Defining the Layers: Seamus Heaney's Metaphor of Layers of Colonisation in Ireland.

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Abstract

Seamus Heaney is arguably Ireland's most notable poet. Receiving the Nobel prize for Literature in 1995, Heaney is recognised as one of Ireland's most prominent writers. In particular, Heaney's poems in the context of the Troubles have provided insight into why these events have occurred. He is, alongside Michael Longley, one of the foremost poets of the Troubles, and used his writing to try and understand the events of the time. Heaney grew up in Derry, Northern Ireland, and personally experienced the Troubles, however, the majority of his poetry which he wrote in context of this era, was written after he had moved to the Republic of Ireland.

It is within the context of the Bog that Heaney searches for answers to the effects of colonisation on the Irish. Heaney explores the loss of culture as a result of colonisation by the British, but he also looks at how the Irish culture has evolved over the past two millennia. Within the poetry that he wrote during the Troubles, Heaney explores the concept of the Vikings' culture of violence and retribution, suggesting that it lives on in the psyche of present-day Irish. In addition, his poems contemplate the hybridity of contemporary Irish culture, showing how the Irish, regardless of religion are one and the same, making the atrocities between sectarian groups pointless.

Although Heaney was a Catholic Irish Nationalist, his vision for Ireland was one of an inclusive Ireland where all Irish were the same regardless of their religion. His exploration of religion and its creation of division of communities in Ireland is a major theme in his poems, and one which he links back to many of the ills of Irish history.

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Introduction

Life and Context

Ireland's complex and often troubled history of colonisation has helped shape the country into what it is today. Ireland has a history rich in Gaelic culture with the addition of further cultures, each one leaving its mark on the Irish as a nation. The Gaelic culture has been joined by the Celtic, Viking, Norman, Scottish, and English cultures, some integrating into the Gaelic culture, and some which retained separate identities. It is this rich and at times complicated layering of history and culture which Seamus Heaney writes about in some of his earlier poetry collections.

In this thesis, I examine how Heaney takes the history of Ireland and explores through his poetry how it has impacted on the Irish through the centuries. To begin, I will give you a brief description of the history of Ireland over the last Millenium, and the context in which Heaney wrote his earlier poetry. I will then explore the themes which emerge in his work, of how colonisation not only affected the Irish historically, but also was a major force behind the Troubles in Northern Ireland. I will analyse 13 poems from his collections Death of a Naturalist (1965), Door into the Dark (1972), Wintering Out (1972), North (1975), and Field Work (1979). In addition to the close readings of these poems I will explore secondary texts, reading both criticism and historical literature in context to the poetry. This will include interviews with Heaney, in particular, those conducted by Dennis O'Driscoll which are found in his book, *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (2008). I will conclude that Heaney sought to show that the conflict of the Troubles was fruitless and unnecessary as the long history of colonisation in Ireland had created an Irish culture so intermingled that those killing and being killed were essentially the same. I will show that through his poetry,

Heaney concludes that colonisation of Ireland has not only caused the Troubles but also created a hybrid culture as seen today. The themes of this thesis are: Heaney's use of Myth and History to understand the events of the time of writing, Post-Colonial Writing, Identity, Hybridity, and Memory. Each theme will be linked by Heaney's use of layers as a metaphor for understanding the Troubles.

After the initial Anglo-Norman invasions of Ireland, the native Gaelic Irish lived happily enough alongside the Normans who had come to be known as 'Old English', and it wasn't until the reign of Elizabeth I that they became second class citizens in their own land. According to Gearoid O'Tuathaigh,

> language and more crucially, religion, were the key elements of cultural discrimination in the greater convulsion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the outcome of which was a Protestant, overwhelmingly planter, new ruling class in Ireland, together with the triumph of the English language, law and politico-administrative institutions throughout Ireland, and the defeat of the whole institutional edifice of the Gaelic political and social order which has sustained and been mediated through the Irish language. (42)

The minority were now ruling over Ireland, and this was a significant reason for the loss of the Irish language. O'Tuathaigh suggests that 'the shift to English, the language of power and of all avenues of advancement, soon gathered momentum among those who aspired to improve their condition. By the late eighteenth century- Irish was already considered the language of the past and the poor' (42). To speak English meant there was more of a chance of getting ahead in life and out of the poverty that so many Irish speakers were in. Seamus Heaney explores the loss of the Irish language in his poem 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', showing how redundant it became as a result of English colonisation.

It must be remembered that although there was a campaign by the government and ascendancy to keep the Catholics in a state of powerlessness to maintain their own power, there were many groups by the mid to late eighteenth century who wanted an Ireland where everyone had equal rights. The United Irishmen were formed in 1791 by a mixture of Presbyterians, Protestants and Catholics. This was the period of Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man,* and what was tolerated by the educated in the past was becoming increasingly untenable. The 1798 uprising was the last mass uprising involving Protestants and Catholics fighting against the British. It involved Catholic, Presbyterian, and Protestant clergy all fighting for the same outcome, the opportunity for Ireland to govern themselves, and for equality for all Irish. Heaney shows this unity in his poem 'Requiem for the Croppies' when he writes how 'the priest lay behind ditches with the tramp' (line 4). The treatment of Catholics by the British, taking away their rights to govern, to vote, to own property because of their religion, was not on theological grounds. This was not about religion as such, instead it had everything to do with politics and power, it suited the British agenda to push sectarianism in the pursuit of keeping Catholics down. Religion was the division between the poor and the ascendancy, it defined a person as poor or not. However, it was not just the loss of culture through the loss of their language that impacted the Irish, but also the mass emigration of Irish people as a direct consequence of the Great Famine of 1845. David Lloyd looks at the devastation caused by colonisation of Ireland by the English, pointing out that

> in the four decades preceding the eve of independence, close on two and a quarter million Irish people had emigrated. For the most part they did not leave for mere adventure and the promise of a new life; they left in order to survive the economic and cultural devastation that colonialism had inflicted; they had no obvious alternative. The Great Famine of 1845 was a significant contributor, not only to death of over a

> million people and the emigration of a further million, it was also the beginning of the end of the Irish language. (57)

Through his poem 'At a Potato Digging', Heaney looks at how the memory of the famine is strong and 'you can still smell the running sore' (line 50). The effects of the famine have left a mark on the Irish psyche, adding to other events in Irish history which are still being felt by the Irish in contemporary times.

After the Republic of Ireland gained independence from Britain, there was a strong move in the south, pushed by the Catholic church, towards continuing the separation of Protestants and Catholics. According to David Butler and Joseph Ruane, after Ireland gained independence in the south,

> the Catholic Church's ne temere decree [Catholics were not allowed to marry non-Catholics unless they received special dispensation from the church, and the non-Catholic converted to Catholicism] was given legal standing in law, no allowance was made for the British component of their identity and the Irish language was imposed on their schools though it was not part of their tradition. (73)

Not only were Catholics and Protestants not encouraged to marry, they played different sports; Catholics playing the Gaelic sports while Protestants played sports such as hockey and rugby. The move away from two distinct groups occurred from the 1960's onwards, to a now more inclusive culture where Protestants and Catholics see themselves as one culture, that being Irish. However, in the North, the division between the two religions has continued to grow.

History has come at a price to those who identify as Catholic Irish, and although the Republic now enjoys a more contented position as a nation in its own right, Northern Ireland cannot say the same. Ireland's conflicted past of colonisation which saw the Irish subjugated

by the English has gone on to produce a disaffected population in Northern Ireland, one which has seen atrocities performed by those on either side of the sectarian divide. Northern Ireland's division from the rest of Ireland has added to an already complicated relationship between the Protestant and Catholic population in the North. There appears to be no end to the hostilities which are still palpable, partly as a result of the partition of Ireland. Although the Good Friday agreement was signed in 1999, which saw a decommissioning of sectarian groups such as the IRA, and new self-government, tensions still remain beneath the surface, threatening to erupt at any time. However, the Troubles which had dominated Northern Ireland for nearly the entire second half of the twentieth century, was finally at an end, after the senseless deaths of hundreds.

Seamus Heaney grew up in Northern Ireland and was living in Belfast when the Troubles began. He experienced first-hand the atrocities which were occurring on both sides of the sectarian divide. Having already started writing poetry which was based on continuity of family and tradition, Heaney then began to write in response to the events of the Troubles. As a result, his poems became analogies for what was occurring during that time, and he draws conclusions as to why they were happening. Heaney explores the concept that the colonisation of Ireland had a profound effect on the Irish, one which had left an ineffaceable mark on the memory of the Irish nation. Within his poetry, Heaney both acknowledges and questions the murderous activities of those who are from the same religion as him, as well as those from the opposing side.

It is within the context of the Troubles that I have researched Seamus Heaney's poems. I have chosen some of his earlier poems in his collections, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1969), *Wintering Out* (1972), and *North (*1975), which deal with significant events in the history of Ireland, as well as connecting with Bog Bodies, to highlight Heaney's insights into the effects of colonisation on Ireland. In addition to these

poems, I have also analysed one of his elegiac style poems from *Field Work* (1979), which explores the violence and killings of the Troubles, in this case, the murder of his cousin, Colum McCartney. These are just a selection of poems in which Heaney pursues the concept that colonisation has ultimately been responsible for the atrocities which were occurring at the time of writing.

Heaney was born in 1939, the eldest of nine children and grew up in County Derry, Northern Ireland. Anahorish School, which he attended for primary schooling, was run by the Catholic Church; however, it was still attended by the local Protestant families. They were aware of the differences between the religions but for the most part, got on with each other, religion not being a means for hostility. Heaney grew up in a very traditional rural household which would have been the typical rural lifestyle at the time. Life was based on the rhythm of the seasons, a continuous cycle of ploughing, sowing, harvesting. Religion would have played an important part of his life and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) would have been not only for sports such as hurling, camogie, football (Gaelic), and handball but also a social outlet where Catholics would have come together. The GAA was for Catholics, and Protestants would not have been members. This segregation would have kept the two religious groups separate regardless of whether there was any animosity between them or not.

Heaney's family had friendships with Protestant families which went back for generations. They were never seen as being lesser than their Protestant neighbours, but this could have been due to the fact that they were land owners with similar size land ownership; this would have put them on an equal footing. There also appeared to be less sectarianism in the countryside in comparison to the towns, where the inequality was more pronounced. However, Heaney was aware when he was growing up of the differences between himself as a Catholic, and the children who were Protestant. There were the chants and rhymes, some sectarian, which they would sing to each other, which he describes as 'roadside rhymes' in

Preoccupations. One such chant was 'Up the ladder and down the short rope / To hell with King Billy and God bless the Pope' which was answered with 'Splitter splatter holy water / Scatter the Paypishes every one / If that won't do / We'll cut them in two / And give them a touch of the / Red, white and blue' (25).

Heaney speaks of his childhood as an idyllic country life, one where 'hawthorn blooms and the soft, white patens of the elder-flower hang dolorous in the hedges', however, 'the rattle of Orange drums from Aughrim Hill sets the heart alert and watchful as a hare' (20). In addition to childhood rhymes, religion set the community into unseen divisions which Heaney explains that 'if this was the country of community, it was also the realm of division' (20), and this can be seen in the boundaries and place names, some being Irish, others English or Scottish, and some a mixture. Heaney's mother came from an urban upbringing and would have had more sympathy for the nationalist cause than his father. After Anahorish school, Heaney was sent to board at St Columb's for his secondary schooling before heading to Queen's University, Belfast to complete his degree in English. When asked by Dennis O'Driscoll if he was ever tempted as a young nationalist poet to head in the direction of the 'assonances of Gaelic' over the Anglo-Saxon alliteration, Heaney explains that there were two reasons as to why he chose English. Firstly, there were very few Gaelic texts in Londonderry for him to be influenced by when he was young, and secondly, he explains that the 'writing current has to flow in your limbs and joints and the linguistic experiences that threw my switches were in English' (O'Driscoll 41). When asked why he did not go to Trinity College in the South, he explained that at the time Dublin just was not even considered, and it was a time when Catholics were banned by the Catholic church from going to Trinity, although this was not the reason he did not attend (O'Driscoll 42).

Heaney's second cousin, Colum McCartney, was shot dead by Loyalist paramilitaries in County Armagh in a random killing as he drove home from a GAA semi-final match in

Croke park, Dublin in August 1975. The paramilitaries had set up a false road block, pretending to be the Ulster Defence Regiment, in the same way as the loyalist paramilitary group, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) had done in July of that year when they murdered members of the Miami Show Band. Heaney recalled, 'He was a guy—just a decent, invisible life—and suddenly he was no more' (Russell 92). He eulogises him in the poem 'The Strand at Lough Beg' in his collection of poems *Fieldwork.* He also had a good friend killed in a bombing of a pub; Louis O'Neill, whom he writes about in the poem 'Casualty', was killed when the pub he was drinking in was blown up during curfew imposed by the IRA in response to the Bloody Sunday massacre. Initially it was thought to have been the work of the IRA; however, in recent years it has been shown that it was more likely to have been a UVF operation. Another friend Sean Armstrong, who he went to Queen's University with, was a social worker and was shot dead on the landing of his flat in Belfast. Heaney wrote the poem 'A Postcard from North Antrim' in memory of Armstrong.

Growing up in Northern Ireland saw Heaney connected through community to those who were perpetrating the atrocities of the Troubles. His neighbour's son was Francis Hughes, the second H-Block hunger striker to die. In 1981, from May until October, twenty three IRA members who were imprisoned in Maze Prison, Belfast, went on hunger strike. Of these men, ten died; Hughes was the second to die. According to Heaney, 'although he was a neighbour's child, he was also a hitman, and his Protestant neighbours would have seen him as being involved in something like a war of genocide against them, rather than a war of liberation against the forces of the crown' (O'Driscoll 260). At that stage, Heaney was not taken with the self-image of the IRA as liberators, but neither was he keen on Thatcher's simplistic 'A crime, is a crime is a crime. It is not political' stance (O'Driscoll 260).

Heaney found life was very different when he went to Berkeley University in the United States to teach English in 1970. In *Stepping Stones,* he tells Dennis O'Driscoll that he

'was taller and freer in myself at the end of the year than at the beginning' (137), which suggests he saw Belfast in a new light upon return. He explains that 'Belfast in the seventies was a pretty unpleasant place to be. But then, it had never been altogether beloved. It had been familiar, yes, but the Berkeley experience meant that I was seeing it- and the university- with new eyes. What Derek Mahon calls 'a perverse pride in being on the side / Of the fallen angels and refusing to get up'- that pride in the down-beat that eventually downgrades began to get to me' (148). It wasn't until he moved to County Wicklow in the Republic that he really started to write about the political situation in the North. Before that time, Heaney's poems were more concerned with the continuity of culture and traditions with poems such as 'Digging', 'Blackberry-Picking', 'Churning Day', and 'Ancestral Photograph'. These poems looked at the continuous rural culture of Ireland, one in which he had grown up. However, the events of the nineteen sixties and seventies, from the civil rights marches through to the events and atrocities of the Troubles, saw him move permanently to the Republic, and it is here that he wrote as a fulltime poet. The republic was not immune from the violence either, with the bombings of Dublin and Monaghan on the 17 May 1974 which killed 33 people and wounded hundreds more. The UVF claimed responsibility for the bombings in 1993, nearly twenty years after the attacks happened. There is suggestion that the British security services had aided the paramilitaries in the bombings. Whoever the perpetrators were, there was by that stage, a definite hardening in opinion towards the IRA and their activities, and both sides of the border were growing weary of the events of the Troubles.

Heaney's poetry flourished in the Republic, and it was from here that he wrote his poems regarding the events of the Troubles. Criticism of his poetry came from two sides, one which suggested he appeared to condone the violence, and the other which argued that he did not write enough about them. However, of those poems that he did write, it is obvious to see that his genealogy and his upbringing in the North, all had an impact on him in regard to his

writing. It is this impact and how Heaney wrote about the situation of the Troubles that will be part of the focus in this thesis.

Chapter One

Post-Colonialism: The Chance for an Authentic Telling of Irish History

Postcolonial studies of Ireland are often debated, with some suggesting that Ireland was not a colony and therefore post-colonial studies are irrelevant to the Irish debate, while others argue that the conditions in which the native communities were treated, in terms of 'subaltern' positioning would suggest otherwise. Richard Pine argues that 'the three elements of colonial rule, two of which are clearly associated, are: the acquisition of territory; its economic exploitation; and the civilising of the natives' (7). On this basis, the history of the Irish as a native people would suggest that they were indeed colonised, therefore, post-colonial studies are relevant. Postcolonial writing helps to address the imbalance of the colonial telling of the colonised history. Too often, the history of a colonised nation is told by the coloniser, while the story of the indigenous population remains untold until decolonisation takes place. Writers such as William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, and James Joyce are all seen as post-colonial writers, all trying to shake off the identity given to them by the British and recreate an authentic Irish identity. Seamus Deane suggests that 'in the attempted discovery of its 'true' identity, a community often begins with the demolition of the false stereotypes within which it has been entrapped' (12).

Putting a timeline on the colonisation of Ireland is helpful in providing an understanding of how it has impacted on the Irish as a culture over the centuries. Clare Carroll suggests that 'the sixteenth century English conquest, which set in motion the complete transformation of the culture that the twelfth century Normans largely assimilated

to, is an important place to start a genealogy of postcolonialism' (63). This was when the Irish became second class citizens in their own country and saw a continuous reduction in their culture and traditions. According to Carroll, for Seathrun Ceitinn, the seventeenth century author of *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn,* '"language is the most important part of the culture"' (Lloyd, 79). The new English settlers were forbidden by law to marry into Gaelic families, speak the language, and in general, mix with the Irish. This saw the formation of two distinct social groups within Ireland, and these groups became distinguishable by their denominations - Catholic and Protestant. Catholicism was seen as the religion of the past, the poor, and the Gaelic order, while Protestantism was associated with the landed gentry, politically enabled, and upwardly mobile. This is what made the Irish a colonised culture: the loss of their land, their traditions, their language, and their political exclusion made them powerless in their own country.

The inequality which was visited upon the Catholic Irish is a major theme in Heaney's writing. Heaney wrote from the perspective of a Catholic living in Northern Ireland where inequality was still a part of the lives of Catholics. Where in the Republic of Ireland Catholics were now enjoying equality in all aspects of their lives, in the North the inequality which had existed before partition was just as prevalent afterwards. Heaney takes this inequality and allegorises it in his poetry showing how little has changed in the balance of equality for Catholics in Northern Ireland. The inequality which Catholics had endured for centuries still existed, just in a different form, and can be seen in the poem 'Requiem for the Croppies' when one of the Irish casualties, speaking from beyond the grave describes how outdone and inadequate the rebels were against the British military with lines such as 'Terraced thousands died / shaking scythes at cannon' (11). The scythe can be seen as an agrarian tool and has connotations of common people fighting with the tools which they had available to them while the British coloniser had a more sophisticated artillery. Those who

were fighting were mainly agrarian workers who would have had a very rudimentary selection of weapons to choose from. This suggests the British, with their heavy-duty weapons such as 'cannon' were prepared to put down the rebellion at all costs. In addition, it also points to modernity, which is a major part of colonial discourse. The coloniser is seen as bringing the native culture, which is portrayed as backward and barbarous, out of the past and turning it into a modern culture. The 'cannon' is representative of this modernity, whereas the 'natives' and their 'backwardness' are represented in their choice of agricultural tools for weapons

This hopelessness has been part of the history of the Catholic Irish for centuries as a result of colonisation and can be seen in the poem 'At a Potato Digging' which references the Irish Famine of 1845, an event in Irish history which is another part of the layers of the land, and one which is part of the collective memory. It is this hopelessness which is a result of British colonisation and has led to inequality for the native Catholic Irish. In addition to inequality, the scythe also has connotations of a people being cut down by the British with their superior weapons such as the cannon, just as a scythe is used to cut down wheat and barley. This links nicely with the reference to barley at the beginning when the speaker recounts how the pockets of their coats were 'full of barley' (1), and in the final line where he describes how 'in August the barley grew up out of the grave' (14). The description of the rebels fighting the British and their cannons with their scythes - the might of the British military compared to the insurgents and their rudimentary weapons is clear to see, showing exactly what the rebels were up against. Heaney shows the reader that although they were out-numbered and militarily out-muscled, they were willing to sacrifice their lives for the fight for freedom. Another connotation is military might versus a lesser force in the context of the Northern Ireland situation, also seen in the use of the words, 'scythe' and 'cannon'. Cannon is a reminder of the extremely violent water cannon used by the British military

forces and the RUC on the defenceless and peaceful civil rights protestors in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. The second civil rights march to take place, was in the city of Derry on 5th October 1968, and resulted in violence. McKettrick and McVea describe how 'the RUC spectacularly overreacted, using water cannon and batons on an obviously peaceful group of marchers' (41). This image of the military against the people mirrors the image of the rebels of 1798 with their simple weapons and the British military with their guns and cannons, and again in 1916 with the British military against the overwhelmed Irish rebels. However, it was not just the military inequality which existed in post-partition Northern Ireland, but also the inequality of civil liberties. Ronnie Munck describes how 'it was in the North's second city of Londonderry (Derry) where the perception of being second-class citizens was probably felt more by Catholics, because they were actually a majority there' (214). Housing and employment inequality became acute by the 1960s which resulted in Catholic resentment. Munck suggests that 'Catholic resentment was building inexorably in the 1960s to the extent that the civil rights explosion in a sense became inevitable' (214).

The theme of sacrifice for the land runs through many of Heaney's poems, including 'Punishment', 'Kinship', 'Tollund Man', and 'The Grauballe Man'. It also provides a powerful image of the inequality which was experienced by the Irish during the colonisation of Ireland by the British. While the British had the might of the British Army, and all of the finance to back it up, the Irish had very little backing. Their help from the French failed to materialise, with the French forces either being too small, landing in the wrong place, or at the wrong time (de Paor 220). This inequality reflects the conditions for the majority of Irish people, Catholics in particular, who were living in abject poverty and inequality due to the religion to which they belonged. Corcoran suggests that these details show the 'miseries of an actual history of hopelessness' (26). The native Irish history under the English is a

continuous story of inequality, poverty, and hopelessness, with very little reprieve for the majority.

In the poem 'The Grauballe Man' Heaney examines the theme of justice and inequality with the word 'scales' which provides connotations of justice and reminds the reader of the victims of the atrocities, questioning the lack of justice in their deaths. He is asking where the justice is for those 'hooded', 'slashed' and 'dumped' victims of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, at the hands of paramilitary groups. The theme of justice is also a reminder of the injustice and inequality which the Catholic Irish have suffered at the hands of their colonisers over the centuries. This 'justice' was also lacking in Northern Ireland during the Troubles when in 1970 the British military, who were originally brought in as peacekeepers, became more about force against Catholics. This force saw mass arrests and internment without trial for civil rights leaders, curfews on the Falls Road where house to house searches were conducted, and soldiers fired on people and houses without discrimination. According to David McKittrick and David McVea, in addition to the ransacking of houses where 'soldiers prised up floorboards', there were 'four deaths, all caused by the army: three men were shot dead by troops while a fourth was crushed by a military vehicle. None of those killed had any IRA or other extreme connections. The sense that the army was deployed against the general Catholic population was compounded when troops brought in two Unionist ministers to tour the area in armoured cars' (62).

Mapping was a way in which the colonisers of a country could cement their control of the colonised land. In Ireland, the British did this through the Ordinance Survey project of the nineteenth century. This saw Irish place names become anglicised, and validated versions of Irish place names which had been changed to suit the English tongue (Nash 457). Seamus Deane argues that 'the naming or renaming of a place, the naming or renaming of a race, a

region, a person, is, like all acts of primordial nomination, an act of possession' (18). Heaney discusses this in *Preoccupations* concerning his homeplace, Mossbawn, which has an apparent hybrid Scottish and English name as per the Ordinance Survey of the nineteenth century. However, he questions the name, as it was always pronounced 'Moss bann' in his family, with ban meaning white in Irish, and suggests that it could actually mean white moss, the white of bog cotton (Heaney 35). The poem 'Traditions' looks at the loss of the Irish language, and the hybridity of the name Mossbawn, when the speaker examines the name in terms of the 'furled / consonants of lowlanders / shuttling obstinately / between bawn and mossland (lines 21-24), and again in 'Belderg', the speaker talks of Mossbawn and the different variants on the name. Catherine Nash sums it up when she says that 'the names of places speak of complicated cultural geographies of language and location' (457), and indeed Mossbawn appears to have a very complicated past regarding its name.

Loss of language is a significant theme in postcolonial studies, and it is not only the loss of the native language that is the problem, but also the telling of the history of the indigenous people in the coloniser's tongue. The loss of the Irish language as a living language has been one of the most devastating effects of colonisation by the British. Anne McClintock argues that 'the lack of attention to indigenous accounts of history is a problem in Irish Studies. As a result, many historians and cultural critics do not read Irish sources, and this severely limits their understanding of native elites and peasantry. A disproportionate importance is given to the English language documents that often produce the cultural assumptions of the colonisers and distort those of the colonised' (Carroll 8). How can a history of a people be told if it is not the people telling it? There will never be an authentic account if it is told by someone else, especially if it is the coloniser who is doing the telling. Heaney addresses this loss of the Irish language in 'Ocean's Love to Ireland' as well as in 'Traditions', and according to Catherine Nash, 'in his place name poems, place names …

were elegies of cultural loss, especially loss of Irish as a spoken language' (463). The appropriation of place names gives legitimacy to the coloniser which would have been lessened by the continuation of the native language in a public sphere, such as a geographical area. Nash argues that 'the Gaelic language and the soil of Ireland were, it was argued, deep repositories of the native spirit. To lose the Gaelic language would be to lose the soul of the nation and, crucially, the 'natural' connection to the land that could only be experienced and articulated through the native tongue' (461).

In several of his poems, Heaney explores the issue of the loss of culture and language as a consequence of colonisation. In the poem 'Traditions', Heaney addresses this loss by using language to make it clear that English has forced out the Irish language, saying 'Our guttural muse / was bulled long ago / by the alliterative tradition' (1-3). The term 'alliterative' refers to the English language, which was common in Old English and derived from the Anglo-Saxon culture and had a revival after the Norman conquest of England in 1066 up until the late fifteenth century. Anglo-Saxon poetry was alliterative in form. It is also the poetic form used in *Beowulf*, which Heaney translated in 1999. It is English that is now the language of choice for the majority of Irish people, and Heaney himself writes in English and chose to study and teach it at tertiary level. In *Preoccupations,* he explains 'I speak and write in English, but do not altogether share the preoccupations and perspectives of an Englishman. I teach English literature, I publish in London, but the English tradition is not ultimately home. I live off another hump as well' (34). He is saying that although he is immersed in English, it does not make him English; instead he is 'other', that being Irish. Irish is a very guttural language, hence the use of the word in line one, while English is seen as alliterative, therefore, it is evident that Heaney is blaming the demise of the Irish language on the forced introduction of English. The term guttural is also seen in his poem 'The Guttural Muse' which Heaney wrote, for the 1979 issue of the New Yorker and can be found

in *Field Work*. Heaney's use of the word 'bulled', a term which means to move powerfully, suggests the Irish language has been violently pushed aside by the English language.

Heaney uses an ironic tone to extend the theme of English now being the spoken language, having been embedded into the Irish oral tradition during the plantations of Elizabethan times, obliterating the mother tongue, when he declares 'We are proud / of our Elizabethan English' (13-14), 'and some cherished archaisms / are correct Shakespearean' (19-20). This irony is a reminder of the outlawing of the Irish language by the Elizabethans and his tone suggests that it is expected that they should be pleased to be speaking English. The expectation that the Irish had to speak English saw a natural erosion in their own native language. However, this irony also extends to Heaney himself, who writes in English, not his native tongue. This is a dilemma of post-colonial writing in that those who write from a colonised viewpoint tend to do so in the language of their coloniser, not their own language. Heaney writes in English because he has learned in English, he is passionate about the language, and it is the best way to get his writing across to many, not limiting his work to only Irish speakers.

In the poem 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', Heaney uses sexual imagery through myth to explore the loss of Ireland's culture through England's colonisation when he describes '…Iambic drums / Of English beat the woods where her poets / sink like Onan…' (lines 22-24). The reference to Onan, who was killed by God in the Bible for disobeying God's wishes and ejaculating, which has been argued as being either coitus interruptus or masturbation, provides connotations of the Irish language as being made redundant by the invasion of the English. It also provides the image of how ineffectual the fight against the English was, all that it resulted in was more death and destruction, and eventually, the loss of the Irish language. The speaker laments of how 'the ruined maid complains in Irish' (19), but her language is no longer dominant, and instead it is English which is now predominant in

Ireland, Ireland's poets are quiet, they have disappeared. Eugene O'Brien explains that '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' (3). Connotations of a lost culture, and in particular, a loss of language in 'Ocean's Love to Ireland' provide Heaney with a platform to examine the effects which the colonisation of Ireland by the English have had on the Irish language. This impotence of the Irish language can be seen in some of his other poems, such as 'Belderg', and in 'Traditions', as seen earlier, where Heaney describes how 'our guttural muse / was bulled long ago / by the alliterative tradition' (1-3). According to O'Tuathaigh, 'the first decades of the nineteenth century reveal a complex bilingual society. It is estimated that Ireland in 1800 had a population of 2 million Irish speakers, 1.5 million Irish-English bilinguals, and 1.5 million English speakers' (43). However, the Great Famine of 1845-50 decimated Irish speaking in Ireland through death and emigration. The 1851 census showed that Irish speakers fell to 1.5 million, which was 25% of the population (O'Tuathaigh 43). Colonisation of Ireland has seen Ireland's language, and cultural identity, irrevocably changed. The Irish language has become second to English as the spoken and written word in Ireland as a direct result of colonisation. This is due to the banning of Irish being spoken in the past, as well as the language being perceived in the nineteenth century as being part of a past culture with associations of poverty and suffering. In Northern Ireland, it is now seen as the language of Nationalists, and it is rare for Loyalists to speak it, although there are moves towards a Gaelic language revival amongst a new generation of the Loyalist community. English has been the preferred language of the Nationalist movements from the United Irishmen through to the early twentieth century. The Irish language by the late eighteenth century was the preserve of the poor, while English was the language of the coloniser, and those aspiring for higher placement in society.

The colonialist concept of the civilised saving the savage is one which Heaney pursues in his poetry. In 'Traditions' he continues the Shakespearean theme by including the only Irish character in Shakespeare's plays - MacMorris, a character who is a typical English stereotype of an Irishman, who is described 'as going very bare / of learning / as wild as hares' (29-30). Connotations of a people who were backward and uneducated is evident in the term 'bare,' and the Irish were portrayed as being like animals, hares in this instance, which was a familiar rhetoric of the English during the Elizabethan era and beyond. Elizabethan political and social themes were well embedded in Shakespeare's work, and Heaney's inclusion of Shakespeare shows how the Irish were portrayed and have continued to be characterised by the English. He illustrates the typical imperialistic view, that of those they were colonising as being base, a lesser race, which was used by imperialist nations to justify their invasion of other countries in order to 'save' them. The English portrayed the Irish as being like animals, as being a lesser species to themselves. They saw the Irish as being incapable of ruling themselves and used this reasoning as an excuse to colonise them; however, it appears it was the English that the Irish needed saving from, and not themselves. The Irish were far from being uncivilised and uneducated, but the English needed it to appear that way in order to justify their colonisation of Ireland. The Gaelic culture was seen as being archaic and of the past, whereas the English culture was representative of modernity and industrialisation. It is this narrative which Heaney argues against in 'Traditions'. He is aware of the rich literary and oral traditions which are part of the Irish culture, and it is the inclusion of James Joyce which helps to rebut such rhetoric. The Elizabethan narrative was that modernity came from outside of the Gaelic culture, not within. Joe Cleary argues that 'The inception of Irish modernity is invariably associated with British dominance on the island and with the termination of the older Gaelic civilisation instigated by the 16th and 17th Century intrusions' (3). He suggests that this narrative sees that

> modernity is a gift of colonial or religious conquest mediated primarily through an expanding British state, rather than through any efforts by the pre-existing Gaelic society to modernise itself by its own exertions and on its own terms. Modernisation in such accounts is coterminous with the Anglicisation of the island: Gaelic culture by that same move is aligned with the medieval, with the pre-modern, the archaic and the maladapted; with all those things whose inevitable fate it was to be vanquished by modernity (3).

Heaney's reply to this idea that the Irish were wild, backward, and uncivilised is to give the final word to one of Ireland's most well-known literary figures, and a prominent post-colonial Ireland voice, James Joyce. After quoting Shakespeare's MacMorris, 'What ish my nation?' (32), Heaney introduces Bloom, a character in Joyce's highly acclaimed Ulysses, who replies 'Ireland…, I was born here. Ireland' (35-36). Heaney has been very clever here, by introducing Joyce into the poem he is showing that Ireland is not the backward race that it is portrayed as, but instead a people of well-known literary and creative ability. The British colonial image of the Irish as a barbarous and simple society is far from the reality of a people with a vibrant culture of bards, language and traditions, one which the Irish have strived to recover since the independence of Ireland. It is this image and its own image of itself as civilised saviour, which Heaney questions in many of his poems, he instead suggests that the violent act of invasion by England is closer to the truth. Anglo-Irish relations, instead of being a mutual coupling, were forced upon Ireland, leading to a loss of language and cultural identity, one which they are still struggling to retain in Northern Ireland.

Heaney explores the concept of a shared history, one that is not based on colonial discourse but is inclusive of the mixed heritage of Ireland. In the poem 'Funeral Rites' the reader is reminded of how sophisticated the Neolithic society in Ireland was by referencing 'the great chambers of Boyne' (line 41), an area of sophisticated stone tombs, rebuffing the

colonial discourse of the English regarding the 'Irish barbarian'. It is also a way of reclaiming the Boyne as a native Irish narrative, one which has been taken over by the Orange Order who reference it in terms of the battle of the Boyne; the Boyne existed as a place of importance to the Irish well before the battle of the Boyne took place. Further reference to the battle of the Boyne can be seen in the lines, 'to the muffled drumming / …imagining our slow triumph' (48, 53). Although this is regarding the multitude of cars which line the funeral cortege in solidarity for the dead and the cause, it is also a reminder of the Orange Order and their marching bands which parade every July in Northern Ireland. In addition to this, Thomas C. Foster suggests that the 'muffled drumming' has connotations of 'the drums of war and even…the sectarian drumming of Unionists commemorating the Battle of the Boyne each year' (61). By reclaiming the Boyne as something other than a symbol of Orange triumphalism, Heaney reclaims the Boyne for all Irish.

Heaney addresses colonisation through religion in the poem 'At a Potato Digging' where he implies that it is in part to blame for the suffering of Catholic Irish. Their religious affiliation with the Roman Catholic church sees them suffer, and in many instances die. In the poem, Heaney directly references death in parts one and two. Death is represented with phrases such as 'Fingers go dead in the cold' (21), 'Flint-white, purple. They lie scattered' (17), 'To be piled in pits; live skulls, blind-eyed' (29). These images provide connotations of death and people dead or dying along the roadsides, skeletal in appearance, and awaiting a mass grave which was very common in Ireland at the time of the 1845 famine. The white and purple are a reference to the Catholic religion, relating to the colour of the vestments worn by priests at different times in the liturgical calendar. Purple is associated with Lent and Advent and is worn at funerals as it symbolises penance and mourning. White is worn as a symbol of eternal life and is a reminder of Jesus' victory at Easter when he rose from the dead and defeated sin, death, sorrow, and darkness. These religious connotations are a

reminder of how religion has been a significant part of the continuous tensions in Ireland over the past 800 years. 'Of fear and homage to the famine god' (14), also references not only the 1845 famine but also the constant struggle which the Catholic Irish have been subjected to over the centuries of colonisation. These connotations of death link the present with the past and remind the reader of Ireland's not so distant past when people starved because of the policies of the British government. These policies saw families evicted from their homes because they couldn't pay their rents, it saw land confiscated if Catholics did not convert to Protestantism, and it saw people starving because of the exportation of food while a famine was raging on. References to the Catholic religion are scattered throughout the first half of the poem. He describes the pickers as 'Heads bow, trunks bend, hands fumble towards the black / mother. Processional stooping through the turf' (11-12). This conjures up images of religious ceremony and procession, where people kneel to statues and bow heads in prayer. Once again, connotations of religion reinforce the idea that religion plays a significant role in the continued tensions between loyalist and nationalist factions. Persecution on the grounds of religion is a large part of the history of the Irish and resulted in the deaths of approximately one million people, with a similar amount emigrating during the Great Famine in Ireland of 1845. It is also a reminder that Catholicism colonised Ireland too; before the fifth century AD it did not exist on the island, but once established, it dictated, as colonisers tend to, how people lived. As a consequence of their faith, Catholic Irish were treated as being an inconvenience to British plans of colonisation. They were being treated like the native Irish were treated by the Catholic church over the preceding centuries. This is a reminder that the use of religion to argue one's Irishness is flawed; Heaney is suggesting that all current religious denominations have been introduced to Ireland, making them all part of the Irish make-up.

Heaney continues the thread of religion in 'Funeral Rites' which begins with reference to the customary practices of an Irish funeral. Descriptive language such as 'dead relations' being 'layed out in tainted rooms / their eyelids glistening / their dough-white hands / shackled in rosary beads' (3-8) produce an image of a very typical scene of a traditional Catholic wake. The word 'shouldered' suggests that not only is the speaker lifting the coffin, but also shouldering the responsibility that comes with that job. 'Laid out / in tainted rooms' provides an image of the body being tended to as per tradition in the 'good room' ready for the wake, while words such as 'rosary beads' and 'crosses' have connotations of religion and confirm the Catholic link. This serene and very natural funereal scene is in deep contrast to part two of the poem, which references the troubles in Northern Ireland, using imagery such as 'each neighbourly murder' (34), and alludes to the funerals of murdered victims of sectarian violence. It is also a reference to religion being like a prison for people. The Catholic faith has for many seen persecution, hunger, and death, and now in Northern Ireland, it has categorised them into a separate group from Protestants which has led to discrimination in employment, education, and housing. It has also led to the ghettoisation of areas within Northern Ireland such as the Falls Road and Shankill Road in Belfast, and the Bogside and the Fountain in Derry. According to Neil Corcoran, unlike the other poems in *North*, where Heaney shows solidarity with his Northern Catholic roots, in 'Funeral Rites' he is implicitly distancing himself, and instead showing judgement when he describes his relations' hands 'shackled in rosary beads' (8) which makes religion a kind of enslavement (Corcoran 65). This idea of religious enslavement becomes apparent after Ireland gains independence from Britain. While the Irish gained independence from the British, they quickly became controlled by the restrictive governance of the Catholic church. Clare Carroll suggests that

> on the one hand, there is a past history of colonialism: conquest, famine, mass immigration. And the loss of the Irish language. On the other hand, there is a more recent history of postcolonialism: a civil war that extended in the exile or execution of recalcitrant revolutionaries; a Free State that imitated colonial institutions more than it lived up to the revolutionary ideals of 1916, and a state-sponsored Catholicism whose tragic abuse of power has in large measure meant the loss of the spiritual authority it once had as an outlawed church. (1)

What was once a spiritual comfort to the Irish, first became a liability in their freedom and ability to contribute to the political life of Ireland, and then later, post-colonisation, it became restrictive and almost tyrannical. The church was well embedded in the running of the new Republic of Ireland, and although this power has gradually eroded over the decades, they do still have a say in the running of some aspects of Irish life, such as education and hospitals. Heaney has been accused of writing from a Catholic perspective, and for allowing his religion to cloud his vision in terms of the events of the Troubles. He has quite rightly agreed that he does write from a Catholic perspective because that is, after all, what he is, a Catholic. Yet, in 'Funeral Rites' he is seen distancing himself, and instead, he appears to be pointing out how enslaved people are because of the religion.

Heaney uses sexual connotations to pursue the concept of colonisation of Ireland and furthers the concept of civility and the coloniser. In 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', 'Driving inland' relates to Ralegh's Elizabethan armies, which he commanded and arrived in Ireland to suppress the native population. Heaney appears to suggest that the incursion of the English into Ireland is very much like rape. Michael Parker argues that the poem 'debunks the myth of English 'civility' in its treatment of what is euphemistically termed Anglo-Irish 'relations' between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries, the periods of the 'wars of extermination' (Yeats)' (142). In other words, the image of England being the civilised

country which has invaded another country because its uncivilised and barbaric society needs saving is invalid in light of the violent colonisation which has resulted in a loss of culture. Heaney debunks any idea that the coming together of England and Ireland is some kind of mutual agreement; instead it has been forced on Ireland, similar to that of a rape. The act of rape is further suggested by the description of Ralegh who '…is water. He is ocean, lifting / Her farthingale like a scarf of weed lifting / In the front of a wave' (7-9), and much like the ocean, he is unstoppable. This not only references his invasion of Ireland but also his maritime achievements where he colonised other countries as well. It also describes England's unstoppable colonisation of Ireland, which in the Elizabethan period saw large areas of Ireland invaded and colonised by the English at the behest of Queen Elizabeth I. This was a time of the Protestant plantations of Ireland when Catholic Irish found their lands and their rights taken off them and given to English settlers.

In his poem 'Act of Union' sexual connotations are employed to show the impact of England's colonisation of Ireland and the legacy left after the partition of Northern Ireland from the rest of the island. Heaney explores the resulting conflict which has seen Protestant and Catholic pitted against each other, and sectarianism become a part of the way of life for those living in Northern Ireland. The idea of a fully united Ireland seems an impossibility as the ideologies of opposing sides appear to be poles apart, with memories embedded within each side which differ from the other side. In 'Act of Union' Heaney portrays Ireland as a pregnant woman, impregnated with Northern Ireland by the imperial male, the United Kingdom. He makes it clear that although Ireland, for the most part, is free from England, it is now dealing with the fall out of colonisation, and with a part of its island which, although still part of Britain, is now showing the effects of said colonisation, 'conceding your half-independent shore / within whose borders now my legacy / culminates inexorably' (lines 12-14). The legacy of the partition of Northern Ireland is the sectarian violence within, and the

term ‘culminates inexorably’ suggests something impossible to stop and reaching a peak. Heaney appears to be suggesting that the outcome of Britain’s colonisation is an uncontrollable violence. The resulting partition has given birth to an unhappy and unsatisfied offspring.

Heaney reminds the reader of England’s imperialism, with words such as ‘imperially’ and ‘colony’, in order to highlight England’s imperial history of invading other countries, and makes reference to both the Nationalistic and Loyalist resistance, ‘an obstinate fifth column’ (19), which is as a result of the parliamentary act of 1800 and also the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921, which saw six counties partitioned from the rest of Ireland and stay under British rule. Stephanie Alexander argues that Heaney ‘depicts Ireland as a femme fatale, capable of producing violent and rebellious off-spring (Northern Ireland and her young men)’ (221). This idea of a femme fatale works in well with the notion that Ireland seduces her young men to martyr themselves in the name of Republicanism. Nationalistic discourse encourages martyrdom through images of freedom, equality, and an Irish nation where all Irishmen are free from the yoke of Britain. It is this discourse which encourages these young men to sacrifice themselves for the freedom of their country and the creation of a united Irish nation. However, the idea that Ireland as a type of femme fatale comes from the broader belief of Ireland as being the Aisling, the passive female to England’s aggressive male; an idea which Heaney suggests ‘was based on a time of invasion, expropriation and defeat of the Gaelic order, so it became part of the cultural nationalist mindset and continued to have a more subliminal appeal for Northern nationalists’ (170). These offspring who are ready to martyr themselves for her and whose ‘heart is a wardrum’ (21) are the result of a violent merging of two nations. These two factions act as if they are fighting for everyone, yet the speaker suggests that their ‘stance is growing unilateral’ (20). Heaney appears to be saying that they do not act on behalf of everyone, and their actions are not condoned by the majority

of the population in the North. This fits in well with Heaney's critique of Irish nationalist activities which he describes in his poem 'Kinship', 'how we slaughter / for the common good/ and shave the heads of the notorious', one which he was criticised for as it was perceived as condoning the violence and atrocities. However, it seems more to the point that he was questioning the methods used to achieve their objectives as well as their reasoning that they are doing it on behalf of all.

Northern Ireland, which is a consequence of Britain's colonisation of Ireland and subsequent partition, is represented as 'parasitical' and sits alongside the seductress. The land as seductress is getting life from another too, those who have given their lives for it, it also is parasitical. The land in the context of a nation needs these young men for support in order to become a single nation once again, breaking down the partitioned boundaries of the British Empire. The nationalist idea of martyrdom for the land is visible in 'Requiem for the Croppies' where 'Terraced thousands died' (11), their martyrdom feeds the nationalistic ideology, and as an extension, it feeds the land. The term 'pain' has connotations of childbirth, the result of the union, which is Northern Ireland. The word 'cocked', has connotations of a gun ready to be fired by young men with their 'ignorant little fists' (23) who the speaker describes that they 'beat at your borders and I know they're cocked / at me across the water' (23-25). There is a real sense of anger; this offspring is showing its rage at both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The 'fifth column' has turned on England and the Republic of Ireland and is 'mustering force' (22), suggesting it is gathering in size and determined to fight them. The product of this Act, and England's imperialism is Northern Ireland, and its anger is directed at both the United Kingdom and Ireland. Seamus Dunne suggests that

> the major communities in the North, Protestant and Catholic, unionist and nationalist, are compelled by the force of circumstances… to rehearse positions from which there

> is no exit. Both communities have felt in the past and now do feel that the principles to which they are loyal are in grievous danger of being betrayed (or have already been betrayed) by those governments, in London and Dublin, who were ostensibly their custodians. (15)

Both sectarian groups feel like they have been betrayed by both the partition of Ireland in 1921 and the subsequent 'Good Friday Agreement' of 1998; for the Unionists it means they have to power share with 'the enemy', and for the Nationalists they have had their country split which does not give them the true independence from Britain which they desire.

The idea of Heaney as a post-colonial writer is complicated, because he was born in a part of Ireland which was still under British rule, and the British presence was very apparent when he was writing during the Troubles. However, it was when he moved to the Republic which was in a post-colonial position, that Heaney wrote most of his poems which could be categorised as post-colonial. Heaney's objective was to understand the impact of colonialism on the Irish, and how it was a significant factor in the Troubles of Northern Ireland. However, it was not only the impact on the Troubles, but also how the Irish language and traditions had declined as a result. What was important, was that he was writing from an Irish perspective, providing the reader with a more authentic narrative than if written by a British person.

Chapter Two

Hybridity: The Irish as an Evolving Culture

Cultural hybridity is a theme which Heaney explores in several of his poems such as 'Belderg', 'Traditions' and 'Bog Queen', with each poem showing how it has manifested in the Irish culture from the continuous invasions over the centuries. The concept of a 'pure culture' of Irish people can be dispelled from the time that the Celts came to Ireland around 500 BC; they were the first to merge with the existing race of people who lived in Ireland at the time. After the Celts came the Vikings, who added their traditions and genetics to the mix, followed by the Anglo-Normans, English and Scottish. The idea of the Irish being a hybrid culture nullifies the notion of tribal violence and this hatred between religions. After all, if they are all of the same make up, then they are ultimately fighting themselves. Their fight against 'the enemy' becomes pointless as in the end they are really just fighting their own.

Douglas Hyde, who was the first President of Ireland from 1938 until 1945, is an excellent example of the hybridity of the Irish culture and is representative of the theme of hybridity which Heaney promotes in a number of his poems. Hyde was the founder of the Gaelic League which was formed to promote all things Irish. He was also a Protestant, his father being a Church of Ireland rector. He is an excellent example of how inclusive many Protestants were in the Irish nation, how they too saw themselves, and still see themselves, as Irish. His idea of a nation was not something which could be made by a legislative act but instead what was within, what a person was born into. One profound quotation provides an

understanding of how people within Ireland saw themselves concerning their identity. Hyde declared that

> a nation has never been made by Act of Parliament. A nation is made from the inside itself, it is made, first of all, by its language, if it has one, by its music, songs, games, customs. So, while not forgetting what is best in what other countries have to offer us, we desire to especially emphasise what we have derived from our Gaelic ancestors. (Pine 18)

This sums up Heaney's musings on the hybridity of culture, which he suggests not only stems from the Gaelic but also all who identify with it.

The concept of the hybridity of the Irish culture sits nicely within post-colonial writing, and Heaney explores it from different angles, including place names and bog bodies. Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes suggest that

> from the point of view of the coloniser, the damage with any programme of assimilation which ultimately might result in sexual unions amongst peoples from different cultural backgrounds was that the resulting offspring of any such union might eventually outnumber the colonisers and subsequently 'contaminate' not only their cultural legacy but the genetic stock itself. (3)

This contamination indeed appears to be part of the reason that the statute of Kilkenny came about in the fourteenth century when the rules forbade the settlers from marrying into Gaelic society, speaking the language or wearing the Gaelic costume; this was to combat the already hybrid community which was forming at the time. According to Carroll, 'Anglo-Normans or Old English intermarried with the Irish and adopted their customs and language. A new hybrid culture arose in which Norman feudalism coexisted with and was sometimes merged with Gaelic political and economic structures' (69). By the time the Elizabethan plantations

were taking place, this same assimilation was forbidden in order for the English to stay in a robust governing position. Intermarriage and interbreeding would put this control of Ireland at risk, as the Irish were bereft of rights such as land owning, governance and voting. However, by the eighteenth century, it was not just the Catholic Irish who felt as if they had no rights to govern themselves as a nation; a good number of Protestant Irish felt the same.

Taking a closer look at the make-up of those who fought in the 1798 uprising, particularly the leaders of the Society of United Irishmen, a large number would have been Protestant Irish. These men fought for an Ireland in which everyone was equal and had the same rights as the next regardless of their religion. They believed in Catholics having the same rights as Protestants, in particular, political rights and the ability to vote. Hybridity is seen in the place name of Heaney's homeplace 'Mossbawn', a name with possible multiple linguistic origins, from Viking, Irish, Scottish, and English. Heaney's homeplace has a name which is a hybrid of different cultures. However, this hybridity goes against the argument of a 'pure Irish' race, of one distinct racial group on the island of Ireland fighting another distinct racial group. Nash argues that

> the idea of a pre-colonial purity defines all other cultural influences as alien and corrupting. From this perspective, despite the diverse influences on the toponomy of Ireland from Celtic, Norse, Norman, Scots and English settlers, place names can only be Irish, true and pure, or foreign, false, and corrupt. (465)

It was not until Catholicism became an outmoded form of religion in England in the 16th Century that the new colonisers assimilated less and became the landlords, and religion became a wedge between the planters and the natives. Being Catholic saw people persecuted, and for those Irish landlords who did not convert to Protestantism, as a consequence, their land would be confiscated. The Catholic church had a strong hold over people, and Catholics

were not allowed to marry non-Catholics unless the other converted to Catholicism. Catholicism, which should have been a sanctuary for people to turn, became like a millstone around their necks. The Catholic church in Rome, for its part, did very little to ease the troubles of the Irish, instead it distanced itself as much as possible from the Irish struggle. Many Catholics who fought in both the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War were threatened with excommunication if they did not give up their fight. The church would have had a good idea of what was going on in Ireland, of how Catholics were suffering at the hands of the English, with many of them dying, but the Catholic church was reluctant to interfere as it did not suit their power play. In his poem 'At a Potato Digging', Heaney explores the role of religion in the suffering of the Catholic Irish in relation to the Great Famine of 1845; suggesting religion is a key component in the suffering of the Catholic Irish.

After independence was gained, there was a chance for Ireland to re-establish itself as a religiously tolerant nation, one where religion did not have the stranglehold over the people which it had had for centuries. However, this was not the outcome; instead, the Catholic Church became extremely entrenched in the governance of the Republic of Ireland, while it was all about Protestants in Northern Ireland. The chance for all who lived in Ireland to live together as one culture was not taken up, and the hybrid culture of Ireland remained as separate groups. The Catholic population in the republic, while finally having independence from England, had swapped the restrictive English regime with a restrictive Catholic one, which permeated through all sectors of Irish society, and had a strong influence on political affairs. The Catholics in the north had to deal with a Protestant majority which saw them face discrimination in all aspects of life such as education, housing, and political representation. Religion became like a millstone around the necks of the Irish on both sides of the border, instead of the comfort it should have been. The continual cycle of misery, far from disappearing, had continued but in another guise. This failure to dismiss others from being

the same culture because of their chosen religion is to ignore the hybridity which exists in Ireland, and it is a lost opportunity in the pursuit of peace. This concept was not lost on Heaney.

Heaney pursues the idea that the Irish are made up of more than just one culture; instead the Irish are the result of cultures which over the centuries have added to what is considered Irish today. It is not religion which defines what it is to be Irish, but instead, it is the mix of people who have come together over time. As can be seen in the concept of identity, in the poem 'Traditions', Joyce's character Bloom was Jewish yet identified as Irish for the simple reason that he was born in Ireland. He did not identify with being Jewish or any other nationality, simply as the nationality of the land of his birthplace. Heaney appears to be saying, that if you are born in Ireland, then you are Irish, not some other nationality from outside of the country, as those Loyalists who identify with being British do, and nor does your religion define your nationality. In his interview with Dennis O'Driscoll, he explains 'that it seems to cut through a lot of the identity crisis stuff that surrounded us [Northern Ireland] in the early seventies' (143). The Troubles, which Heaney lived through, was a time when the concept of two separate cultures in Northern Ireland was prominent; it came down to religion and not shared origins.

In the poem 'Belderg', Heaney pursues the idea of the Irish as a hybrid culture by using the Ceide Fields in County Mayo as a metaphor for the layers within the Irish culture. The Ceide fields in which the poem is set is an area rich in stone age tombs and settlements, and it stretches over a vast area, with only a small part having been excavated by archaeologists. This is an area which is barren, stony and mainly bogland, and where subsistence would have been harsh. The poem describes a people who through 'persistence / a congruence of lives / how, stubbed and cleared of stones / … accrued growth rings / of iron, flint, and bronze' (lines 21-25). Through their persistence, the layers of civilisation built up

in the area, each leaving their mark. It is the persistence of various cultures to mix which has created the hybrid culture that is the Irish culture of today.

This persistence and congruence also point to tribal violence, which has persisted into the present time. Violence has been an ongoing occurrence in Ireland for centuries, both inter and intra tribal, and it has continued in the north of Ireland in the form of the Troubles. Michael Parker argues that the 'imprint of the Vikings persists in the Irish language and the landscape and that despite one thousand years going by, a congruence exists between the Vikings' lives of tribal violence and the present day' (129). The poem's description of the bog's layers, where he describes how he 'stripped off blanket bog / the soft-piled centuries / fell open like a glib' (9-11), present the bog as being like a book, with each layer telling a different history. Once again, Heaney looks at how each layer of colonisation has left a mark on the Irish in more ways than just an imperialistic one. Not only have these layers meant a loss of their language, as seen in 'Traditions', where the native Irish language has been supplanted by English, just like many of the Irish traditions such as the hanging of the St Brigid's Cross in houses and out-houses, but it has also seen a hybrid culture develop. Those cultures who have come into Ireland have brought with them, their own traditions and ways, and they have melded with the native Irish traditions to create the Irish culture. However, this layering has also seen the Catholic Irish suffer, as can be seen in 'At a Potato Digging' which references the Great Famine of 1845, a time when around one million Irish people died from starvation, and a similar number emigrated. This was as a direct consequence of the colonisation and government by Britain.

The theme of the Irish being a hybrid culture is noted in the poem 'Bog Queen' with references to the Vikings in the use of words such as 'Baltic amber', and 'Phoenician stitchwork' which suggests a people who travelled far and were colonisers. The word 'fjords' brings the reader to Scandinavia, while 'glacier' also reminds the reader of Scandinavia, but it

is also similar to the bog, except it is made up of layers of snow instead of vegetation. While 'hoard' is reminiscent of the Vikings and their spoils of invasion, it can also mean to store something, just like the bog stores the memory of the land. These words also suggest a person of Viking origin, and remind the reader that the body is from a race whose violence is legendary, but who also colonised countries, Ireland included. It was the Vikings who created settlements in Ireland which became towns for trading, such as Dublin, Wexford, Limerick, and Waterford, and introduced many aspects of their culture to Irish society, including an Irish currency. Both 'Baltic amber' and 'Phoenician stitchwork / retted on my breasts' (lines 31-32) provide an image of someone who comes from a civilisation which has travelled and traded and colonised far and wide. In this, the Vikings become a mixed metaphor; on the one hand, they represent the English in the sense that they invaded Ireland and colonised it. While on the other hand, they represent the Irish who have evolved over the centuries through the inclusion of many different races. Although their initial invasions were as raiding expeditions, eventually Ireland was seen as a country that the Vikings could colonise and rule, just as the Anglo-Normans saw it. However, instead of colonising Ireland, they integrated with the Irish, forming political alliances and marriages. Donald Logan argues that 'the true history of Ireland in the tenth century was not a struggle of Irish against the Vikings but an internal struggle among Irish kings for the overkingships…. Vikings had become additional chessmen used by the greater Irish kings in their attempts to establish wider political power' (51). They became a part of the Irish culture, unlike the English whose integration never fully happened, and they remained a separate race because of the distinction in religion from the native Irish. On the other hand, the Vikings represent a part of the Irish psyche in terms of the retribution and vengeance which has remained a part of the Irish culture through to contemporary times.

These layers have helped to shape the Irish of today, indicating that the Irish are made up of many different cultures. Looking at the different cultures who came to Ireland, many assimilated into Irish life by speaking the language, marrying into the Irish community, taking on the Catholic religion and eventually seeing themselves as Irish. Heaney points to the reality that the Irish are made up of many layers of cultures, and one group cannot lay claim to Irishness over another. This suggests that the 'tribes' of Ireland are much the same, coming from a mixed cultural background which makes the fight against each other redundant. In 'Kinship' Heaney looks at his own origins and genetic make-up, aware that he too comes from a mixed gene pool. It is a reminder that those who were killing each other during the Troubles were essentially the same, each having similar bloodlines. In the poem, the speaker declares 'I grew out of all this / like a weeping willow inclined to / the appetites of gravity' (lines 93-96). Heaney's origins are like those of the bog, he has grown away from the North, he lives in the Republic, but now addresses it and its political issues through his poetry. He too is made up of layers, just like the bog, through the layers of colonisation in Ireland, and the different cultures who have come to make up the Irish of today and he is aware that he is made up of these layers of cultures who have come and settled in Ireland.

Heaney is aware of the complex make-up of the Irish as a result of colonisation. He pursues the notion of hybridity as a way of understanding how one group of people commit atrocious acts against another even though they have similar origins. In 'Kinship' he brings himself back through time to 'origins', likening it to 'a dog turning / its memories of wilderness /on the kitchen mat' (6-8). The dog, although domesticated, still remembers a time when it was free, and not under somebody's control. This implies that Heaney is reminded of an earlier time, which like the dog, saw a people who were free and not subject to colonialism, just like the dog who was once upon a time free to roam the wilderness, before domestication. It also has connotations which indicate that those who were there

from the beginning are different from the present Irish just as the domesticated dog has changed. The Irish have changed over time, as a consequence of the continuous colonisation by various cultures over the centuries. These changes can be seen in their genetics; the Vikings brought them red hair, the English their language. Colonisation also took their freedom, denying them the right to govern themselves and seeing many emigrate to other countries. Those that fight each other for sectarian reasons are more the same than they would admit or perhaps even realise. His reference to Tacitus reminds the reader that this has been ongoing for many hundreds of years, that these problems were noted by the Romans, and Ireland has rarely been at peace. He suggests that 'this island of the ocean / where nothing will suffice' (133-135) is still struggling to find satisfaction in its position in the world in terms of its partitioned tenure. The idea that 'nothing will suffice' suggests that the solution of a united Ireland will not make everyone happy either: the Nationalists will be satisfied, but those loyal to Britain will not be. It seems like there will never be a contented Ireland, one sector will always be unhappy. Looking at Ireland's history, there have been centuries of conflict, including a time before colonisation, when tribes fought each other over territory.

Although Heaney promotes the Irish culture as being a hybrid of different cultures layered on top of the native Irish, he also pursues the theory that the native Irish has endured regardless. There are still many aspects of the Irish culture which have survived to the present time which were in existence long before any invasions took place in Ireland. As in his bog poems, in 'Belderg' Heaney references the Vikings, initially questioning his homeplace and the origins of its name, 'He crossed my home's music / With older strains of Norse' (28-29). He questions the word 'moss', a name of Scandinavian origin, meaning moss and bog. Heaney references the Viking myth of 'Yggdrasill' when the speaker of the poem describes 'A world-tree of ancient stones' (43), suggesting that the bog is the centre of

civilisation, the centre of the Irish way of life and a place which sustains life. Yggdrasill is the old Norse myth of the 'world tree', which was a great Ash tree at the centre of the universe. The world tree is found in different guises in many different religions, including Christianity, and relates to the Heavens with their Gods, the Underworld, and Life in between. Virtually all religions have similar strands of belief, yet the view remains amongst them that they each see their own as being more superior than the other. Thomas C. Foster suggests that this sustaining tree, which in Viking culture sustains life, in *North* is less a tree of life than of death, persistence and congruity growing out of the eternal repetition of violence within the community (60). As in his other poems such as 'Punishment' and 'Funeral Rites' Heaney pursues the idea of Ireland's long history of continual conflict and violence. He suggests that this violence is not only a continuous historical action but also a continuous part of the psyche of the Irish culture. Fred Miller Robinson suggests that Heaney does not envision 'Belderg' as a 'unity of culture but instead diversity, not a regressive mythology of origins but a progressive history of difference' (34). However, although it provides a picture of difference in terms of Ireland's fraught history of colonisation, it also shows how this history has produced a hybrid culture in return.

These diverse layers can be seen in the archaeology of the area where 'there were the first plough-marks / the stone-age fields / the tomb' (12-13), suggesting that this area has a rich history of agriculture and tradition, with 'its stone-wall patterning / repeated before our eyes / in the stone walls of Mayo'; these ancient methods are still in use in the present day. It is suggestive of a civilised culture, the native Irish, which existed before any layers of colonisation began. Although Heaney points to the overlapping of cultures, he also advances the idea that the origins of the Irish are still present today and can be seen in the form of stone walls which are still in use. These connotations of persistence of a native people which have been added to by additional cultures like 'Querns piled like vertebrae' (44), and the weight of

these cultures sees them like ‘marrow crushed to grounds’ (45), reminds the reader that the culture persists in some things regardless of the incoming cultures.

In his poetry, Heaney addresses the addition of new cultures within the layers of the bog, each culture adding to the Irish landscape, language, and culture. This is a theme which is seen in his bog poems in *North,* including in the poem ‘Bone Dreams’, where Heaney includes phrases such as ‘Elizabethan canopies / Norman devices / the erotic mayflowers of Provence / and the ivied Latins of churchmen’ (lines 23-28). Heaney suggests this change in Irish culture in Belderg where ‘its foundation / Was mutable as sound’ (30-31) with the term mutable suggesting it was liable to change. The foundation of what it is to be Irish has changed over time, and each new culture to colonise and invade Ireland has left its own mark, intertwining with the indigenous culture to create the Irish as they are in the present. Fred Miller Robinson concludes that ‘at the root of the much-invaded island is a continuity formed by difference. Heaney makes clear that this is what we want to imagine, but the evidence is accumulating that the vision has substance’ (37). This difference has in some part melded seamlessly into the foundation, yet some has been forced on it. The Irish are a mixture of cultures, and this can be seen in their language, which due to the outlawing of Irish Gaeilge in the nineteenth century, English is now their chosen mode of communication. It can also be seen in their genetic make-up, and in their appearance with many having characteristics of different origins, and their cultures and traditions, some which have been sustained from a time before invasion and some which have come from other cultures.

Heaney pursues the theme of endurance of culture in the poem ‘The Grauballe Man’ in which the inclusion of the ‘Dying Gaul’ is a reminder of the devastation that colonisation has had on Ireland, and how it has contributed to the deaths of many during the Troubles of Northern Ireland. The Dying Gaul is a Roman statue based on an earlier Greek sculpture, of a Celtic Warrior who is dying after being defeated by the Romans. It has connotations of a

culture which has been defeated by another, just as the Irish were colonised and conquered by the English. It could also be seen as another layer in the make-up of the Irish, one which in many ways has endured in the Irish culture. The Celts were invaders too, but their culture has survived within the Irish culture, and it is what the Irish culture is seen as being rooted in. The native Irish as a culture have endured through centuries of invasions and colonisation to emerge with a large part of their culture intact; it is this endurance which has seen them survive a history of injustice and misery. However, there is another characteristic which has endured through the centuries, that of vengeance and retribution, a trait which can be traced back to the Vikings, and which can be seen in the continued tensions between Protestant/Unionist and Catholic/Nationalist.

Heaney explores the subject of the culture of violence and retribution which has endured in Ireland for the past millennium by employing the theme of hybridity and Irish culture in his poetry. He focuses on the Viking culture, suggesting that their culture has endured within the Irish psyche and is being replicated centuries later in the Troubles in Northern Ireland. In the poem 'Funeral Rites' Heaney the turns to the Boyne, a place of significant importance to Irish history to examine this violence and retribution. Initially, he suggests the hybridity of the Irish culture with reference to Neolithic, Catholic, Protestant, and finally Viking cultures when the speaker declares how he '…would restore / the great chambers of Boyne / prepare a sepulchre / under the cup marked stones' (40-43). This history is two-fold, for not only did the Battle of the Boyne, in which Protestant William of Orange defeated Catholic James II, take place here in 1690, but it was also an area of Neolithic civilisation, of huge tombs, pagan religion, and sophisticated communities. This layered history hints at the hybridity of the Irish culture, Neolithic, Viking, Catholic, Protestant, with each layer of culture built upon the other to form the Irish of today. It is also a reminder of the roots of the Irish culture, that of the Gaelic civilisation which was in

existence thousands of years before the Celts, who are referenced in the terms ‘cup-marked stones’, arrived. Fred Miller Robinson argues ‘that it is important that this ceremony, crossing as it does from the North to the Republic and allaying for a moment the endless feuding and cycles of revenge that mark the Troubles, takes place in one of the greatest monuments of the Neolithic past’ (36).

Heaney’s emphasis on hybridity is helpful in understanding the characteristics and traits of the Irish of today, and in particular those who are part of the continuous culture of violence and retribution. Heaney does this in the poem ‘Bog Queen’, about a Viking Queen who becomes one with Ireland through her burial, and who has associations with the Viking culture of violence and retribution. Heaney starts this poem by describing the body with words such as ‘diadem’ suggesting a crown and royalty, and ‘gemstones’ giving the impression that this body is not only a Viking but also a queen. ‘Phoenician stitchwork / retted on my breasts’ (31-32) suggests something which is melting into the bog, another collection to add to the memory of the bog, and another layer to add to the Irish identity. She, as a Viking, has added to the make-up, both genetically and culturally, of the Irish. Her descendants both descend from the colonisers and are colonised themselves by the Anglo-Normans, and the English. Fred Miller Robinson argues that all who came to Ireland became Irish, and that ‘Ireland historically turned everyone who came there into Irishmen, not least the Normans and the Elizabethan plantation owners from whose settlements spring the present Troubles. Culture is essentially progressive’ (41). Heaney would appear to agree with this to a point as his bog poems addressed the idea of the layers of colonisation in Ireland. In his poems, he implies that the hybrid nature of the Irish means there is no group in Ireland that is more Irish than the other. Heaney describes the queen’s burial place as ‘between turf-face and demesne wall’. This appears to allude to the fact that the queen is a hybrid of the colonist and the colonised, with the Vikings initially colonising Ireland and

eventually assimilating into Ireland; she sits somewhere between the two cultures. It is also a reminder of Heaney's own roots, which he discusses in *Preoccupations,* how his childhood home of Mossbawn lies between the villages of Castledawson and Toome; he explains how he was 'placed between the marks of English influence and the lure of the native experience, between 'the demesne' and 'the bog' (35).

The queen is not only representative of the hybridity of the Irish culture, which is a consequence of colonisation, but also of the resentment of the Irish nationalists to the continual subjugation by the British. The bog queen resents the English Peer's wife for disturbing her, ripping her from her place of rest after the turf cutter had so carefully returned her to her resting place, which she describes him as being the one 'who veiled me again / and packed coomb softly / between the stone jambs at my head and feet' (44-47). Her resentment can be seen as a metaphor for the Irish resentment of the English. The peer's wife has given no thought to the sanctity of the grave, she has gone ahead and dug up the body with only her own interests at heart, much like the English who have helped themselves to Ireland with no regard for the Irish. However, the bog queen is an invader too, just as the English are. But the English have taken control of Ireland, whereas the bog queen has become one with it. Like the bog queen, the resentment of the Irish regarding the English is bubbling away beneath the surface, biding time to rise up. Heaney uses the bog queen as a metaphor for Irish resentment which, like the queen, is waiting beneath the surface, waiting to rise up. The bog queen is initially a coloniser but eventually becomes the colonised, and like all those layers of cultures who have colonised Ireland, she too has become one with the country. She has the experience of both coloniser and colonised.

The image of the invader is one that is continually evolving through history. Culture is ever-changing and what constitutes who the Irish are today will be very different in another couple of hundred years. As in 'Belderg', where the growth rings of the speaker's

home show the continuous layer of different cultures, Ireland's growth rings are continuous too.

Chapter Three

Identity: What Does It Mean to be Irish?

Heaney recognises that Irish identity is complex, that the very idea of Irishness is not a straight forward concept. As can be seen in the hybrid nature of the Irish, Ireland is made up of layers of cultures due to the many invasions over the centuries; therefore, it is not for Catholics to say they are the only true Irish when Catholicism proceeded Paganism, and as such, it can also be seen as foreign, it colonised the previous religion. The Vikings, while bringing with them new ways and customs, integrated into the Irish community by intermarrying and interacting politically. Many Anglo-Normans integrated into Irish society, spoke the language and assimilated into the culture. It wasn't until in Elizabethan times and later that they started to see themselves as a much more separate culture. A lot of this was down to the laws brought in after the Cromwellian campaign of 1649 to 1653, a time when many Catholic Irish landowners were stripped of their land because they had fought opposite Cromwell during his campaign. Meanwhile, others had to renounce their Catholic faith and convert to Protestantism to keep their lands. The seventeenth century royal edict saw restrictions on place-names, language and customs in order to preserve the cultural identity of the planted English.

The sense of identity is different in Northern Ireland between the two distinct religions -Protestants/Loyalists and Catholics Nationalists, and indeed it was different for the planters of sixteenth century Ireland in how they saw their identities. Joe Cleary suggests that 'for those who migrated into the country as colonial settlers in the early modern period, Ireland was and was not home; the very fact that the settlers referred to themselves as New-

English, Anglo-Irish or British implies an outlander mentality, which claims an allegiance to the centre but does so self-consciously from the frontiers of a radical otherness' (7). They did not identify as Irish, instead preferring to see themselves still as a separate culture to those who were there before them. This may have been due to the fact that to identify as British or English ensured rights and benefits afforded to those who were not seen as 'native'.

The Catholic Irish were stereotyped by the English as being barbarous and uncivilised, and in the nineteenth century they were portrayed as being animal like. This was typical behaviour of a colonial power, if the native population were made to look uncivilised and like savages, then it gave them a reason to colonise them so they could 'save' them by civilising them. This idea of the Irish as being barbarians before the nineteenth century saw the Victorians turning them into ape-like creatures by the Victorian era. Victorian caricatures portrayed the Irish as physiologically like apes, who were dangerous and ignorant. According to Louis Perry Curtis, there was a

> widespread belief in Victorian England that Englishmen and Irishmen were separated by clear-cut ethnic or racial…barriers. Intermittent rebellions and chronic agrarian unrest in Ireland, combined with the disorderly behaviour of some Irishmen in Britain seemed to confirm the notion that Irish Celts were a subrace of people with habits antithetically opposed…. Every abortive rebellion and every agrarian outrage helped to confirm the stereotype of Paddy as the ignorant and superstitious dupe of crafty leaders'. (21)

It is this reasoning which saw the Catholic Irish as being portrayed as something almost subhuman. Catherine Nash argues that 'a simple anti-colonial interpretive framework would characterise all settlers and their descendants after some indeterminate distant time as alien anomalies in a line of Gaelic history, with no claim to inclusion in the narratives of the

nation, except as invaders' (460). In other words, those of Protestant or planter ancestry would still be seen as non-Irish in the twenty first century; however, if those settler groups were to be asked what they identified as, then the answer would surely be 'Irish'. Heaney pursues this line of thought in his poem 'Traditions' in which the James Joyce's Jewish Bloom, in answer to the question 'What ish my nation?' (32) declares 'Ireland…/ I was born here. Ireland' (35-36). This challenges the concept that only one group which identifies as Irish because of their religion and ancestry can see themselves as Irish while Ireland as a nation has been made up of many different cultures.

Identity is deeply ingrained within the psyche, and this appears true in relation to the Irish. Terry Eagleton argues that 'nobody can live in perpetual deferment of their sense of selfhood, or free themselves from bondage without a strongly affirmative consciousness of who they are. Without such self-consciousness, one would not know what one lacked; and a subject that feels itself complete feels no need to revolt' (37). The Irish knew what they were and where they had come from, and their desire to get back that sense of identity and selfhood was strong enough to sacrifice themselves for it. The identity of the Irish has come from centuries of subjugation from a foreign invader, it has shaped them into the nation that they are today, and even though the language is a fraction of what it was a millennium ago, a strong cultural identity still exists. The exit of the British after the War of Independence, and the softening of the grip of the Catholic Church after the 1960s has seen an inclusive Ireland where those who live in the Republic identify as Irish. Regardless of their often fraught histories, both Protestant and Catholic Irish, through social and cultural integration, identify as Irish. Ian McBride suggests that 'our social frameworks-family, the community, the nation-are themselves constituted by memories, for how can we locate ourselves in relation to others without a sense of continuity based on common experiences? The relationship between memory and identity is always a two-way one, with ideas of the communal past

setting limits to the perceptions and aspirations of the current generation' (13). It is the memory of the shared history of the Irish which has helped to shape their identity and combined with a sense of belonging, and this is what Heaney was trying to portray in his poetry.

Language is a major component of the Irish identity, and, up until the Great Famine, Gaeilge (Irish) had been spoken by the majority of people living in Ireland. However, this was already in decline before the famine due to the formation by Britain in 1831 of the system of 'national school' education. The addition to the education system heralded the end of the indigenous Irish 'hedge schools' which as a consequence contributed to the subsequent diminishment of the Irish language which was at these schools; instead children learnt in English instead of Irish, and as a result, the Irish language was more or less extinguished (Pine, xx). By the time the Great Famine had devastated Ireland, the Irish language was seen as the language of the poor and equated to hunger and death; to have any chance in life, then English was the language to speak.

The question of identity and what it is to be Irish is examined by Heaney in several of his poems at a time when Northern Ireland was in the middle of an identity crisis as a result of the 'Troubles'. Heaney examines the concept of what it is to be Irish in the poem 'Requiem for the Croppies', remembering the history of 1798 when Irishmen fought alongside one another regardless of their religion. Through this poem, Heaney references the leader of the Wexford insurgents, Father Murphy, as 'the priest [who] lay behind ditches with the tramp' (4), and to the actual events of the uprising where the insurgents were, until their betrayal by a spy, successfully battling the British, by 'stampeding cattle into infantry' (8). The reader is under no illusions that the speaker is under attack, and not free in his own country, with the line 'We moved quick and sudden in our own country' (3). The 1798 rebellion was a time in Irish history when all who were fighting against the British fought as

one, from the peasant to the Catholic priest and the Protestant. Here was a collection of Irishmen who regardless of their religion, wanted Ireland governed by the Irish, not the British, and for all Irish people to be treated equally, despite their faith. They were all fighting for the same cause, there was no division based on religion and culture, they were fighting as Irish people, and this is made very clear by the speaker when he describes 'A people, hardly marching-on the hike' (5); they were a people, they were fighting as one people, as Irish. Heaney does not distinguish them by their particular religions; instead, he sees them as a collective. It should be observed that this was the time of The Society of United Irishmen, who were in existence from 1791, where a majority Protestant leadership, including Wolfe Tone and Thomas Russell, led the suffering Catholics in rebellion against British rule (de Paor, 218). It is important to note that this was the last time that an overwhelming number of Protestants and Catholics fought alongside each other in a non-sectarian rebellion. The concept of a people who fought alongside each other shows how the Irish of that time saw themselves as one when it came to fighting the British. This unity, or ability to live within a community regardless of religion exists in Heaney's own family background; Heaney explains to Dennis O'Driscoll, in his interviews entitled *Stepping Stones*, 'that there were old friendships going back' for generations between his family and Protestant families, there were no sectarian issues or prejudices (132).

The notion that Protestant and Catholic fought as one, as Irishmen, touches on the theme of identity, and what it means to be Irish. According to Robert Kee in his book *The Green Flag,* Irish nationality is a reasonably new construct, one which has only existed in the past couple of hundred years. Before that time, Ireland was a tribal country, where tribes fought against each other, and there was very little cohesion amongst them. The Anglo-Normans, although assimilating into the Irish culture to a point, saw themselves as separate to the Gaelic Irish and after several centuries were known for the most part as 'Old English'.

While the plantations saw the English as a distinct culture and were known as the 'New English', he argues that by the early seventeenth century, the people who lived in Ireland were 'of mixed racial origin and differing interests and could hardly be said to form any single distinct nation' (13). Ireland at that time was a country made up of Gaelic, Old English, English, and Scottish, each with their separate affiliations and loyalties. However, by the time of the formation of 'The Society of the United Irishmen' identity was emerging as a 'them and us' mentality regarding Britain so those who fought in the 1798 uprising saw themselves as Irish, regardless of whether they were Catholics or Protestants. They all wanted the same outcome, to govern themselves as a separate nation to England which suggests that it was not only Catholics who identified as Irish, other ethnic groups, such as Protestants, did so too. Heaney poses the question of what identifying with being Irish means not only in 'Requiem for the Croppies' but in other poems as well, such as 'Belderg', 'Traditions' and 'Funeral Rites'. He reminds the reader that Irish identity is made up of many layers, which is a culmination of the invasion of Ireland by the Celts, the Vikings, the Normans, English, and Scottish.

Heaney explores the relationship between the Irish and the land, suggesting that those who are born in Ireland, identify as Irish, Ireland is their nation. In the poem 'At a Potato Digging', 'Heads bow, trunks bend, hands fumble towards the black / mother. Processional stooping through the turf' (11-12) link back to the land, and how it is revered by those living on it. The earth supplies them with sustenance, just as a mother does for her young, and the use of the word 'trunk' alludes to the people as being as one with it as a tree is, growing out of it yet sustained by it. This concept of growing out of the land is also seen in Kinship when Heaney explains how he grew out of the bog 'like a weeping willow' (92). Heaney too feels at one with the land; he is kinned to others in his 'tribe' through his connection with the bog. This relationship with the land has seen many suffer for it, as those in the Great Famine of

1845 suffered, they suffered as a result of identifying not just as Irish, but also as Catholic Irish.

The relationship between identity and the land is evident in 'At a Potato Digging' which considers the continuity of culture through suffering as a consequence of religious affiliation. The words 'wicker', 'pits', and 'higgledy' in sections one and three have connotations of continuity through objects and actions and link the present with the past. Although there are over one hundred years between the famine and the present, some things have remained the same, the use of pits for the potatoes, higgledy lines, and wicker baskets are the same in the present as in the past. They are a reminder that there has been a continuous culture of suffering and sacrifice in the name of religion. This continuity of sacrifice and death is a result of the colonisation of Ireland where there has been a continuous cycle of violence and suffering, which in the end is the result of two religions pitted against one another. Ian McBride argues that 'our social frameworks-family, the community, the nation-are themselves constituted by memories, for how can we locate ourselves in relation to others without a sense of continuity based on common experience' (13). Heaney's poem 'Digging' also contains this theme of continuity, of the link between the present and the past. In 'Digging', the speaker is writing while his father is outside digging potatoes just as his father did. It takes him back to when his grandfather would cut turf in the bog, another continuous action passed on from one generation to the next, suggesting the traditions of one generation are followed on by another. The speaker does not dig with a spade as his father did; instead he 'digs' with his pen. Heaney's earlier poems in his collection, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) explores his agricultural and rural roots, and how continuous traditions have been a part of his ancestors' lives.

Heaney's connection to his past makes him who he is, and he sees it in his own home, Mossbawn. It is this connection through tradition and a shared commonality which makes

him Irish, and although he does not partake in manual labour as his father, grandfather and so forth before him, he feels the connection through them. It is not his religion which makes him Irish; instead it is the simple connection to the land which has been an integral part of the survival of his ancestors. 'Requiem for the Croppies' is not only a reminder that the memory of the land has deeply affected the Irish, but as mentioned earlier, it is also a reminder that the 1798 rebellion was the last time that Catholics and Protestants fought together for the same cause, that of the right to govern themselves as a nation. It is a reminder that at one stage, the people fought on mass, as Irish against the British regardless of their religion. They were all fighting for the same goal, for an Ireland where everyone was equal, which would help rid the country of the abject misery and poverty which stalked the Catholic Irish, and where they could govern themselves as an Irish nation.

Heaney's focus on religion as being a factor in the Irish identity occurs in several of his poems, including 'At a Potato Digging'. Religion has been such an integral part of the Irish identity, both Catholic and Protestant, in the past it defined a person, especially from a social perspective. Heaney takes the simple task of potato picking and uses it as an allegory for the Great Famine of the nineteenth century. He employs images that are reminders of religious rituals where the workers, with their 'processional stooping…/ Make a seasonal alter out of the sod' (12,16). Not only are they going through the motions of religious processes but they are still sacrificing themselves to the land, which ultimately is associated with their religion. Heaney finishes the poem with images of the workers breaking for tea and bread, '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' (55-58). This image has connotations of offerings to a deity, but the deity is now only worth a few crumbs and some cold tea, however, the Irish are still offering up sacrifices to 'Mother Ireland' in the form of men and women through sectarian conflict. Richard Rankin Russell argues that in

the present the people ‘go through the motions of offering these libations and bread to mother earth. Such actions are habitual and immemorial, linking them to their ancestors who would appease the gods associated with the earth and harvest. Yet they have been sufficiently sundered from these forebears, in part by the introduction of the mechanical digger, such that their “offerings” are mere parodies of sincere ones from the past, and they are largely unconscious of them as rituals (41). The land is ‘faithless’, yet people have died, and continue to die for it because of their connection with their religion.

Sacrifice for the land is not the only reason why religious identity is problematic in the wellbeing of the Irish. Their faith has affiliated them to a particular status in Ireland, so depending on whether they are Protestant or Catholic is indicative of where in society they would end up. Before partition, if a person was Catholic, then they were more than likely to have very few rights, no ownership of land, no political or voting rights, life would have been generally pretty miserable and there would have been no chance of rising above their social status. If a person was Protestant, then they would have had better prospects which would have included the opportunity to own land, to vote and participate in Irish politics, and the chance to rise above your social status. Religion has defined Catholic Irish as intended sacrifices in the attainment of English Imperialistic ambitions. After partition, where the Catholic population was the minority in the North, inequality was still a common occurrence; this is a land which has defined people by their religion.

Identifying as a particular religious group within the Irish identity can be noted in Heaney’s work; he identified as a Catholic within the confines of the Irish culture. Through his affiliations, he explores the continuous sacrifices which have been made as a consequence of religious identity. In ‘The Tollund Man’, this connection to his religion is visible and the reader is reminded of Heaney’s religious affiliations when he says ‘I could risk blasphemy / Consecrate the cauldron bog / Our holy ground and pray‘ (lines 21-23). His religion is very

different from that of the bog body, and it is a reminder that he is one tribe in the make-up of Northern Ireland, that of the Catholic / Nationalist. He is praying to a god that is not his own, asking for these young men, whose 'Tell-tale skin and teeth / Flecking the sleepers' (29-30), and who have been murdered to be regenerated and whole again. It is as if he is asking for the act of violence, which was visited on these 'four young brothers' (31) by the Black and Tans, being undone, for it never to have happened and for 'Him to make germinate' (24). This regeneration is also seen in 'Requiem for the Croppies' when the barley which they had in their coats for sustenance, later 'grew up out of the grave' (14), but in this case, it is the regeneration of rising against the British in the form of the 1916 uprising. The term 'cauldron bog' suggests an area of instability where emotions run high, such as in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the idea of germination could also be suggestive of the birth of a new Northern Ireland; one free of the hatred and violence for which it is currently defined by at the time of writing, one which is free of religious division, where the identity of the people is Irish, nothing else.

Religion has now become identified as being affiliated with the ideologies of nationalist and loyalist groups, as seen in the poem 'The Tollund Man'. In the poem, Heaney uses sexual connotations to pursue the connection of religious identity and the ideologies of the Troubles when 'She tightened her torc on him / And opened her fen / Those dark juices working' (13-15), and through words such as 'Naked', and 'bridegroom'. These connotations tell readers that the bog is a symbol for the goddess of fertility, and the body in it has become her bridegroom through his sacrifice. He has, through death, become one with her within the bog, through both allusions of sex and marriage. Heaney suggests that the sacrificial victim has been seduced by the goddess Nerthus, as have those victims been seduced by Mother Ireland in Ireland. In contemporary Northern Ireland, people were dying for the ideologies of sectarianism in which they are encouraged to become martyrs for their fight for their land, for

their nationhood. It is this identity which these groups see themselves as being, that has prevented peace from being fully established on the island of Ireland. The Tollund man, along with the other bog bodies, becomes a symbol of those who have sacrificed their lives for the land in Ireland. This sacrifice can be seen to be made in the name of Ireland but also in the name of religion, as many of those who have died have done so as a consequence of their religious affiliations, just as the Tollund man was killed for his religious beliefs. Andrew Foley suggests that through 'The Tolland Man' 'Heaney seeks to consecrate the land, transforming the 'cauldron bog' of 'hatred and violence' into 'our holy ground', and praying to 'Him' to make the victims of the ongoing conflict 'germinate' into something new and positive' (65). The 'land' does not just mean the mere physical entity of Ireland, it is more than that, the land represents the nation of Ireland, and the aspirations of generations of Irish to live on it as equals; within it, it contains the spilled blood of those martyrs whose memory lives on beyond their generation.

In 'Punishment', the religious connection is pursued in relation to Heaney's own religious affiliations, he identifies as the same faith as those who commit atrocities in the name of Ireland. Heaney begins the poem talking about the bog body, describing how 'I can see her drowned / body in the bog' (lines 9-10), but halfway through changes the poem to addressing the body when he says 'My little adulteress / before they punished you / you were flaxen-haired / undernourished, and your / tar-black face was beautiful' (23-27), hence giving the body a human presence. In this poem, the girl has paid for her perceived wrong, and Heaney likens what has occurred to her to what was happening to young Catholic women who had relationships with British soldiers in Belfast during the Troubles. Those young women were tarred and feathered by the IRA for their perceived betrayal for consorting with 'the enemy'. Just like the bog body in 'Punishment' with her '…naked front / …shaved head / like a stubble of black corn' (4, 17-18), these contemporary girls' heads were shaved before

they were stripped, tied to a pole and tarred and feathered. Thomas C. Foster argues that Heaney recognises the wrong of tarring and feathering, and murder but he also 'acknowledges the impulse of the community to protect itself. There seems…no attempt here to justify the atrocities, but only to "understand" (…a distant sympathy), to comprehend the source' (55). However, Foster goes on to suggest that it is because Heaney is part of the 'native-Celt/Northern-Irish-Catholic nationalists that he remains in touch with this part of himself, but what he is "seeing" is not the same as sanction' (55). The shared history as a Catholic in Ireland that Heaney has with the IRA is always going to be the common denominator in the events of the Troubles, but this does not mean he condones the violence, just the history which drives it. The subject of punishment of tarring and feathering by the IRA, of those suspected of sympathising with the British highlights what was occurring at the time that Heaney was writing. It was not just young women who had relationships with British soldiers who were tarred and feathered; those suspected by the IRA as sympathising with the British, also being punished. In addition to IRA punishment, 'Punishment' is also seen as a reference to the brutal interrogation and treatment meted out to the people of Belfast by the British military. Heaney laments the fact that he has been a witness to such atrocities and has stood by and said nothing. He suggests, 'I almost love you / but would have cast, I know / the stones of silence / I am the artful voyeur' (29-32), and 'I who have stood dumb / when your betraying sisters / cauled in tar / wept by the railings' (37-40), shows his feelings of guilt for doing nothing. Heaney implies that being part of the 'tribe', means he understands the reasoning behind it but does not necessarily agree with the actions of those in his 'tribe'. Foley addresses this by suggesting that 'one of Heaney's chief concerns, highlighted in *North* continues to be the tensions between humane tolerance for others and the need to oppose injustice' (73).

Heaney has been criticised as being a champion of the atrocities by extension of his writing, which was influenced by his Catholic background, the same origin as those whose violence of which he writes. Henry Hart argues that 'to Heaney's detractors, he seems to justify atrocities any humane person would condemn, while in fact he is engaged in a perplexed debate over the proper way to approach and mourn atrocities in art' (393). Heaney was concerned with how to write with some sensitivity about the events which were happening within his community. He struggled with the fact that he agreed with the fight but not necessarily the means, and he tried to bring this out in his poems. Heaney grew up as a minority Catholic in Northern Ireland and was well aware of the inequality which Catholics had to deal with daily. It was not just the political and economic inequality that Heaney would have been aware of, but the treatment in general of Northern Ireland's Catholics, something he experienced himself. In *Preoccupations,* he writes of how he was stopped by soldiers on the Falls Road and 'marched to the nearest police barracks, with my three year old son, because my car tax was out of date' (30). The oppression and everyday contact with the British army may have given him a reason to sympathise with the activities of the IRA; however, he was also affected on a personal level by their actions and the actions of the loyalist factions. With loved ones and friends becoming casualties, it became about something more than an ideology; it became human.

It is this humanity of the situation in Northern Ireland in contrast to the violent actions of the military and paramilitary groups which would have seen Heaney appalled with what was taking place while having a degree of understanding as to why the violent behaviour of his own 'tribe' was occurring. This understanding is associated with being part of the 'tribe'; he appears to be saying that because he is part of the same tribe, it is in his genes too, and he understands what drives the IRA to do what they do. The term 'exact' which would indicate that the punishment of tarring and feathering suits the crime of consorting with British

soldiers has caused consternation amongst Heaney's critics, with some saying that Heaney appears to condone the violence of the IRA. Neil Corcoran argues that 'the poem's business is to remind us, once again, of the persistence of atavistic emotions and responses in the North, and therefore also, to some degree, in any poet born into the community of Northern Catholicism who wishes to tell a truth about it (73).

In addition to tribal kinship, Heaney explores the concept of identity through the place names of Ireland. He looks at how many have become hybrid by the cultures which have settled over the centuries. Through these poems, Heaney shows how place names are an essential part of the identity of a place as well as the people who live in them. In 'Traditions' Heaney ponders the fact that the place he was born, 'Mossbawn', a place he holds dear, is a word made up of English and Scottish words, 'Moss', which is Scottish for bogland, and 'bawn' which is English for an enclosed farmhouse (24). In 'Belderg', Heaney again questions his homeplace by looking at the origins of the name 'Mossbawn', a name with possible roots in Viking, Scottish, English, and Irish. The poem 'Bog Queen' suggests that the Viking Queen becomes part of the land, and therefore can be seen to become a part of the Irish make-up, her own culture too can now be found in place names in Ireland, while Strangford and Carlingford Loughs as seen in the poem 'Funeral Rites' are both names of Viking origin. Each civilisation which has colonised Ireland has left behind some part of their own culture, which has mixed in with the original inhabitants and resulted in the Irish of today. The Vikings brought their towns, currency, politics, and while initially would have been feared, eventually married into the Irish community, becoming one with it, while the Normans and English for the most part initially assimilated into the country, speaking the local language, but adding their fortified farms, language and so forth.

Heaney explores how those who have colonised Ireland have added to the identity of the Irish as a culture. This hybrid culture now identifies as Irish, and it is this hybridity which

Heaney appears to be highlighting just how futile the fight between loyalist and nationalist groups is. In 'Belderg' connotations of a layered history suggest how these layers have shaped Irish culture, the layers in the bog appear to relate to the different layers of invaders over time, each one lying on top of the native Irish. The poem 'Belderg' appears to question what it is to be Irish, what defines the term Irish, and is there such thing as a 'native Irish' person. The layers of bog can be seen to be a metaphor for the layers of cultures which make up the Irish, making the term 'native Irish' ambiguous in the sense that the 'native Irish' have an elaborate cultural make-up. The first two lines, 'They just kept turning up / And were thought of as foreign' (1-2), appear to suggest a metaphor for those foreign invaders, although Heaney's speaker is, in fact, talking about the quern stones which are being dug up out of the bog, in the Ceide fields, in County Mayo. However, although these quern stones appear foreign, they are in fact from an earlier time, before the invasions, and point to a sophisticated civilisation. They also hint at a culture which was 'One-eyed and benign' (3), which provides the idea of an inward-looking and harmless people, suggesting that they were happy within their community, and no threat to other cultures, unlike those who have invaded Ireland over the centuries, such as the Vikings, Normans, and English. They have become the foundation of the Irish culture. As such, 'Belderg' becomes a metaphor for the ever-changing Irish culture, one which has been continuously changing since Neolithic times. Fred Miller Robinson sums it up when he says 'a dig into the land, as Ceide Fields makes clear, is a dig into a cultured self. Irish rather than Celtic or Gaelic, the self of the people of the island of Ireland (38). Ireland as a culture does not stem from one individual culture; instead it comes from several vastly different ones who have come together over time to create the Irish as they are today.

The notion that to be Irish means that one sees themselves as Gaelic ignores the fact that there are other strands in the make-up of the Irish and nullifies the contribution that other

cultures have made to the culture. Heaney's message seems to be that Ireland's complicated history of invasion has resulted in a culture which is diverse in its make-up, and a reminder that being Irish is not as simple as one genetic or religious group of people. This layering of cultures to make the Irish of today is implied in the poem 'Grauballe Man' where Heaney uses strong images and descriptive language to scrutinise the body of the Grauballe man. He uses vivid detail to describe the body, which was exceptionally well preserved when it was found. Heaney describes the features of the preserved body, saying that 'The grain of his wrists / is like bog oak / the ball of his heel / like a basalt egg / His instep has shrunk' (lines 6-10). In addition to this, Heaney portrays the body as being a part of the bog, as though it has become one even though it is still very much a body. He describes the body 'As if he had been poured / in tar, he lies / on a pillow of turf / and seems to weep / the black river of himself / His hips are the ridge / and purse of a mussel / his spine an eel arrested / under a glisten of mud' (1-5,13-16). This is reminiscent of Heaney's other bog poems, such as 'Bog Queen' where the body has become one with the land, indicating the connection between the land and humans. It reminds the reader of how the bog is like a vessel, it stores the memory of the nation and the people, and everything eventually returns to it. Stephanie Alexander proposes that for Heaney 'there is little or no separation between body and bog, or between Ireland and Irishman. The landscape becomes a metaphor for identity and a vehicle for embodiment itself' (223). This suggests that land and nation are the same; the Irish are bound up in their history, which is absorbed within the land. The word 'tar' has connotations of nature and its resources. Tar can be produced from peat and has been an essential part of life for millennia. It is also a reminder that peat is a natural resource too, and one that has been an integral part of the Irish way of life for centuries. Tar is also a reminder of the young Catholic women who were tarred and feathered for consorting with British soldiers during the Troubles. The connection to the bog, which is an integral part of Irish life continues with the

word ‘turf’. Turf is the one constant in Irish history which has sheltered, in terms of housing materials, provided employment, and given heat and energy; it comes from the bog which is as Irish as a Planters’ demesne is not.

Heaney’s suggestion that those who are born in Ireland are Irish is not shared by everyone who lives there. Through his poems, he suggests that to be Irish is to be born in Ireland and to take on the culture of the existing civilisation while adding to it at the same time. This concept follows on from Heaney’s poem ‘Traditions’ where Bloom, who is Jewish, declares ‘What ish my nation? / …Ireland…/ I was born here. Ireland’ (32, 35-36), in which Heaney suggests that regardless of what religion you are if you are born in Ireland, then you are Irish. However, he would be aware that as a Catholic growing up in Northern Ireland, not everyone sees themselves as Irish, in fact, Unionists and Protestants tend to see themselves as British. The desire to keep the status quo of Protestant ascendancy has seen loyalists cling to their British roots. What began as a system to keep the majority native Catholic Irish from controlling the country, has now turned into bigotry and hatred for another religion. Bigotry and hatred have passed down through the generations so now those loyalist Protestants do not identify as being of the same nationality as their fellow Catholic citizens. Heaney describes this mindset of being a separate nationality in *Preoccupations,* when he describes a time when atrocities were taking place by the IRA, hearing ‘a completely unbigoted and humane friend searching for words to cope with his abhorrence of the Provisionals and hitting on the *mot juste* quite unconsciously: ‘These…these…Irish’’ (32). Heaney, who grew up living peacefully beside his Protestant neighbours sees no difference in whether a person is Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and so forth; take away the religion, and they are the same.

In ‘Kinship’, it is this connection to the land which cements the identity of Heaney as Irish. In the poem, he is ‘kinned by hieroglyphic peat’ indicating that the body in the bog is a sacrificial victim of a religious ceremony and suggests Heaney feels connected to this body through the bog. The connection to the land is strong, it is ingrained in the Irish psyche, and Heaney uses the image of the body in the bog which has become one with the earth through his sacrifice, as a metaphor for the deep connection felt by the Irish to the land. Connecting himself to a bog body, which has lain for centuries in ‘the love-nest in the bracken’ (4), suggests he is so familiar with the bog, having grown up near it that it makes him feel connected to all that is in it. He, like the bog body, is a part of the bog and will one day return to the earth upon death, just as the bog body has. Heaney is connected to the land through his family, and through the history of where they have come from. These origins are a continued layering of cultures, each one contributing to Heaney’s pedigree. As per all cultures, Heaney’s ancestors were reliant on the land; it is what sustained them, their lives would have revolved around the bog and its seasons. Sexual connotations, with words such as ‘soft lips, ‘tawny rut’, ‘shaft’, ‘wettish’, ‘bearded-cairn’, ‘love nest’ suggest the bog is more than just a piece of ground. Michael Parker proposes that these connotations ‘stress the intensity of the bond - physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual - between the poet and his ground (139). They also suggest that the land, or Mother Ireland, seduces her followers, seeing them sacrifice their lives for her. The Irish are bound to the land, and this connection has seen them dying for it, just as the strangled victim has died for it. These words also bring up connotations of sexual impotence and failure, where their seduction by Mother Ireland, the ‘insatiable bride’ leads to their deaths, not to their success.

Identity through a shared history is a theme which Heaney pursues in his poem ‘The Strand at Lough Beg’. Heaney is aware that he shares the same history as those who commit atrocities in the name of freedom for Ireland, but he is also aware that he does not act as they

do. This theme emerges as the Troubles progress, and Heaney appears to be saying that although there is a shared history and religion with those who are causing such atrocities, he neither condones or asks for such actions to occur on his behalf. Instead, he likens those who have murdered his cousin as being animals and emphasises the difference between them, and himself and his cousin. Heaney portrays his cousin Colum as being the very opposite to those who shot him and makes it very clear that Colum was in no way violent or involved in the sectarian violence of the Troubles. He provides an image of a man who hated guns and violence when he writes

> There you used hear guns fired behind the house
>
> Long before rising time, when duck shooters
>
> Haunted the marigolds and bulrushes
>
> But still were scared to find spent cartridges (lines 17-20).

The word 'acrid' suggests something unpleasant, while 'brassy' provides connotations of a loud booming sound, much like a gun firing, 'genital' would indicate the production of or reproduction, perhaps violence in this case, and 'ejected' suggests something which has been forced out violently, which could suggest McCartney's situation when he was murdered. Heaney explains to Dennis O'Driscoll in an interview that Colum McCartney was from a family who was not politicised, and regardless of what might be occurring in their community, they would not get involved (222). This was indicative of a lot of rural Irish; the majority just wanted to get on with their lives, while others were trying to try and change the status quo.

This concept of a shared heritage of passive ancestors is implied when he writes 'For you and yours and yours and mine fought shy / Spoke an old language of conspirators / and could not crack the whip or seize the day' (23-25). And the poem suggests they are from a

more simple existence of country people who were 'Big-voiced scullions, herders, feelers, round / Haycocks and hindquarters, talkers in byres / Slow arbitrators of the burial ground' (26-28). He explains to Dennis O'Driscoll that he 'just wanted to suggest that Colum and I had been born into that same quietist, fatalistic tribe' (222); this is in contrast to those men who murdered McCartney, who had the mindset of taking action through murder. Heaney emphasises the difference to show the goodness in McCartney in comparison to those who killed him, and it also suggests that Heaney saw himself and McCartney as being from peaceful people who saw alternative ways rather than violence to try and change their situation. The word 'arbitrators' suggests someone who settles disputes, which has connotations of peacemakers not warmongers. Heaney's mother would have come from a different background, one where the talk would have been more political which would have had some influence on Heaney, so although he may not have joined the Provisionals or some similar group, he fought, but with his pen instead.

Throughout the poems that he wrote during the Troubles, Heaney pursues the idea of a single identity. An identity based on being born in Ireland, not based on religion or, political or historical bloodlines, but one where remembering the past has its place but not at the expense of a united Ireland. Heaney appears to be suggesting that a lot of the problems which were occurring during the Troubles, would disappear if those living there would stop seeing themselves as a particular group within the community, and instead saw themselves and others as the same.

Chapter Four

Myth and History: Looking at the Past to Understand the Present.

Seamus Heaney employs myth and history in his poems to provide a clearer picture of the effects of invasion and colonisation on the Irish. Heaney's bog poems revolve around the use of myth, which helps to provide an understanding of what is happening in Northern Ireland during the period of the Troubles. Thomas C. Foster suggests that 'the bog people act to unify the material from various ancient cultures, they are the link to the past' (50). Not only are they a link to the past, but they are also a tool to examine the present. In addition to these poems, Heaney references the Viking culture as an analogy of the tribal conflict of Northern Ireland between the Loyalist factions and the Irish Nationalist groups. He implies through this analogy that the tribal retribution and blood lust of Viking culture is very much alive and well in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. In 'Funeral Rites', Heaney uses the layers of history in the Boyne, from the Neolithic period of Newgrange, onto the Vikings, and through to the Battle of the Boyne in which Protestant William of Orange defeated Catholic James II, to explore how each era has had an impact on the Irish. This poem, which has imagery of Catholic funerals, seems straightforward to begin with, however, it soon reveals itself to be more than just a poem about your average Irish Catholic funeral. Instead, the funeral becomes a sombre account of a funeral during the Troubles, where neighbours are killed by the sectarian violence by which they are surrounded. Guy Beiner argues that 'myths do not directly constitute events, they offer interpretive narratives through which meaning of events can be constructed' (377). Heaney tries to make sense of this violence by looking at it

through the historical context of the Boyne, where different cultures have all made their mark. However, it is the Viking myth where he shows his desire for an end to the violence in Northern Ireland. His depiction of Gunnar dead in his tomb and unavenged is contrary to the usual violence and retribution of the Viking culture, and instead portrays the Vikings as ceasing hostilities, instead of the continual cycle which was usual in the Viking culture.

Through many of his poems, Heaney shows that Ireland's tribes have been at war for centuries. This tribal society has ultimately been the downfall of Ireland's sovereignty and is still seen today in Northern Ireland. It was, after all, tribal warfare and unrest which eventually saw the Anglo-Normans arrive on Ireland's shores, at the invitation of Diarmait MacMurrough in 1169. Heaney uses myth and history to tie the present to the past, and this helps to make the actions of the Troubles more comprehensible. This does not mean that Heaney condones the actions of those involved in sectarian violence, it is more that he chooses the medium of myth and history to help understand why it is happening, and what has caused it. Russell argues that

> as the 1960s concluded, and the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland thrust themselves into everyday life, Heaney turned often to specific periods of Irish and other national identities to gain some kind of purchase on the atrocities being committed' but in earlier poems, he is more concerned to explore other historical wounds that had been inflicted upon the Irish psyche, for instance the Irish Famine. (39)

In the poem 'At a Potato Digging' he explores the idea of how the effects of the famine are still being felt by the Irish today, how the memory of that catastrophic event is still felt in the present time, and how 'you still smell the running sore' (50).

Heaney has been criticised for his use of myth in his poems, with some saying he does not go far enough to condemn the atrocities by using myth to skirt around the issue. He has

been accused of being sympathetic to the Irish Nationalist programme of violence as he has not been seen to have taken a strong enough stand against their actions. However, on the other side of the argument, he has been criticised for not speaking out loudly enough against the brutality and death visited upon the Northern Ireland Catholic community by the British military. However, on closer inspection of his poems, there is plenty of criticism from Heaney concerning both groups. The poems 'At the Water's Edge' and 'The Toome Road' look at the intrusion of the British military in the area, while in 'Punishment' Heaney appears to be saying he doesn't agree with the actions of the IRA, but he understands the reason why they commit the atrocities that they do. Andrew Foley argues that 'rather than provide trite condemnation or approbation of the use of violence as a political strategy, Heaney instead is concerned to understand the primitive mythologies and psychological forces which render such violence possible in the first place' (71).

Heaney takes different defining moments in history to explore the effects these events have had on the Irish people. In 'Ocean's Love for Ireland' Heaney likens England's invasion of Ireland to rape. The siege of Smerwick in 1579 was a defining moment in Irish history, with the failure by James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald to win against crown forces. This led to the English introducing more plantations, as well as large confiscations of land in Munster which was divided up, and by 1598 10,000 settlers had moved in (de Paor 132). Heaney uses these events to explore, not only the loss of land, but also the loss of the Irish culture, and in particular, the Irish language when in 'Ocean's Love to Ireland' 'the ruined maid complains in Irish' (19). In 'Act of Union', Heaney takes the name from the legislative acts of 1800-1801, which were directly as a result of the 1798 uprising in Ireland, and which saw Ireland lose its parliament to become one with England as the United Kingdom. He uses this moment in history to examine the effects colonisation has had on the Irish community, especially those in the North where their anger rages still.

Heaney's bog poems are an excellent example of the use of myth to analogise what was happening during the period of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Heaney takes a society such as that of Jutland, which during the Neolithic period was entrenched in sacrificing to the goddess Nerthus for a successful harvest for the common good of the community, and later, the Viking period which was based upon retribution and violence, as an effective way of exploring the Troubles. He saw a connection in both societies regarding sacrifice and bloody violence in relation to the land. The sacrifices made to Nerthus, the fertility goddess, mirror the sacrifices made in contemporary times in pursuit of sectarian ideologies. It is the theme of Irish martyrdom for the land which Heaney looks at via the Neolithic martyrs of Jutland. These poems, such as 'The Tollund Man', 'The Grauballe Man', and 'Punishment' use the sacrificial victim of several thousand years previous to explore the events of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Through this process Heaney is able to come to the conclusion that people are still being sacrificed for the land, in what could be seen as a wasteful act.

Heaney explores the link between the sacrificial victims of various historical events which have occurred in Ireland and the sacrifices of contemporary Ireland. In the poem 'At a Potato Digging' Heaney portrays the land as mother, linking it with his bog poems, which look at the land as a mother-like figure, such as Mother Ireland, whose faithful make sacrifices to her. However, this 'mother' is not always nurturing as Heaney reflects with his connotations of death and famine in the first half of the poem. The 'mother' can be cruel and take life, be it through famine or sacrifice, and connotations of the land turning on the people can be seen in the line '…in the bitch earth' (44). The term 'mother' can also be seen as a reference to the Virgin Mary, which is another connection to Catholicism, through the concept of the reverence and devotion to the Virgin Mary, a practice which is not followed by Protestants. Poems such as 'Punishment',' Kinship', and 'The Tollund Man' all reference the goddess figure, to whom sacrifice is made in exchange for a good harvest, or in contemporary

times for Irish Nationalism which has seen young men sacrificed for Nationalistic ideology. Henry Hart argues that Heaney examines death in relation to the Northern Ireland situation, and concludes that 'mother Ireland is femme fatale, seducing her devotees to violent death, rather than a holy land populated by sacred ghosts' (388). Heaney attempts to quiet the Nationalist romantic notion of sacrifice for the nation, showing that even the land can turn against the faithful. In particular, this can be seen where he writes 'A people hungering from birth / grubbing, like plants, in the bitch earth / were grafted with a great sorrow / Hope rotted like a marrow' (43-46), suggesting that although mother earth gives, she can also take away, resulting in death both through famine and sacrifice. The bog bodies in Heaney's bog poems have sacrificed themselves for the betterment of everyone.

Heaney uses the violent death of the Tollund man as an allegory for the violent deaths of many people in Ireland. He includes the deaths of four young brothers in Ireland during the War of Independence when he describes

> The scattered, ambushed
>
> Flesh of labourers,
>
> Stockinged corpses
>
> Laid out in farmyards
>
> Tell-tale skin and teeth
>
> Flecking the sleepers
>
> Of four young brothers, trailed
>
> For miles along the lines (25-32).

Heaney explains to Dennis O'Driscoll that these lines were inspired by a photo he had seen in Tom Barry's book *Guerilla Days in Ireland* (1949), in which four brothers were shot in reprisals by the Black and Tans during the War of Independence (135). This violent act visited on these four young men is a reminder of the culture of reprisals between loyalist paramilitary groups and nationalist IRA during the Troubles. In the poem, the term 'sad freedom' is contradictory; freedom would suggest liberation or emancipation, which would give an assumption of happiness and contentment. However, the addition of the word 'sad' suggests this freedom comes with exceptions and terms and may relate to the fact that although Catholics now have emancipation; in Northern Ireland they are still not free from the British yoke which keeps them from being a part of a united Ireland.

Heaney takes the concept of looking at the atrocities of the Troubles from afar to try and make sense of the events which were occurring at the time of writing. By analogising the Troubles through myth and history, Heaney can view the events from a different perspective. In 'The Tollund Man' Heaney continues to remind the reader that these bog bodies should be remembered for being people at some stage in history. He describes 'Saying the names / Tollund, Grauballe, Nebelgard' (36-37), implying that these victims of violence should not be forgotten, just as those victims of the Troubles should not be forgotten but instead, remembered for the suffering they have endured which has been caused by this violence. Heaney corresponds the inhumanity of the sacrifice of the Tollund man to the inhumanity of the sacrifice of those killed during the Troubles. According to Hakkioglu and Parlak, Heaney uses myths like the bog bodies in order to 'hold a mirror to the local from a distance' (111). Distance gives him the ability to show what was going on in Northern Ireland through indirect means. Addressing the Troubles through indirect means helps to distance Heaney personally from the events, which gives him a new angle to look at the atrocities which were occurring on his own doorstep and which affected him personally through his relationships

with various victims. It meant that the poetry he wrote was about all who were affected by the Troubles, not just himself and those close to him; these were events which affected the whole community.

Through the use of myth and history in a number of his poems, Heaney is able to suggest that there is the hope of an end to the atrocities of the Troubles. The final verse of 'The Tollund Man' confirms Heaney's reasoning that those regions in Jutland with their sacrificial victims are no different than Northern Ireland. Heaney suggests that 'Out there in Jutland / In the old man-killing parishes / I will feel lost / Unhappy and at home' (41-44). This is an area unfamiliar to him, where he is a visitor 'Not knowing their tongue' (40), yet it is so familiar due to the same sacrificial victims and killings which make the two areas so similar. However, although it may be familiar to him, it does not make him happy. Andrew Foley argues that 'despite the sombre mood of the last verse, the poem does seem to hold out some hope for the future. In associating modern Ireland with the ancient fertility cults of Jutland, the poem suggests some possibility of renewal and transformation' (65). It appears that Heaney would like to see an end to the atrocities, and eventually the formation of a united Ireland, a new Ireland, one where tribal warfare is once and for all no longer a part of the Irish memory. However, he is aware that there are two different memories to deal with, the loyalist memory and the nationalist memory, and reconciling the two into a manageable history where the two can exist side by side is an insurmountable task. The fact that he has used a victim of a ritual killing to the fertility goddess suggests he hopes to see Ireland regenerated as a country where a complicated history and perceived differences can be put aside for the end goal of peace, and an end to the killing which has plagued Ireland for the past millennium.

Heaney continues this desire for an end to the retribution and killings in 'Funeral Rites' by taking the legend of Gunnar the Viking, who was from the thirteenth century

Icelandic epic *Njal's Saga* and instead of portraying his death as being avenged as would be usual in Viking culture, the retribution has been arrested. In the poem, the 'Gap of the North' (58) refers to an area which was militarily strategic as it was the route between Ulster and The Pale (the area outside Dublin). Further reference to Vikings, indicates that those that they have buried under the mounds were killed like Gunnar and also lie in a burial chamber, 'dead by violence / but unavenged' (72-73). The Vikings being such an important part in the shaping of Ireland and Irish culture are integral in understanding the violence which was happening in present day Northern Ireland. It is after all the violence and retribution, which was such a large part of the Viking culture that was being transposed to the current events of the Troubles at the time of writing. The poem questions the concept of honour, in the lines 'Men said that he was chanting / verses about honour' (74-75), which seem to suggest there is no honour in murder. Heaney appears to be admonishing the continuous cycle of killing and retribution which has continued in Ireland since the time of the Vikings; however, he is hoping for a time when there will be reconciliation between the two groups in Northern Ireland.

Another of Heaney's bog poems in *North* which he wrote after reading P. V. Glob's book *The Bog People,* is 'The Grauballe Man'. Globb explains that the Grauballe Man was discovered by peat-cutters in 1952, two years after the discovery of the Tollund Man and eleven miles east of Tollund (Globb 37). In October 1973 Heaney made a trip to Denmark on the back of an invitation from the Danish Association of English Teachers. While there, he went and saw the Grauballe man in Aarhus and the Tollund man in Silkeborg. According to Michael Parker, these visits and encouragement from Ted Hughes to write more poems saw him write 'The Grauballe Man' (123). Elmer Andrews argues that the 'discovery of the ritual sacrifice preserved in the bog was a metaphor for the Troubles, buried in the history of Ireland' (3). However, in many ways, the Grauballe man has resisted becoming one with the

bog, and instead through his preservation has remained a separate entity. In fact, Heaney likens his discovery and subsequent removal from the bog as being like a birth when he describes how he first saw '…his rusted hair / a mat unlikely/ as a foetus's /…his twisted face / in a photograph / a head and shoulder / out of the peat / bruised like a forceps baby' (29-31,32-36). This allusion to birth can also be seen in the poem 'Bog Queen', when the peer's wife bribes the turf cutter to dig the body up, and the queen's plaited hair becomes like 'a slimy birth-cord/ of bog had been cut' (50-51). These connotations of birth are a reminder of the theme of sacrifice and the fertility goddess which the Grauballe Man has been sacrificed to. It is also a reminder of the hope for regeneration and a peaceful outcome for Northern Ireland. Heaney's background as a Catholic Nationalist meant he was in a position to understand the reason behind the atrocities without necessarily condoning them. He, like most other people in Northern Ireland, wanted a place where violence was no longer a regular occurrence, and everyone was treated as equal regardless of their religious affiliations. He wanted to see the 'birth' of a country in which young men were no longer sacrificing themselves for the land, that they no longer needed to because the past issues had been resolved.

In continuing the theme of the Vikings, Heaney utilises their culture of retribution and violence to stress that the same culture still existed in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. The reference to the Vikings is present throughout 'Funeral Rites'. Words such as 'igloo' which presents an image of a cold climate, 'black glacier' suggests connotations of the bog being something that is slow moving like a glacier, and 'Strang and Carling fjords', which uses the Viking spelling, and reference to the Viking Gunnar are used to emphasise the connection between Jutland and Ireland. Heaney uses the mythology of the Vikings to stress the violence and continued retribution of the Troubles, but also in relation to Gunnar, to suggest a desire for this retribution to be halted. In Gunnar's situation, the tribal norm of

feuding, vengeance, and killing ends, and Heaney dreams of the same thing happening in Northern Ireland. Neil Corcoran argues that the poem's hope is that those 'disposed like Gunnar' during the imagined funeral rites in the Boyne will also remain unavenged by their mourners, (67) while Thomas C. Foster argues that it is significant that it is the Vikings and their formal code of blood vengeance, not the Catholic or Protestant traditions of forgiveness and turning the other cheek, in which the cycle is broken (61). Heaney appears to steer clear of both Protestantism and Catholicism, showing that the contemporary violence is as a result of those denominations, which is ironic considering that they preach 'love thy neighbour' and 'turn the other cheek'. Therefore, in Heaney's use of the Viking culture as a passive ending, a culture of violence and retribution highlights the hypocrisy of both sides of the religious and sectarian divide. James Simmons, however, proposes that Heaney's idea that the one big funeral which will see the burying of dead finish once and for all, may be satisfying for Heaney, 'but it has no relevance to Northern Ireland today' (55). However, I would suggest that it is relevant to the events which were occurring when Heaney was writing these poems. His poetry was about addressing the issues and events of the Troubles, and one of the fundamental issues was religion, which has produced a one-eyed view of the other religion. Heaney is suggesting that religion is the root of all of the conflict which Ireland has faced and continues to face in the guise of the Troubles. If those on either side of the sectarian divide can look beyond religion, then Northern Ireland has a chance of peace.

The idea of one big funeral with no religious affiliations suggests that Heaney sees this as a significant part of the solution to the Troubles in Northern Ireland and an alternative to the current situation; if religion could be overlooked then a final peace may be achieved. Once again, Heaney turns to myth and history to provide insight into the violent events of the Troubles. As already noted, he has used this method in other poems such as 'Belderg', 'The Tollund Man', 'Punishment', 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', and 'The Strand of Lough Beg'. In

the bog poems of 'The Tollund Man', 'Punishment', and 'The Grauballe Man' Heaney borrows from the Scandinavian Neolithic myths of the fertility goddess, Nerthus, using the sacrifices made to her as an analogy for the sacrifice made to 'Mother Ireland' by the young men of Ireland. By looking at the past in this way, Heaney finds an analogy for the present conflict. As previously stated, he likens the sectarian violence to the violence and retribution of the Viking culture, with references to Gunnar in *Njal's saga* of the thirteenth century, in which the constant feuding led to their loss of independence in 1262. According to Henry Hart, 'this reference garnered sober lessons for his own bellicose culture 700 years later' (395). Irish society and culture at the time of the invasions of Vikings, and then Anglo-Normans, was a tribal affair, and this lack of cohesion would have been a factor in the colonisation of Ireland. The concept of looking back and using history and myths of earlier cultures, which are linked in some way to Irish culture and Ireland, is Heaney's way of examining the violence of the present which was occurring during the Troubles. These analogies of the Troubles provide a clear picture of how religion has been such a significant part of violence and hatred in Ireland, and how differences have become magnified by such religions. Heaney provides a way to explore the idea that Christian faith which represents itself as one of love, is the very reason that many have been killed and continue to do so. His solution appears to be one where people are not controlled by religion, and instead see each other as fellow Irish.

The march to the mounds, as 'quiet as a serpent' (55) in 'Funeral Rites' suggests the Catholic element, as St Patrick banished the snakes from Ireland. The word 'serpent' provides an image of a mythical creature, a reminder of the story of Adam and Eve, and Satan as the serpent. A serpent also means a sly or treacherous person, especially one who exploits a position of trust. This suggests that the Catholic church as a source of comfort is nothing but a myth; instead it is an establishment which has exploited its position for its

own ends, not those of its members. It is a reminder of his own religious affiliations which connect him with those acting out atrocities in the Troubles.

Relating the Vikings to the Troubles in Northern Ireland is suggestive of the contemporary violence which was indeed occurring in 1970s Northern Ireland at the time of writing. In 'Bog Queen' Heaney points to the Troubles when describing the body, 'I was barbered / and stripped / by a turf cutter's spade' (41-43), which suggests someone who has had their hair cut or shaved and has been rendered naked by a native person and this is mirrored in his poem 'Punishment', in which he admits 'I who have stood dumb / when your betraying sisters / cauled in tar / wept by the railings' (37-40). Again, in 'Kinship', he admits 'how we slaughter for the common good / and shave the heads of the notorious' (139-142), alluding to the punishment meted out to young Catholic women in Belfast who consorted with British soldiers. In these instances, the young women had their heads shaved, and were tarred and feathered. The use of the term 'cauled' is interesting, and looking at the meaning of caul, which is the amniotic membrane which is sometimes covering a newborn baby's head upon birth, it is ironic that Heaney uses an image which is representative of a new life to describe women who have been tarred for adultery. Another meaning for cauled is a fourteenth century cap worn by women, which would be a good description of a woman whose head was covered in tar as if they were wearing a cap. Although this bog body has no suggestion of being punished in any way, it appears to be a reminder of what was happening at the time, with connotations of brutality. The bog queen, just like those young women, is subjected to a violent act which is beyond her control. She is ripped away from the bog by the bog cutter, very much like a baby leaving its mother's body, which she describes when 'a peer's wife bribed him / The plait of my hair / a slimy birth-cord / of bog, had been cut' (48-51).

The myth of sacrificial victims and Viking violence parallel those victims of the Troubles. In 'Bog Queen', Heaney centres his poem on a bog body which was found on the Moira Estate in County Down, Northern Ireland in 1781 (Foley, 67). The body is thought to be that of a Danish Viking woman who had been left undisturbed in the bog for hundreds of years until chanced upon by a local turf cutter. The queen has started to become a part of the land through her 'fabrics and skins / the seeps of winter / digested' (9-11) her, the ravages of time have reduced her from a newly buried body to something that now resembles the land in which she is buried. Once again, as in Heaney's other bog poems, there is a connection between Ireland and Jutland, however, whereas in his other bog poems the bog bodies are located in Jutland; this is the only bog poem in which the body is in Ireland. Andrew Foley points out that 'the fact that archaeologists believed the body to be that of a Danish Viking who had lived in Ireland is of crucial importance to Heaney as it cements the connection between the two cultures not just in imaginative fancy but in authentic historical reality' (67). Heaney uses Jutland as a reference for his poems as he sees the sacrificial killings that happened there as being an allegory for the murder and sacrifice which was happening in Northern Ireland at the time of writing and indeed had been happening throughout Ireland since the Vikings arrived. He implies that the vengeful culture of the Vikings is the same as the culture in Northern Ireland. This reference to Vikings, bog bodies and ritualistic killings provides a basis for Heaney's writing on the ongoing trouble and violence in Northern Ireland.

Myth and history become useful to Heaney to explore the impact on the community of the Troubles, and to help humanise the victims of it so that these victims are not just statistics but real people. Heaney's fascination with the Grauballe Man is balanced by the reminder that this man was a victim of sacrifice, so common in the bog bodies of Jutland, and the reader is told of 'his slashed throat' (20). He 'seems to weep / a black river of himself' (4-5),

suggesting he is crying regarding the sad and violent ending to his life. It also brings up connotations of violence, and along with the lines where he mentions 'each hooded victim / slashed and dumped' (47-48) the reader is brought back from the past to the present and reminded of the victims of the Troubles who have been hooded, murdered, and dumped. Andrew Foley suggests that in the bog bodies of Jutland 'Heaney was able to find truly befitting emblems of adversity for the predicament in Northern Ireland…. He was able to move beyond the surface details of current events and employ a symbolic mode which laid bare not only the savage tribal instincts of the perpetrators of the violence, but also the archetypal barbarity of the conflict itself' (73). Thus, not only does the Grauballe man becomes an allegory for those victims of the paramilitaries during the Troubles, but it also examines the psyche of those who are committing the atrocities. Michael Parker suggests that this means that 'no-one in the North can or should escape the burden' of these hooded victims (136). The atrocities of the Troubles were felt by all sectors of society in Northern Ireland, and Heaney sums it up in *Preoccupations* when he says

> I am fatigued by a continuous adjudication between the agony and the injustice, swung at one moment by the long tail of race and resentment, at another by the more acceptable feelings of pity and terror. We live in the sickly light of TV screens, with a pane of selfishness between ourselves and suffering. We survive explosions and funerals and live on in families of the victims, those blown apart and those living in cells apart'. (30)

Everybody felt the burden of the Troubles regardless of where in Northern Ireland they lived, everyone was affected by it in some way or another, whether it was as a casualty, the family or friend of a casualty, or being close to an event such as a bombing or riot when it has taken place.

Not only is the use of myth and history useful in helping to understand the events of the Troubles, but also in understanding the 'tribal' links between those perpetrating the atrocities and the rest of the Northern Ireland community, Heaney included. This can be observed in the poem 'Punishment' which is another of Heaney's bog poems and relates to two different eras, the Iron Age and the Troubles. Initially, the imagery is of a young woman, who has been dug up from the bog, and the speaker imagines how she died, 'I can feel the tug / of the halter at the nape/ of her neck, the wind/ on her naked front' (1-4). It is clear from this brief description that this woman has died a violent death, and words describing 'her drowned / body in the bog / the weighing stone' (9-11) suggest her drowning was no accident, but instead a ritualised killing, and 'her shaved head' (17), 'her blindfold a soiled bandage / her noose a ring' (19-20) confirm this. It is revealed that she is 'an adulteress' and a 'scapegoat', and it suggests that she has been punished while her lover goes free. 'Punishment' uses the bog body of a murdered girl as an allegory of the events which were occurring during the Troubles at the time of writing. The bog body is an iron-age representation of modern Catholic girls who have fallen foul of the IRA for consorting with British soldiers. Heaney takes myth and applies it to the situation to garner some kind of understanding of the treatment and activities by the Irish nationalist group, the IRA. He addresses his own complicity in the atrocities of the Troubles, by the fact that he comes from the same 'tribe' as those committing them.

The idea of a 'scapegoat' is a theme which runs through Heaney's poems in the guise of sacrifice for the greater good of the community and links nicely with the concept of tribal affiliation in relation to religion. It is seen in 'The Tollund Man' who is sacrificed to the earth goddess, Nerthus, in exchange for a good harvest the following year which will sustain the rest of the community. Heaney uses the idea of a scapegoat in this instance as an allegory of the sacrifice made by young men to Mother Ireland, in the pursuit of their tribe's

ideologies, on both sides of the sectarian divide. The theme of the scapegoat can also be seen to relate to Christianity, where the ultimate sacrifice, according to Christian beliefs, was made by Jesus to save humanity; Jesus became a scapegoat for the masses by being crucified to appease God and secure redemption for humankind. Sarah Broome argues that the idea of sacrificial martyrdom is a motif which has long been part of Irish nationalism, seen in 1916 by Pearse's invocation of the imagery of Christian martyrdom in his staging of the Easter Uprising of that year (147). This Christian allusion can also be seen in the lines 'but would have cast, I know / the stones of silence' (30-31). The idea of the adulteress woman being forgiven by Jesus and the biblical story of those without sin casting the first stone suggests Heaney questioning Christianity. However, Broome suggests that Heaney's implications of Christianity in 'Punishment' are complex as the various biblical references do not sit comfortably together and can be seen to be either suggesting that there was purpose to the girl's death, or' implicating Christianity very negatively in a paradigm of violent, sacrificial religions' (147). I would suggest that Heaney is criticising the role of Christianity in the struggles of the Irish, struggles which were still going on in Northern Ireland at the time of writing 'Punishment'. Religion became the division between the settlers and the native Irish and by the time the partition of Ireland had taken place, the minority Catholic population were persecuted and treated with inequality because of their faith. Christianity, which is based on love and forgiveness, has become the very opposite in Ireland and instead has become one of hate, sacrifice, and retribution.

The idea of martyrdom in Ireland can be seen in the twelfth century in the Archbishop of Cashel's response to Gerald of Wales criticism of the Irish for their lack of martyrs. The Archbishop declares that 'although our people are barbarous, uncivilised and savage, they have always paid great honour and reverence to churchmen…But now a people has come which knows how and is accustomed to make martyrs. From now on, Ireland will

have its martyrs' (Carroll 63). It appears that before the commencement of colonisation by the Normans and then the British, the concept of martyrdom and dying for your land was not a part of the Irish psyche; instead it was borne out of a need to try and prevent the colonisation of their land. Heaney's use of a bog body in 'Punishment' to explore the violence of the Troubles has seen him accused of condoning the violence of the IRA. However, instead of condoning the violence, he explores the tenuous link between 'tribal affiliation' and understanding of the actions of the IRA. He understands that nothing is black and white in the context of the Troubles, the shared history shows that there are too many grey areas to suggest that a person is either for or against the activities of the paramilitary. To condemn is too simplistic a concept in the complicated situation of the Troubles, and Heaney tries to portray this through 'Punishment'.

In 'Kinship', Heaney pursues the theme of 'tribal' affiliation, and the term 'kinned' is a reminder of the tribal connection that he has through his religion with those who are committing atrocities in the name of Irish nationalism. Heaney is not involved in these atrocities, and neither does he condone them, but he understands why it is occurring, and he suggests that this understanding relates to being 'kinned' by his religion. However, although he is affiliated through his 'tribal' connections, the actions of his 'tribe' do not sit comfortably with him. Connotations of sacrifice are further enhanced with the image of how this victim's life has come to an end when the speaker describes 'each bank as a gallows drop' (19), indicating that death was violent and involuntary. Heaney has lived through the Troubles where many Irish have become victims because of a strong connection to the land. This sacerdotal connection also reminds the reader of the sacrifice many Irish have made, or less than savoury conditions they have had to endure, because of their religious affiliations. He appears to imply that nationalism has seen many die for the cause, that many have been sacrificed for the greater good; it is almost a criticism, but he softens the statement by making

it clear that those that died were faithful to their land. It is as if he is equivocal about those who have died for "the cause". On the one hand, this statement could be seen as critical, in the sense that people have died in pursuit of a united Ireland, all in the name of nationalism. This is clear to see when the speaker suggests that those faithful who have died for their land 'lie gargling / in her sacred heart' (29-30), and 'Read the inhumed faces / of casualty and victim (136-137). However, on the other hand, he seems to be lauding the dead for their loyalty to their country, and the speaker asks Tacitus to 'report us fairly' (138). This stance has been criticised as being overtly nationalistic by many of his critics. Edna Longley argues 'that 'Kinship' defines the battlefield in astonishingly introverted Catholic and Nationalist terms' (46). This partly relates to Heaney's use of the term 'sacred heart' which is a Catholic symbol, as well as the idea that the earth is soaked in the blood of Irish martyrs. This appears to be a rather simplistic view based on a few words connecting the Catholic faith and nationalism to the entire poem and does not take into account the context of the poem in regard to Heaney's background and influences. In an interview with Dennis O'Driscoll, he states that he never consciously wrote from a Catholic perspective, but his writing was definitely influenced by his religion, even though he had 'no agenda to write as a Catholic' (66). Heaney struggled with the expectations which he felt were aimed towards him to write about the events of the Troubles. He was not militant regarding his views but living in Belfast and having to deal with the atrocities that were taking place certainly seemed to affect him. The Civil Rights marches of 1968 to 1969, which saw many protestors beaten by the police and British Army, saw Heaney finding it harder to blame both sides for the conflict (109). By the time *North* was published in 1975, Northern Ireland was being ravaged by the Troubles, where sectarian and military violence was ongoing. People he knew were being murdered, such as his friend Louis O'Neil who died after being blown up in a bomb blast in a pub he was drinking in, in 1972. At the same time, on 30 January 1972, British soldiers shot

28 civilians in the Bogside area of Derry, killing 13 of them instantly in what was to be known as Bloody Sunday. He not only saw what was going on but was personally affected by it too and so his Nationalist sympathies naturally came through.

Through myth and history, Heaney takes the sacrifice of neolithic people and uses it as a parallel for those victims and martyrs of the Troubles. In 'Kinship' this sacrifice is explained as the land as having seduced her victims. Heaney explores this concept that the land has seduced people over the centuries and can be seen when the speaker declares, 'I stand at the edge of centuries / facing a goddess' (71-72). The land has seduced her followers and over the centuries has thus been treated like a goddess, and the sacrifices made back in history are still being made in the present time. The speaker can look back from the present time, and see the same sacrifice being made in the name of the land. Michael Parker argues that 'Heaney recognises that although the goddess of territory has stimulated and sustained his poetic energies, during these self-same periods she excited others to channel their frustrated energies - political, spiritual, and possibly sexual even - into horrific acts of slaughter' (141).

'Kinship' suggests that nothing has changed in Ireland, the ongoing conflict has been, for the most part, a continuous part of the island of Ireland, from post-Neolithic times right through to present day. He declares that those nationalistic tendencies have seen 'our mother ground / … sour with the blood / of her faithful' (126-128). However, it is not just nationalistic tendencies which have caused conflict; there was conflict between the different tribes before the first invaders arrived. It was after all on the invitation of the deposed king of Leinster, Diarmait MacMurrough who wanted his kingship back from Ruaidri O'Rourke, that the Normans arrived in Ireland (Liam de Paor, 94). Ireland has rarely seen peace, and the latest conflict is nothing new. This is confirmed with his reference to Tacitus which reminds the reader that this has been ongoing for many hundreds of years, that these problems were

noted by the Romans, and Ireland has rarely been at peace. He suggests that 'this island of the ocean / where nothing will suffice' (133-135) is still struggling to find satisfaction in its position in the world in terms of its partitioned tenure. The idea that 'nothing will suffice' suggests that the solution of a united Ireland will not make everyone happy either: the Nationalists will be satisfied, but those loyal to Britain will not be. It seems as though there will never be a contented Ireland, one sector will always be unhappy. Looking at Ireland's history, there have been centuries of conflict, including a time before colonisation, when tribes fought each other over territory. Heaney connects the present to the past by using the bog body and its past predicament as a sacrificial victim as a representation of the present Troubles and those it has affected. In these ways, the layers of the bog become a metaphor for the complicated history of colonisation in Ireland, and the effect it has had on the Irish as a nation.

Heaney looks to Ireland's history with Britain to understand the effects of Britain's colonisation, and in the process alludes to the brutality in which colonisation has taken place. This brutality is suggested in 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', which is an allegory for the troubled and brutal colonisation of Ireland by England. Heaney has taken Sir Walter Ralegh's poem title, 'Ocean's Love to Cynthia' (which he supposedly wrote to Queen Elizabeth I) and renamed it 'Ocean's Love to Ireland'. The title itself is ironic, as it a well-known fact that Ralegh had only disdain for Ireland and its people, and he was anti-Catholic. Connotations of rape can be seen with the use of strong, vivid images which describe how 'Ralegh has backed the maid to a tree / And drives inland / Till her strands are breathless' (2, 4-5). The maid represents Ireland, and Ralegh is England. Heaney likens the violation of the maid to the rape of Ireland by England when he describes that 'Ireland is backed by England / and drives inland'. Neil Corcoran agrees that 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', 'draws on a passage from John Aubrey's life of Ralegh to transform [his love for Elizabeth] into a rape':

> He loved a wench well; and one time getting up one of the Mayds of Honour up against a tree in a wood (‘twas his first Lady) who seemed at first boarding to be something fearful of her Honour, and modest, she cryed, sweet Sir Walter, what doe you me ask? Will you undoe me? Nay, sweet Sir Walter! Sweet Sir Walter! At last, as the danger and the pleasure at the same time grew higher, she cryed in extasey, Swisser, Swatter, Swisser, Swatter. She proved with child, and I doubt not but this Hero tooke care of them both, as also that the Product was more than an ordinary mortal. (Corcoran 77)

This fits in with the sexual connotations of other Heaney poems such as ‘Act of Union’ in which he sees England as regretting the pain of the impending childbirth of his partner, Ireland, and his bog poems with their sexual references throughout. These sexual connotations continue with phrases such as ‘drives inland’, ‘The Spanish prince has spilled his gold’, and ‘breathless’, all of which add to the sense of England’s colonisation of Ireland as being like a sexual act.

Sexual connotations in Heaney’s historical poem ‘Ocean’s Love to Ireland’ are a reminder of the impotency of the atrocities which have occurred in the past and those that continue in the present time. When Sir Walter Ralegh was sent to Ireland to suppress an uprising in the province of Munster, his victory at Smerwick, in which he put down the Desmond uprising, resulted in hundreds of deaths of Irish, Spanish, and Italians. Heaney describes this, saying ‘Smerwick sowed from the mouthing corpses / of six hundred papists, as gallant and good / personages as ever were beheld’ (16-18). The ‘six hundred papists’ were sent by the Pope to help the Irish, but upon surrender at Smerwick in 1580, they were massacred by English armies of Lord Deputy Grey and Sir Walter Ralegh (Ross 1576). Heaney appears to be suggesting that there is no nobility in the actions of the colonisers. It is also a reminder that this victory by the English saw destruction, famine, and a loss of land for

the Irish, and saw a rise of plantations of English and the eventual English conquest of Ireland. Comparing the slaughter of the Catholic soldiers with the Troubles reminds the reader that this slaughter continues. Neil Corcoran suggests that the papists were slaughtered 'for the common good; or at least for the common good of 'Cynthia' (Queen Elizabeth) and those English colonists who dispossessed the rebel landholders after Smerwick' (78). This 'slaughtering for the common good is visible in Heaney's poem 'Kinship' where the speaker asks Tacitus to 'report us fairly / how we slaughter / for the common good' (138-140). This is illustrative of the Troubles and how those sectarian ideologies see atrocious acts of violence and sacrifice for the 'common good'. Heaney appears to be saying that what was happening in the Troubles by those who argued that they were committing atrocities and fighting for 'the cause' was no different than those who colonised Ireland centuries beforehand. History is merely repeating itself, and the rape of the country which occurred by the English was in many ways being relived in the sense that the actions of a few were being visited upon many without their control. The majority of people living in Northern Ireland on both sides of the religious divide would like to see a unity of the Northern Ireland community, however this peace is being prevented by a few dissident groups. These groups are both Nationalist and Loyalist, and their views tend to look inward, with both feeling as if they are being attacked by the other. The Catholic nationalists see themselves as fighting to get the coloniser out of their country, and initially during the Troubles, to have the same rights as the Protestant population. Meanwhile, the Protestant Loyalists saw themselves as under attack from the Nationalists during the Troubles, and now see themselves as British, with this 'Britishness' being under attack too. It appears that neither can see things without the prejudices and memory of the past getting in the way.

The theme of impotence continues in 'Ocean's Love to Ireland' when the speaker also laments at how, 'The Spanish prince has spilled his gold / and failed her' (21-22), in Spain's

failure to invade England, it has failed Ireland too; if Spain had succeeded, then the outcome for Ireland may have been very different. Once again it is the impotency of the act which prevents the Irish from prevailing in their bid for freedom from England. Heaney uses the association of a violent sexual act of rape to describe a defining moment in Ireland's history: the battle of Smerwick which resulted in the slaughter of the 600 'papists' as well as victory over the rest of the Irish rebels. The result of this slaughter would see Lord Deputy Grey conducting a campaign of destruction in Munster. Liam de Paor explains that by 1582, 'famine was everywhere and the rebellion was crushed' (132). This particular rebellion saw the plantation of English, and saw Ireland coming under the control of England. Sexual impotence in the inclusion of Onan is a reminder of the failure by those fighting and their allies, a time in history which saw Ireland lose its independence. The last line in the poem which looks at 'the ground possessed and repossessed' suggests the struggle for control over it. It has connotations of taking the land back for the Irish, a land that was once possessed by them, and will one day be again.

Heaney uses history in the context of a sexual union between Ireland and Britain to explore the effects of colonisation on Ireland, and how it has produced a disaffected population in Northern Ireland. The poem 'Act of Union' reveals sexual connotations with words such as 'A gash breaking open the ferny bed' suggesting a sexual act which is far from gentle, instead the act is 'heaving', and like a 'battering ram' which is violent and thrusting suggesting that this was a violent union. This follows on with 'boom burst' suggesting ejaculation, but none of these terms conjure up images of a loving situation, instead it comes across as a forced act. Even the title conjures up images of a sexual nature, and the reader is reminded of the act of creating life which is confirmed later in the poem when it is described how 'The act sprouted an obstinate fifth column' (19). These sexual connotations continue into the poem where it is clear to see that Ireland is portrayed as female, while England is

male. Just as in 'Ocean's Love to Ireland', England is the dominant male, declaring 'I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder' (line 9). 'A gash breaking open the ferny bed / Your back is a firm line of eastern coast/ and arms and legs are thrown' (4-6), provides a very clear picture of sexual activity, and shows the female image in a vulnerable position, but one who has turned her back on him. Ireland may have independence by turning her back on England, but at what cost? Her island has been divided and her 'half independent shore' (12) is still connected to England by way of England's 'legacy', Northern Ireland. This legacy has created inequality for the Catholic population and sectarian violence between the Protestant and Catholic population. The Act of Union was touted to the Catholic population as being a move towards Catholic emancipation. According to Alvin Jackson:

> the critical aspect of the Act of Union in the early nineteenth century was not what it did, but what it failed to do. The architects of the Union, and particularly Prime Minister William Pitt, had conceived the measure as a means to extending and reinforcing the state, and more widely – of consolidating the government of the empire. But this vision was worthless if the union did not accommodate the Irish people, or if it passed over the heads of a resentful majority. (28)

The Union relied on the support of leading Catholics under the premise of Catholic emancipation if it passed; support was duly given, the Union came into being, but Catholic emancipation did not come about until thirty years later. This failure to enact emancipation when it had been promised and then the failure of the British government to provide a remedy for the suffering of the Great Famine was another layer to add to the discontent of the Catholic Irish. The partition of Ireland and subsequent inequality resulted in a disaffected Catholic/Republican population in Northern Ireland.

The concept of Ireland seducing young men, as a type of femme fatale, can be seen in some of Heaney's other poems. This Kathleen ni Houlihan image shows Ireland as seductress, for whom young men are willing to sacrifice their lives, and is present in his bog poems, such as 'The Tollund Man', 'Requiem for the Croppies', and the 'The Grauballe Man'. The poem 'The Tollund Man', describes the body of a man sacrificed to the Earth Mother, Nerthus, as being 'bridegroom to the goddess' (12). In the poem 'Requiem for the Croppies', thousands of lives are sacrificed and returned to the land while fighting for Irish freedom in the 1798 uprising. This too has connotations of seduction by the land, where expectations are of young men sacrificing themselves for the nation. However, in 'Act of Union' the seductress has become the seduced, and Northern Ireland and the Loyalist and Nationalist movements are the result. Northern Ireland is represented as 'parasitical' (22) and sits alongside the seductress in that sense. The land as seductress is getting life from another too, those who have given their lives for it, it too is parasitical. The land in the sense of a nation needs these young men for support in order to become a single nation once again, breaking down the partitioned boundaries of the British empire. The Nationalist idea of martyrdom for the land can be seen in 'Requiem for the Croppies' where 'Terraced thousands died' (11), their martyrdom feeds the nationalistic ideology, and as an extension, it feeds the land. The term 'pain' has connotations of childbirth, the result of the union which is Northern Ireland. The term 'cocked', has connotations of a gun ready to be fired by young men with their 'ignorant little fists already' (23) who the speaker describes that they 'beat at your borders and I know they're cocked / at me across the water' (23-25). There is a real sense of anger, this offspring is showing its anger at both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The 'fifth column' has turned on England and on the Republic of Ireland, and is 'mustering force' (22), suggesting it is determined to fight them. The product of this

act, and England's imperialism, is Northern Ireland, and its anger is directed at both the United Kingdom and Ireland. Seamus Deane suggests that

> the major communities in the North, Protestant and Catholic, unionist and nationalist, are compelled by the force of circumstances… to rehearse positions from which there is no exit. Both communities have felt in the past and now do feel that the principles to which they are loyal are in grievous danger of being betrayed (or have already been betrayed) by those governments, in London and Dublin, who were ostensibly their custodians. (15)

Both sectarian groups feel like they have been betrayed by both the partition of Ireland in 1921 and the subsequent 'Good Friday Agreement' of 1998; for the Unionists it means they have to power share with 'the enemy', and for the Nationalists they have had their country split which does not give them the true independence from Britain which they desire.

Heaney turns to myth in his elegy 'The Strand at Lough Beg' from *Field Work* (1979) which was written in response to the random murder of Heaney's cousin Colum McCartney by Loyalist paramilitaries in August 1975. Colum McCartney was driving home from a Gaelic Football match in Croke Park in Dublin when he came across a bogus roadblock, set up by the Loyalist paramilitaries to look like it was the Ulster Defence Regiment. McCartney was gunned down in cold blood, and although Heaney did not personally know his cousin, he was affected by the event and wrote 'The Strand at Lough Beg' as an elegy to his cousin. This poem was one of several in *Field Work* which were dedicated to people who had been randomly killed in the Troubles by sectarian factions. Louis O'Neill, in whose memory he wrote 'Casualty', was 'blown to bits' in a bar after breaking the IRA curfew, which was as the result of the 13 people who were shot dead by British soldiers in the Bogside area of Derry, an event known as Bloody Sunday. 'A Postcard from North Antrim' was written for

his university friend Sean Armstrong, a social worker, who was shot dead on the landing of his flat.

In 'The Strand at Lough Beg', Heaney reconstructs the events of his cousin's ambush by imagining the scene as it may have been. Alan Peacock suggests that 'the poem is a moving triumph of empathetic reconstruction', in which 'local reference, mythological allusion, and specificity of imagined detail coalesce in a lament which raises ordinary, humane, appalled speculation on the circumstances to a level of solemnised grief' (238). He produces a scene with simple imagery that suggests an ordinary person going about their day doing everyday activities. What initially starts as a simple pastoral type scene where he describes 'Leaving the white glow of filling stations / And a few lonely streetlamps among fields / You climbed the hills towards Newtownhamilton / Past the Fews Forest, out beneath the stars' (1-4), soon becomes a more menacing picture. The tone changes, and the image of a young man driving home after a likely enjoyable day watching Gaelic Football matches becomes one of menace and terror. Words such as 'bloodied heads' has violent connotations and can be connected to those murdered victims of the Troubles, while 'demon pack' suggests something evil is about to befall his cousin. 'Heads hooded' indicates that those who are about to kill him do so under anonymity and show that there is no honour in what they have done if they have to hide their faces. It is also a reminder of those victims of sectarianism who were hooded and killed before being dumped or buried, quite often in the bog. 'Snapping and squealing' has connotations of something being hunted, like pigs being chased by dogs, which reminds the reader that there is no humanity in this or any other murder which took place during the Troubles. These words suggest a darker story is about to unfold and Heaney provides an image of evil, so the reader is under no illusion that those involved are evil, and that there is no humanity in the perpetrators' act of violence. These connotations of something sinister and evil provide a contrast to Heaney's description of

Colm McCartney who was scared upon finding ‘spent cartridges’ left behind by duck shooters. He makes it clear that McCartney was not part of any paramilitary group, merely someone in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The poem turns to myth to extend the image of violence when Heaney includes Sweeney in part one of the poem. Sweeney originates from the Old Irish tale, ‘Buile Suibhne’ which translates as ‘The Madness of Sweeney. Once again Heaney uses myth to try and make sense of the sectarian violence. ‘Buile Suibne’ was translated as ‘Sweeney Astray’, by Heaney in 1983 and it is a tale about Suibne Mac Colmain, King of the Dal n’Airaidi, in Ulster who was cursed by St Ronan to roam the earth and die by sword point. Suibhne’s territory was said to be based around the area that the poem is set. He describes the road in which Colum McCartney is travelling as being ‘that road, a high, bare pilgrim’s track / Where Sweeney fled before the bloodied heads’ (5-6). Not only has he set the tone of the poem in terms of a dark foreboding scene, but he has used myth to do it. This is a method he has used in his other poems such as ‘Punishment’, ‘The Tollund Man’, and ‘Funeral Rites’ in order to understand the culture and events of the Troubles. The use of myth suggests that the Troubles has been born out of myth, something which over time has lost its true meaning. Heaney appears to be implying that the original issues that drive the contemporary violence have been lost over time, and now Irish nationalism’s fight is based on hate instead of the realisation of freedom from Britain and the attainment of a united Ireland. Just like those who sacrificed themselves for Nerthus to secure a successful harvest, the myth has let those Nationalists down by not living up to expectations.

The last part of ‘The Strand at Lough Beg’ has Heaney imagining his cousin walking with him through the Strand where he describes them working their way ‘…through squeaking sedge / Drowning in dew’ (32-33). He describes to his cousin how ‘I turn because the sweeping of your feet / Has stopped behind me, to find you on your knees / With blood

and roadside muck in your hair and eyes' (35-37), and reminiscent of Dante's Virgil in which Virgil wipes the grime of Hell from Dante's face, Heaney explains to his cousin how he kneels in front of him to '…gather up cold handfuls of the dew / To wash you, cousin. I dab you clean with moss / Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud' (39-41). The reference to Dante begins as an epigraph and ends with a similar scene to Dante's *Purgatorio*. Heaney explains that he wrote the last part first after reading *Purgatorio* as he 'couldn't not connect it' with his own strand (221). This particular scene in *Purgatorio,* which is about Dante's journey through Purgatory and the seven deadly sins with Virgil by his side, Dante and Virgil emerge from Hell and find themselves on an island which is described as 'this little island, round about its very base, down there where the wave beats it, bears rushes on its soft mud' (9). The description of the island reminds Heaney of Lough Beg near where he grew up, and Church Island which is situated on the lough, although not a true island as only three sides are surrounded by water, hence it is called the Strand. Church Island is thought to be connected to St Patrick and contains a bullaun stone which has a hole that holds water and was believed to have been created by St Patrick as he knelt down to pray and therefore, is a sacred place for Catholics.

Connotations of religion are clear in the lines 'lift you under the arms and lay you flat / With rushes that shoot green again, I plait / Green scapulars to wear over your shroud' (42-44). These images suggest a shared Christian religion, and the reader may be reminded of Jesus who, in Christian belief, was sacrificed on the cross for the good of mankind, and who rose again. This idea of religion is enhanced with the use of the words 'green scapulars', which are a symbol of a miracle conversion and are a Catholic symbol (Emmons, 33). Heaney is once again suggesting a common religious connection, and a reminder of what is one of the main drivers behind the atrocities of the Troubles, that of religion. McCartney was murdered because of his religion, and the Troubles have now become about religion as much

as about independence from Britain. And again, connotations of the continued fight are clear as Heaney looks at regeneration and describes how he plaits green scapulars with '…rushes that shoot green again' (44). This is an important theme in many of Heaney's poems, the idea that the fight will continue from generation to generation with no ending, that the divisions that are now there between the loyalist groups and Irish nationalist groups are too large to ever be overcome. The Viking culture which has endured within the Irish psyche and is based on violence and retribution is still alive in the events of the Troubles. McCartney's death will be avenged and the continual tribal culture of continuous bloodshed and an eye for an eye, which is so similar to that of the Vikings, will continue.

Heaney's use of myth and history to explore the events of the Troubles and understand the violent activities of those involved has seen him criticised for doing so. However, this criticism seems short-sighted and appears to misunderstand Heaney's reason for doing so. He uses myth to extend the theme of colonisation and its effect on the Irish psyche, suggesting that the Viking culture of violence and retribution lives on in the era of the Troubles. Along with the search for answers through myth and history, Heaney finds the relationship between religion and the continuing tensions between Protestants and Catholics in the North. He distances himself from the continuous violence by writing about something which occurred thousands of years previous, providing an effective platform from which to do so.

Chapter Five

Memory: The importance of Memory to the History of the Irish, in the Land and the People.

Heaney uses memory of the land as a motif in many of his poems in order to create understanding for the events of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Heaney looks to the land, and how it contains the memory of the colonisation and continued struggle of the people of Ireland, in terms of their fight for independence from Britain. His poetry, in particular, that written after the Naturalist, explores the connection between the aforesaid colonisation and the Troubles of Northern Ireland. In *Preoccupations'* Heaney explains that 'since memory was the faculty that supplied me with the first quickening of my own poetry, I had a tentative unrealised need to make a congruence between memory and bogland, and for the want for a better word, our national conscience' (54). In a number of his poems Heaney uses the bog to show the layers of colonisation, and how each layer contains memory of invasion. This memory is stored within the bog, and over the centuries has accumulated to create the story of Ireland, It has also resulted in a culmination of resentment which has finally exploded into what became known as the Troubles, and prior to that, the Irish War of Independence. The memory of the bog becomes a metaphor for the memory of the Irish; the layers of the bog are an allegory for the layers of memories and the effect they have had on the Irish psyche.

Heaney maintains that he never set out to write from a sectarian point of view, but the conditions and events of the time influenced his work, so his poetry during the Troubles was indicative as to what was going on at the time. Through this poetry Heaney suggests that the

effects of colonisation, have resulted in a disaffected population, whose resentment has finally come to the surface, after centuries of being kept down. The land holds onto that memory, and the bog in particular, is a keeper of memories. In the poem 'Belderg', this memory is seen in the objects which are revealed in the bog over time. The speaker describes how 'when he stripped off blanket bog / the soft-piled centuries /fell open like a glib / there were the first tyre marks / the stone-age fields' (9-13), early Irish history is revealed. Thomas C. Foster suggests these accumulations of layers are the same as the layers of the ages in which we are all made up of; we are unconscious inheritors of numerous traditions from these successive ages. He argues that Heaney becomes aware of that heritage and understands how it can be used to understand current history as well as ancient history (Foster 59).

The memory of the land is the layers of different cultures and traditions, pointing to a nation which is made up of many layers, just as the bog is made up of many layers too. His inclusion of the different eras of invasion in his poems, relating it back to the land, provides an image of the land holding onto the memories of the past, with each layer showing that there has been a constant repeat of history in regard to conflict. Kevin Whelan describes memory as

> spontaneous, social, collective, and encompassing; borne by living societies, it is permanently evolving like a coral reef, with a cumulative, incremental view. Living memory is condensed in myth, the collective construction of memory, in which is embedded its defining narrative. Active myth is a form of legitimisation of the present by the past, and it belongs to a nation not an individual. (97)

This concept suits Heaney's bog poems where myth is used to link the present with the past in order to make sense of the events of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Heaney uses bog bodies in several of his poems to pursue this idea of the land as memory. The bodies are buried for centuries, holding onto the memories of their era, yet becoming a part of the memories which are layered on top of it. The successive centuries do not suppress the memory, it is more that they add to it. The bog bodies are a reminder of a previous time, a time of ritual and sacrifice, which Heaney uses to examine how people are being killed and sacrificed in contemporary times, all for an outcome which will not please everyone. These bog bodies are a reminder of a more violent time, a reminder of inequality, once again pointing to contemporary events.

Heaney explores the ideology of the sectarian violence, which espouses the idea of sacrifice in the name of a free Ireland. Through his poems, he shows how young men have died for mother Ireland, and this can be seen in his bog poems where he uses the bog bodies of Jutland, who are sacrificed to the earth goddess Nerthus, as an analogy for the sacrifice of young men in contemporary times. The Nationalist ideology is one of triumph in defeat, and the memory of previous conflicts fuels this ideology. This collective memory is seen in the elevation of King James as a saviour for the downtrodden people by the Society of United Irishmen. According to Guy Beiner, 'instead of the initial derision regarding King James where he was seen as cowardly in regard to the Battle of the Boyne, he was used to suggest a promise of future victory and was buoyed by the French Revolution' (374).

Collective memory is manipulated to suit the needs of either side. Heaney explores this concept and through his bog poems suggests that those memories have ended in murdered young men. In poems such as in 'Funeral Rites', Heaney explores martyrdom for the greater good of the community; it is this martyrdom through memory of the past which is used generation after generation. After the failure of 1798, the leaders became martyrs, and were used to promote the cause of the uprising. Instead of mourning their losses, they became symbols of a continual fight, one that would regenerate. At his 1915 graveside

speech at the funeral of Fenian Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, Padraic Pearse declared 'Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations' (Beiner 375). Those who died become the memory for the next generation, and according to Beiner, "memories of the past shaped perceptions of historical events and were thus a reflexive agent of self-validation and auto-generation (377). However, Roy Foster argues that, 'Bernard Shaw and Alfred Webb suggested in 1898, others would do better to look to the future than to a past which has been romanticised and sanitised for present purposes' (93). This retelling of, or conveniently forgetting history can be seen when the burning alive of 100 Protestant civilians in a locked barn in Scullabogue by rebel forces in 1798 has been repainted as not having happened, even though it is a well-known fact that it did (Roy Foster 87). Andrew Foley suggests that the bog poems continue to offer a brutally pertinent understanding of the underlying causes of the ongoing Ulster crises (73). It is the memory of the past which is the seed of the martyrdom of young men in the Troubles. Ian McBride quotes one political scientist as saying that 'Ireland is almost a land without a history because the troubles of the past are relived as contemporary events' (1). This fits in well with Shaw's and Webb's suggestion of looking ahead instead of behind through rose-tinted glasses, the memories of the past have provided a reason to continue actions which should have been learnt from, put aside and forgotten. Instead it is clung to and reinvented to fit the issue of the day, it gives the contemporary events legitimacy.

Both sides of the sectarian divide have a historical memory of Ireland which differs to the other. The Loyalists have memory which is defined by the triumphal events of Protestantism, while Irish Nationalists look further back to a pre-invasion era when they were tribal and had their own ruling system. According to Ian McBride,

> Loyalism had been constructed upon a grid of talismanic dates-1640, 1690, 1912- all underlining the durability of ethnic antagonism in Ireland, the unchanging threat

> posed by Roman Catholicism and the ultimate assurance of providential deliverance. For Nationalists, the myth of a pre-Norman golden era, the recollection of conquest and persecution, and the pantheon of Republican martyrs which stretched from Wolfe Tone to Patrick Pearse have all formed corresponding ideological functions. (2)

This memory appears to be a major impetus in continuing the fight for independence from Britain and portrays the failures of the past as successes based on the martyrs who took part in these uprisings. The likes of Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmett, Napper Tandy, have been remembered, not for their subsequent failures, but for their glory of martyrdom and the message of loyalty and freedom; they provide a belief that rising up against the tyrant is worth dying for. Father Kavanagh who was an accepted nineteenth century historian of the rising said the following at the laying of the foundation stone of a memorial to the 1798 Wexford uprising: 'it was proof to future generations that we were imbued with the spirit of the men of '98…. The men whose memory we honour today, died for a persecuted creed as well as an oppressed country… Their blood was not poured forth in rain. It made the earth which drank it ever sacred to freedom; with their expiring death they kindled the embers of a fire which burnt still (Roy Foster 77). This memory through martyrdom has continued through to the present day, and the Troubles have seen young men die for the cause of a united Ireland.

The concept of sacrifice and martyrdom is portrayed by Heaney in his poems as being a consequence of the events which are embedded in the Irish memory. The continuous cycle of the past being used to inspire, even though history has resulted in failure and martyrdom, is a significant theme in Heaney's poetry. Heaney explores the memory of martyrdom in the poem 'Requiem for the Croppies', from *Door into the Dark* (1969), a poem which is based on the 1798 uprising in Ireland, and in particular describes the battle of Vinegar Hill in Enniscorthy, County Wexford during the 1798 uprising. This battle in the 1798 uprising

was particularly brutal, and although the rebels appeared to take the fight to the British, they were outnumbered and outgunned, much as they were in the Easter uprising, which led to their eventual slaughter on Vinegar Hill. Since, at the time that 'Requiem for the Croppies' was written, it was approaching the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Easter uprising, many writers in Ireland were writing in commemoration of that event. However, instead of the 1916 uprising itself, Heaney wrote about the 1798 uprising which, it has been argued, was the inspiration for 1916. The final line of the poem in which, 'in August the barley grew up out of the grave' (14), suggests hope of a renewal of life, and in particular that this would not be the last time that the Irish would rise up and fight, referencing both the Irish War of Independence, and the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The barley is a reminder that the seeds of rebellion were sown during the failed 1798 uprising and reaped in the 1916 Easter uprising, a little over one hundred years later. In *Preoccupations* Heaney explains that the 1916 uprising 'was the harvest of seeds sown in 1798, when revolutionary republican ideals and national feeling coalesced in the doctrines of Irish republicanism and in the rebellion of 1798 itself-unsuccessful and savagely put down' (56). This explanation fits in well with the idea as mooted by Guy Beiner, of the Nationalist Republican tradition of "triumph of defeat". Beiner argues that the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic 'justified the insurrection with reference to "the dead generations" and an "old tradition of nationhood" through which "every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty' (377). The concept of the glorious dead and their glory through failure can be seen when Roger Casement's remains had eventually been returned to Ireland in 1965, 49 years after his execution by the British. According to Richard Kirkland, Eamonn De Valera orated at Casement's graveside and 'expressed the hope that Casement's example would provide its own inspiration: "This grave…will become a place of pilgrimage to which our young people will come and get renewed inspiration and renewed determination that they

will also do everything that in them lies so that this nation which has been one in the past will be one again in the future"' (49). This inspiration is recognised in 'Requiem for the Croppies' where Heaney looks at the martyrs of 1798 regenerating in the martyrs of 1916, and those martyrs who compel contemporary martyrs of the Troubles to continue the sacrifice. Heaney implies that it is not only the memory of suffering and inequality that spurs on the eternal retribution and death but one of martyrdom and its inspiration for the next generation.

The martyrdom and sacrifice which have been such a large part of the fight for independence from the British can be regarded as a memory of 'triumph of defeat'. The 1916 leaders employed the memory of the leaders, such as Wolfe Tone, and Napper Tandy, of the 1798 uprising as inspiration for the Easter uprising. Although the 1798 uprising ended in failure and death for thousands including those leaders, the tradition of looking back at defeat as triumph continued. Those who found inspiration in the failed Battle of the Boyne, became the inspiration for those executed in the Easter uprising of 1916; this is what made it a triumph of defeat. Each generation was looking to be triumphant in the shadow of those who previously had tried; their self-sacrifice made their loss victorious. Heaney explores this idea and suggests that this concept of regeneration through past failure is ingrained in the memory of the Irish. Memory, which is part of the reason the rebels fight, is what spurs the 1916 leaders to rise up, and although the 1798 rebels were defeated, it is not lamented by the Irish but instead celebrated as a triumph in defeat and used in successive rebellions. According to Beiner, Padraic Pearse, one of the leaders of the 1916 uprising, argued that 'Emmett's rising was not a failure, but a triumph for the deathless thing we call Irish Nationality' and that patriotism was 'in large part a memory of heroic dead men and a striving to accomplish some task left unfinished by them' (377). It appears that each generation harbours a memory of the earlier generations from which to gain inspiration. It is this inspiration which, regardless

of the defeat which previous generations had incurred, Heaney highlights as being a key component to the martyrdom of young men during the Troubles.

This concept of sacrifice and how it has manifested within the Irish psyche to then be reproduced for contemporary purposes is notable in Heaney's bog poems. In these poems, Heaney uses the bog in Jutland as a metaphor for the memory of sacrifice and suffering, which is a result of the colonisation of Ireland by various cultures throughout the centuries. Heaney uses the poem, 'The Tollund Man' to emphasise this sacrifice and suffering and although the Tollund man is a bog body which was discovered in Denmark in 1950, Heaney uses it to reinforce themes of sacrifice, martyrdom, and regeneration. The bog becomes the holder of memory, which in this case is that of a sacrifice which took place in early Iron Age Denmark, and it is a reminder that these were times when superstitions and beliefs meant people were made scapegoats for the greater good of the community. It is the Tollund man who is 'Naked except for / The cap, noose, and girdle' (9-10) which provides an image of a pure unadulterated selfless act, an act which ultimately sees him become 'a saint's kept body' (16), one which may be considered as being metaphorically re-enacted during the Troubles. The Neolithic people made sacrifices to the fertility goddess Nerthus, in return for the success of crops in the upcoming season. In 'Bog Queen', the body becomes a symbol of Irish republicanism, of resentments simmering underneath, as she lays waiting 'between turf-face and demesne wall' (2), with the turf-face representing the native Irish and the demesne wall being the colonisers and may be seen as a metaphor for the Irish nationalists who too are seen to be waiting, lying down, and waiting for their turn to rise up and take their country back. Michael Parker suggests that she is a representation of Kathleen Ni Houlihan, who was a symbol for nationalism and sacrifice for the national cause, and native resentment. Ni Houlihan was said to have the same fatal attraction as the North European fertility goddess, Nerthus. It was as a sacrifice to Nerthus, that the Tollund man met his fate, in return for

continued abundant harvests (106). It is this sacrifice which Irish Republicans believe will result in a free Ireland. The belief that sacrifice to a fertility goddess would ensure abundant harvests, and the belief by Irish Nationalists that, in order to achieve a united Ireland, lives must be sacrificed is one and the same, it is a means to an end. Heaney uses this idea of a martyr for the greater good of the community as a parallel for the conflict which Ireland has endured for over 800 years and one which has culminated in the martyrdom of young men in current events of the Troubles.

Heaney explores the concept that past atrocities and catastrophic events in Ireland have had such an impact on the Irish, that the memory has been well and truly embedded in the Irish psyche, and is still felt in the present day, especially in the context of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. In the poem 'At a Potato Digging', Heaney looks at how the land holds onto the memory of the people by linking the present with the past. The motif of the land as the memory of the people is one which Heaney uses in his other poems, such as 'Kinship' and 'Requiem for the Croppies'. In 'Kinship' the land links the speaker with those who share the same heritage with him, those who commit atrocities against others in pursuit of a common goal. In 'Requiem for the Croppies', the land takes on the memory of those who have died fighting for freedom and regenerates that fight one hundred years later. However, in this instance, Heaney uses the agricultural ritual of potato harvesting to show how tragic, historical events are still felt over a century later. 'At a Potato Digging' which is made up of four parts, examines the Irish Famine of 1845 and how its effects were still being felt in contemporary times in Ireland at the time of writing in 1966. Part one and two describe the harvesting of potatoes in modern times using a mechanical digger but alludes to the famine in both parts. Words such as 'dead' are an indicator of the result of the famine, 'crows' are symbols of death, and 'ragged' which represents those victims and their appearance are all representative of the events which have left an indelible imprint on the Irish psyche. Heaney

uses descriptions such as these not only to highlight how these experiences of one hundred years ago are still palpable in current times, but how this sense of continuity is a part of the Irish culture.

These images of death and despair continue in part three of the poem with strong images of the famine, which describe how 'wild-higgledy skeletons / scoured the land in 'forty-five / wolfed the blighted root and died / The new potato, sound as stone / putrefied when it had lain / Millions rotted along with it' (31-35, 37). Instantly the 'wild-higgledy skeletons of 1845 become connected to the 'higgledy line' of contemporary times, re-enforcing the theme of the past and present intertwining. Heaney reinforces the theme of suffering and death with scenes of 'a million wicker huts / beaks of famine snipped at guts / a people hungering since birth / grubbing, like plants, in the bitch earth / stinking potatoes fouled the land' (41-44, 47). There is no doubt that in 1845 the people were starving and desperate, or that the memory of it is still very raw and affects the people today. The land has continued to hold onto the memory of the suffering and death caused by the famine, and it is still omnipresent in the people of Ireland. Although life has returned to a more consistent rhythm of sowing and harvesting, the past is always close by, 'and where potato diggers are / you still smell the running sore' (49-50). It fits with the theme of the land holding onto the memory and a shared commonality of the Irish. According to Ronald Tamplin, 'At a Potato Digging' 'projects the past into the present and finds no discontinuity between the two' (24). Not only have they not forgotten the famine, but it is now part of the national psyche. The word 'pus' suggests something which is infected and hasn't healed, just as the hurt and pain of the Great Famine has not healed in the Irish memory, contemporary Ireland still remembers the suffering of its past.

Heaney uses the bog to promote the theory that the land holds onto the memory of the people. In a number of his bog poems, Heaney looks to the distant past to analyse the

continuous invasion of Ireland and its effect on the Irish psyche. He does this by suggesting that the layers of the bog correspond to the many layers of colonisation, and like a sponge, it has absorbed all of the cultures which have gone into making up the Irish as they are today. It is effective in portraying Irish history and culture as a series of layers which have been added to by successive invaders, and each invasion has both added to the Irish culture and left a mark on the Irish psyche. In his bog poem 'Kinship' he suggests that the bog is an 'Earth-pantry / bone-vault' (37), while in the poem 'Bog Queen' it is the memories of the Queen herself which are stored within its confines as her 'diadem grew carious / gemstones dropped / in the peat floe / like the bearings of history (25-28). The bog queen is a Viking who has become one with the land which puts her on the same level as the Gaelic that she has colonised. In 'The Tollund Man' it is the memory of the horrific atrocities which occurred during the Irish War of Independence where

> The scattered ambushed
>
> Flesh of labourers
>
> Stockinged corpses
>
> Laid out in farmyards
>
> Tell-tale skin and teeth
>
> Flecking the sleepers
>
> Of four young brothers (25-31)

which he allegorises through the memories that remain of the Tolland man. Each memory is retained and has helped to shape both the culture and the psyche of the Irish; the bog becomes a metaphor for the layered history of the Irish and all of the cultures which have settled in Ireland, and it is a symbol of the complex make-up of the Irish.

In ‘Requiem for the Croppies’ Heaney explores this idea of the land soaking up the memory when ‘the hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave’ (12). This not only indicates a brutal and final ending to the battle and connotes an image of the earth soaking up the blood of the rebels which suggests many died during the campaign, but it also points to the land containing the memory within. Corcoran argues that the use of personification here ‘dramatizes the sense of shame taken into the land itself by the atrocity committed on it’ (26). The hillside blushing becomes a metaphor for the shame which is felt or should be felt because of the atrocities which have occurred in the quest for a united Ireland. This shame is for the horrors of the past as well as those of the Troubles and once again links the past with the present. Shame is also considered by Russell who explores Rand Brande’s suggestion that the original title for ‘Punishment’ was ‘Shame’. He suggests it has a double connotation, not only suggesting how the contemporary republican community tried to shame local Catholic women by tarring and feathering them for consorting with British soldiers but also how that community ‘should feel itself for its primitive, brutal behaviour’ (76). The concept of shame in his poem ‘Requiem for the Croppies’ when ‘The hillside blushed’ (12) from the blood of the fallen rebels has connotations of shame, the shame of the nation caused by the violence and retribution which has been a part of Irish history for centuries. This is a reminder that these atrocities have taken place and are still occurring in Ireland. The history of Ireland over the last millennium is one of inequality, persecution, murder, hunger, death, and retribution, nothing to be proud of in that sense. It is also a reminder that the atrocities and retribution which have occurred in the struggle for independence and equality have been done so in the name of the Irish people, and therefore this makes everyone complicit in the events which have occurred, regardless of whether they took part in the violence or not.

The effects of the past on contemporary Ireland are evident in the events of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and Heaney portrays this through the theme of memory. It has

been suggested that 'Requiem for the Croppies' was a recruitment song for the IRA, but Heaney argues that it was not written for that purpose. Instead, he explains to Dennis O'Driscoll that it was intended in the 'Northern Ireland context to exercise the rights of nationalists to have freedom of cultural speech, as it were. To make space in the official Ulster lexicon for Vinegar Hill as well as for the Boyne and the Somme' (118). The memory of the 1798 rebellion was just as important to those who lived in Northern Ireland and in particular the Catholic/Nationalist population as the memory of the Boyne, and World War One was to the Protestant/Loyalist community. This would result in more of an inclusive history, instead of one in which a substantial part of the Northern Irish memory has been excluded. It would also acknowledge the history of a united Irish who wanted an independent Ireland, one free from British rule; and these Irish were not fighting as a religious group; instead they were fighting as one unified people.

Colonisation of Ireland has provided a history of inequality and suffering which has manifested within the Irish psyche. The treatment by the English of the Catholic Irish, from the seventeenth century, saw the Irish suffer, losing their lands, their voting rights in parliament, the right to speak their language, and saw many dying; the colonisers became the colonised. This memory has become ingrained in the Irish psyche, and resulted in a resentful nation, ultimately resulting in the Troubles. Although the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which had followed a cease-fire from the IRA and the Loyalists in 1994, saw the inception of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1999, this has not seen an end to the violence or erased the memory. Peace in Northern Ireland is tenuous, and the memory of sectarian hatred and difference is never far away with the Brexit debate renewing old hatreds, as was seen in April 2019 when the young journalist, Lyra McKee was shot by the New IRA during rioting in Derry. Heaney explores this idea of a memory which has resulted in resentment by those who have suffered as a result of colonisation. In the poem, 'Bog Queen' the idea that the bog

queen has become one with the land is seen in the use of nature. Words such as 'turf-face', suggests that she has become an integral part of Irish culture, 'heathery levels', is reminiscent of moors and bogland and the plant which grows on it, and 'soft moraines' is a reminder of the Viking connection as a moraine is the accumulation of glacial debris triggered by glaciers. These 'soft moraines' can be seen as a metaphor for the accumulation of memories and items which have been built up in the bog over centuries; the queen too is an accumulation of the bog. The queen's body becomes 'braille / for the creeping influences' (5-6) which has connotations of a story being told by the processes on her body down through the centuries in which the queen has been lying in the ground; she has become like a storybook for whoever finds her. Referencing 'Bog Queen' and 'Kinship' with its 'hieroglyphic peat', Neil Corcoran suggests that 'given the nature of its primary subject – Northern Ireland in crisis after 1969 – *North* is an astonishingly literary book which foregrounds the way it turns its material into text' (56).

At the time of writing the poem 'Kinship', Northern Ireland was going through social upheaval. The year 1968 witnessed civil rights marches taking place, as a consequence of the inequality felt by the Northern Irish Catholics. Catholics felt that they were being discriminated against due to their religion in many aspects of life, such as employment, education, housing, and politics. According to Ronnie Munck, 'it was in the North's second city Londonderry (Derry) where the perception of being second-class citizens was probably felt most by Catholics because they were actually a majority there (214). The civil rights marches turned into flashpoints of violence, often aggravated by the Reverend Ian Paisley, an Orangeman and politician, and his Ulster Protestant Volunteers (McKittrick and McVea, 41). From then on, the violence escalated as the RUC used violent measures such as powerful water cannon and batons on a peaceful protest. This heralded the beginning of the Troubles, and by the time that Heaney was writing his bog poems, sectarian violence had seen many die

on both sides of the political and religious spectrum. These issues which have seen Ireland ravaged by inequality, war, and imperialism for centuries, have added to the layers of the Irish consciousness. Through the imagery of layers of bog, Heaney explores Ireland's continued fight for a fully united and independent country, and how this has impacted on the people and culture.

Using the theme of memory to promote the idea of those who have come to Ireland have eventually become one with it is addressed in several of Heaney's poems. Throughout these poems, the motif of the land being a collective memory of the nation is clearly represented, and in particular, this is seen in his bog poems. These are a series of poems in which the bog, and the bodies found in it, become an allegory for the political situation of Northern Ireland at the time of writing. Heaney uses the bog to highlight the continued political and social issues which dog Ireland, by connecting the present with the past. In 'Bog Queen', the queen is buried in a way that the 'dawn suns groped over my head / and cooled at my feet' (7-8), suggesting that she had a pagan burial and was buried facing west, and therefore, had not converted to Christianity which dictates that bodies are facing east in anticipation of the second coming of Jesus Christ, as is the belief of Christianity. The term 'wet nest' suggests the bog is like a bird's nest, a place which is safe and familiar, while 'black glacier' is another word for bog which is connected by the Viking Queen's origins of Scandinavia. These connotations of becoming one with the land explore the possibility that although the bog queen is of Viking origin, and therefore foreign, she has become part of it.

The poem 'Kinship' begins as a reminder to the reader of how familiar Heaney is with the peat bog; having grown up near one, he is 'kinned by hieroglyphic peat' (1). The term 'hieroglyphic', from the Greek for 'sacred writing', suggests the layers of bog tell a story of connection to the land and its memory. Heaney has an obvious affection for the bog, with the speaker declaring 'I love this turf-face / its black incisions / the cooped secrets of process and

ritual' (13-16). He ponders the word 'bog', comparing it to the harsher terms 'Quagmire, swampland, morass', (25) preferring the term 'bog', a word whose origins are Irish, a word that means 'soft', while the other words are hard-edged, and tend towards 'slime kingdoms' (26). The bog is quintessentially Irish, having been an integral part of the Irish way of life for centuries. It has been the source of heat in the form of dried turf, and was used to insulate roofs of cottages, and has provided employment for many Irish. People have worked in the bog since time immemorial and continue to do so today, it is a symbol of the continuity of Irish tradition and has sustained the Irish down through the centuries. Therefore, it is the perfect platform to examine the layers of history and invasion in Ireland and its impact on the country and its people, both in the past and the present.

This continuity can be seen in Heaney's other poems such as 'Belderg', in which the Irish culture and traditions have endured in spite of the concerted effort by the English to wipe out the Irish culture. It is also a reminder of the continuous fighting which has taken place over the previous eight hundred years and into the present. In 'Kinship', the bog is not only a collector and storage of memory, both Heaney's and Ireland's, over the centuries, it is also a 'bone vault' which contains 'sabred fugitives' suggesting it is a graveyard for many victims who have run away from captivity but have been cut down in the process and now lie within the bog. The term 'embalmer' provides images of the bog preserving bodies, and this image is reinforced by the word 'casket' which offers connotations of death and burial. The bog is like a graveyard which like a 'midden' contains all types of artifacts and bodies which assist in telling the violent history of Ireland. It absorbs everything that goes into it just as a 'sun-bank' absorbs the energy of the sun. The 'flow of history' suggests that time is arrested inside the bog, and all that has gone into it, including the memories and experiences of the Irish people, still exist, having been preserved by it. These images suggest the bog holds memories from the Neolithic era through to the Vikings, and onto the Middle Ages and

beyond. Each period bringing different experiences such as the Vikings arriving in Ireland, not only did they bring death and terror in their raids, they also constructed the first towns such as Waterford, Dublin, and Wexford and eventually assimilated into Irish culture. The English brought famine and misery and tried to rid Ireland of the Irish by repopulating parts of the country with Scottish and English settlers. In 1691 they took away the right of Catholics to enter parliament, and in 1727, they were denied the right to vote (de Paor,167). Moreover, the memories of the 1798 uprising are in the land, as is seen in 'Requiem for the Croppies' where the ground is soaked in the blood of the rebels.

Heaney writes about memory in order to understand the events which were occurring in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Through his poems he explores the concept that the memory of previous events in Ireland's bloodied and troubled past have shaped the Irish psyche. The ongoing violence as a result of this memory has seen many killed, however, Heaney suggests that this memory of invasion contains a paradox within the bog. The continual nature of invasion in Ireland has created not only a history of violence and suffering, one which is still being played out in Northern Ireland, but it has also created a rich culture which has come from the mix of many cultures. It is this paradox which Heaney explores to show how fruitless the atrocities of the Troubles are.

Conclusion

In his poetry, Seamus Heaney suggests that religion and colonisation are the two main factors in the history of Ireland, which have culminated in the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has two very distinct groups living within its borders, both believing they are right in their ideologies. In his poems Heaney questions how they can reconcile to create a single nation when their ideals and histories are poles apart. Through his poetry he examines the atrocities which were occurring at the time of writing by taking the past and using it as an analogy for the present. Distancing himself both geographically by moving to the Republic, and historically by using myth and history, he is able to try and make sense of why the events of the Troubles were occurring.

Heaney explores the concept that colonisation has played a major role in the manifestation of the Troubles, and provides images of inequality, death, and war. He suggests that colonisation saw the Catholic Irish suffer, and this memory has lingered as a result. He points out that English colonisation has grown an angry population, which, as in 'An Act of Union' has now produced an angry offspring, Northern Ireland, 'whose stance is growing unilateral / his heart beneath…is a wardrum' (20-21). The subjugation of the Catholic Irish and the partition of Northern Ireland from the rest of Ireland has left its mark on the Irish psyche, one which has seen many die as a result.

Another effect of colonisation which Heaney looks at, is the loss of Irish culture. He explores the loss of language, which he sees in place names, and in particular, his own homeplace 'Mossbawn'. In the poems, 'Traditions' and 'Belderg' he questions the origins of his homeplace and also suggests that the Irish language has been pushed out by the English

language. However, in the place of many of the original Irish place names are hybrid names, they like the Irish are now a hybrid of what they used to be. Heaney suggests that the Irish are now made up of many cultures, but the native Gaelic have still endured, as he shows in his poem 'Belderg' where the 'stone-wall patternings / Repeated… / In the stone walls of Mayo' (17-19). The Gaelic culture has endured regardless of the continual colonisation and subjugation down through the centuries. In addition to the Vikings' link to violence and retribution, Heaney also suggests they became one with the land, and in extension, part of the Irish.

His poetry questions where religion stands in all of this, how has it created more of a problem than a solution for the Irish. The poem, 'At a Potato Digging' explores the role of religion in the suffering of millions during the Great Famine of the nineteenth century, a time where over one million people died, and another million emigrated. Catholicism resulted in those affiliated with it dying and living a life of inequality as a result. It was how the native Irish were distinguished from the settlers, and this was used in the systematic prejudice and destruction of their culture by imperialist Britain. Heaney explores the idea that religion has not only seen the Catholic Irish suffer inequality at the hands of the English, but it is now used to categorise two separate groups in Northern Ireland, that of Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist. Heaney suggests that Christain religion, which these religions are and which is supposed to be about love and turn the other cheek, is more about hate and an eye for an eye. In his poem 'Funeral Rites' he imagines an Ireland where the concept of turning the other cheek is the code which the Northern Ireland community lives by, and hostilities between communities cease.

It is through the bog that Heaney questions what it is to be Irish and explores the concept of the Irish as a hybrid culture. Ireland has been invaded by different cultures since the time of the Celts, and Heaney examines how these cultures have imprinted qualities and

traits into the Irish culture. Heaney uses the bog as a metaphor for the layers of invasion which have occurred in Ireland, and the effects it has had on the Irish. He looks at his own home place of Mossbawn in the quest to understand how the Irish culture has both been affected and evolved as a result of colonisation. He also looks at the mark left on the Irish psyche in terms of retribution which stems from the Viking invasion. Through his poems he suggests that some traits such as these have endured over the centuries and are still seen in contemporary times.

Heaney links the Vikings and their culture with the Irish, suggesting that their legacy of retribution and violence lives on in the Irish psyche. Vikings feature prominently in several of his poems, and he uses them as an analogy for the mentality of those who were committing atrocities during the Troubles. His use of Gunnar the Viking in his poem 'Funeral Rites' to suggest an alternative to the continual violence confirms the link between the two cultures. This is ironic as Gunnar came from the Viking culture of violence and retribution. Heaney is suggesting that violence does not need to keep continuing, that turning the other cheek is possible, and only then will peace be achieved in Ireland.

The creation of his Bog poems gave Heaney a platform in which to examine the events of the Troubles. Neolithic bog bodies from Jutland became a way of understanding the Troubles, providing a parallel between sacrificial victims of thousands of years ago and those victims martyred during the Troubles. He has been criticised for his use of myth in these poems, but to look beyond the simple image of the Neolithic body in a bog is to see something more complex and related to what was occurring in Northern Ireland at the time of writing. Heaney looked for symbols within the bog, which was a familiar part of his life, to explore the issues which were predominant during the Troubles. These issues, such as Irish martyrdom and sacrifice, appear to follow a history which has seen young men, in particular, die for the land.

Heaney examines the tribal affiliations which tie him to those committing atrocities in Northern Ireland at the time he was writing. Through his poems such as 'Punishment', Heaney conveyed to the reader that although he would 'connive / in civilised outrage' (41-42), he understood 'the exact / and tribal, intimate revenge' (43-44). Heaney grew up in the same 'tribe' as those perpetrating atrocities during the 'Troubles', and through that connection he could understand why they were committing the violence that they were. He appeals to the reader to understand the reason regardless of the revulsion to the acts. Criticism of his perceived sanctioning of the atrocities appears to misunderstand Heaney's objective which seems to be that he understands the reasons behind the actions of those who create atrocities as he is from the same 'tribe', and therefore subjected to the same treatment as them. However, he does not sanction the way in which they respond to their treatment.

It appears that Heaney's overall objective is to make sense of the events of the Troubles, to understand why they were occurring as well as understanding his own footing in the history of it all. He looks at his own culpability through his tribal connection and shows his understanding for the reasoning behind the atrocities. He makes it clear that the violence and subjugation of the Catholic Irish by the British has continued into present day. He longs for peace and an Ireland where everyone can live as one culture, but questions whether such a dream can ever be achieved. He sees the irony in a history of colonisation, which has resulted in a rich culture but one which, at the same time, has seen one part of that culture subjugated. He agonises over this concept where the Irish culture is richer in some ways but poorer in others as a result of colonisation by other cultures. It is this paradox which Heaney uses to show how futile the continued violence in Northern Ireland is. Ireland has been a nation in conflict for over eight hundred years, as such, the concept of a single nation, free of sectarianism appears to be an unachievable objective, one which Heaney longed for but never lived to see.

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