. As he traces the collective history and memory he begins to voice his opinions about shaping of universal identity that has no specific religion, language and culture. The shift from the personal to the communal to the universal lands him on the global platform where he can totally reject the rigidities of Manichean binarism that creates fissure in the consciousness of the individual leading to the creation of

‘otherness.’ The binarism between the self and other, Irish and British, coloniser and the colonised diffuses in Heaney’s work as he embraces alterity that paves the way for self-definition.

Further Possibilities of Research:

The given research area envisages a wide array of scope to look into the contemporary economic and political debates that resulted from the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. Brexit as a contested terrain evokes crucial detour to the concepts of nostalgic historicism, emotive materiality and exposes the epistemological flaw in the structure of postcolonial paradigm. Brexit, as a problematised political and economic event has put Irish sovereignty at stake and exposed its people to newer realities of identity politics. With the rollout, the narrow border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland that served as free movement area for trade has been put into question. The anxiety of the supposed ‘hard’ physical border post the rollout inevitably conjures up the violent history of the Troubles in 1960s and virulent memory of the Good Friday Agreement, 1998. Brexit, as a threat to the distortion of the normalcy, I argue, engenders an unquestioning right to memory and history as an ethical responsibility. Why do we crave for memory as a matter of ethics? Memory, as a temporal and spatial evocation of the affective and spectral materiality is intimately related to fear. More than the ‘eternal romantic return’ to the presence of the past it is all about envisioning portentous repercussions, unrealized probabilities and is encouraged by avoidance of alternatives in order to face the future.

In this context Seamus Heaney’s later works post the Good Friday Agreement could be read in the light of Brexit as a good/ bad strategy for coping with the future of the Irish in general and Northern Irish in particular.

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