

The Fifth Province: Seamus Heaney and the Reinterpretation of the Cultural Morphology of Border County Ireland

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Introduction:

The prolific Irish literary tradition is well known and Seamus Heaney, the 1995 Nobel Prize winner for poetry, is emblematic of this tradition. Heaney is a native of County Derry, Northern Ireland. This County is located in Ulster, the northern most province of the Irish island, which is bisected by a border dividing Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland. There is a disputed heritage located in this region which is characterized by the 'Troubles' – the sectarian strife between Irish Catholic nationalists and British Unionists over the identity and perception of this landscape. However recently a peace process has bloomed in this region and its intellectual foundation lies in a methodology that is post-national and post-modern in character. The seeds of this methodology are found in the artistic and literary community of Northern Ireland, of which Heaney is representative. The methodology contained in this paper consists of a poetical hermeneutic approach to the study of the cultural morphology of this landscape. And through Heaney's texts, the human geographer is afforded a multidimensional, home insider perspective to perceive and reinterpret the cultural phenomenology occurring within the morphology of this landscape.

I: The reinterpretation of landscape

This reinterpretation of the cultural landscape of the border is to employ the insights provided by the cultural mentifacts imbedded in the collective unconscious of the inhabitants of the landscape. The psychiatrist Carl Jung (1936) defined the collective unconscious as an aspect of the human psyche, which unlike the personal unconscious, is not acquired by experience, but by heredity and culture. In essence, the collective unconscious consists of archetypes (from the Greek, *arkhetupon*: literally 'first molded') which are inherited. These archetypes are described variously as 'elementary' or 'primordial' thoughts. Within the realm of mythological research they are described as 'motifs'. Wrote Jung (1936) "This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only be-

come conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents. Jung held that access to this collective unconscious was found through dreams and what he termed the active imagination.

Within the context of this paper and within Heaney's poetry there is an intersection between Jung's active imagination and Kearney's (1997) imagined community. The anthropologist Levi-Strauss notes that within the archetypes of myth making are constructs which make possible at an imaginary level what is impossible in the 'real' or 'empirical' experience. Notes Strauss (1968) "[Myth-making is concerned with] 'the fantasyproduction of a society seeking passionately to give symbolic expression to the institution it might have had in reality.'" Perhaps imbedded within the cultural landscape contained within the Border region of the Irish Island is a landscape of archetypes accessible through the works of the Fíli (poets) inhabiting this landscape. With Irish and British nationalism obscuring this landscape, the use of poetry to 'excavate' these archetypes for objective examination is an avenue of research to explore. Notes Welch (1993) "There is a conflict between Ireland and England; it often seems insoluble to the mind trained in the discourses of politics, negotiation and opposition. It may in fact be insoluble. But a poem...witnesses to a space human creativity can create where history is set aside and the problem is viewed objectively. The 'affect' [of the conflict] to use Jung's term, is there, but viewed from a 'higher level of consciousness', poetry." Exploring archetypes found in the works of poets is perhaps to re-map the morphology of the northern Irish landscape, beyond outdated and anachronistic perceptions of it.

II: The 'Fifth' Province

A post-modern and post-national approach to the Irish landscape would be to construct the Irish landscape in a form that complements its multi-cultural character rather than to mimic and internalize foreign, centralized ethno-political structures. This does not ignore the fissures that compose sectarianism; rather it proposes a different perspective from which to view these fissures. Kearney (1988) has observed a "crisis of culture" which places the modern four provinces of Ireland within a philosophical transition from national constructs to supra-national constructs. Within the context of political geography, this places Ireland as a member of the European Union. The four provinces of Ireland (Leinster, Munster, Connaught and Ulster) however still demarcate the body of the island. Post-modernism does not ignore this 'crisis of culture' as Brandes (1994) notes, "Ireland in its post-modern condition is a state still torn apart—North and South, rural and urban, Catholic and Protestant, employed and unemployed, and man and woman."

However within the context of post-modern thought, Kearney (1997) attaches one more province within the post-modern conceptual model, that of the 'Fifth Province'. He states

"Modern Ireland is made up of four provinces. And yet, the Irish word for a province is coiced which means fifth. This fivefold division is as old as Ireland itself, yet there is disagreement about the identity of the fifth... The obvious impotence of the various political attempts to unite the four geographical provinces would seem to warrant another kind of solution...one which would incorporate the 'fifth' province. This province, this place, this centre, is not a political or geographical position, it is more of a disposition." He further adds, "The fifth province is to be found, if anywhere, at the swinging doors which connects the parish to the cosmos...the fifth province can be imagined and reimagined; but it cannot be occupied. In the fifth province it is always a question of thinking otherwise."

The excavation and re-examination of cultural archetypes is a fundamental aspect of this 'Fifth' province. The 'cultural crisis' which Kearney (1997) observes perhaps is best understood by the exposition of constituent cultural archetypes buried within the chorological and chronological layers of the Irish landscape. What undergirds this 'cultural crisis' particularly in the communities of the north of Ireland is a tribalism that has its roots in the ancient Celtic/Gaelic culture, which existed before the modern transpositions of political, religious and social structure upon the landscape.

One needs only to compare archeology, art and religious relics strewn across the Irish and Scottish landscapes to appreciate the fact that a collective unconscious was definitely shared, if not traded between the Irish and the Scots. Notes Jackson (1971) "Until at least the end of the sixteenth century Ireland and the [Scottish] Highlands formed a single culture province. The 'sea-divided Gael' as they were called, were closely linked not only by their language but also by their civilization, their customs and traditions..."

Therefore it is important to understand that a shared collective unconscious exists between the communities within this cultural crisis, despite being buried by decades and centuries of sectarian conflict. To utilize the phenomenology of collective unconscious thought and its attendant archetypes, a methodology 'mapping' the oral and written tradition of the culture of these communities can be employed to explore the multi-dimensional landscapes occurring upon the Irish Island. Notes Kearney (1997) "In Celtic culture, unity was an imaginary concept to be safe guarded by Fili (poets) rather than political leaders." The use of the texts of poets and writers to explore the perceptual phenomenology creating the cultural morphologies of the landscape is an avenue to explore the constituent components of this morphology.

III: The landscape as text

Within the discipline of geography the morphology of landscapes can be explored through the use of texts and conversely in this approach one can perceive the landscape as a text as well. Samuels (1978) argues that environments can be read as biographies. Johnson (1979) asserts that the landscape, the creation of those who live/have lived in it, is an important text. White (1985) maintains that in the context of such a landscape text, the *home-insider* provides material on a sense of place...in a placeless world.

I juxtapose these ideas of landscape along ideas of sacred space. Water (1988) comments that "The quality of a place depends on a human context shaped by memories and expectations, by stories of real and imagined events—that is by historical experience located there." Relph (1976) notes "Any exploration of place as a phenomena of direct experience cannot be undertaken in the terms of formal geography nor can it sole constitute part of such geography. It must, instead, be concerned with the entire range of experience through which we all know and make places."

Through the use of this textual methodology a 'feel' for the cultural hues of landscape can be accessed. For instance, the geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer (1925) approached landscapes as morphological entities, subject to change, rather than as static bodies of land. Sauer noted the relationship between culture and landscapes, "The works of man express themselves in the cultural landscape...They are derived in each case from the natural landscape..." The human geographer; Yi-Fu Tuan (1971) concurs, "The quality of human experience in an environment, both physical and human, is given by people's capacity-mediated through culture- to feel, think and act...I have explored the nature of human attachment to place, the component of fear in attitudes to nature and landscape, and the development of subjective world views..."

Through the use the subjective texts of Heaney's poetry, An essence of inner and outer morphologies contained within the symbolism and archetypes of the Irish landscape can be assessed. Seamon (1976) notes, "(The symbolic meaning of landscape) is still an essential part of a literary perspective on people's experiential dialogue with environment because literary symbols and images manifest aspects of this interplay that are perhaps invisible and impregnable to conventional techniques of social science." In particular, the non-linear nature of Irish artistic and intellectual traditions become more prominent when the Irish literary tradition is utilized as a methodology, rather than centralized, positivistic Greco-Roman logo-centric models. Comments Kearney (1985)

"The Irish Intellectual tradition is characterized by the ability to hold traditional oppositions of classical reason, either/or together in a creative confluence of both/and.

The use of this methodology, though qualitative in appearance, actually derives from a non-linear logic construct that is seen as anti-utilitarian if viewed solely from the scientific rational tradition. The application of this methodology is congruous with the Irish intellectual tradition and presents an appropriate research approach to appreciate the mythical artifacts present in this field of study. Levi-Strauss (1968) comments that "the kind of logic in mythical thought is quite rigorous as that of modern science." Given the fact that political processes have offered perhaps solutions that will tentatively allow the absence of war, it is the creation of peace may be in the hands of the 'Fili' (Poets).

IV: The Fili

Before the Anglicization of Ireland, the inhabitants of the Island spoke Irish and Scots-Gaelic dialects. With the advent of Christianity in Ireland, writing was introduced to the culture. Writing subsequently preserved language within text. The folklore of these inhabitants had a strong connection with Celtic cosmology, and though the majority of these tribal people were farmers and stockmen, the shifting alliances of the tribal kingdoms produced a warrior culture, which created imaginative recollections of semi-divine ancestors. The connection between the tribal fields and the heavens was explained and told through the institution of the seanchas –the traditional lore of storytelling according to Purdon (1999). This form of traditional lore was an oral means of preserving epic tales. The individual who collected and preserved these tales was called the shanachie (storyteller). With the arrival of Christianity many of these epic tales, *Lebor na hUidre* (The Book of the Dun Cow), *Lebor Gabala* (The Book of Invasions) and *Tain Bo Cuailgne* (Cattle Raid of Cooley) were inscribed by various monks. The inscription of these epic tales took place between 6 AD and 8 AD. Preceding and concurrent with this the 'technological' innovation of inscription, was the tradition of the Fili (poet), who unlike the shanachie, did not simply recall and recite the oral tradition, but composed pieces of poetry and epic tale themselves. The Fili was an aristocrat within the tribal systems of the Irish and Scots culture both by nature and outlook. The Fili, whose role combined the craft of the poet with the duties of the arbitrator of tribal law, served an apprenticeship of up to 12 years before being allowed to officially compose and arbitrate. Within the tribal hierarchy, the Fili was second only to the king in power. During the Christian conversion of Ireland, the confluence of written language introduced by the monks and the aristocratic role of the Fili created a powerful

social crucible for the completion of written text. Many of the early-inscriptions of Irish poetry were similar to the Japanese haiku— simply spare reflections upon the seasons, the essence of nature and the fickleness of landscapes. The subsequent development and practice of Irish poetry provided a means to access the morphology of both the landscape and culture of the Irish Island.

Notes the geographer J.K. Wright (1924) “ Some men of letters are endowed with a highly developed geographical instinct. As writers, they have trained themselves to visualize even more clearly than the professional geographer those regional elements of the earth’s surface most significant to the general run of humanity.” Another geographer, Watson (1983) claims that literature is a “Primary source for the whole world of images [that] illustrates the ‘soul’ of a place.”

V: Seamus Heaney

Seamus Heaney, through his poetry provides the vantage of the contemporary home-insider for the differing dimensions of the northern Irish landscape. Many of these poems are inspired by landscape. They also incorporate the landscape as a metaphor to describe cultural and socio-political issues occurring upon the landscape itself. Through the vantage provided by these poems, the reader is allowed a contemporary, multi-dimensional geographical exploration of space within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Seamus Heaney was born on April 13, 1939 in Mossbawn, County Derry, Northern Ireland. He was the first child of nine, raised in a farm family. This rural landscape provided Heaney an environment with which to develop his spatial perceptions as the home-insider.

This first selection of Heaney’s poetry will explore the linguistic and semantical complexity that occupies landscape space in the geographical north of the Irish Island.

FROM: WHATEVER YOU SAY, SAY NOTHING III

Religion’s never mentioned here, of course.
You know them by their eyes, and hold your tongue.
One side’s as bad as the other, never worse.
Christ, it’s near time that some small leak was sprung

In the great dykes the Dutchman made
To dam the dangerous tide that followed Seamus.
Yet for all this art and sedentary trade
I am incapable. The famous

Northern reticence, the tight gag of place
And times: yes, yes. Of the 'wee six' I sing
Where to be saved you only must save face
And whatever you say, you say nothing.

THE PENINSULA

When you have nothing more to say, just drive
For a day all round the peninsula.
The sky is tall as over a runway,
The land without marks so you will not arrive

But pass through, though always skirting landfall.
At dusk, horizons drink down sea and hill,
The ploughed field swallows the whitewashed gable
And you're in the dark again. Now recall

The glazed foreshore and sillouhetted log,
That rock where breakers shredded into rags,
The leggy birds stilted on their own legs,
Islands riding themselves out into the fog

And drive back home, still with nothing to say
Except that now you will uncode all landscapes
By this: things founded clean on their own shapes,
Water and ground in their extremity.

THE STATIONS OF THE WEST

On my first night in the Gaeltacht the old woman spoke to
me in English: You will be all right. I sat on a twilight bedside
listening through the wall to fluent Irish, homesick for a
speech I was to extirpate.
I had come west to inhale the absolute weather. The visionaries
breathed on my face a smell of soup-kitchens, they
mixed the dust of croppies graves with the fasting spittle of
our creed and anointed my lips. Ephete, they urged. I blushed
but only managed a few words.
Neither did any gifts of tongues descend in my days in that
upper room when all around me seemed to prophesy. But still
I would recall the stations of the west, white sand, hard rock,
light ascending like its definition over Rannafast and Errigal,
Annaghry and Kincasslagh: names portable as altar stones,
unleavened elements.

These three selected works have a common thread weaving through them. That is the ability to speak knowingly from the perspective of the home insider, viewing the different dimensions of the surrounding environment. One is reminded of the Biblical aphorism of "If the stones could speak." In the excerpt from *Whatever You Say Say Nothing*, the speaker explores the semantical terrain of the northern Irish landscape.

The patchwork of sectarianism does not correspond to any rational geography. Lines and boundaries twist and turn. Words are used as both masks and passwords. This exemplifies the linguistic complexity that occupies the social aspect of this landscape. Silence is the best cloak in such an environment. The statement "Whatever you say say nothing" is a familiar refrain. Living in Glencolumbkille, County Donegal, I was constantly reminded by a man nicknamed "King" of that line. He would drink at the sleeve end of the bar, a tailor by trade but a drinker for life. The lack of the ability to truly express oneself is what the speaker is struggling with in this first poem.

The Peninsula hints towards a form of transcendence, which actually brings the speaker into touch with the physical geography of the northern Irish landscape. This is also a journey through a tirtha. (In the Hindu tradition, tirthas are sacred places. The term tirtha literally means crossing; i.e. they are places where one crosses over to far shores or crosses up to the realm of heaven). Singh (1993) notes that a sacred space is a central place of hierophany, where a divine or transcendent dimension breaks through into everyday life. Traveling to the northern Irish coast brings the speaker this tirthic form of solace. Within this solace is the end of the sectarian linguistic labyrinth that the speaker has traveled from. In the face of the powerful physical geography of the terrain, words—and what they represent, convey and express—simply have no ability or power in this space to shape a sense of place. The sense of place here is found in, and formed by the natural terrain. The speaker is reminded of the vastness of nature and the sectarianism that has him in the first poem struggling for expression is diminished in the face of it. However this solace does not bring the speaker to a form of expression. But it does prove to be a balm for the soul. It is interesting to note that the extremity that characterizes this landscape, also characterizes the various sectarian divides in the northern Irish social landscape.

Stations of the West takes place within a Gaeltachta, or an Irish speaking region of Ireland. This poem is probably set in the Republic of Ireland, as the Gaeltachtas are located along the geographical West coast of Ireland, hence the title of the poem. The speaker seems to be a pilgrim of sorts. The symbolism in the poem invokes the Catholic ritual of communion and the image of the Last Supper and the Pentecost, where the tongues of flame descended upon Christ's Apostles anointing them with the gift of tongues. The speaker is struggling to learn Gaelic. In this struggle he feels both at home and alienated. He listens "Through the wall to fluent Irish, homesick for a speech [he] was to extirpate." As in the second poem the speaker invokes the landscape of the stations of the west, "White sand, hard rock, light ascending like its definition over Rannafast and Errigal..." It seems as if the landscape in both poems gives the speaker

a sense of balance. It provides ballast for his semantical and linguistic journey towards expressing a balanced perception of his environment.

This following text selection provides a description of the bog landscape and utilizes it as a metaphor. This metaphor provides a link between the past and the future of this landscape, as well providing a sense of the universal, which Kearney (1997) has noted unites the "parish and the cosmos" and in doing so permeates all diasporatic Irish landscapes.

BOGLAND

We have no praries
To slice a big sun at evening-
Everywhere the eye concedes to
Encroaching horizon,

Is wooed into cyclop's eye
Of a tarn. Our unfenced country
is bog that keeps crusting
Between the sights of the sun.

They've taken the skeleton
Of the Great Irish Elk
Out of the peat, set it up,
An astounding crate full of air.

Butter sunk under
More than a hundred years
Was recovered salty and white.
The ground itself is kind, black butter

Melting and opening underfoot,
Missing its last definition
by millions of years.
They'll never dig coal here,

Only the waterlogged trunks
Of great firs, soft as pulp.
Our pioneers keep striking
Inwards and downwards,

Every layer they strip
Seems camped on before.
The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage.
The wet centre is bottomless.

Bogland, is a geo-poem describing a landscape that covers much of the geographical north and west of the Irish island. The bog is a common term and at times it is used pejoratively to describe a wasteland. However, the poem does not refer to it in this light. The bog has an organic presence and has been a major resource of fuel for heat. It is also a

striking and defining feature of the Irish landscape, much like the moors are in Scotland. It seems to be alluded here by Heaney as both a sepulchre and historical treasure vault, holding the remnants of both pre-colonized and pre-Christian Irish civilization. Heaney in this poem also invokes a metaphorical allusion to the coherence of space as, Wet...bottomless. Kearney (1997) writes that the allusion of a bottomless center bespoke to a more global circumference, once again a reference to the unity of the parish and the cosmos. In *Bogland*, Heaney is utilizing the distinctiveness of an aspect of Irish landscape and connecting it to a greater whole. Ireland whether politically united or not, is still a geographical feature that is surrounded by ocean and therefore is united in its geographical insularity. The allusion to 'Atlantic seepage' creates a passage through the bog to a greater supranational and diasporatic whole. The bog therefore provides the metaphorical transcendent passage to a greater global identity. In this respect the metaphor of the bog acts somewhat like a tirtha, which provides the passage or a crossing to a transcendent perception. While it seems inhospitable on face value, the value of the bog is immense. It has supported life for centuries in the face of invasion, colonialism and sectarian nationalism. It now serves as a metaphor that Heaney uses to both deepen and globalize the Irish identity. Notes Welch (1993) "Bogland"...announces a theme...that of lost and neglected areas of memory and understanding, tribal and psychological...the writing conveys the atmosphere of strenuous effort applied to a hidden secrecy, now opening at last. Those engaged in this activity are pioneers; they are not reciters of the litanies handed out by schools, courts or churches."

With the next selection of poetic text, Heaney approaches the cultural landscape of Northern Ireland as a sort of poetic archaeologist. As in the previous poem, *Bogland*, Heaney is a pioneer, "Striking inwards and downwards...". The poet, influenced by the Danish Archaeologist P.V. Glob's text, *The Bog People* (1969) (which described the bodies of Iron-Age Celtic ritual killing victims found remarkably preserved in a peat bog in Denmark), visited the bog-site. Both the book and the visit to the peat bog, where he gazed upon the preserved body of the Tollund Man, had a profound and insightful effect upon him. Recalls Heaney (1994) "The unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles."

THE TOLLUND MAN

I

Some day I will go to Aarhus
To see his peat-brown head,
The mild pods of his eye-lids,
His pointed skin cap.

In the flat country nearby
Where they dug him out,
His last gruel of winter seeds
Caked in his stomach,

Naked except for
The cap, noose and girdle,
I will stand a long time,
Bridegroom to the goddess,

She tightened her torc on him
And opened her fen,
Those dark juices working
Him to a saint's kept body,

Trove of the turfcutters'
Honeycombed workings.
Now his stained face
Reposes at Aarhus.

II

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

The scattered, ambushed
Flesh of labourers,
Stocking corpses
Laid out 'in the farmyards,

Tell-tale skin and teeth
Flecking the sleepers
Of four young brothers, trailed
For miles along the lines.

III

Something of his sad freedom
As he rode the tumbril
Should come to me, driving,
Saying the names

Tollund, Grauballe, Nebelgard,
Watching the pointing hands

Of country people,
Not knowing their tongue.

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

Heaney's 'excavation' of the Tollund Man and the subsequent resurrection of him upon the page weaves in a 'sectarian' murder committed by Northern Ireland's auxiliary police force, the B Specials. The murder takes place in the 1920s and in the Tollund Man, Heaney is explicit in his comparison of the body of the Tollund Man, a victim of ritual sacrifice and the bodies of 'four young brothers'. The brothers were dragged by a train, their 'Tall-tale skin and teeth/Flecking the sleepers'. Heaney's theme in this poem is ritual murder, perpetrated both in Iron-Age Denmark and in 20th century Ireland. He admits at the end of the poem that "In the old man-killing parishes/I will feel lost, /Unhappy and at home."

The ritual of murder has expressed itself through out Celtic history, especially among tribal groups indigenous to the northern Irish landscape. In visiting the gravesite of the Tollund man, Heaney connected figuratively the ritual murder stemming from the Celtic Iron-Age cultures to his own contemporary Northern Irish culture. Notes Vendler (1998) "The bog bodies [such as the Tollund man]...persuaded [Heaney] that ritual killing had been a feature of Northern tribal culture in a wide geographical swath: that immediate history alone did not begin to explain the recrudescence of violence in Northern Ireland."

Heaney himself comments on this connection in a 1979 interview in *Ploughshares* magazine by J. Randall,

"The Tollund Man seemed to me like an ancestor almost, one of my old uncles, one of those moustached archaic faces you used to meet all over the Irish country side. I felt very close to this. And the sacrificial element, the whole mythological field surrounding these images was very potent. So I tried, not explicitly, to make a connection between the sacrificial, ritual, religious element in the violence of contemporary Ireland and this terrible sacrificial religious thing in *The Bog People*. This wasn't thought out. It began with a genuinely magnetic, almost entranced relationships with those heads..."

One can surmise that Heaney's collective unconscious was presenting itself into his active imagination. Jung's 'primordial' thoughts were asserting themselves...an archetype was being extracted and recognized. Continues Heaney in the 1979 interview,

"And when I wrote that poem, I had a sense of crossing a line really, that my whole being was involved in the sense of -the root sense-of religion, being bonded to something, being bound to do something. I felt it a vow; I felt my whole being caught in this..."

Heaney had crossed the border from the collective unconscious to the consciousness of his poetic 'active imagination'. This is not say that the insight was imagined. Far from it. What Heaney recognized and inscribed into text was the hereditary strand that culture produces regardless of political or social boundary. The Iron Age ritual killings and the sectarian landscape of murder were embodied within different transpositions of history, yet the out come was the same...murder, whether under the guise of a Celtic goddess, a Christian religious creed, or a sectarian political assumption. The landscape did not provide abstract justifications for these killings; it merely provided the repository archetype, which defined the cultural and historical borders transposed upon it.

The next three selections of Heaney's poetry form a triad that express an awareness of the fatal complexity of these inner and outer borders upon the northern Irish landscape. They also describe the supranational tendency inhabiting the human character to cross the artificial and politically imposed borders both at the cost and creation of life itself.

I TERMINUS

(3rd Stanza)

Two buckets were easier carried than one.
I grew up in between.
My left hand placed the standard iron weight.
My right tilted a last grain in the balance.
Baronies, parishes met where I was born.
When I stood on the central stepping stone.
I was the last earl on horseback in midstream
Still parleying, in earshot of his peers.

II CASUALTY

1.
He would drink by himself
And raise a weathered thumb
Towards the high shelf,
Calling another rum
And blackcurrant, without
Having to raise his voice,
Or order a quick stout
By a lifting of the eyes
And a discreet dumb-show
Of pulling off the top;
At closing time would go

In waders and peaked cap
Into the showery dark,
A dole-kept breadwinner
But a natural for work.
I loved his whole manner,
Sure-footed but too sly,
His deadpan sidling tact,
His fisherman's quick eye
And turned observant back.

Incomprehensible
To him, my other life.
Sometimes, on his high stool,
Too busy with his knife
At a tobacco plug
And not meeting my eye,
In the pause after a slug
He mentioned poetry.
We would be on our own
And, always politic
And shy of condescension,
I would manage by some trick
To switch the talk to eels
Or lore of the horse and cart
Or the Provisionals.

But my tentative art
His turned back watches too:
He was blown to bits
Out drinking in a curfew
Others obeyed, three nights
After they shot dead
The thirteen men in Derry.
PARAS THIRTEEN, the walls said,
BOGSIDE NIL. That Wednesday
Everybody held
His breath and trembled.

2.

It was a day of cold
Raw silence, wind-blown
Surplice and soutane:
Rained-on, flower-laden
Coffin after coffin
Seemed to float from the door
Of the packed cathedral
Like blossoms on slow water.
The common funeral
Unrolled its swaddling band,
Lapping, tightening
Till we were braced and bound
Like brothers in a ring.
But he would not be held
At home by his own crowd
Whatever threats were phoned,
Whatever black flags waved.

I see him as he turned
In that bombed offending place,
Remorse fused with terror
In his still knowable face,
His cornered outfaced stare
Blinding in the flash.

He had gone miles away
For he drank like a fish
Nightly, naturally
Swimming towards the lure
Of warm lit-up places,
The blurred mesh and murmur
Drifting among glasses
In the gregarious smoke.
How culpable was he
That night when he broke
Our tribe's complicity?
'Now, you're supposed to be
An educated man,'
I hear him say. 'Puzzle me
The right answer to that one!'

3.

I missed his funeral,
Those quiet walkers
And sideways talkers
Shoaling out of his lane
To the respectable Purring of the hearse...
They move in equal pace
With the habitual
Slow consolation
Of a dawdling engine,
The line lifted, hand
Over fist, cold sunshine
On the water, the land
Banked under fog: that morning
When he took me in his boat,
The screw purling, turning
Indolent fathoms white,
I tasted freedom with him.
To get out early, haul
Steadily off the bottom,
Dispraise the catch, and smile
As you find a rhythm
Working you, slow mile by mile,
Into your proper haunt
Somewhere, well, out beyond...

Dawn-sniffing revenant,
Plodder through midnight rain,
Question me again.

III A PEACOCK'S FEATHER

Six days ago the water fell
To name and bless your fontanel
That seasons towards womanhood,
But now your life is sleep and food
Which, with the touch of love, suffice
You, Daisy, Daisy, English niece.

Gloucestershire: its prospects lie
Wooded and misty to my eye
Whose landscape, like your mother's was,
Is other than this mellowness
Of topiary, lawn and brick,
Possessed, untraversed, walled, nostalgic.

I come from scraggy farm and moss,
Old patchworks that the pitch and toss
Of history has left dishevelled.
But here, for your sake, I have levelled
My cart-rut voice to garden tones,
Cobbled the bog with Cotswold stones.

Ravelling strands of families mesh
In love-knots of two minds, one flesh.
The future's not our own, we'll weave
An in-law maze, we'll nod and live
In trust but little intimacy-
So this is a billet-doux to say

That in a warm July you lay
Christened and smiling in Bradley.
While I, a guest in your green court,
At a west window sat and wrote
Self-consciously in gathering dark,
I might as well be in Coole Park!
So before I leave your ordered home
Let us pray: may tilth and loam
Darkened with Celts' and Saxons' blood
Breastfeed your love of house and wood.
And I drop this for you, as I pass,
Like the peacock's feather in the grass.

These three poems hint at the recognition and crossing of both internal and external borders placed upon and within the northern Irish landscape. In *Terminus*, Heaney speaks of the awareness of a sense of balance that he arrives at while caught in midstream between two banks of a shore. 'Baronies, parishes met where I was born.' Speaks of the class, religious and cultural divides that permeate the northern Irish landscape. The choice of *Terminus*, The Greek god of borders as the title of the poem cements the essence of the poem from the beginning. It is a meditation on the nature of borders.

Casualty is an elegy for a fisherman, a modern Tollund Man, who at home on the sea, where the only boundaries are physical, will not be limited by social boundaries when he places his feet upon the land. The poem speaks of a time frame surrounding 'Bloody Sunday'. On January 30th 1972, Paratroopers from the British army killed thirteen unarmed civil rights marchers in Derry. The IRA reprisals consisted of a series of bombings, which included Loyalist patronized public houses. The fisherman in Heaney's poem, despite warnings to stay within the social boundaries of his own tribe, 'But he would not be held at home by his own crowd...' travels for his nightly drinking session to a pub where a sectarian bomb has been planted. The cost of admission is fatal, as he has crossed the social/sectarian boundaries and his fate becomes a casualty of the 'troubles'. Heaney muses upon this strictly social ordering that has come about due to the political situation imposed upon the landscape. He questions the ethos of this ordering, 'How culpable was he, That night when he broke, Our tribe's complicity?'

Tribal geographies are characterized by the non-linear. Cartesian ordinances do not effectively map out the ebb and flows of tribal existence or thought. To recognize that tribalism was an effective social ordering during the time of the Celts (Kearney, 1997) is to recognize its de-centralized character, which is completely incongruous with the political superstructure imposed upon the landscape of northern Ireland. The mentifacts and social structures of tribalism remain despite this political imposition and in the case of the poem, *Casualty*, delineates invisible yet deeply ingrained cultural boundaries which are not in synchrony with the super imposed political sectarian geography of Northern Ireland.

Heaney it seems yearns for a freedom from both the claustrophobic tribalism and the nihilistic superimposed sectarian political geography. Towards the end of the poem he reflects, 'I tasted freedom with him. To get out early, haul steadily off the bottom, Dispraise the catch, and smile as you find a rhythm working you, slow mile by mile, Into your proper haunt somewhere, well out, beyond...' Heaney yearns for a freer existence as exemplified by the life of the fisherman. It is no coincidence I believe that a fisherman was sacrificed in *Casualty*, much like the 'Fisher of Men', Christ was sacrificed at Golgotha. Heaney despite his yearning for the freedom of the supra-national, still unconsciously allows his tribal, Catholic roots to appear within his poetry.

The third poem *A Peacock's Feather* describes the crossing of cultural borders. The serenity of a christening is framed in a poem as a gift to his 'English' niece. He describes 'tilth and loam' as 'Darkened with Celt and Saxon blood'. This intermingling of his Celtic family with a Saxon family describes the crossing of cultural borders. This supranational metaphor

hints at the crossing of deeply ingrained internal borders as an avenue to create a peace process on the outer landscape. And is emblematic of the visionary landscape of the 'fifth' province.

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