

Poet to Poet: Seamus Heaney's Wordsworth

MICHAEL KINSELLA

PhD

2003

POET TO POET: SEAMUS HEANEY'S WORDSWORTH

MICHAEL KINSELLA

PhD

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RELATED LITERATURE

2003

CHAPTER 5	Wordsworth: the ‘heartland of the ordinary’	172
	i Glimpsing directions	174
	ii Spaces: huts, nests and homes	183
	iii Bicycles, skating and ‘a new momentum’	189
	iv Transforming the ordinary	195
CODA		207
APPENDIX	Introduction to <i>William Wordsworth Lived Here</i>	214
	A transcript of <i>William Wordsworth Lived Here</i> with additional footnotes	220
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Chronological	228
	Alphabetical	241

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to the following people who have been instrumental in the completion of my thesis. I would like to thank my academic readers, the late Dr Stephen Copley, Jack P. Donavan, Professor Hermione Lee and Bernard O'Donoghue for their challenging critiques and incisive suggestions. My supervisor, Mr Hugh Haughton, deserves special mention for his insights, guidance and patience. I would like to acknowledge Patrick Brennan, Jeff Cowton, John Gamble, Seamus Heaney, Sean B. O Kelly and Robert Woof who assisted me in my research. My continuing thanks goes to The British Library at Boston Spa, to the libraries at Cambridge University, Queen's University Belfast, The University of York, York Minster Library and The University of Ulster. I would also like to thank the following institutions and museums: BBC Archives Department, Bellaghy Bawn and The Wordsworth Museum at Grasmere. Finally, I heartily thank my family and friends without whose love and financial support this research would not have been completed.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore those points in Seamus Heaney's writing that seem to have a relationship with the poetry and prose of William Wordsworth. It focuses on Heaney's integration, shaping and recasting of Wordsworth's writing for his own artistic purposes. The thesis is not about the Romantic poet but about the Wordsworth Heaney privileges — Heaney's Wordsworth. As the Irishman's writing changes, his uses of the Lake poet's life and work also transform. My aim is to show that his interactions with the English poet are more complicated than previous studies on the Irish writer have suggested. The shape of my thesis has emerged as a result of five distinct but interrelated movements in Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's writing.

Chapter 1 teases out the hidden Wordsworthian background in Heaney's early poems and discusses how Heaney's themes — childhood, memory and rural life — are rhymed with Wordsworth's in his poetry and the 1802 'Preface'. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that the making of the television programme, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974), spurred Heaney to bring the Romantic poet into the literary foreground of his verse and essays. It will be suggested that what Heaney has to say about Wordsworth's life and writing in the programme is self-reflexive but also, as a result of that first visit, Heaney tended to read his predecessor outside political and historical contexts, idealising the Romantic poet's life and work.

Stations, 'Singing School' from *North*, and 'Feeling into Words' are grouped together in Chapter 2 because they were written or completed just after Heaney's visit to Grasmere. It will be suggested that they are, in part, a response to that experience and that these texts translate, pun

on and advertise Wordsworth's 'spots of time', his 'ministry of fear' and 'hiding places', which are transposed by Heaney into an Irish setting. In these first two chapters, I propose that the political situation in Ireland complicated any easy assimilation of Wordsworth into a Derry experience.

Chapter 3 explores the difficult transition in Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's writing. I begin by discussing Heaney's initial rejection of any analogy between his home in Co. Wicklow and Wordsworth's at Grasmere in the first drafts of the 'Glanmore Sonnets', which were written not long after making *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, and perhaps were a reaction to the residual effects of that experience. These are then compared and contrasted with the final sonnet sequence that appears in *Field Work* (1979) where, it will be argued, the Irish poet seems to identify tentatively with the Romantic poet's cottage retreat.

Heaney's major prose pieces on Wordsworth's poetry: 'The Sense of Place', 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats', 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' and *The Essential Wordsworth* are examined in Chapter 4. Using these essays, it is argued that Heaney's 'sense of place' has been shaped by Wordsworth's pastoral poem, 'Michael', that the Irish poet's understanding of the relationship between a poet's creative procedures and the music of the finished poem has emanated from the Dove Cottage recluse, and that, ironically, though politics initially separate the Irish and English poets, Heaney found in *The Prelude* a working model which he used, not only to address the political situation faced by poets from Northern Ireland, but to recast Wordsworth in his own image, drawing him closer to the Romantic writer. Using Heaney's 'Introduction' and selection for *The Essential Wordsworth*, I

discuss Heaney's developing notions of Wordsworth's poetic style, his privileging of the early poetry and his misappropriations of different Wordsworth editions.

Chapter 5 is the last stage of my argument. There I discuss *Seeing Things* (1991) and suggest that Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry once again occupies the literary background as it did in the Irishman's first three poetry volumes. In *Seeing Things* Heaney revisits and revises earlier memories. We find him engaged with the same themes that preoccupied him in his early work. However, it will be argued that the incidents Heaney recalls are imitative of Wordsworth's original 'spots of time', and like the Romantic poet suggested, they argue for the preeminence of the imagination.

Heaney's Wordsworth: An Introduction

How should a poet properly live and write? What is his relationship to be to his own voice, his own place, his literary heritage and his contemporary world?

Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*¹

It is not clear whether better relationships are the solution to our suffering, or whether it is that very aspiration that we suffer from.

Adam Phillips, *Promises Promises*²

I

In a keynote address given in 1998 to a conference celebrating the bicentenary of *Lyrical Ballads*, at Grasmere,³ Seamus Heaney read William Wordsworth's note on 'Lines left upon a seat in a Yewtree':

This spot was my favourite walk in the evenings during the latter part of my school-time . . . The site was long ago pointed out by Mr. West in his Guide, as the pride of the lakes, and now goes by the name of 'The Station.' So much used I to be delighted with the view from it, while a little boy, that some years before the first pleasure-house was built, I led thither from Hawkshead a youngster about my own age, an Irish boy, who was a servant to an itinerant conjurer. My motive was to witness the pleasure I expected the boy would receive from the prospect of the islands below and the intermingling water. I was not disappointed; and I hope the fact, insignificant as it may appear to some, may be thought worthy of note by others who may cast their eye over these notes.⁴

Heaney's purpose was to invoke this picture of an 'Irish boy being led to the brink of wonder by his English guide as a foreshadowing of my own relationship with Wordsworth's poetry.'⁵ His placing of himself in the role of the Irish boy, a kind of joke, was rather predictable. While it revealed his affection for Wordsworth, without too much embarrassment, it was also an

¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Foreword', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 13.

² Adam Phillips, *Promises Promises* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 200.

³ *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge* held at The Wordsworth Trust, 9 September, 1998.

⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. eds. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. 1, p. 329.

⁵ Seamus Heaney, keynote address, *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge* held at The Wordsworth Trust, 9 September, 1998.

‘affirmation of continuity’⁶ between his poetry and Wordsworth’s. But in what sense does one poet have a kinship with a poem, its author or with a tradition? What might Heaney be implying, benefit from, or feel he is lacking when he claims a ‘relationship’ between his own and Wordsworth’s poetry? How might a relationship with Wordsworth’s poetry sabotage his own development? Certainly, to suggest an affinity with the Romantic poet implies something about the kind of poet Heaney wants to be and the kind of poetry he was ‘hankering’⁷ to write. For how different it would be for him to claim a connection with Swift or Goldsmith, Dryden or Donne.

If, as the critic Harold Bloom suggests as ‘poetry has become more subjective, the shadow cast by the precursors has become more dominant’⁸ — a statement which reveals a dark, perhaps more rivalrous side to Heaney’s sense of Wordsworth’s ‘foreshadowing’ — then the Irish poet’s keynote address neatly circumvented those anxieties often attributed to ‘intra-poetic relationships.’⁹ Being an ‘Irish Wordsworthian’¹⁰ might be, as we shall see, the very aspiration that Heaney suffers from. Yet, rather than flirt with his sense of affinity, by refusing, deferring or denying it, the Irish poet chose to re-warm and recast his past advocacies of Wordsworth’s writing in the 1998 keynote address. His essays, ‘Feeling into Words’ (1974), ‘The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats’ (1978), ‘Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry from Northern Ireland’ (1984), ‘Sylvia Plath: The Indefatigable Hoof-taps’ (1988) and his

⁶ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.*

⁷ See, ‘Interview with Seamus Heaney: Thomas O’ Donnell and Donna Campbell’, *Cottonwood* 30 Spring, 1983, p. 36. There Heaney claims that he did consider himself a Wordsworthian and that he favoured Wordsworth over Yeats, when he wrote ‘The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats’, because at that time he was ‘hankering for that kind of poetry’.

⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: OUP, 1973), p. 11.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁰ Hugh Haughton, ‘Place and Displacement in Derek Mahon’, *The Chosen Ground*, ed. Neil Corcoran (Mid Glamorgan: Seren Books, 1991), p. 100.

introduction to *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988) were all well represented in the 1998 keynote address.

Within the context of Heaney's address 'relationship' seems to be his covert word for commitment. His commitment is to a 'sense of poetry and sense of what it is to be a poet',¹¹ which 'came from very traditional sources' as the Irishman recalls, 'from the Romantic poets, from Wordsworth's 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* . . . it was from there I got my myth of poetry as 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'.¹² His use of the word 'relationship' also implies a commitment to a particular poetic tradition that finds its resources in autobiography, nature and the imagination, rather than in irony and wit. And these resources and the Wordsworthian 'spontaneous' myth are, in part, responsible for shaping Heaney's appreciation of Wordsworth's writing and his life.

Heaney might claim that 'I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with my reading'¹³ however we might think of his relationship beginning with Wordsworth when, as an A Level English Literature pupil, at St. Columb's College, in Derry, he read *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose* edited by David Nichol Smith.¹⁴ It was then, as Seamus Deane — a classmate and contemporary — recalls that Heaney read and favoured 'Wordsworth's large therapies of recovery in "Tintern Abbey" — a poem [Heaney] knew by heart.'¹⁵ Deane 'recognized then—also

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, *Reading the Future: Irish writers in conversation with Mike Murphy* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000), p. 87.

¹² *ibid.* p. 87.

¹³ Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968 - 1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 37.

¹⁴ According to Sean B O'Kelly, Heaney's A level English Literature teacher at St. Columb's College, this was the course text *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). As a matter of interest, Heaney would dedicate *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988) to O'Kelly.

¹⁵ Seamus Deane, 'The Famous Seamus', *The New Yorker*, 20 March, 2000, p. 62.

for the first time—why Heaney responded so fully, with such timbre, to Wordsworth. Like Wordsworth, Heaney was of the healing school of readers and writers.’¹⁶

Later, as a student¹⁷ and lecturer at university, Heaney gained and continued to deepen what the critic Michael Parker has referred to as a Leavisite faith in literature’s ability to civilise, promote spiritual development and to heal.¹⁸ It was while at Queen’s University Belfast, Heaney read *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (1959), *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, edited by E. de Selincourt (1959), (which Heaney uses in his own selection *The Essential Wordsworth*) and Mary Moorman’s biography¹⁹ (to which Heaney acknowledges his indebtedness in *Preoccupations*).²⁰ All these texts shaped Heaney’s appreciation of Wordsworth’s writing and therefore they are the primary sources of reference in my thesis. In fact, so instructive was Heaney’s understanding of Wordsworth’s poetic myth that when he gave ‘a lecture on W.H Auden . . . once again’, as he recalls, ‘I was talking about Wordsworth because I knew more about him at the time.’²¹

The evidence for how Heaney, as a pupil, student, lecturer and poet, would read Wordsworth’s poetry suggests that the Irish poet’s relationship with his Romantic predecessor’s

¹⁶ Seamus Deane, op. cit. p. 62.

¹⁷ According to Neil Corcoran, as a post-graduate Heaney ‘had a thesis on Wordsworth’s educational ideas in mind.’ See, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 243. But, sadly, there is no actual thesis held by Queen’s University Belfast.

¹⁸ Michael Parker, *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1993), p. 16.

¹⁹ Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: The Early Years 1770-1803* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) and *William Wordsworth: Later Years 1803-1859* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

²⁰ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 71.

²¹ Seamus Heaney, keynote address, *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge* held at The Wordsworth Trust, 9 September, 1998.

writing could be interpreted as a commitment to poetry as ‘healing’, as Deane suggests, in other words, what Heaney seems to make less explicit in his view of poetry in ‘Feeling into Words’, a view based on ‘the hiding places’ passage in *The Prelude* — ‘poetry’ as divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself; poems as elements of continuity’.²² Poetry as healing or perhaps better still poetry as recovery — in all senses of the word — might then be a more adequate way of describing Heaney’s appreciation of Wordsworth’s writing. And, as we shall see, the prescriptive qualities of the Romantic poet’s work and life are used by the Irish poet to treat his own memories, sense of loss and imaginative project. But before I discuss the objectives of my chapters, I want to elaborate upon some of the complications inherent in Heaney’s reading of Wordsworth’s poetry.

II

Each time Heaney turns to Wordsworth in his poetry and prose there are a number of textual complications. Sometimes it is not always clear when the Irish poet’s work is referring to Wordsworth’s poetry. So, it is worth considering the crude pragmatic question — when does Heaney rhyme his own experiences with Wordsworth’s? As we shall see, in the early poetry volumes, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1968), *Wintering Out* (1973), Wordsworthian themes and images are a secret ‘literary background’.²³ Only after Heaney’s first visit to Grasmere, when he made *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974),²⁴ does the Irish poet allow his relationship with Wordsworth’s poetry to occupy a literary foreground: ‘Feeling into

²² Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 41.

²³ Nicholas Roe, ‘Wordsworth at the Flax-dam’: An early poem by Seamus Heaney’, *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature*, eds. Michael Allen and Angela Wilcox (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1989), p. 167.

²⁴ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974). I have made a transcript of the programme which has been included in the appendix pp. 211-224

Words' (1974), *Stations* (1975), 'Singing School' (1975), 'The Sense of Place' (1977), 'Glanmore Sonnets' (1979), 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978), 'Place and Displacement: recent Poetry from Northern Ireland' (1984) and his introduction to, and selection for, *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988) are some examples. Then in the later volumes, *The Tree Clock* (1989) and *Seeing Things* (1991), the relationship with Wordsworth's poetry once again lies hidden beneath the surface of some of the poems. And it would seem that with *The Spirit Level* (1996) and the 1998 keynote address, Heaney draws his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry to a close. *The Spirit Level* (1996), *Beowulf* (1999) and *Electric Light* (2001) seem to signal quite different literary directions in that they begin to take 'the self' out of the literary equation.

The textual complications of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry actually begin with the instability of Wordsworth's texts, his re-visionary tendencies and deferrals. Wordsworth may have spoken more about himself in his autobiographical project than any previous poet. Perhaps Heaney wanted to ally himself with Wordsworth's authorial control over self-presentation. Many memories in *The Prelude* are (re)-shaped to affirm poetic convictions and often experiences are re-described or conflated. But for Heaney to say, in his 1998 keynote address, that he had a relationship with Wordsworth's poetry was to edit out the Romantic poet's role and indeed the role played by editor(s) in forming Heaney's sense of Wordsworth's poetry. Perhaps as a result of reading different editions of Wordsworth's writing the Irish poet does not seem entirely consistent as to which version of the Romantic poet's work he may prefer. For example, 'The Makings of a Music' quotes from the 1850 version of *The Prelude* while discussing the style of the early Wordsworth.

If there cannot be a single definitive text of *The Prelude*, as Jonathan Wordsworth would tell us,²⁵ does Heaney's use of different versions of Wordsworth's poem imply that the Irish writer was constructing an edition of *The Prelude* perfect for his own use? How odd too, that the earliest complete version of *The Prelude* (1805) and the first draft of 1799 are Heaney's choice for *The Essential Wordsworth* and that these should be set alongside Wordsworth's final edition of his poems. Such a varied selection does not quite fit with Heaney's claim, in his introduction, that by 1807 'the work of the essential Wordsworth was mostly completed.'²⁶ Such misappropriations are equally part of the story of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry. The inconsistencies between Heaney's uses of Wordsworth's texts and the Romantic figure the Irish poet seems to favour are further complicated by his comparison between Wordsworth's poetic style and that of other poets, in particular W. B. Yeats.

Heaney originally pairs Wordsworth and Yeats in 'Singing School' in *North* (1975), but it is not until 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978) that his characterization of both poets' poetic procedures becomes clear. In that essay, as Helen Vendler has suggested, Heaney sets 'Wordsworthian yielding a trifle too dramatically against the implacable control of Yeats.'²⁷ However, these artistic polarities seem to disappear in Heaney's introduction to *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988) — there both Wordsworth and Yeats are seen to have responsibly combined 'emotional susceptibility, intellectual force, psychological acuteness, political awareness, artistic self-knowledge and bardic representativeness',²⁸ ultimately

²⁵ Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, eds. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams and Stephen Gill (London: Norton, 1979), p. 510.

²⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 7.

²⁷ Helen Vendler, *The Music of What Happens* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 158-159.

²⁸ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 4.

making the first and one of ‘the last romantics’²⁹ similar to or the same as each other. But, in the Keynote Address (1998), Heaney’s appreciation of Wordsworth changes again, as he envisages the Romantic poet after 1799, ‘as something intended and complete’,³⁰ a phrase which knowingly echoed Yeats’s own in ‘A General Introduction to my Work’, and so Heaney seems to recast his earlier description of Wordsworth as a yielding feminine writer, making him like the former, forging Yeatsian figure described in ‘The Makings of a Music’.

III

What I have to say . . . stems from the slightly predatory curiosity of a poet interested in the creative processes of another poet.

Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*³¹

There are other subtler shifts in Heaney’s sense of Wordsworth’s poetic procedures. In *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974) Heaney draws attention to Wordsworth’s illegible manuscripts and ‘the quick of the poetic matter’.³² ‘Feeling into Words’ (1974) focuses on a time when Wordsworth ‘composed with great rapidity’³³ while ‘The Makings of a Music’ claimed that ‘Wordsworth continued to think of the poetic act as essentially an act of compliance with natural impulses and tendencies.’³⁴ It is as if Heaney associated the swiftness with which Wordsworth wrote with the spontaneous creation of poetry. This suggestion went against a good deal of critical opinion — such as the views held by Jonathan Wordsworth, Zachary Leader or Stephen

²⁹ W. B. Yeats, ‘Coole Park and Ballylee’, *Yeats’s Poems*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: MacMillan, 1989), p. 360.

³⁰ Seamus Heaney, keynote address, *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge* held at The Wordsworth Trust, 9 September, 1998.

³¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Fire i’ the Flint’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 79.

³² Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

³³ Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 50.

³⁴ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 71.

Gill — on the Romantic poet's work, but it was probably a defence of the kind of poetry Heaney was writing during this period and the kind of ideal past he wanted to have. For instance, in 'Feeling into Words' (1974), he recalls how 'Bogland' was written 'quickly' and revised 'on the hoof, from line to line, as it came'³⁵ — perhaps a Heaney equivalent to 'a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'³⁶ However, in his essay 'The Indefatigable Hoof-taps: Sylvia Plath' (1988), Heaney seems to reevaluate his appreciation of Wordsworth's artistic procedures — perhaps as a result of writing his more studied introduction to *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988) in the same year — favouring the revisions and hesitations of the early Romantic poet's workshop.

If there is one consistent feature that prevents Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry from completely fracturing it must be the Irishman's identification with the Romantic poet's life from 1799 to 1807. Even if those poems that Heaney refers to in his own poetry and prose are not necessarily representative of Wordsworth's creativity during this period, the Irish poet seems to privilege and have a curious affinity with the poet of Dove Cottage. It was then, as Heaney claims, 'the truly Wordsworthian realms were occupied',³⁷ a claim made in his introduction to *The Essential Wordsworth* (1998) which seems to reiterate what had already been suggested in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974), 'The Makings of a Music' (1978) and the 'Glanmore Sonnets' (1979). If it can be argued that Heaney was constructing a relationship with the poet of Dove Cottage and privileging that middle voiced Romantic writer, then the Irish poet's writing was, in actuality, misrepresenting Wordsworth's poetry and creating a Wordsworth

³⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 55.

³⁶ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p.153.

³⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 6.

for his own use and perhaps in the Irish poet's own image.

Yet, despite Heaney's incongruous fitting together of Wordsworth's poetry and the poet figure whom he most admires, most literary commentaries on Heaney's writing affirm the importance of the Romantic poet's influence but do not explore how the Irish poet has reshaped his Romantic predecessor's example. What has been outlined so far: Heaney's evolving identities for the Romantic poet, his indiscreet use of different editions of Wordsworth's poetry and his comparisons with W. B. Yeats, complicates our understanding of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry. Yet, since we must deal with Heaney's appropriations of his Romantic predecessor as they are, no matter how misread or inappropriate, many of the textual difficulties that have been highlighted remain interestingly unresolved. I am grateful for the directions given by a number of essays and studies. Nicholas Roe, confirmed my own suspicions that Wordsworth was a secret 'literary background'³⁸ in 'Death of a Naturalist'. Similarly, Neil Corcoran's studies, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* and 'Examples of Heaney',³⁹ verified the Romantic poet's guidance, but most important of all, Corcoran reassured me of my own view when he described Heaney's 'trying-on of different literary styles and manners, the rhyming of his own experiences with poems by . . . Wordsworth, with the aim of discovering the kind of poet he might himself become.'⁴⁰

Other commentaries have helped me spot those times when Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry was less obvious. For instance, Darcy O'Brien's essay, 'Seamus Heaney

³⁸ Nicholas Roe, 'Wordsworth at the Flax-dam': An Early poem by Seamus Heaney', *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature*, eds. Michael Allen and Angela Wilcox (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1989), p. 167.

³⁹ Neil Corcoran, 'Examples of Heaney', *Poets of Modern Ireland* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1999).

⁴⁰ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 7.

and Wordsworth: A Correspondent Breeze',⁴¹ drew my attention to the Wordsworthian background to 'Exposure' as did Bernard O'Donoghue who reads the poem as a failed hidden gleam in his excellent study *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry*.⁴² John Montague's anecdote was equally revealing: 'when I was examining the famous letter from Goslar in Dove Cottage, first draft of the skating scene in *The Prelude*, the curator came over to say that he had only seen one person regard the manuscript with such intensity, that he was from Ireland as well . . . No marks for guessing the Secret Sharer.'⁴³ And although most studies celebrate Heaney's involvement with Wordsworth's writing, I am also indebted to those, such as Edna Longley, who found Heaney's nods to Wordsworth too 'self-conscious as well as satirical'⁴⁴ or who argued, as David Lloyd has done, that Heaney 'uncritically replays the Romantic schema of a return to origins which restores continuity through fuller self-possession'.⁴⁵

IV

The poet, in one kind of psychoanalytic language, is a highly valued internal object, and one who is often linked, I think, in some obscure way, with fantasies of freedom and independence: the poet represents the apotheosis (at least for some people) of self becoming, of individuality, of difference wrought to a distinctive pitch through style.

Adam Phillips, *Promises Promises*⁴⁶

If Heaney, as David Lloyd has suggested, is uncritical of 'the Romantic schema' and by

⁴¹ Darcy O'Brien, 'Seamus Heaney and Wordsworth: A Correspondent Breeze', *Critical Essays on Seamus Heaney*, ed. Robert F. Garratt (New York: G. K. Hall, 1995), pp. 187-195.

⁴² Bernard O'Donoghue, *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry* (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 76.

⁴³ John Montague, 'The Sweet Way', *Irish Writers and their Creative Process*, ed. Jacqueline Genet and Wynne Hellegouarch (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1996), p. 35.

⁴⁴ Edna Longley, *Poetry in the Wars* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1986), p. 147.

⁴⁵ David Lloyd, 'Pap for the Dispossessed: Seamus Heaney and the Poetics of Identity', *Seamus Heaney: A Collection of critical Essays*, ed. Elmer Andrews (London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 95.

⁴⁶ Adam Phillips, *Promises Promises* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 19.

extension of Wordsworth and his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry — and it will be argued that Heaney is unquestioning in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974), *Stations* (1975), *North* (1975), 'The Sense of Place' (1977), 'The Makings of a Music' (1978) and the 'Glanmore Sonnets' (1979) — it might be because the Irish poet tended to read Wordsworth outside his historical and political contexts. What has been excluded in his description of his 'relationship' with Wordsworth's poetry and life, in the 1998 keynote address and throughout the Irishman's own poetry and prose seems important. Wordsworth's losses, political disillusionments and literary anxieties are glossed over until Heaney comes to write 'Place and Displacement' (1984) and the introduction to *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988).

As we shall see, up until these more judicial examinations of Wordsworth's writing, the Romantic poet represented, for Heaney, the apotheosis of what a poet could be. Wordsworth's 'seedtime', his 'spots of time', his belief in the restorative powers of memory, his life at Dove Cottage, all represented an ideal for the Irish poet which his early prose essays and poems fashioned and had to sustain in order to compare and contrast Wordsworth's poetry with his own. Heaney's idealization — with its concomitants of envy, rivalry and suspicion — it will be argued, was complicit with his own fantasies of poetic freedom, his need for his 'Wicklow life to be in some sense an equivalent to the Grasmere life; it was a withdrawal to try to get centred and to try to get some writing done.'⁴⁷ As we shall see, that desire to advertise the Glanmore experience as an 'equivalent' to Dove Cottage, would transcend an instinctive response that declared: 'Glanmore is not Grasmere./ That was a different ministry of fear.'⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

⁴⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'Two Poems II', *Prospect* 5, 1976, p. 64.

I would suggest that chronic conditions in Northern Ireland complicated Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's writing and its assimilation into a modern Irish context. Should we think of Wordsworth's poetry as assisting Heaney in his own autobiographical project — 'I rhyme/ To see myself, to set the darkness echoing' — certainly, the political convulsions in Northern Ireland undermined the Irish poet's confidence in treating his own introspections as Wordsworthian 'spots of time' (*Stations*, 1975) or his own fosterage as a Wordsworthian 'ministry of fear' ('Singing School', *North*, 1975). Yet, as I will argue, and this is perhaps the most unexpected part of the story of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's writing. The very political conditions that threatened to frustrate Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry would be addressed by the Irish poet through reference to *The Prelude* in 'Place and Displacement' (1984). In that essay, given at Grasmere, I will argue that Heaney found in Book X a disaffected Wordsworth whose story he reads as being analogous to the conflicts endured by poets from Northern Ireland.

If, as Heaney suggests, Wordsworth's 'poem is diagnostic, therapeutic and didactic all at once',⁴⁹ what he discovered in Book X, as we shall see, allowed him to affirm the 'autonomous habits of the poet's imagination'.⁵⁰ Finding Wordsworth's commentary dispelled Heaney's doubts about language and the authority of poetry when faced with an intolerable conflict. The story in *The Prelude* was a counter force to the fear that language and meaning will not restore a sense of self or community. To put it in Heaney's own terms, it persuaded him of the efficacy of

⁴⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry from Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 3.

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 4.

poetry. And it is the 'efficacy'⁵¹ of poetry that would be further explored in *The Government of the Tongue* (1988). It will be argued that that book celebrates and closes with an extract from Wordsworth's 1802 'Preface' because the Romantic poet's example persuaded Heaney that a poet's ultimate fidelity must be to lyric utterance, to the imagination, 'to the demands and promise of the artistic event.'⁵²

V

If Wordsworth's account in *The Prelude* of the 'conflict of sensations' he endured showed Heaney that a poet's ultimate fidelity must be to his imagination and to artistic play, it was Wordsworth's recollections there that also allowed the Irish poet to revisit his own experiences under a different lamp light. *The Haw Lantern* (1987) may represent Heaney's first attempts to expand into a new imaginative territory but, it will be argued, it is not until *The Tree Clock* (1990) and *Seeing Things* (1991) that Wordsworthian realms are truly occupied. In both these volumes the ordinary becomes transfigured by a new vision and freedom. The responsibilities and distractions that Heaney had felt in earlier books, to comment on the political conditions in Ireland, are replaced by what the philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, might have called a reverie in memory. Heaney in these volumes becomes 'the author of his solitude, when he can finally contemplate a beautiful aspect of the universe'.⁵³ Powers of earth are replaced by visions of air, to play with the title of an essay by Seamus Deane.⁵⁴ This solitude, which we might call

⁵¹ In the essay, 'The Interesting Case of Nero, Chekhov's Cognac and a Knocker', Heaney discusses the poetry of Osip Mandelstam suggesting that he 'stands for the efficacy of song itself'. Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. xx.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵³ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 173.

⁵⁴ Seamus Deane, 'Powers of Earth and Visions of Air', *Seamus Heaney: The Shaping Spirit*, eds. Catherine Malloy and Phyllis Carey (Newark: Delaware, 1996), pp. 27-33.

Wordsworthian, seems to be no longer noticeably impinged upon by previous preoccupations which were encumbering the Irish poet's life and community. Although Wordsworth's example is implicit in Heaney's work, it will be argued that the memories Heaney recovers in *Seeing Things* are closer to Wordsworth's 'spots of time' than they had ever been. He had come through an almost Dantesque journey and in this volume, where ordinary experiences are transfigured, Wordsworth seems to assert his 'immortality most vigorously.'⁵⁵

In the following chapters I discuss the shifts and developments in Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry as a response to the aesthetic and political developments in Heaney's writing. As we shall see, through creating a relationship with Wordsworth's work and life, however problematic that may be, Heaney found resolutions to those centrally preoccupying questions: 'How should a poet properly live and write? What is his relationship to be to his own voice, his own place, his literary heritage and his contemporary world?' And we might think of *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, the 'Glanmore Sonnets', 'The Sense of Place', 'The Makings of a Music', 'Place and Displacement', 'Feeling into Words' and his introduction to and selection for *The Essential Wordsworth* as adequate answers to those questions.⁵⁶

Chapter One is in two sections. The first discusses the Wordsworthian background to some of the poems in *Death of a Naturalist*, *Door into the Dark* and *Wintering Out*. The second part

⁵⁵ T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 40.

⁵⁶ Although every effort has been made to study Heaney's texts in their chronological order, in an attempt to remain true to the 'history' of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry, some overlap occurs between his poetry and the prose. For instance, various essays by the Irish writer are used to support my argument for the Wordsworthian presence in the poetry. So it was then necessary to study the Romantic writer's influence in the Irish poet's prose in a separate chapter. As a result there are two bibliographies. The first arranges the texts chronologically. However this list only represents those works which seem to have a relationship with Wordsworth's poetry. It is by no means representative of all of Heaney's publications and so should be checked against *A Bibliography of Seamus Heaney* by Rand Brandes, when it is published by The Gallery Press. The second bibliography arranges the work alphabetically in accordance with university regulations.

is a review of Heaney's television programme *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, which I have transcribed and included in the appendix. (I would suggest that this is read before reading the second chapter.) In Chapter Two, I suggest the sense of 'tranquil restoration' Heaney gained from Dove Cottage represented an anthesis to his own experiences, determining how the Irish poet would read Wordsworth's poetry, incorporate and shape 'spots of time' in *Stations*, his 'ministry of fear' in 'Singing School' and those Wordsworthian 'hiding places' in 'Feeling into Words'. Chapter Three examines the different drafts of the 'Glanmore Sonnets'. I discuss Heaney's rejection and then tentative identification with Wordsworth's life at Grasmere and his own at Glanmore. Chapter Four primarily looks at three lectures on Wordsworth: 'The Sense of Place', 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats', and, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry from Northern Ireland.' I discuss Heaney's uses of Wordsworth's 'Michael' to justify the claim we are 'dwellers' and the Irish poet's examination of Wordsworth's compositional procedures and the role of *The Prelude* in justifying poetry as a form of play in its own right in the face of violent conflict. The chapter then concludes with a critique of Heaney's introduction to and selection for *The Essential Wordsworth*. The final chapter argues that Wordsworth is once again a literary background to some of the poems in *The Tree Clock* and *Seeing Things*. I suggest that many of the poems are closer to Wordsworth's original 'spots of time' and that both volumes show a Wordsworthian trust in the restorative powers of the imagination.

Chapter 1: Wordsworth, Roots and Reading

The greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, in order to write.

Samuel Johnson, *The Life of the Poets*¹

When Seamus Heaney claimed: 'I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with my reading',² he might have said, more specifically, 'I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with reading Wordsworth's poetry.' This is not to diminish the importance of other poets to Heaney's poetic development but to emphasize a particular affinity with the poet from Grasmere. When the Irish poet first encountered Byron and Keats, though he could savour the rich sensuousness of 'To Autumn' for example, Heaney found that 'literary language [to be] a kind of force feeding.'³ Similarly, he was daunted by 'the otherness of Eliot'⁴ and neither could he internalise MacNeice. But what Heaney found in Wordsworth was a corroborative relation between a landscape and a sensibility similar to his own. Reflecting on reading Wordsworth's poem 'Michael' for the first time, Heaney recalls that:

At a very simple basic level I knew a few Michaels myself and the observation of that kind of patient, silent world of workers out in the field is a rare enough thing in English Literature . . . I was not only moved in some primitive way by the subject matter, but also by [Wordsworth's] response to it.⁵

As we shall see, Wordsworth's response to his subject matter guided how Heaney would come to write about the rivers, loughs and places of Derry. For the Irish poet to delight in the sound

¹ Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets, Boswell*, vol. 2, 6 April, 1775, p. 344.

² Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 37.

³ *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'Learning from Eliot', *Agenda*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1989, p. 17.

⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Interview with Seamus Heaney: Thomas O'Donnell and Donna Campbell', *Cottonwood* 30, Spring, 1983, p. 36.

of Wordsworth's line, 'All shod with steel, We hiss'd along the polished ice',⁶ suggests that Heaney's word-hoard was inextricably bound with the Romantic writer's work, or as Heaney himself would affirm — 'I feel very close to Wordsworth, because his work is in me, in my memory and I can work myself into the grains of it, just by closing my eyes and thinking of the lines.'⁷

Admittedly, there are no explicit references to Wordsworth's poetry in Heaney's first three books, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1969) and *Wintering Out* (1972) even though many of the themes — autobiography, childhood, nature and the imagination — or subjects, be it the death of family members, local crafts people or the meanings of placenames, might be claimed as Wordsworthian or foreshadowed by Wordsworth's writing. In this chapter, I open with sketches of the Wordsworthian background to each book. Each introductory analysis is then followed by a more focussed account of three individual poems: 'Death of a Naturalist', 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' and 'Gifts of Rain' — each of which might be said to be representative of their respective volumes — and my aim is to tease out the hidden relationship between these poems and Wordsworth's.

If Wordsworth's writing is an unacknowledged literary background in 'Death of a Naturalist', 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' and 'Gifts of Rain', then the second part of chapter one, which discusses *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974) shows the converse to be true. Prior to writing and presenting the documentary on Wordsworth's life and poetry and after the publication of *Wintering Out* (1972), Heaney's engagement with his Romantic predecessor, as

⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 46

⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

we shall see, becomes gradually more conspicuous. However, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* represents the Irish poet's first major engagement with the English poet and it will be argued his views there, on Wordsworth's life and writing, are often more reflective of his own preoccupations and suggest more about his own imaginative needs than they do about his Romantic predecessor's.

I

We praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else . . . but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously

T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*

Before I discuss the poem 'Death of a Naturalist', I would like to make some brief observations about the book itself and its relationship with Wordsworth's writing. In his 1802 'Preface' Wordsworth reminds his reader of the importance of those who live a simple rural existence for 'in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity'.⁹ As we know, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) opens with 'Digging' and in doing so Heaney maintains a link, not just between the generations that farmed the land, but a literary root between his own writing and Wordsworth's, for it was the Romantic poet who claimed that the natural soil of poetry was, as in Heaney's case, rural life. If, as Christopher Ricks¹⁰ suggests, the central subject of Heaney's volume is 'growing up',¹¹ as Wordsworth grew up, 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear', (and Rick's suggestion uncannily prefigures Heaney's

⁸ T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 40.

⁹ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 152.

¹⁰ See, Christopher Ricks, 'Growing up: Review of *Death of a Naturalist*', *Seamus Heaney*, ed. Michael Allen (London: MacMillan, 1997), pp. 21-25.

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 21.

use of these lines from *The Prelude in North*), then in *Death of a Naturalist* the Irish poet writes with equal vividness and strength about both sensations.

In order to lessen the distance between the adult poet writing verse and his experiences growing up in rural south Derry, Heaney, it would seem, has learnt from Wordsworth to revisit his home through the eyes of a child. Often the poet's experiences in *Death of a Naturalist* have corresponding moments in *The Prelude*. As with Wordsworth's childhood moments, the imagination transforms the ordinary in many of Heaney's poems. They explore and magnify sensations of fear ('The Barn'), sensuality and awakened sexuality ('Blackberry-Picking'), loss of immediate family ('Mid-Term Break'), overwhelming interactions with nature ('Storm on an Island' and 'Waterfall'), and nature as the great educator ('An Advancement of Learning') themes closely associated with the Romantic poet's own autobiography.

It seems surprising that few of the early reviews spotted the relationship between some of Heaney's poems and Wordsworth's. Indeed one reviewer claimed that Heaney's stance was anti-romantic.¹² However, of all the poems in that volume that come close to a Wordsworthian episode in *The Prelude* it must be 'Death of a Naturalist'. Like much of Wordsworth's poetry, fear is the fostering discipline in Heaney's poem, as in 'The Barn' and 'An Advancement of Learning'. Like 'Blackberry Picking', which Neil Corcoran has suggested is 'written in the margins' of 'Nutting',¹³ 'Death of a Naturalist' explores the loss of childhood innocence. And Corcoran's suggestion that poems are written in the margins of other works seems entirely appropriate to me as it emphasises what Julia Kristeva might have called the intertextual nature of Heaney's poetic

¹² Thomas E. Luddy, 'Book Review', *Library Journal* 91, vol. 19 November, 1966, p. 5408

¹³ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 5

enterprise. So, perhaps when Heaney read 'Nutting' or *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's poems laid down in him a way with which to discuss the discovery and despoilment of the natural world as an analogy for developing sexual awareness, yet 'Nutting', like the 'woodcocks' or boat stealing episodes in *The Prelude*, also allowed Heaney to work out how his own boyhood recollections were different from the Lake poet's.

In 'Death of a Naturalist', Heaney lays his scene at a flax-dam 'in the heart/ Of the townland' and his use of the word 'heart' may be a delicate allusion to Wordsworth's poetry. The word 'heart', from where the philosophic song of *The Prelude* emanates, seems to be a reminder that the territory of this poem holds its place in a literary, literal and inner-territory, a reminder how one spot — a place and a memory — can shape a sensibility. Like 'the woodcocks' episode, when Wordsworth imagines 'Low breathings coming after me, and sounds/ Of undistinguishable motion', there is in 'Death of a Naturalist' a sense of a child's increased heart-rate, as he ducks through hedges, sickens, turns and runs. If Heaney learnt from *The Prelude* how to recreate the intensity of childhood experience, the poem does have what could be termed the pupil effect.

By the pupil — I not only mean that Heaney's poem has learnt from Wordsworth's example — effect I mean the child becomes a pupil of the natural world. He is fostered or educated by beauty and by nature — 'There were dragon-flies, spotted butterflies' — and by fear — 'their loose necks pulsed like sails . . . /their blunt heads farting.' As the boy's fear intensifies in the poem so does the pupil in the eye dilate. He takes more in. He becomes more knowledgeable of the world around him and innocence is lost. The mind's eye then magnifies that natural world so that ordinary objects assume monstrous proportions. And again Heaney may have learnt from reading *The Prelude* and Wordsworth's image of being hounded by a cliff, how to manipulate

and disproportion the natural world. Certainly the Romantic poet's writing confirmed the value of his home ground as a literary resource. So, the frogs are no longer small amphibians but powerful and vengeful as obscene threats and mud grenades. The notes of incertitude and panic in 'Death of a Naturalist' and *The Prelude* are similar. But unlike Wordsworth's autobiographical poem or in 'Nutting', for instance, the child in 'Death of a Naturalist' does not come away from his experience, 'rich beyond the wealth of kings',¹⁴ but rather terrified by 'great slime kings'. ('Kings' has in Heaney's poem a larger monarchial and political connotation, hinting at Ireland's colonial past.)

In photographic terms 'Death of a Naturalist' is a close up. The eye has widened. Our eyes, ears, sense of smell are assaulted by images in a language grittier than Wordsworth's. Where the Lake poet's childhood landscape has restorative virtues, the place that Heaney describes seems more deeply troubled. In his essay, 'Wordsworth at the flax-dam: an early poem by Seamus Heaney',¹⁵ Nicholas Roe argues that 'Death of a Naturalist' has a literary background in the 'woodcocks' episode in *The Prelude*. He claims that Heaney's concrete imagery is at odds with him inhabiting the child's feelings. It is a failed 'spot of time' Roe suggests, and with, I think, some sense of humour, because 'Death of a Naturalist' shows a 'catholic unwillingness' to consent to the redemptive adequacy of a Wordsworthian, Protestant imagination. While I would agree with Roe that 'Death of a Naturalist' cannot reconcile itself to the Wordsworthian spot of time, I see the hesitations in the poem emanating, not from the inadequacies of Catholic doctrine, but from the sectarian dimensions of Heaney's townland.

¹⁴ William Wordsworth, 'Nutting', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 68.

¹⁵ Nicholas Roe, 'Wordsworth at the Flax-dam': An Early Poem by Seamus Heaney', *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature* eds. Michael Allen and Angela Wilcox (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1989), pp. 166-170

I would argue that the flax-dam was a reminder of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland, like other aspects of Heaney's childhood — his reciting of poems, patriotic ballads and songs about Henry Joy McCracken, Michael Dwyer and Father Murphy, his playing the part of Robert Emmet or a blacksmith forging pikes in the play *Betsy Grey*.¹⁶ The flax-dam is a reminder of figures such as Henry Munro, about whom Heaney has written a play, and the role of linen-drapers in the rebellion in Ulster, as well as the politics of the Heaney household. 'I never had any hint of blistering Republican dogma',¹⁷ Heaney recalls. He points out, 'for example I knew very little about 1916. On the other hand, I knew a lot about 1798. When people met in the house, they would sing songs or recite poems about '98.'¹⁸ And this is no doubt why, when some poets were straining to celebrate the anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, in 1966, Heaney decided to write 'Requiem for the Croppies', included in *Door into the Dark*. And his sonnet, written the same year that *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) was published, is a terrible reminder of the legacies of Irish history — the connection between rural life and political uprisings and perhaps the shared politics between those who instigated the uprising in Ireland (The United Irishmen) and those who took part in the French Revolution.¹⁹ But the flax-dam has also come to symbolize, in Heaney's writing, what he calls, 'the basis of Belfast's industrial power and its intransigent male-fisted

¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'The North: Silent Awareness', *Rambles in Ireland*, ed. Monic Begley (Old Greenwich: Devin-Adair, 1977), p. 162.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Wordsworth while touring Ireland in 1829 does mention the site of Vinegar Hill. It seems, from what he has written, that the more conservative Romantic figure favoured the defeat of the Rebels although his choice to mention the spot twice, first in a letter to Christopher Wordsworth and then in a letter Mary Wordsworth, might reveal some conflict of feeling about the place. See, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years Part II 1829-1834*, ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 123-125.

politics',²⁰ which he associates with Unionism's economic control in the province. So, what was at the 'heart' of the townland was not only a reminder of historical events and how history becomes mythologised, until it becomes the politics of Heaney's community, but phrases such as 'cocked on sods', 'obscene threats', and 'mud grenades', hint at the tensions still there in South Derry between Nationalism and Unionism, Republicanism and Loyalism, Catholicism and Protestantism.

The flax-dam can assume a dual political identity. Heaney's childhood recollections were muddied by past and present conditions. This gave the Irish poet's reflections terrible dimensions, dimensions that serve to highlight how he read Wordsworth's poetry and why it was a literary background to 'Death of a Naturalist'. As the poem concludes, the line, 'I sickened turned and ran', begins to play with feelings of revulsion and rage. If these feelings tell of self-disgust, intrusion, sabotage, betrayal, they might also be evidence of a previous commitment to a preferred ideal. For the way Heaney has invigilated the boy's reaction tells us, not just what the Irish poet thinks has been lost, but also what was valued — a world without a deeply ingrained sense of sectarianism. Heaney, I would argue, found that world in Wordsworth's poetry. While the childhood adventures in *The Prelude* may persuade us of the value of inner tensions — 'I grew up/ Fostered alike by beauty and by fear' — unlike Wordsworth's recollections, Heaney's boyhood memories suffered from being unable to bear too much conflict. How the Irish poet read his experiences was coloured by politics, by the dye cast from a flax-dam. Those aspects of 'Death of a Naturalist' that most remind us of parts of *The Prelude* or 'Nutting' then represented an ideal and were there, perhaps, to give some sense of order to a life

²⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry from Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 20.

out of joint, to preserve, if not restore, a sense of self and community that political tensions were always threatening to diminish.

As with 'Death of a Naturalist', 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' has a hidden relationship with Wordsworth's poetry. As John Wilson Foster has suggested, the sequence 'occupies the poetic centre'²¹ of the second volume. However I would like to lead into my discussion of a 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' by briefly discussing *Door into the Dark's* (1969) relationship with the Romantic poet's writing. It seems to me that a number of the poems in Heaney's second volume are there to populate and bring a sense of the pastoral to the landscape of Heaney's poetry.²² If Heaney 'has embraced the role of Romantic poet',²³ as Blake Morrison has suggested, 'by drawing his theories of composition from Wordsworth'²⁴ and by 'comparing the poet's task to carpenters and water-diviners',²⁵ as in *Death of a Naturalist*, and now blacksmiths ('The Forge'), thatchers ('Thatcher'), and 'a whole range'²⁶ of what Morrison calls 'folksy-craftsy 'makers'',²⁷ mythologising the poet's skill in his community, then *Door into the Dark* seems curiously even more 'foreshadowed' by Wordsworth's poetry than Heaney's preceding volume.

²¹ John Wilson Foster, 'A Lough Neagh Sequence': Sources and Motifs', *Seamus Heaney: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), p. 45.

²² For further discussion on how Heaney's poetry negotiates its place and path between pastoral and anti-pastoral traditions see: Sidney Burris, *The Poetry of Resistance* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990) and Henry Hart, *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progressions* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

²³ Blake Morrison, *Seamus Heaney* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 15.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

Along with these portraits of the poet as local artisan come other more oppressed figures in *Door into the Dark*. These might be referred to as Heaney's first solitaries. 'The Wife's Tale' and 'Mother' seem to be among his more tender attempts to understand the isolation and humiliations endured by women in a male, rural culture. Even if the poems finally fail in their empathy, the poet does attempt 'to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes'.²⁸ It is as if from reading Wordsworth's 'Preface' or poems, such as 'Simon Lee', that Heaney learnt how to emphasize in 'The Wife's Tale', for instance, individual powerlessness, feelings of being 'lost', the importance of mutual respect in human relationships and learned how to give a poem a political message, as in Wordsworth's 'The Female Vagrant', and to comment upon the poverty of human interactions in rural Derry. But unlike Wordsworth's poems, 'The Wife's Tale' shows the value of mutual respect by revealing its absence — 'I'd come and he had shown me/ So I belonged no further to the work./ I gathered cups and folded up the cloth/ And went.' However imitative these lines may be of Lowell, Frost, or Heaney's own voice, as Neil Corcoran has commented,²⁹ Heaney's rural portraits are altogether sturdier, hardier, than those figures we meet in Wordsworth's poetry, like the pastoral shepherd in 'Michael' — the essential difference between English rustic and Irish rural.

If 'The Wife's Tale' and 'Mother' can be convincingly seen as equivalents or at least similar to Wordsworthian solitaries, other poems in *Door into the Dark*, with their focus upon embryos and fetuses, such as 'Elegy for a Still-Born Child' or 'Cana Revisited', aim for what Hugh Bredin has called a 'moral vision',³⁰ (perhaps a Catholic vision?). Bredin's remark, whether

²⁸ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 162.

²⁹ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 14-15

³⁰ Hugh Bredin, 'Book Review', *Newman Review*, 1 December, 1969, p. 20.

intentional or not, seems to me to draw attention to how some of the poems in *Door into the Dark* may be read as a social critique. I do not want to exaggerate the poet's ambitions in this volume, but if these 'human poems' were not attempting to heighten the quality, of what Wordsworth called the 'moral relations'³¹ of mankind, at least they were attempting to bring a sense of a need for humanity, when Ireland was in conflict.

Blake Morrison, has also suggested that *Door into the Dark* is 'a less fearful collection' than *Death of a Naturalist*. However, I would suggest that fear is as ever present but in this volume more controlled or anticipated by the poet. This is not to say that *Door into the Dark* does not have fleeting moments when Heaney wishes to evade those incarcerated ghosts that haunt Ireland. 'The Peninsula' might be one useful example. In their essays, T.S Eliot disapprovingly and Heaney approvingly, have described Wordsworth as a 'pedestrian' poet. In 'The Peninsula' the Irish writer might be thought of as a motorist poet, less environmentally friendly than Wordsworth's walking, but nonetheless Heaney uses his transport to take in and be silenced by nature's beauty — 'When you have nothing more to say, just drive/ For a day all round the peninsula.' The poet observes a landscape changing through the day. 'The sky is tall as over a runway', he tells us, suggesting a clear, warm blue day which gradually passes away into dusk and then into fog, the fog being highly evocative of the solitary Romantic poet/figure. We might think here of Herbert Lindenberger's essay, 'Images of Interaction in *The Prelude*',³² and his account of 'islands' in Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, particularly Books II and VIII.

³¹ William Wordsworth, op. cit. p. 176.

³² Herbert Lindenberger, 'Images of Interaction in *The Prelude*', *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, eds. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H Abrams and Stephen Gill (London: Norton, 1979), pp. 642-663.

As with Lindenberger's discussion of *The Prelude*, it might also be claimed that in 'The Peninsula' there appears to be a similar interaction with nature and something more than a picturesque evocation of a landscape. The valuable lesson the Irish poet tells himself driving home is 'now you will uncode all landscapes/ By this'. This line suggests that Heaney has learned to internalise his place, to draw the historical and violent from the visual. And there are other examples in *Door into the Dark* — 'Requiem for the Croppies', 'Relic of Memory', 'Shoreline' and 'Bogland' — where the 'landscape' both represents occupation and occupies the darker places in the human psyche, what Heaney would refer to in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* as a 'mindscape'.³³

Yet of all the poems in *Door into the Dark*, 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' might be the most Wordsworthian. As in Wordsworth's poem, 'Tintern Abbey', in 'A Lough Neagh Sequence', the lough, which Wordsworth had himself described as 'vast',³⁴ impresses itself upon the psyche of the Irish poet. Like the Romantic poet, Heaney does not seek to hold a mirror up to nature but rather to convey its emotional, spiritual and mythological impact upon the observer. The sheer enormity of this stretch of water is emphasised by the local myths that are associated with it: 'There is a town sunk beneath its water./ It is the scar left by the Isle of Man', it is a 'sea' and it is to the vastness of the lough that Wordsworth pays particular attention during his visit to Ireland in 1829.³⁵ But perhaps most important of all is the psychological territory the lough takes up in the Irish poet's imagination of the poet and the seven parts to this poem might be thought of as

³³ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 217.

³⁴ William Wordsworth, 'William Wordsworth to His family at Rydal', *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years II, 1829 - 1834*, ed. Alan G Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 151.

³⁵ *ibid.*

Heaney's guide to the lake. As in *The Prelude* it is not so much the natural world but how it is transformed by the imagination that gives the sequence its power.

In the first section of the poem, 'Up the Shore', Lough Neagh seems to be both an object of fear — 'The lough will claim a victim every year' — (death by water) — and 'virtue' or beauty as the water 'hardens wood to stone.' And the repetition of the line, 'The lough will claim a victim every year', emphasises a cyclical event from which there can be no escape. John Wilson Foster has drawn attention to the circularity of the poem and its immediate sources but his insights could have been developed further. For Sigmund Freud water was not only a maternal symbol, but it appealed to evolutionary truth. In Heaney's poem the lough's presence then represents an inversion of Freud's reading, something more foreboding. The eels, Freud might have suggested, are 'easily understandable male sexual symbols'³⁶ as the 'famous symbol of the snake.'³⁷ But in the context of the sequence they seem to represent a more self-destructive evolutionary truth.

The critic, Thomas C. Foster, rightly argues that the fishermen are as much a part of the cycle as the eel they catch, however he goes too far by suggesting that the fishermen 'display the lack of recognition of pattern characteristic of Wordsworth's rustic.'³⁸ On the contrary, the men described are cannily aware and are complicit in their own destinies. They 'never learn to swim' and they play with the perilousness of the water — "We'll be the quicker going down," they say.'

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey, eds James Strachey and Angela Richards (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 189.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Thomas C. Foster, *Seamus Heaney* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1989), p. 29.

If 'he who plays with perfidious water drowns and wants to drown.'³⁹ and death associated with water is more dream-like than death associated with the earth, as the philosopher Gaston Bachelard would propose, then what we seem to have in 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' seems more like the recurrence of a nightmare, which the poet seeks to avoid by remaining safely 'up the shore' and 'cautious' at riverbanks. If *The Prelude* showed Heaney how a Wordsworthian reverence for nature might shape the imagination, this first section of 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' seems unclear, uncertain and uncanny, when compared to the Romantic poet's reflections. When Wordsworth tells how he 'saw a drowned man rise out of Esthwaite Lake, 'Bolt upright . . . with his ghastly face', this is a boy's adventure associated with the fantastical rather than ambivalent imaginings.

Section two of Heaney's poem, 'Beyond Sargasso', which looks at the beginning of the life cycle of the eel, at elver stage, until it fully matures and feels the pull across the Atlantic, the poet imagines the eel working its way 'Against/ ebb, current, rock, rapids' and it may have faint echoes of Wordsworth's 'sounding cataract'. Like Wordsworthian nature, the eels' presence gradually impresses itself upon the Irish poet's imagination. However, the eels haunt and worry Heaney. Nature, rather than being an invisible force for good, has been charged with anxiety. In the other parts of the poem, 'Bait', 'Setting', 'Lifting', 'The Return' and finally 'Vision', the eel emerges as 'hatched fears', or as a 'muscled icicle', or as 'mud coronas', 'slippy' and as 'sinewed slime'. Like the frogs, the 'slime kings' in 'Death of a Naturalist', their writhing, wriggling bodies symbolise a 'darker sexuality',⁴⁰ as Neil Corcoran has suggested. But they are

³⁹ Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Material Imagination*, trans. Edith R. Farrell (Michigan: Braun-Brumfield, 1983), p. 82.

⁴⁰ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 16.

also equally as threatening and vengeful like 'The lice', fastidious adults 'said, would gang up/
Into a mealy rope/ And drag him, small, dirty, doomed,// Down to the water.'

How different Wordsworth's image of himself in *The Prelude*: 'A naked boy, among thy
silent pools/ Made one long bathing of a summer's day./ Basked in the sun, or plunged into thy
streams . . . a naked savage in the thunder-shower?'. Yet, Heaney's description of the cycle of
the fishermen's lives, the lough and the life cycle of the eel, are all bound up with the globe, and
the Irish poet's choice of words and phrases, such as 'The oars on their locks go round and
round', 'satellite', 'insinuating pull', 'orbit', 'globe', 'encompass', 'knot', toy with the same kind
of gravitational forces that can be seen in Wordsworth's poetry. For instance, in 'A slumber did
my spirit seal'.⁴¹ Lucy is imagined, 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course/ With rocks, and
stones, and trees',⁴² whilst in 'Tintern Abbey' the poet senses the harmony and
interconnectedness of ' . . . the round ocean and the living air./ And the blue sky and in the mind
of man:/ A motion and a spirit that impels/ All thinking things, all objects of all thought,/ And
rolls through all things.'⁴³

Where Wordsworth's poetry may emphasise 'harmony', Heaney's poem is based on an
endless repetition of fear, fear in the community — 'The lough will claim a victim every year'
— and in the individual — 'He stood at night when eels/ Moved through the grass like hatched
fears// Towards the water.'⁴⁴ This seems, to me, to emphasise a tone of hopelessness in the poem

⁴¹ William Wordsworth, 'A slumber did my spirit seal', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 72.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ William Wordsworth, 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey', *ibid.* p. 52.

⁴⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'A Lough Neagh Sequence', *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 33.

which was composed and first published when political and sectarian tensions were heightening in Northern Ireland. So, fear in 'A Lough Neagh Sequence', particularly in its closing poem 'A Vision'—'Time/ Confirmed the horrid cable'⁴⁵ — might well be a form of anticipation, a subconscious acknowledgement, by a poet wishing for autonomy from the insidious and uneasy truces between a divided community. Like and unlike Wordsworth's visionary sublime, it was also the malignant that gave the Irish poet's place its form and continuity. Indeed, 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' might be described as a malignant version of Wordsworthian sublime.

Before I discuss 'Gifts of Rain', I would like to explore, in brief, some of the poems that make up *Wintering Out* and what their relationship might be with Wordsworth's writing. Like *Door into the Dark* we encounter more solitary figures, this time more convincingly portrayed. Neil Corcoran, in his book *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (1998), has discussed some of these poems in a subsection titled 'Mooning',⁴⁶ drawing attention to how the unhappy wife in 'Shore Woman' walks in the moonlight or how in 'Bye-Child' the boy is described as 'Little moon man'. We might add to these 'Limbo', where the infant's body is netted at night and the line 'A cold glitter of souls' creates a moon like quality. Similarly in 'Maighdean Mara', where the suicide happens in 'night air' by the sea, it is not difficult to imagine that the scene is moonlit and in 'Westering' the poet explores his own sense of isolation and distances from home by describing the moon's 'bony shine' and 'untroubled dust'. In these poems it seems to me that Heaney has employed a recognisable Wordsworthian signature to similar effect.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Neil Corcoran, *op. cit.* p. 50.

As in Wordsworth's 'Strange fits of passion have I known',⁴⁷ with its 'sinking moon' and 'descending moon', the lunar references in Heaney's poems have a strange hypnotic effect. The moon appears as a sign of isolation, death and neglect. Indeed, as Corcoran has noted in 'Shore Woman', the female figure becomes 'disembodied in the final line 'A membrane between moonlight and my shadow'',⁴⁸ and it might be suggested that Heaney's scene in the poem recycles Wordsworth's device in *The Prelude* when the 'ghastly figure' of the discharged soldier shape-shifts out of his human form to retain a spectral, almost supernatural quality in the moonlight. But unlike Wordsworth's solitaires, in these poems Heaney does not interact with those whose story he tells; he is either speaker or remains at a distance as the storyteller.

Heaney's tale of a woman desperate to be separated from her husband in 'Shore Woman' or of the child drowned in 'Limbo' or of the suicide in 'Maighdean Mara' seem to have social and political implications, like in *Lyrical Ballads*. According to Lionel Trilling, the 'intention of the poet [Wordsworth] is to require us to acknowledge their being and thus to bring them within the range of conscience, and of something more immediate than conscience, natural sympathy'⁴⁹ and what Trilling has to say might equally apply to Heaney's poems. If, as in the 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', where Wordsworth proclaims, 'Deem not this man useless', Heaney's 'natural sympathy' with the plight of those whose stories he narrates, might be read as subtly questioning the validity of, or seeking to advance a more sympathetic social value or Catholic doctrine. As with Wordsworth's 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', other Heaney poems,

⁴⁷ William Wordsworth, 'Strange fits of passion have I known', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 69-70

⁴⁸ Neil Corcoran, loc. cit.

⁴⁹ Lionel Trilling, *The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent*, ed. and introduced by Leon Wieseltier (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 2000), p. 194

such as the ‘Servant Boy’ and ‘The Other Side’ raise issues of political history and contemporary politics, in particular, what the Gaelic tradition called *dinnseanchas*, which Heaney defines as ‘poems and tales which relate the original meanings of place names and constitute a form of mythological etymology’.⁵⁰ Heaney’s definition does not seem dissimilar to Wordsworth’s advertisement to what he called, ‘Poems on the Naming of Places and as Neil Corcoran has briefly noted might owe something to the Romantic poet’s writing. And I would now like to explore, ‘Anahorish’, ‘Broagh’, ‘Toome’, ‘The Wool Trade’ and ‘Linen Town’

In the ‘Advertisement’ to ‘Poems on the Naming of Places’, it seems obvious that Wordsworth wanted his poems to be records of places he and his friends had named where incidents occurred and to renew the feelings experienced. Often, as in ‘Emma’s Dell’ or ‘Joanna’s Rock’, the naming of places allows those who are gone to be alive in memory. In another instance, a particular place, as in ‘A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags’, might be associated with a moment of learning — ‘What need there is to be reserved in speech/ And temper all our thoughts with charity.’⁵¹ In some respects Heaney’s poems share not too dissimilar ambitions. But, for the Irish poet, many of his places have already been named for him. And by the time he began to write about many of them in *Wintering Out* (1973) he had already been displaced from them. Whereas Wordsworth returned to his Lake District, Heaney’s poems reveal and conceal a greater distance from his first sources. Yet with some of these places the Irish poet does feel naturally attuned whilst to others he feels a sense of hostility.

⁵⁰ Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 131.

⁵¹ William Wordsworth, ‘A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags’, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. ed Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. II, p. 148.

‘Anahorish’ might be Heaney’s purest reverie in sound in the poetry of a placename. ‘My ‘place of clear water’” is his translation of its Irish meaning. The poem has a Wordsworthian ‘eminence’, ‘the first hill in the world’,⁵² if not a preeminence in the Irish poet’s imagination, incomparably pure — ‘where springs washed into/ the shiny grass’.⁵³ Some critics have described the poem as Arcadian,⁵⁴ Edenic,⁵⁵ Gaelic Pastoral⁵⁶ and an example of Wordsworthian pastoral might be added to the list. Heaney may not suffer from Wordsworth’s false modesty, by giving his name to the spot, but linking the place to his childhood and to generations of ‘mound-dwellers’ — ‘dwellers’ that most Wordsworthian of words — Heaney’s poem becomes a record of personal feelings associated with a place like many of Wordsworth’s.

If ‘Anahorish’ is a personal and rather Wordsworthian evocation of place, then ‘Broagh’, ‘Toome’, ‘The Wool Trade’ and ‘Linen Town’, reveal that Heaney’s intimacy with his placenames are often more problematic than his Romantic predecessor’s. They are complicated by linguistic, military and colonial history. Yet, in ‘Broagh’, the Irish poet may share a common word hoard with Wordsworth’s poetry. We might think of Heaney’s poem as a Wordsworthian ‘open space’.⁵⁷ For both writers might be described as ‘border poets’. They both had an adoptive and adaptive relationship with the Scot’s tongue. When Heaney read Wordsworth’s poetry, as in ‘Michael’ for instance, he heard dialectical echoes that legitimised and made important his

⁵² Seamus Heaney, ‘Anahorish’, *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 16.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 45.

⁵⁵ D.E.S Maxwell, ‘Heaney’s Poetic Landscape’, *Seamus Heaney: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), p. 31.

⁵⁶ Rita Zoutenbier, ‘The Matter of Ireland and the Poetry of Seamus Heaney’, *ibid.* p. 57.

⁵⁷ William Wordsworth, ‘When, to the attractions of the busy world’, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. eds Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), vol. II, p. 118.

own Derry speech and place names.⁵⁸ In ‘Broagh’ the ‘gh’ that ‘strangers found difficult to manage’ does not just have to be another subtle reminder of England’s political trouble with managing Ireland. It is more self-delighting to read the poem as a romantic reminder of rural placenames where there have been crossovers between dialects and that ‘strangers’ might be those outside points of linguistic intersections. So, presumably, Wordsworth would not have found the ‘gh’ in ‘Broagh’ any more difficult to manage than the ‘gh’ in the word ‘wrought’ in ‘Michael’.⁵⁹

But this more playful reading of ‘Broagh’ does not illustrate the deeper divisions that lie between Heaney’s and Wordsworth’s understanding of their respective place names. Whilst, in the poem, ‘Forth from a jutting ridge, around whose base’,⁶⁰ Wordsworth may have given a single spot a personal ‘double memory’, Heaney in his poems ‘Toome’ and ‘The Wool Trade’ and ‘Linen Town’, cannot simply evoke these placenames as landmarks on his childhood map. They are equally more sobering reminders of Ireland’s violent history. ‘Toome’ was one of the sites of the 1798 rebellion and ‘Linen Town’, set in Belfast 1786, regrets the lost ‘possibility’ of political revolution by the hanging of Henry Joy McCracken (and it might be remembered, these are similar political ideals to which the young Wordsworth ascribed.) In ‘The Wool Trade’, although Heaney may employ an epigraph from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,⁶¹ it is the industrialisation of Ireland — as Sidney Burris has argued, spoiling a nostalgic and pastoral

⁵⁸ Seamus Heaney, ‘The North: Silent Awarenesses’, *Rambles in Ireland*, ed. Monica Begley (Old Greenwich: Devin-Adair, 1977), p. 162.

⁵⁹ William Wordsworth, ‘Michael’, *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 73-87.

⁶⁰ William Wordsworth, ‘Forth from a jutting ridge, around whose base’, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. II, p. 151.

⁶¹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Paladin, 1977).

scene of ‘hills and flocks’⁶² — that appears to be an extension of colonial rule. If, in ‘Gifts of Rain’, the river water spells its own name, the poem not only invokes a Wordsworthian reverie in the ‘sounding cataract’,⁶³ but behind that lies other more sinister associations with ‘native haunts’.⁶⁴

As in ‘Death of a Naturalist’ and ‘A Lough Neagh Sequence’, Wordsworth remains a secret literary background in ‘Gifts of Rain’. The poem opens with a solitary figure, not unlike Wordsworth’s leech gatherer, or his solitary reaper, demonstrating, as Neil Corcoran has suggested, ‘a compelling interdependence between man and land.’⁶⁵ As Heaney imagines a man toiling in the fields, ‘hooped to where he planted/ and sky and ground// are running naturally among his arms/ that grope the cropping land’,⁶⁶ it is as if the Irish poet has learnt from ‘Resolution and Independence’⁶⁷ how to endow the rural figure in its place with that same kind of stoical endurance admired by Wordsworth. Like Wordsworth’s poem, ‘Gifts of Rain’ treats us to exhilarating forces of nature. As Heaney listens to the ‘rains’ and the ‘all-night/roaring off the ford’, his lines appear to echo those that open ‘Resolution and Independence’ — ‘There was a roaring in the wind all night;/ The rain came heavily and fell in floods’.⁶⁸ If ‘Gifts of Rain’ shares this ‘common ground’ with ‘Resolution and Independence’, it might be that Heaney has

⁶² Sidney Burris, *The Poetry of Resistance: Seamus Heaney and the Pastoral Tradition* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990).

⁶³ William Wordsworth, ‘Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey’, *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 51-52.

⁶⁴ Seamus Heaney, ‘A New Song’, *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 33.

⁶⁵ Neil Corcoran, op. cit. p. 40.

⁶⁶ Seamus Heaney, ‘Gifts of Rain’, *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 24.

⁶⁷ William Wordsworth, ‘Resolution and Independence’, *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 88-92.

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 88.

been relying upon the preeminence of Wordsworth's poem to empower and increase the impact of his own. But, as the Irish poet takes 'soundings', it seems difficult to determine if he achieves, what Wordsworth called a 'wise passiveness'.⁶⁹

Unlike the putrefied water at the flax dam or the deep water of the lough, representing a dark and murky subconscious, in 'Gifts of Rain' the element is more released, flowing, purer and, as we shall see, closer to Wordsworth's description of the river Derwent in *The Prelude*. The fact that 'Gifts of Rain' opens with the poet listening to the 'Cloudburst and steady downpour' might be read, to a degree, as a kind of Wordsworthian conciliation in nature. Indeed, many of the constituent parts that make up Wordsworth's recollections of the river Derwent in *The Prelude* — 'Was it for this/ That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved/ To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song . . . //That nature breathes among the hills and groves'⁷⁰ — seem to have been worked by Heaney into his own verse.

Writing about childhood narratives, Heaney affirmed that 'one of my own favourite inventions . . . is William Wordsworth's image of the River Derwent as a maternal tongue which licked his poetic being into shape.'⁷¹ And it was perhaps with this admiration of Wordsworth's 'invention' in mind that Heaney decided to associate the Moyola river with his own poetic development. It might then be said that 'Gifts of Rain' is about the Moyola licking Heaney's poetic being into shape. As with Wordsworth's recollection in *The Prelude*, Heaney's poem, presumably recalls how as a boy he heard the 'Moyola harping on// its gravel beds' past the gable

⁶⁹ William Wordsworth, 'Expostulation and Reply', *ibid.* p. 61.

⁷⁰ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805), Book I, ll. 271-285, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 16-18.

⁷¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Foreword', *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*, ed. John Quill (London: Methuen, 1986), p. xi.

of his home, Mossbawn. Previously, water was associated with fear in ‘Death of a Naturalist’ and I suggested when discussing ‘A Lough Neagh Sequence’ that Freud’s maternal associations with water had been subverted. Now, in ‘Gifts of Rain’, it would appear that the element assumes more protective connotations, not dissimilar to the mothering kindness Wordsworth came to associate with nature:

The tawny guttural water
spells itself: Moyola
is its own score and consort,

bedding the locale
in the utterance,
reed music, an old chanter

breathing its mists
through vowels and history.
A swollen river,

a mating call of sound
rises to pleasure me. Dives,
hoarder of common ground.⁷²

In this last section of the poem, and perhaps the key to the whole sequence, the Moyola river is not just an actual fact of Heaney’s childhood. It could be a metaphor for the Irish poet’s beginnings. For as in Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, the physical topography becomes transformed by Heaney into a landscape of the mind — an equivalent to Wordsworth’s ‘prospect in the mind’.⁷³ It would appear that through finding Wordsworth’s ‘invention’ Heaney acquired a sense of how he could develop that ‘tawny guttural water’. Like the Lake poet’s original description of the Derwent in *The Prelude*, ‘Gifts of Rain’ seems, in part, to be a powerful infant memory and also an example of how the adult poet has shaped his memories to evoke a contemplative mood. Admittedly, Heaney does not refer to the Moyola as his ‘nurse’ but it does seem to play a nurturing role as ‘consort’, and as with his Romantic predecessor, he finds ‘pleasure’ in the sound

⁷² Seamus Heaney, *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 25.

⁷³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1850), Book II, l. 352. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 63.

of running water. And Heaney's use of the word 'pleasure' knowingly echoes Wordsworth's 'grand elementary principle of pleasure' in the 1802 'Preface'. There are other similarities which suggest something of the poem's Wordsworthian background. As with Wordsworth's description of the Derwent, Heaney's Moyola is musical, breathing, whispering and hypnotic. Indeed, 'Gifts of Rain' — 'gifts' perhaps Heaney's equivalent to a Wordsworthian 'blessing' — might be re-titled 'Gifts from Wordsworth'.

In his discussion of 'Gifts of Rain', Michael Parker has suggested that 'increasingly Heaney is drawn to *stillness* [Parker's italics] longing for a Wordsworthian tranquillity and an assurance of continuities.'⁷⁴ If this is so, and I think there is some truth to Parker's suggestion, it might be said that 'Gifts of Rain' comes closer to a Wordsworthian reverie in the complex interaction between man and nature than 'Death of a Naturalist' or 'A Lough Neagh Sequence.' However, Parker's argument is not completely persuasive. I would suggest that if *The Prelude* and 'Resolution and Independence' are literary backgrounds in 'Gifts of Rain', Heaney's longing, for what Parker has called a Wordsworthian tranquillity, falters. The Irish poet might secretly yearn for continuity, or in his own words 'common ground',⁷⁵ between his own and Wordsworth's poetry; he may wish to align the 'score' of the Moyola with the 'music' of the Derwent; he may want to establish a relationship between his own and Wordsworth's educative experiences, but such hankerings seem to me to be interrupted by tensions in both the poem and in the Irish poet.

I am inclined to read 'Gifts of Rain' as an example of the frictions and tensions between Heaney's Wordsworthian longings, his wish to remain faithful to his own poetic style (much of

⁷⁴ Michael Parker, *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet* (London: MacMillan, 1993), p. 99.

⁷⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Gifts of Rain', *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 25.

the diction, ‘slabbering’, ‘brimming’, ‘gathering’, is a reminder of ‘Death of a Naturalist’ and ‘A Lough Neagh Sequence’) and his sense of responsibility to comment upon the historical and political tensions in Ireland that interrupt the artistic enterprise. One line which perhaps best illustrates those frictions and tensions might be, ‘The Moyola harping on// its gravel beds’,⁷⁶ as Heaney’s description implicitly acknowledges how Wordsworth’s example in *The Prelude* and Irish history fed him with one of the most memorable lines in the poem. For the word ‘harping’ gives the line a deliberate inflection that plucks on the strings of the Belfast Harp festival and its role in the foundation of The United Irishmen in 1791.⁷⁷ So the song of the Moyola in ‘Gifts of Rain’ seems not only Wordsworthian but appears to be loaded with reminders of the revolutionary movements in Europe, England and Ireland which, in their different ways, fostered English Romantic poetry and Irish politics. Heaney’s ‘swollen river’ may not only be a metaphor for inspiration, it may hint — as when things are ‘swollen’ — that bruising or hidden hurts (the loss of the Irish language, a fragmented cultural heritage, a weak political status) are part of the ‘overflow’ and undertow in the growth of the Irish poet’s mind.

II

When William Wordsworth spoke of the assuaging influence of ‘the spirit of place’ he used the phrase ‘tranquil restoration’ and that is exactly the effect that Dove Cottage has on me. For although it is now a museum it seems to exude a strange residual life — secluded, integrated with the ground, battened down for action, almost hutch like.

Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here*⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *ibid.* p. 24.

⁷⁷ See Mary Helen Thuente, ‘The Literary Significance of The United Irishmen’, *Irish Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Kenneally (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1991), pp. 35-54.

⁷⁸ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974). Appendix, p. 223

The first section of this chapter has looked at those intersections between Heaney's roots, his reading of Wordsworth's poetry and the poems the Irish poet would ultimately write. A number of those poems, in particular, 'Death of a Naturalist', 'A Lough Neagh Sequence' and 'Gifts of Rain', I have argued, have an unacknowledged literary background in Wordsworth's poetry. If, in these poems, like their respective volumes, Heaney secretly smuggled and repackaged Wordsworthian images and themes into his own work and into an Irish rural setting, it was not long after the publication of *Wintering Out* (1972), that the Irish poet's relationship with his Romantic predecessor becomes more self-conscious and public.

In the final part of this chapter I will discuss *William Wordsworth Lived Here: Seamus Heaney at Dove Cottage* (1974) which Heaney wrote and presented at Grasmere for the BBC in 1974. Rather than interrupt my argument with an outline of the textual complications I encountered in making a transcript of *William Wordsworth Lived Here* I have sketched out these difficulties in an introduction which has been included in my appendix. As this programme is crucial to any understanding of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry, it was essential that a textual copy be made for those who have not had the opportunity to see the programme. The secondary intention of the transcript is to provide a text, independent of the thesis, that can be used by anyone doing further research on Heaney, or indeed Wordsworth. I would suggest that my transcript is read before you continue this section of the chapter.

In what follows I begin by giving *William Wordsworth Lived Here* a journalistic context by looking at Heaney's other contributions to radio and newspapers. I would suggest that the programme seems to be a prelude to Wordsworth's writing taking the literary foreground in Heaney's poetry and prose. Without wanting to hinge too much upon the impact of this first visit

to Grasmere, yet not wanting to diminish the transforming nature of that experience, it seems to me that Heaney's tour of the Lake District, nevertheless, represents a pivotal moment in his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry. It will be suggested the visit coloured how Heaney would appreciate his Romantic predecessor's work and life.

In a number of early reviews for *The Listener* Heaney used Wordsworth's writing as a touchstone with which to measure the achievements of other poets. 'Jaggy Climbs', an article on Norman Nicholson's *A Local Habitation* (1972)⁷⁹ is one such example. When reviewing *The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology*,⁸⁰ Heaney compares MacDiarmid's achievement in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* with *The Prelude* and MacDiarmid's image of the poet as being retrieved from the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* — 'a man endued with a lively sensibility, unusual enthusiasm and tenderness, a great knowledge of human nature, a comprehensive soul, a man rejoicing in the spirit of life that is in him and delighted to contemplate similar volitions and passions manifested in the goings-on of the universe.'⁸¹ And not only does Heaney quote from Wordsworth's 'Preface' but he chooses to incorporate the Romantic poet's words within his own review without acknowledging their original source, suggesting the extent to which Heaney's had interwoven his own characterisation of a poet and true artistic achievement with Wordsworth's poetic manifesto.

⁷⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Jaggy Climbs', *The Listener* (26 October, 1972), p. 549-550.

⁸⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Tradition and an Individual Talent', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), pp. 195-198.

⁸¹ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 197.

In a series of radio broadcasts called *Explorations*, written by Heaney for the BBC, he often turns to Wordsworth's writing. In a programme called 'The Long Garden'⁸² the Irish poet argues for the importance of those Wordsworthian moments in childhood bathed in a golden light for the adult poet, while in the next programme, 'Bitter Honey',⁸³ he translates Wordsworth's imagery in 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from recollections of Early Childhood', suggesting that Wordsworth's 'prison house' could be renamed 'the house of experience or the walls of responsibility that sooner or later hem in the freedom of childhood', adding that 'the windows of the house open into a world of pain and decision and loneliness. Some children discover it earlier than others.'⁸⁴

Heaney's comments in 'The Long Garden' and 'Bitter Honey' not only retain autobiographical resonance but were something of an anomaly. For at that time, when 'The Troubles' were at their peak in Northern Ireland, the Irish poet invited his listeners, to (re) think about their lives in terms of Wordsworthian ideology — 'The Child is Father of the Man' — a teaching that has a curious triviality yet relevancy to growing up in the North. Nevertheless, Heaney seems at pains, in both programmes, to demonstrate the restorative virtues and healing powers of poetry based on memory, childhood and the imagination. If *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974) is like these other pieces of literary journalism, it also represents Heaney's first major engagement with Wordsworth's life's work.

⁸² Seamus Heaney, 'The Long Garden', *Explorations* (Belfast: Radio 4, 7 February, 1973).

⁸³ Seamus Heaney, 'Bitter Honey', *Explorations* (Belfast: Radio 4, 17 January, 1974).

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

There can be little doubt that for Heaney reading Wordsworth's poetry was an altogether different experience from actually visiting Grasmere. From the opening of the programme the Irish poet makes it clear that Wordsworth's poetry had given him 'no firm visual impression of the Lake District'⁸⁵ but now seeing it for the first time allowed the Irish poet to re-experience Wordsworth's writing and Heaney was delighted to find the landscape 'so palpable and compact, so monumental and serene'.⁸⁶ Indeed, his first impressions suggest that he had previously imagined Wordsworth's landscape in awe-inspiring dimensions. Like Wordsworth's recollection, when as a child he magnified the cliff that seemed to pursue him in *The Prelude*, the same seems true of the prominence of Wordsworth's domain in Heaney's imagination. The actual 'country of the mind', that Heaney created, was evidently greater than the geography of the Lake District, hence his 'surprise' to find it so 'compact'. This seems an encouraging discovery, as if what Heaney found was reassuringly proportionate to the natural boundaries of his own homeland and his own experiences.

Yet, the programme's opening panoramic shot, of Heaney sitting on the hillside with Derwent water behind him does seem incongruous. As civil unrest intensified in Northern Ireland, here was 'Seamus Heaney' at Dove Cottage celebrating the domestic retreat, and poetry as a vocation. By the time Heaney came to make the programme the more violent images that he had seen and read about in P.V Glob's book *The Bog People*⁸⁷ had already been written into his poetry. The ritual sacrifices of iron-age man, where for him 'symbols adequate to [the]

⁸⁵ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 217.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ P.V. Glob, *The Bog People*. trans. Rupert Bruce-Mitford (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969).

predicament⁸⁸ in the North. In fact, a number of his 'bog poems' had already been written. Yet, so too, in its own way, was Grasmere. If the 'bog poems' were Heaney's way of fulfilling a poetic obligation and talking about the violent political situation in the province, then the tour of the Lake District declared another allegiance. Making the programme on Wordsworth and Dove Cottage was an affirmation of a life dedicated to poetry and to comparative peacefulness. But in order to affirm the poetic life, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* tends to focus on Wordsworth's life, and to celebrate those poems on childhood, nature and the imagination, outside a political and historical context.

It seems something of an irony that as Heaney's poetry was becoming more politically involved, the more concertedly the Irish poet read Wordsworth's poetry and life aesthetically. Heaney may read the terrible weather that greeted Wordsworth's arrival at Dove Cottage as symbolising the turbulent energies of the Romantic poet's creativity, perhaps a Heaneyfied version of Wordsworth 'wintering out', but he avoids discussing the unnatural strife felt by the Romantic poet when England declared war on France. It is not until he writes 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (1984), a lecture first given at Grasmere, that the Irish poet makes a connection between Wordsworth's conflict of sensations and those endured by poets from Northern Ireland. For what Heaney omits in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* seems to me to be as important as what he dwells on.

Heaney's focus upon Wordsworth's 'resolution, his independence as a poet',⁸⁹ a pun on the title of Wordsworth's poem 'Resolution and Independence', seems to suggest that he clearly

⁸⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 56.

⁸⁹ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 222.

associated Dove Cottage with artistic autonomy. Often, Heaney's description of Wordsworth's home as 'a retreat'⁹⁰ or as an 'elemental power point',⁹¹ seems to be a euphemism for fantasies of artistic freedom. The actual isolated location of Wordsworth's home, for Heaney, evidently represented his 'instinctive decision to make new and nourishing connections with his origins'. Connections with origins, as we have seen in 'Anahorish' in *Wintering Out* have often been associated by Heaney with pastoral and unsullied sources. But in those poems the additional troubling resonances muddy his own sources of inspiration, whereas what he has to say about the connection between Wordsworth's actual dwelling place and his sources of poetic inspiration seems to emphasise a poetic ideal:

there certainly is a cellar like atmosphere in these downstairs rooms and particularly through here in the kitchen and in the larder. And yet this cellar atmosphere seems to me completely appropriate for a man whose inspiration was stored in the cellars of his consciousness, a man who traced the birth of his poetic vocation to the noise of river water murmuring in his infant ear.⁹²

Here, Heaney's description recalls an image he had previously employed in an introduction to some of his poems — 'the cellars of the self have been and will be my study so long as I continue to write.'⁹³ For Gaston Bachelard the cellar was 'first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces.'⁹⁴ We have already seen some of these subterranean forces at work in 'A Lough Neagh Sequence'. Like C. G Jung in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Bachelard associated 'cellars' with fear, 'buried madness, walled-in tragedy.'⁹⁵ However, these darker associations, to which Heaney's poetry would seem to be drawn, all but

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 223.

⁹¹ *ibid.* p. 218.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *Modern Poets in Focus 2*, ed. Jeremy Robson (London: Corgi Books, 1971), p. 102.

⁹⁴ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, new forward John R. Stilgoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 18.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 20.

disappear in his description of Wordsworth's home. I am not saying that darker undertones are not there at all, but rather, if they are there, they may well have been circumvented by the Irish writer or he may have carried over from his own writing into his reading of Wordsworth's poetry and his home more subliminal forces.

Some examples of this poetic ideal might be Heaney's revelation that Wordsworth was a boarder at school, or that the river Derwent ran at the bottom of the garden of his childhood home. These details have a personal resonance. They make us think of his poetry such as 'Mid Term Break' and 'Gifts of Rain'. But the political undertones given to the Moyola's 'score', more than the death of a sibling, contrasts with Wordsworth's experience as retold by Heaney. Yet the most notable example of a crossover between Heaney's experience and what he identifies with in Wordsworth's life is the attention given to the fact that 'William sank his own well',⁹⁶ while he lived at Dove Cottage, 'as ever in search of the secret enhancing water'.⁹⁷

Drawing out this personal detail was not only a way for Heaney to reconnect the Romantic poet to water as the source of his song, and affirm an already conservative appreciation of his predecessor's poetry, but to select this detail was clearly Heaney's way of reminding us of his poem 'Personal Helicon', where staring into wells and the drawing of water would be analogous to the discovery of a poetic voice. However, the rat that slaps across the child's reflection in that poem (the rat being a recurring symbol of fear in the early poetry) pollutes his poetic reverie whereas in the description of Wordsworth's life such contamination seems notably absent.

⁹⁶ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974). Appendix, p. 221.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

Heaney even goes so far as to describe Dove Cottage as ‘a station from which [Wordsworth] could contemplate those ‘natural forms’ around which his feelings grew pure and steady.’⁹⁸

It would seem that purity and steadiness appear to be Heaney’s code words for artistic freedom and emotional stability. To describe Dove Cottage as ‘a station’ even seems peculiarly Catholic in connotation, especially if we reflect upon *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, in the light of the prose poems that make up *Stations* (1975) and the title poem in *Station Island* (1984), both of which bring to mind Catholic penitence and the Stations of the Cross. However, Heaney’s description of Wordsworth’s home as ‘a station’ has more immediate resonance in the Irishman’s earlier poetry, in particular ‘The Diviner’. There the ‘secret stations’, that dousing for water picks up, are not only analogous to the mysteries of the poetic craft but again they are associated with purity and hidden resources. So, for Heaney to describe Dove Cottage as a ‘station’⁹⁹ suggests that the Irish poet associated Wordsworth’s home with his artistic energies and with a purer way of life. And upon reflection this seems to Romanticise or Wordsworthianise the poem ‘The Diviner’. Heaney may acknowledge that ‘in fact the Wordsworths were quite poor during their time here. They lived on porridge and potatoes, for the most part, and they washed that down with home-made beer.’¹⁰⁰ But as he dwells upon the ordinary details of Wordsworth’s cottage life, the Irish poet seems almost to celebrate the fact that Dove Cottage and its facilities ‘would invite and encourage frugality.’¹⁰¹ What he paints in the programme contrasts with the frugal scene in ‘At a Potato Digging’. For rather than see Wordsworth’s experience as an economic hardship, akin to many rural experiences in Ireland, Heaney associates such ‘plain

⁹⁸ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 219

⁹⁹ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 220.

¹⁰¹ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 219.

living [with] high thinking'.¹⁰² Indeed, the references to potatoes and porridge seem archly self-referential.

If in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* Heaney idealises the rural and poetic life led by Wordsworth, and I think he does, it might be suggested that this says more about the Irish poet's own needs. For even though Dove Cottage is now a museum, the Irish poet makes a concerted effort, in the programme, to emphasise how 'it seems to exude a strange, residual life' which suggests more about how Wordsworth's home and poetry has permeated Heaney's imagination. For as we shall see the 'residual' life of Dove Cottage will permeate the Irish poet's writing in *Stations* (1975), *North* (1975), and many of the essays in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (1980). And Heaney's closing description of Dove Cottage hints at its impact upon the Irish poet. What he has to say reveals as much about Wordsworth's home as it does about Heaney and his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry:

secluded, integrated with the ground, battened down for action, almost hutch like. It suggests to me the incubating mind, the dedicated retreat of that decade, when Wordsworth founded his Romantic vision.¹⁰³

Although some might hear in the phrase, 'the incubating mind',¹⁰⁴ echoes of C.K. Stead's essay on Eliot's 'dark embryo' — and we might think back to the moral vision engendered in those foetal centric poems 'Elegy for a Still-Born Child' or 'Cana Revisited' in *Door into the Dark* — Heaney does not seem to be doing anything as radical with Wordsworth as Stead did when he 'rehabilitated Eliot as a Romantic poet'.¹⁰⁵ For Wordsworth's home to be described as

¹⁰² Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

¹⁰³ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 223.

¹⁰⁴ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

¹⁰⁵ Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 92.

'hutch like'¹⁰⁶ might recall Wordsworth's 'my Mother's hut'¹⁰⁷ in *The Prelude*, suggesting yet again a place of incubation and growth, pre-oedipal and without anxiety. It might be remembered that Heaney had already chosen his own 'secluded' spot, Glanmore, from where he could contemplate the heart of man in Ireland, the beautiful in nature and reminisce about his childhood. To describe Dove Cottage as 'battered down for action'¹⁰⁸ might actually say more about Heaney's own sense of being besieged by the political conflict in the North of Ireland. For Wordsworth's dwelling place, I would suggest, invalidated Heaney's own place of seclusion and, in some respects, Heaney's description of Dove Cottage, can be read as a working out of his own tangled feelings about his move to Co. Wicklow.

Heaney's emphasis in the programme upon the way in which the windows of Dove Cottage were set into the very landscape and how the natural growth involved itself with the natural light, seem to be there to reinforce his description of Wordsworth's home as being 'integrated with the ground'.¹⁰⁹ This integration with the ground may represent the Romantic poet's connection with a better soil and source of poetry. But the phrase 'integrated with the ground' — which seems more self-referential and self contained than Heaney's own more politically anxious phrase 'common ground' — also hints at how many of Heaney's own poems, including 'Follower' and even the bog poems, are all, in their own way, about human integration with the ground, Irish style. If Heaney's experiences of living in a divided society determined his response to Wordsworth's home and poetry, then the Irish poet's description of Dove Cottage as a 'retreat'

¹⁰⁶ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), Book I, l. 302, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁹ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

— a word which picks up and plays on his earlier description of Wordsworth, ‘composing here like a Celtic monk in his cell in the wood’¹¹⁰ and the description of Dove Cottage as ‘a station’ — suggests that the Irish poet saw Dove Cottage as representing a place that permitted untroubled artistic frequencies:

when Wordsworth founded his Romantic vision of man, ‘the heart of man, and human life’ upon those ‘beautiful and permanent forms in nature and in the poetic acts which engendered that vision coupled the childhood years of ‘glad animal movement’ with those later years ‘that bring the philosophic mind’.¹¹¹

In the next chapter we will see how Heaney, on his return home from Grasmere to Glanmore, began to complete and re-write the prose poems of *Stations* (1975), finish ‘Singing School’ and write ‘Feeling into Words’. Although these three works make explicit references to passages from *The Prelude*, although they in part celebrate experiences of the natural world, Wordsworth’s poetry and life represents an ideal that Heaney seems to read, if mistakenly, ahistorically in order to highlight the divisive forces on his own home ground.

¹¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 222.

¹¹¹ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 223-224.

Chapter 2: After Dove Cottage, *The Prelude* in *Stations*, 'Singing School' and 'Feeling into Words'

A station from which he could contemplate those 'natural forms' around which his feelings grew pure and steady.

*William Wordsworth Lived Here*¹

After making *William Wordsworth Lived Here* Heaney returned to Glanmore Cottage, in Co. Wicklow, during the last week in May, 1974. From May to October that year there was an immediate flurry of writing, perhaps generated by his first visit to Dove Cottage. For it seems important too to stress the fact that *The Prelude* is only explicitly referred to in Heaney's poetry and prose written a matter of weeks after that first visit to 'Wordsworth country.'² It was if that first visit to the Lake District reassured the Irish poet that there was a recognisable, yet fraught, relationship between his own and Wordsworth's poetry. And it was at Glanmore, his own cottage retreat, that Heaney completed the prose poems of *Stations*,³ finished the poetry sequence 'Singing School',⁴ and prepared his essay 'Feeling into Words'.⁵ But, I would argue, Heaney's use of *The Prelude* in all three works and his appreciation of Wordsworth's poetry seems to have been coloured by his first visit to Grasmere. His conclusion to *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, with its emphasis upon Dove Cottage's feeling of 'tranquil restoration',⁶ must have highlighted, for the Irish poet, the partitions and violations of his own country. As we will see, for Heaney,

¹ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 219.

² *ibid.* p. 217.

³ Seamus Heaney, *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975).

⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 56-67.

⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), pp. 41-60.

⁶ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

any recuperation in the natural world, any assimilation of *The Prelude* into a South Derry life, was complicated by sectarianism and Ireland's colonial history.

Yet, in spite of the complications of assimilating Wordsworth into his own text, the epigraph to 'Singing School' and the opening to 'Feeling into Words' and most probably the preface to *Stations*, all directly appeal to the thirteen book version of *The Prelude*, completed by 1805, while Wordsworth was living at Dove Cottage. As with *The Prelude*, all three Heaney pieces are primarily concerned with autobiography, memory, childhood development and the sources of poetic inspiration. I begin by looking at *Stations* where Wordsworth's 'spots of time' are given a new shape and psychological importance so as they can assimilate the Irish poet's sense of cultural division. The division between Heaney's rather naive appreciation of a Wordsworthian ideal and his understanding of Ireland's harrowing circumstances are made even more glaring in 'Singing School'. I look at this sequence of poems, suggesting that the epigraph from *The Prelude* asks us to question how much Heaney was favoured in his birthplace as the experiences described in 'The Ministry of Fear', or 'A Constable Calls' or 'Exposure' give a quite different meaning to Wordsworth's 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear.'⁷ In the final section I look at the semi-autobiographical essay 'Feeling into Words'. Like *Stations* and 'Singing School', 'Feeling into Words' explores poetry's responses to the conflict in Ireland. Although Heaney wishes to encompass that predicament, it will be argued that his appropriation of 'the hiding places' passage from *The Prelude* and his defence of 'The Thorn' are about refusing to abandon the relationship he had constructed between his own and Wordsworth's poetic procedures.

⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 56.

‘insistent signals’

Seamus Heaney, *Stations*⁸

In order to understand how Heaney was drawn to Wordsworthian themes and why *The Prelude* would feature in *Stations* by 1974, I want to outline the book’s history. It was ‘begun in California in 1970/71’⁹ when Heaney was a guest lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. It was there he wrote ‘three or four’¹⁰ of the final twenty-one pieces that make up the volume. The cultural and literary movements in America were, as Heaney recalls, a movement ‘back to a kind of reality that I had known in my childhood’.¹¹ But rather than follow that contemporary movement Heaney chose to ally those ‘first pieces’¹² he wrote for *Stations* with those ‘spots of time’ in Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*. In the preface he writes:

those first pieces had been attempts to touch what Wordsworth called “spots of time”, moments at the very edge of consciousness which had lain for years in the unconscious mind as active lodes of nodes.¹³

To ally ‘those first pieces’¹⁴ with ‘spots of time’¹⁵ suggests the extent to which his first drafts imitated the Romantic poet’s writing. Indeed, Heaney’s phrase, ‘attempts to touch’,¹⁶ does hint

⁸ Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, ‘An Interview with John Haffenden’, *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p.67.

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Saturday Interview: Caroline Walsh talks to Seamus Heaney’, *The Irish Times* (6 December, 1975), p. 5.

¹² Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

¹³ *ibid*.

¹⁴ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit*

¹⁵ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit*.

¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit*.

that the Irish poet felt he was ‘robbing’ from the Wordsworthian nest. If, as Heaney claims, “Berkeley loosened the soil around the Ulster tap root”,¹⁷ those ‘first pieces’,¹⁸ written in California, may have been closer to Wordsworth’s original accounts in *The Prelude* in that they did not focus as much upon the sectarian dimensions of Heaney’s childhood. However, upon his return to Ireland, he encountered essentially two delays in writing which were literary and political.

Just as with *The Prelude*, which was in part about not writing *The Recluse*, part of the history of *Stations* was also about not writing another *Prelude* or another collection of prose poems like Geoffrey Hill’s *Mercian Hymns*. The tone of the preface to *Stations* suggests that Heaney seems to have felt, in 1974, a greater pressure to confront the crisis in Northern Ireland. When he returned from California to Ireland in July, 1971, with a view to completing *Stations*, Geoffrey Hill published *Mercian Hymns*.¹⁹ Heaney regarded *Mercian Hymns* ‘as stolen marches in a form new to me’²⁰ and this phrase suggests that Hill’s artistic enterprise anticipated the way Heaney wished to represent his own experiences as a contemporary reworking of *The Prelude*, again implying that Heaney’s earlier drafts for the book were closer to a Wordsworthian model, than those we encounter in the published volume. However, only a month after Heaney’s return to Co. Wicklow there was ‘the introduction of internment’ and, as he recalls in the preface to *Stations*, ‘my introspection was not confident enough to pursue its direction.’ As the preface states, ‘the sirens in the air’ reminded Heaney that the ‘sectarian dimension of that pre-reflective experience

¹⁷ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Saturday Interview: Caroline Walsh talks to Seamus Heaney’, *The Irish Times* (6 December, 1975), p. 5.

¹⁸ Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Hill, *Mercian Hymns* (London: Deutsch, 1971).

²⁰ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

presented itself as something asking to be uttered also.’ So, Heaney reappropriates ‘spots of time’, giving them new dimensions.

In the ‘preface’ to *Stations*, Heaney tells us that ‘it was again at a remove, in the “hedge-school” of Glanmore, in Wicklow, that the sequence was returned to.’ It was then that the ‘greater part of the prose poems ‘came rapidly to a head in May and June’ 1974, what we might call a kind of Wordsworthian ‘spontaneous overflow’.²¹ Yet the preface to *Stations* omits the fact that he had visited Dove Cottage and made *William Wordsworth Lived Here* only a matter of days before he began polishing the prose poems. In the television programme he tended to emphasise those natural, pastoral influences in Wordsworth’s life and the tranquillity of the Romantic poet’s home. Indeed, Heaney’s definition of ‘spots of time’ in the preface to *Stations*, as in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, emphasises the aesthetic and the personal as opposed to the political and the social. So, how the Irish poet came to view the Romantic poet’s life may have shaped his appreciation of Wordsworth’s ‘spots of time’ and these Wordsworthian moments are seen, by the Irish poet, to be the result of very different influences to his own. Yet, ‘spots of time’²² also showed Heaney how to shape and explore his own memories. However, Wordsworth’s model has been modified in *Stations* so as to include the political and religious tensions at the edge of Heaney’s consciousness. In order to receive those insistent and sectarian signals Wordsworth’s ‘spots of time’ needed to be translated as ‘stations’.

²¹ William Wordsworth, ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 154.

²² Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

Heaney's translation is not literal, of course. Rather, he recreates or preserves something of the original function of 'spots of time', but renders them so as they can include the stuff of his upbringing that was distinctly Catholic, penitential and painfully sectarian. The difficulty that Heaney faced was how to make a distinction between his own and a Wordsworthian experience without completely losing Wordsworth's earlier example. The answer seems to have come from *Mercian Hymns*. Hill's collection was preoccupied with 'the struggles of entanglement with incoherent roots'²³ and what Heaney would later say of *Mercian Hymns* seems equally true of Heaney's prose poems in *Stations*:

Hill's celebration of Mercia has a double focus: one a child's-eye view, close to the common earth, the hoard of history, and the other the historian's and scholar's eye, inquisitive of meaning, bringing time past to bear on time present and vice versa.²⁴

Essentially the 'child's-eye view' in *Mercian Hymns* with its 'double focus' was a model for Heaney, suggesting to him ways in which he might approach his own entanglements. But even though Heaney's natural surroundings were an important part of his psychological development, as the Lake District was for Wordsworth, Heaney was under pressure to combine quite different cultural, historical and religious dimensions. It could even be suggested that the 'form' Heaney chose, the prose poem, represents his divided loyalty. The Irish writer had used prose to address directly the politics of the North, for example 'Belfast's Black Christmas' 1971'.²⁵ However, on the other hand, poetry represented, for the Irish poet, a tradition in which to place his individual talent. And in order to deal with the strain of different directions Heaney had to define what those prose poems meant to him:

²³ Geoffrey Hill, 'Interview with John Haffenden', *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p.82-83.

²⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'Englands of the Mind', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1969-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p.159.

²⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Belfast's Black Christmas', *The Listener* (December 23, 1971), p. 857-858.

I think of the pieces now as points on a psychic **turas**, *stations* [my italics] that I have often made unthinkingly in my head. I wrote each of them down with the excitement of coming for the first time to a place I had always known completely.²⁶

As with his definition for a Wordsworthian ‘spot of time’, the Irish poet’s description of a ‘station’ places similar emphasis upon psychological development. As we have seen in Chapter 1, the word ‘stations’ recalls Heaney’s description of Dove Cottage in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* — ‘the cottage at Towne End was a station from which he [Wordsworth] could contemplate those ‘natural forms’ around which his feelings grew pure and steady.’²⁷ But for Heaney, ‘stations’ are more than the influence of natural forms upon the mind. They also have a distinctly Catholic and often political feel, recalling the Stations of the Cross and the island of pilgrimage, Station Island. The word is burdened with religious devotion and mystery, both penitential and redemptive, while also punning on ‘those secret stations’²⁸ received by the diviner in *Death of a Naturalist* (1966). So, it would seem, that in the prose poems, these stations, natural forms, religion and politics, and the mystery of the poetic craft, coalesce to make up a moment of inspiration.

I now want to look at three specific examples ‘Nesting-ground’, ‘Waterbabies’, and ‘The discharged soldier’, which seem to interact powerfully with moments from *The Prelude* while simultaneously playing out the larger adult themes of politics in Northern Ireland. If at the beginning of *Stations*, in ‘Cauled’, ‘Branded’ and ‘Hedge-school’, Heaney gradually brings to the foreground the divisions in his community, my point of entry begins with the fourth, ‘Nesting-ground’, which appears to imitate *The Prelude*.

²⁶ Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

²⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 219

²⁸ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Diviner’, *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 36.

In 'Nesting-ground' the child seems to be a version of a Wordsworthian 'fell destroyer'²⁹ and plunderer of nests. The cold prick of a dead robin's claw reminds Heaney of his own mortality and that the natural world can be both intriguing and frightening. As with Wordsworth's scene, which describes local hunters trapping birds, Heaney's prose poem suggests the shadowing presence of an adult world. It recalls that the 'men had once shown him a rat's nest in the butt of a stack',³⁰ which they were presumably going to flush out. In 'Death of a Naturalist' we have seen how frogs are used as a symbol of childhood fears, sexual awakening and even guilt, but here the child seems to be capable of revelling in the details of 'the moist pink necks and backs.'³¹ For, unlike 'Death of a Naturalist', the child in 'Nesting-ground' does not sicken and then run away. Instead, the central activities for the boy are gazing, waiting and listening, activities akin to Wordsworth's in *The Prelude* where he describes gazing from the 'lonesome peaks',³² and listening into the sounds of nature, to the streams, to the wind in the woods and the hooting owls.

At this point it is worth comparing a similar incident, of flushing rats from their den described by Seamus Deane, in *Reading in the Dark*.³³ The more sinister undertones in Deane's book help to highlight the extent to which Heaney's 'station' has been drawing on the more beneficent moments from *The Prelude*. 'Nesting-ground' may appear to be similar to a Wordsworthian 'spot of time', yet the child's wanton abandonment in *The Prelude*, as he plunders nests and steals woodcocks, contrasts with the more regimented boyish figure in

²⁹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 318, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 20.

³⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Nesting ground', *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 7.

³¹ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

³² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805) Book I, l. 337, op. cit. p. 20.

³³ Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark* (London: Cape, 1996) pp. 77-80.

‘Nesting-ground’, who stands like a ‘sentry’. There the child’s stance sounds a note of caution which seems laden with political undertones. It appears defensive, like the position adopted by Heaney’s Catholic, nationalist community. It hints at how the sectarian politics in the North has been gradually coming to the fore in the child’s consciousness. This recollection seems more culturally defensive than any childhood incident in *The Prelude*. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth’s child seems terrifically at home as he describes him wandering among the hills, whereas in ‘Nesting-ground’, Heaney recreates an experience which seems more guarded as he assumes the role of a custodian of the deserted rat nests. So, when the boy imagines ‘putting his ear to one of the abandoned holes and listening/ for the silence under the ground’, a ground possessed and repossessed throughout Irish history, these deep recesses represent an access point to an underworld. They act as a correlative to memories that lie hidden in the psyche which surface to quicken the poet and hint at those beautiful and terrible moments in Irish history.

If Heaney’s ‘Nesting-ground’ demonstrates how Wordsworth’s poetry has feathered his nest, and how, as Wordsworth argued, ‘the child is father of the man’,³⁴ the next prose poem, ‘Waterbabies’ — where the child’s experience begins to widen — assumes greater social and political resonance. The political undertones that Heaney gives his memories marks a different type of initiation than in *The Prelude*. As the two boys dabble in a ‘fetid corner’³⁵ their play could be seen as a re-enactment of the bathing episode in *The Prelude* as both incidents could be likened to a baptism in natural elements. But in ‘Waterbabies’ the activity in ‘flooded mucky runnels’ seems an altogether more silted experience than Wordsworth’s bathing in pure streams.

³⁴ William Wordsworth, ‘My heart leaps up when I behold’, *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 93.

³⁵ Seamus Heaney, ‘Waterbabies’, *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 9.

The loam smears the children. They are marked — in all senses of the word — by their country's ground. They are would-be naturalists whose botany is like an initiation ritual. The word 'christened' reminds us, not only of the influences of religion in Northern Ireland, but also of the divisions between the different belief systems. The fact that the children chose to christen their place 'Botany Bay', after a former English penal colony in Australia, a place synonymous with unjust detention and punishment, politicises their dabbling place and reminds us of Ireland's colonial history.

We might call 'Waterbabies' a failed sublime moment. The 'kaleidoscope' that could offer 'incomprehensible satisfactions' becomes 'messed and silted'. So the possibility of Wordsworthian vision fades from view as the historical back-drop, represented by the bombers warbling 'far beyond', complicates the Irish poet's recollection. And the distant presence of war not only reminds us of the clash between democracy and fascism in the wider world, but also hints at the divided loyalties within Heaney's local community. Yet, the children's refusal to admit this mechanised world as they play with sail boats — like the adult poet who refused to admit the mechanical world of California into his poetry — imagining a bye-gone era of sail boats, suggests how this child is being invigilated by the poet in order to preserve some sort of Romantic ideology. However, the passing train is not only a disturbance of their little delta but its presence, like the bombers, suggests how greater forces, be they historical or political, or economic disparities between the Unionist and Nationalist communities in the North, will gradually encroach upon their world.

If 'Waterbabies' introduces those underlying political and religious factors that characterise a childhood in Northern Ireland, 'The discharged soldier' reveals the more blatantly sectarian

nature of Heaney's Derry community. In this station the child's world has widened. In 'The Discharged Soldier' the title and portrait of his World War I veteran appears to be partly modelled on Wordsworth's early poem 'The Discharged Soldier', included in Book IV of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth first wrote about his encounter with the soldier in 1798 and eventually incorporated the incident into the 1805 *Prelude*. However it is likely that Heaney's prose poem is based upon the Irish poet's reading of Wordsworth's shortened and less detailed account in the 1850 version of *The Prelude*. Yet in both versions, Wordsworth's account happens on a moonlit road and as if imitating the uncanny atmosphere of that strange meeting, Heaney recreates his encounter at twilight. Like Wordsworth's evocation of his soldier, who can be heard 'murmuring', Danny's can be heard 'wailing', although the Irish poet's description seems more like a banshee than the quasi-mystical figure that appears in *The Prelude*. Again like Wordsworth's solitary figure, Heaney's solitary, 'Danny', has a physical deformity — a rather clichéd literary device that associates physical being with mental and emotional states — and in Heaney's prose poem Danny's misshapen body seems to suggest something about his moral and emotional disfigurement.

There are further similarities, yet in *The Prelude*, where Wordsworth remembers how the soldier 'Returned my salutation, then resumed/ His station as before',³⁶ the Romantic poet's use of the word 'station' is naive when compared with the resonance given to the word in Heaney's prose poems. If, as Heaney had already emphasised in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, the roads and pathways around the Lake District gave Wordsworth chance encounters with solitary figures, in 'A discharged soldier', perhaps greater focus is placed upon where the encounter

³⁶ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book IV, l. 439-440, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 132

happens — the ‘twilit road’ and ‘public way’. In the Irish poet’s piece the ‘road’ seems to represent a journey into a civic arena, troubled by the overbearing presence of the old soldier. For as the boy in *Stations* ventures beyond Mossbawn, he develops a new understanding of his environment. His first place widens and is no longer simply a site of natural beauty. It is a place of commerce, where the relationships and links between places and their boundaries seem all important. Yet, if Wordsworth’s poem assisted Heaney in shaping and devising this memory, the politics and history involved in ‘The discharged soldier’, makes this ‘station’ radically different to the Irish poet’s appreciation of a Wordsworthian ‘spot of time’.

Wordsworth’s portrait seems to place a great deal of importance upon the humanitarian plight of soldiers, who were on duty in the West Indies, and who were left without pensions and homes. The fact that Wordsworth addresses his soldier as ‘comrade’,³⁷ a republican term, might illustrate something of his sympathy and identification with the lonesome figure. By contrast, Heaney’s relationship with ‘Danny’ can only be described as fearful and antagonistic even though the soldier appears to be given some sort of coarse dignity — “‘Oh, a bad old rip, the same Danny, a bad-tongued godless/ old bastard’”³⁸ — a description which sharply contrasts with Wordsworth’s soldier who stoically accepts his lot and puts his ‘trust in God and Heaven.’³⁹ When ‘Danny’ bitterly and resentfully stamps the parish with his ‘built-up hoof, proffering the black spot of his mouth’,⁴⁰ he leaves an indelible mark, not only upon Heaney’s memory but upon

³⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805) Book IV, l. 488, *ibid.* p. 134.

³⁸ Seamus Heaney, ‘The discharged soldier’, *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 12.

³⁹ William Wordsworth, *op. cit.* l. 494, p. 134.

⁴⁰ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

‘the parish’⁴¹ and the wider Catholic community. The nationalist and republican ideals in that part of Derry, where Heaney grew up, refuse to identify with this ex-soldier. Whereas Wordsworth empathises with his veteran and victim of war, Heaney’s portrait suffers under the burden of religious and political prejudice. ‘Flanders’, the First World War battlefield on which so many Ulstermen were killed, has become a political weapon that separates both communities.

In his poem ‘Wounds’, Michael Longley — Heaney’s contemporary — reveals something of the tragic brutality of this cultural division, where a historical moment has been made or seen by some as the exclusive preserve of a Protestant heritage:

First, the Ulster Division at the Somme
Going over the top with ‘Fuck the Pope!’
‘No Surrender!’: a boy about to die,
Screaming ‘Give ‘em one for the Shankill!’⁴²

Coming from a Catholic community Heaney was acutely aware that this was ‘heraldry [he] could not assent to.’⁴³ Perhaps angry at this exclusion, Danny’s ‘yarns’ are compared to an inflated pig’s bladder in order to deflate the way in which the Great War had been usurped by the Unionist community in Northern Ireland as an example of their loyalty to their Britain and the Union and also to highlight the disloyalty of the Nationalist or Republican community. By drawing to the fore religious and political divisions, this ‘station’ attempts to be reflective of Heaney’s experience, a ‘black spot’⁴⁴ in his imagination, a reminder of bigotry and fear rather than beauty and fear.

⁴¹ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

⁴² Michael Longley, ‘Wounds’, *Poems 1963-1983* (London: Salamander, 1985), p. 86.

⁴³ Seamus Heaney, ‘Sweet William’, *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 11.

⁴⁴ Seamus Heaney, ‘The discharged soldier’, *op. cit.* p. 12.

Heaney's account of his poetic development in *Stations* continues to recreate incidents from school and university. Yet, Wordsworth's portrayal of his school-boy days, at Hawkshead Grammar where he 'would walk alone'⁴⁵ around the hills and lakes, drinking in a 'visionary power',⁴⁶ contrasts with Heaney's education. 'Ballad', for example, draws attention to how poetic form can politicise the language of men. 'The Stations of the west', which recalls a trip to the Gaeltacht area in Ireland, where the poet could 'inhale the absolute weather',⁴⁷ draws attention to how learning Irish was bound up with Catholicism and Nationalism while the clipped, fragmented, discontinuous nature of *Stations*, as in the final prose poem, 'Incertus', the pseudonym Heaney published under while he was at Queen's University, dramatically contrasts with Wordsworth's more indulgent account in book three of *The Prelude*, 'Resident at Cambridge'.

The poet Anne Stevenson has suggested⁴⁸ that many of the details in *Stations* are not immediately understandable. Likewise, Edna Longley has also voiced her frustrations, pointing out the 'exaggerated necessity to point a moral and adorn the tale',⁴⁹ noting that the prose poems are mostly set in a rural landscape and curiously, she argues, only occasionally deal with the political situation in Northern Ireland. Longley may wish to diminish what seems a highly charged political book. Yet if *Stations* demonstrates anything, it is that in Ireland, at any rate, language, religion and politics, cannot be separated. Heaney commented:

⁴⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book II, l. 321, op. cit. p. 60.

⁴⁶ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805) Book II, l. 330, loc. cit.

⁴⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Stations of the west', *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 22..

⁴⁸ Ann Stevenson, 'Stations: Seamus Heaney and the Sacred Sense of the Sensitive Self', *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, ed. Tony Curtis (Bridgend: Poetry Wales, 1982), p. 50.

⁴⁹ Edna Longley, 'Book of the Day: Poetry from the North', *Irish Times* (April 21, 1976), p. 8.

They seemed to stand half-way between being a coherent prose memoir and not being quite a sequence. And a number of people responded to them unflatteringly. Nevertheless at the time I was excited by them, and I thought the pamphlet publication was ideal. A lot of people say they should be verse. . . . I don't know why I didn't do them as verse. Marie doesn't like them because she thinks that they aren't realized or thrown free, that they are like private family memories, pious.⁵⁰

If we agree with this remark *Stations* certainly attempts to expose a very different sense of self-definition and self-understanding than Wordsworth's 'spots of time' and what those 'stations' revealed about Heaney's fosterage seems to be more fully realised in 'Singing School' in *North*.

II

'the ministry of fear'

Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School'

Before I discuss the 'Singing School' sequence, I would like to briefly look at its history and *North* as a collection. In *North*, Heaney continues to draw upon the personal, the historical and the literary. But it is the autobiographical that predominates the last section of 'Singing School'. The section opens with an epigraph from *The Prelude*, signalling that the Wordsworthian enterprise still holds some relevancy for the Irish poet. After *Stations*, we might think of 'Singing School' as Heaney's second attempt at an autobiographical piece. Yet Heaney's co-opting of English Romanticism does not merely begin with that sequence. Throughout *North* the poet appears to be operating within the English Romantic tradition. For instance, the prose poem, 'The Unacknowledged Legislator's Dream', plays with Shelley's Romantic conception, in his *Defence of Poetry*, that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. Yet Heaney's poem seems to challenge how effective poets can be in levering the state, while in the same poem his image

⁵⁰ John Haffenden, An interview with Seamus Heaney, *Viewpoints: Poet in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 68.

— ‘I swing on a creeper of secrets into/ the Bastille’⁵¹ — serves as a grim reminder of how political idealism can turn into despotism.

Heaney’s poems in *North* not only echo the Romantic poet’s concerns, but some of the poems actually dabble in the historical period connected with Wordsworth’s life at Grasmere, the growth of English Romanticism and England’s rule of Ireland. In the ‘Act of Union’ we are brought back in time to the parliamentary act of 1800, which was England’s political response to the 1798 Rebellion. The Act was created in January 1801 for the ‘United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland’ but that same month and year also saw the second publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* and it seems only natural that both events would coalesce in Heaney’s imagination. Indeed, as we have seen, the prose poem, ‘The stations of the west’, surely shows how Heaney had begun to associate political revolution as a herald for new movements in literature and language. In order to deal with political upheaval Anne Stevenson has suggested that both Heaney and indeed Wordsworth created their own myths — ‘as Nature was for Wordsworth, the Bog People were for Heaney’⁵² — and I now want to look at the role of *The Prelude* in ‘Singing School’.

‘Singing School’ opens with two epigraphs which show the importance of individual experience and the autobiographical tradition. Wordsworth’s account, with its emphasis upon a personal interaction with nature, sits more comfortably with what we know of Heaney’s upbringing than the epigraph taken from W. B. Yeats’s *Autobiographies* and its dreamy wish to ‘die

⁵¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Unacknowledged Legislator’s Dream’, *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 50.

⁵² Anne Stevenson, ‘Stations: Seamus Heaney and the Sacred Sense of the Sensitive Self’, *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, ed. Tony Curtis (Mid Glamorgan: Poetry Wales, 1982), p. 49.

fighting the Fenians'.⁵³ Heaney's title is probably taken from Yeats's poem 'Sailing to Byzantium' — 'Nor is there singing school but studying'.⁵⁴ There are also a number of nods to other artists, both those in the plastic arts and Irish and English writers. There are references to Yeats, Shakespeare, Joyce, Hopkins, Mandelstam, Goya, Patrick Kavanagh and Michael McLaverty. However, the epigraph and references to moments from *The Prelude*, throughout the sequence, hints at the extent to which Wordsworth was at the forefront of Heaney's mind when he was finishing the poem. In a poetry reading which the Irish poet gave at Dove Cottage in 1996, Heaney outlined some of the history behind writing 'Singing School' — 'As far as I remember', he recalled, 'bits of it were written after my first visit to Grasmere, here in 1974, which was a very special, educative and friendship establishing time.'⁵⁵ That 'first visit to Grasmere',⁵⁶ was, as we know, when Heaney made *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974) and it hardly seems a coincidence that just as he dwelt upon Wordsworth's experiences as a boarder at Hawkshead in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, that he should begin 'Singing School' with his own memories as a boarder at St.Columb's, memories he already reworked as quasi-'spots of time' in *Stations*.

'The Ministry of Fear' recalls those first days when Heaney attended St.Columb's grammar school from 1951 to 1957 and the epigraph from *The Prelude* of 1805 appears to be used by Heaney in order to work with and against the Irish poet's own autobiography. Although both would be boarders at school, and although both moved from a rural environment into small

⁵³ Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 56.

⁵⁴ W. B. Yeats, *Yeats's Poems*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: MacMillan, 1989), p. 301.

⁵⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

towns. Heaney's allusion to Wordsworth's statement, that he was 'much favoured in my birthplace' seems ironic, if applied to 'Singing School'. For despite the fact that Wordsworth's word 'seedtime' would have had obvious attractions for Heaney, recalling his rural background, it also serves as a reminder of the reaped 'barley'⁵⁷ of historical legacy which we have seen in 'Requiem for the Croppies'. And the lines from *The Prelude* are a reminder to us that Heaney's fostering experiences as a child, in a natural place, may have been impressive, but what he experienced in Derry also contrasted with those experiences that 'fostered' Wordsworth as a boarder.

For instance, in Book II of *The Prelude* Wordsworth recalls the beautiful scenery that surrounded his grammar school. It was in this beautiful place that he often wandered alone. He recalls how it 'twas my joy/ To wander half the night among the Cliffs/ And the smooth Hollows'. In contrast the Irishman's image of himself is 'lonely' and confined, implying something altogether more disappointing than Wordsworthian splendid isolation. In 'The Ministry of Fear' we have no sense of Wordsworthian 'joy', as Heaney recalls his school self in that 'lonely scarp/ Of St.Columb's College, where I billeted'. His views were not of a majestic natural scene but rather Brandywell's 'floodlit dogtrack'. The noisy and mechanised image of 'the throttle of the hare' sharply, if not comically, contrasts with the landed pursuits of 'the pack loud chiming and the hunted hare' in *The Prelude*.⁵⁸ Even the word 'billeted' suggests something of Heaney's bitter resentment of life as a boarder. Indeed, his sense of 'exile' has more in

⁵⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Requiem for the Croppies', *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 12.

⁵⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book II, l. 464, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 28.

common with James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* than with the Wordsworthian child who was 'transplanted'.

Wordsworth's use of the word 'transplanted' suggests that his move to Hawkshead insured continuity between his boyhood at Cockermouth and his life at the grammar school. It carries a sense of organic continuation, of not being deracinated but rather re-rooted. Here again, Heaney's use of *The Prelude* serves to contrast with and dramatise his experience at St. Columb's. In an interview with Georgina Mills, Heaney recalls that life as a boarder at St. Columb's was 'absolutely similar'⁵⁹ to the *Portrait of the Artist*. What seems to be relayed in 'Singing School' might be described as a repressive experience as the poet remembers how he wrote home, 'shying as usual', from telling the truth about his boarder's life.

As with Joyce's *Portrait*⁶⁰ and Wordsworth's *Prelude* the autobiographical and the artistic co-mingle in 'The Ministry of Fear'. Wordsworth's years at Hawkshead were among his happiest, producing memories such as the skating passage and the hooting owls incident. In contrast to these moments in *The Prelude*, the boy's 'exile' in 'The Ministry of fear' and the reference to his 'act/ Of stealth'⁶¹ can only be described as satirical, if not melodramatic. In the same interview with Georgina Mills, Heaney states that 'there is a line in 'The Ministry of Fear', which is lifted straight out of Wordsworth, where he talks about stealing the boat and the mountain towering above, menacing: 'It was an act of stealth'.⁶² But Heaney's theft of this 'spot

⁵⁹ Georgina Mills, 'Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Strawberry Hill*, 5 February, 1980, p. 14.

⁶⁰ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Paladin, 1977).

⁶¹ Seamus Heaney, 'The Ministry of Fear', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 57.

⁶² *ibid.*

of time' seems 'archly literary'⁶³ and the moment he chooses from *The Prelude* sees Wordsworth as 'free', free to wonder, free to steal the boat, free to sail across a lake, free to sin and enjoy feelings of guilt and anxiety.

Such moments in *The Prelude* Heaney has called Wordsworth's "Natural Ministries"⁶⁴ and, as with the Romantic poet, Heaney too believes that, 'fear is the emotion that the muse thrives on'.⁶⁵ But the Irish poet puts, what he calls, 'a topspin'⁶⁶ on the Wordsworthian notion of fear, 'bringing it from the realm of nature into the realm of politics.'⁶⁷ Such a 'topspin' inevitably involves punning on Wordsworth's word 'ministry'. Like the word 'station', the word 'ministry' carries religious overtones, drawing attention to the priest's role in the school regime of 'morning mass, bells to summon you to class, night prayers, silence in the study hall, the struggle with 'bad thoughts',⁶⁸ all of which fashioned the Irish poet. At St. Columb's Heaney encountered a religious 'ministry' that intimidated the boys into studies:

On my first day, the leather strap
Went epileptic in the Big Study,
Its echoes plashing over our bowed heads.⁶⁹

But there is, of course, a second possible pun on the word 'ministry', beyond the discipline and fear instilled in the school regime, beyond the walls of the college. It could refer to the

⁶³ Edna Longley, "Inner Emigre' or 'Artful Voyeur'?: Seamus Heaney's *North*", *Poetry in the Wars* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1986), p. 147.

⁶⁴ Georgina Mills, loc. cit.

⁶⁵ John Haffenden, An interview with Seamus Heaney, *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 69.

⁶⁶ Georgina Mills, loc. cit.

⁶⁷ Georgina Mills, loc. cit.

⁶⁸ Georgina Mills, loc. cit.

⁶⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'The Ministry of Fear', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 58.

political ministry in Northern Ireland, represented by the RUC, a force which a poem such as 'A Constable Calls' seems to associate with intimidation and a suspicion of Catholics. So, Heaney's ministry of fear appears to be an attempt to realise a trauma more sinister and disturbing than anything evoked by Wordsworth. When the constable asks the Irish poet his name, or rifles through private love letters, essentially he is an instrument of the state checking out religious and political affiliation and as in 'A Constable Calls', the whole experience is one of fear, beyond that described in *The Prelude*. Ironically, and notably not mentioned by Heaney, Wordsworth and indeed Coleridge, were spied upon by the state. But for the Irish poet, at this time, Wordsworth's autobiography seems to be un-disrupted and to have a self contained authority, whereas Heaney's poem emphasises a loss of control and a power that takes writing out of his hands — his letters are man handled.

Heaney continues to draw upon *The Prelude* in the poem 'Fosterage', the title of which perhaps puns on Wordsworth's line 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear'. This poem seems to have a greater degree of certainty and self-assuredness than the other five in the sequence — 'The Ministry of Fear', 'A Constable Calls', 'Orange Drums, Tyrone, 1966', 'Summer 1969' and 'Exposure'. Dedicated to Michael McLaverty, an accomplished Irish novelist and also headmaster of St. Thomas's Intermediate School, in which Heaney taught, the poem recalls a chance meeting between himself and McLaverty. McLaverty's advice to the Derry poet seems almost like a disclosure of a Wordsworthian secret — 'Description is revelation.'⁷⁰ As we have seen with 'Death of a Naturalist', for instance, descriptions in Heaney's poems are a revelation in that they explore being brought up in a sectarian society. They reveal that childhood fear and

⁷⁰ Georgina Mills, 'Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Strawberry Hill*, 5 February, 1980, p. 18.

indeed adult anxieties have greater repercussions beyond the individual, shaping communities and an entire province. In order to tell of these experiences Heaney listened into moments in *The Prelude*, just as he listened to MacLaverty telling him, 'Listen. Go your own way./ Do your own work', and the novelist's comments, as with Wordsworth's project in *The Prelude*, emphasise the importance of autobiography, of feeling and revelation.

Yet, what McLaverty offers Heaney is not literary exemplars, such as Mansfield or Hopkins, however useful they may be, but rather his advice directs Heaney as to how he should position himself as a poet and from where he should draw his inspiration. Like 'The Ministry of Fear', 'Fosterage' offers a mode of resistance, namely 'exile' and this note of 'exile', perhaps developed from Wordsworth's image of the solitary among the hills and lakes, is now given an Irish or Joycian dimension of 'silence'⁷¹ and 'cunning'.⁷² Both these Wordsworthian and Irish dimensions are what 'fosters' Heaney's presentation of his own development and it is his sense of 'exile' that becomes the central focus in 'Exposure'.

As with 'The Ministry of Fear' and 'Fosterage', 'Exposure' has fosterings of a Wordsworthian kind. If 'stations' were sectarian 'spots of time' and if in 'The Ministry of Fear' the word 'ministry' was used to pun on the differing forces that fostered Heaney, the title of 'Exposure' puns on the idea of 'exposure', meaning publicity, self-revelation and artistic vulnerability in a troubled political climate. Darcy O'Brien's essay, 'Seamus Heaney and Wordsworth: A Correspondent Breeze',⁷³ suggests that the poem reflects upon the period of

⁷¹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of Artist as a Young Man* (London: Paladin, 1977), p. 251.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Darcy O'Brien, 'Seamus Heaney and Wordsworth: A Correspondent Breeze', *The Nature of Identity*, ed. William Weaters (Tulsa: University of Tulsa, 1981), p. 34-46.

December, 1973, when O'Brien visited Heaney at Glanmore. O'Brien recalls how Heaney had said to him that at that time he 'had been getting a lot out of Wordsworth lately'.⁷⁴ Yet even though 'Exposure' seems to reflect upon an earlier period — December 1973 — Heaney indicates in a reading at Dove Cottage in 1996, that 'Exposure' was 'certainly written some time after my first visit to Grasmere . . . in 1974.'⁷⁵ As we have seen in Chapter One, Heaney seems to have come away from Dove Cottage with a view of Wordsworth's life as being rather self-assured and idyllic which could only have highlighted for Heaney his own complicated relationship with place. 'Exposure' seems to be a revelation and description of those complications. There the Irish poet characterises himself as 'neither interneer nor informer;/An inner emigre'. The critic Richard Gravil has recognized that these lines sound a similar note to Wordsworth who 'called himself 'a boarder of the age''⁷⁶ and attention should be drawn to Heaney's use of 'I' in 'Exposure' as being as significant as the 'I' in the epigraph from *The Prelude* to 'Singing School'. For the use of the first person pronoun not only signals the importance of self-revelation to Heaney, but also how the Irish poet saw revelation and getting feeling into words were procedures essential to the creation of *The Prelude*.

Even though Wordsworth's story of his life in *The Prelude* acted as an example for Heaney of how to write his own autobiography, the Romantic poet's model was also something to react against. For if *The Prelude*'s earliest completed form of 1805 adequately traces the growth of the poet's mind, so too does 'Exposure'. Yet, 'Exposure' lacks Wordsworth's sweeter note as

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 35.

⁷⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

⁷⁶ Richard Gravil, 'Wordsworth's Second Selves?', *The Wordsworth Circle*, Wordsworth Summer Conference, vol. XIV, no.4 (Autumn, 1983), p.191.

Heaney feels that he has missed, 'The once-in-a-lifetime portent./ The comet's pulsing rose.'⁷⁷ However, these lines might suggest a different kind of success. In 'Exposure', personal experience and imagination endure as poetry becomes like a weapon, 'his gift', 'a slingstone/ Whirled for the desperate.'⁷⁸ Implicit in this image is a portrait of the poet as 'Heaney Hero', an image which seems profoundly Romantic if not Wordsworthian. And Anne Stevenson has made a similar point, arguing that with Wordsworth, as with Heaney, 'we have the first instance in Britain of a poet in retreat from a corrupting society and a doubtful religion, digging in and fortifying the bastions of his own psyche.'⁷⁹

Anne Stevenson's comment seems equally applicable to how Heaney in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* also recognized the way Dove Cottage fortified Wordsworth's psyche. According to the Irish poet, Dove Cottage seemed 'battered down and ready for action',⁸⁰ a phrase which allies the Romantic poet with ideas of an embattled, isolated, heroic figure. So, despite the differing political and historical pressures upon both poets, Heaney has drawn closer to Romanticism and Wordsworth in 'Exposure' than in any of the other poems in 'Singing School'. Like Wordsworth, Heaney too withdraws from the world into a sacred area of personal sensitivity. However, Heaney's sense of 'exposure' contrasts with his portrayal of Wordsworth's retreat in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. There the Irish poet read the Romantic poet's life as

⁷⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Exposure', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p.67.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

⁷⁹ Anne Stevenson, 'Stations: Seamus Heaney and the Sacred Sense of the Sensitive Self', *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, ed. Tony Curtis (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1982), p. 47.

⁸⁰ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

something of an ideal, a 'dedicated retreat'.⁸¹ 'retreat' having connotations that could hardly be assigned to those memories described in 'Singing School'.

Where Wordsworth revels in the natural world in *The Prelude*, Heaney's place seems much more politicised, and part of the limitation of the Irish poet's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry is, at this point, his tendency to de-politicise the Romantic poet's landscape. So when the Irish poet describes himself as taking 'protective colouring/From bole and bark',⁸² the word 'colouring' strains to integrate a double allusion. Firstly it may recall Wordsworth's reference to the imagination in his 'Preface' and to a poet's ability to throw a certain colouring of the imagination over an ordinary object or event. Secondly, and perhaps more sinisterly, 'colouring' also reminds us that the poet must remain true to 'his own cultural and political colourings'.⁸³ Being faithful to a Wordsworthian notion of the autobiographical imagination, as in *The Prelude*, is one thing, but the Irish poet perhaps feels equally pressurised to be faithful to the colourings of his own community and often the strain to accommodate politics and poetry proves to be overbearing.

In order to gain some sort of comfort, 'Exposure' tells how the poet walks through the damp leaves of Autumn, or how he watches the rain coming down through the alders, suggesting that, like Wordsworth, Heaney can find some sort of conciliation in nature and the imagination and that the natural and the poetic work together therapeutically. However, any simple Romantic consolation in the natural world becomes complicated by the fact that the Irish poet's landscape

⁸¹ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 223

⁸² Seamus Heaney, 'Exposure', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 67.

⁸³ Seamus Deane, 'Unhappy and at Home: Interview with Seamus Heaney', *The Crane Bag: Book of Irish Studies*, eds. M.P. Hederman and R. Kearney, with a 'Preface' by Seamus Heaney (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1982), p. 67.

has terrible historical and political associations. Heaney cannot simply rejoice, as Wordsworth did, in the spirit in the trees. For as the Irish poet retreats to his woods he is reminded of the conquest of Ireland. He imagines himself to be a 'wood-kerne' — a 'lightly-armed, Irish foot-soldier'⁸⁴ — a military figure recalling how the poet and the rebel, English Romanticism and Republicanism, were aligned in 1798, like celestial bodies.

Of the five questions asked by the poet in 'Exposure' the most important must be — "How did I end up like this?"⁸⁵ At once enquiring and depressed in tone, almost throw-away, what it asks surely lies behind those prose poems that make up *Stations* and the first two sections of *North* that interact with history, archeology and autobiography. By outlining those natural, political and religious ministries that fostered him in 'Singing School', Heaney has essentially answered what he questions in 'Exposure'. His question begs to understand the forces — psychological, historical, political and literary — that have shaped him as a poet, a question, which, we might add, Wordsworth answered by writing *The Prelude*. For Heaney, however, the political nature of his fosterage ultimately means that his 'seedtime'⁸⁶ cannot be as benign as Wordsworth's. What differentiates Heaney's 'fear' from his Romantic predecessor's, lies in those political and violent forces that were part of a Northern Irish childhood. Therefore the epigraph from *The Prelude*, 'Much favoured in my birth place',⁸⁷ seems double edged, self-reflexive and surely bitterly ironic.

⁸⁴ Richard Wall, 'Dialect Glossary for Seamus Heaney's Works', *Irish University Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, (Spring/Summer, 1998) p. 78.

⁸⁵ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 66.

⁸⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 56.

⁸⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 307, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 18.

North was written to reach a much wider audience than *Stations*. After its publication in 1975 it would become Heaney's most controversial book. In 'Singing School' the sectarian nature of Heaney's upbringing becomes more complex than in the more blatant accounts of sectarianism in *Stations* and arguably those dimensions to his life have been made more palatable for his widening audience by embracing references to canonical figures within the English literary tradition. In *Stations*, as we have seen, Heaney gives vent to that 'slightly aggravated young Catholic male part'⁸⁸ of him. If the prose poems have a more visible sense of what he calls 'that obstinate papish burn, emanating from the ground I was brought up in',⁸⁹ *North* seeks explication but not at the expense of alienating his readers. Indeed, Heaney's ability to remain within the mainstream of the English literary tradition has insured his popularity and his epigraph from *The Prelude* reassures that he still remains loyal to the English literary canon.

In her 'Introduction' to *The Living Stream* (1994) Edna Longley writes about the literary connections between England and Ireland. There she argues that Heaney's appeal to English audiences might depend on his 'tap-root to Wordsworth'.⁹⁰ So the use of *The Prelude* in 'Singing School' may have been to prevent any alienation of his English readership. The poet may state, 'Ulster was British, but with no rights on/ The English lyric', but 'Singing School' and *North* make some headway on redirecting traditions. In an interview with Harriet Cooke (1973) Heaney speaks about his ambitions for his poetry — 'I wanted to take the English lyric and make it eat stuff that it has never eaten before...and make it still an English lyric.'⁹¹ 'Exposure' and 'Singing

⁸⁸ Harriet Cooke, 'Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Irish Times*, (6 December, 1973), p. 5

⁸⁹ Seamus Deane, *op. cit.* p. 67.

⁹⁰ Edna Longley, 'Introduction: Revising Irish Literature', *The Living Stream* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1994), p. 48.

⁹¹ Harriet Cooke, *loc. cit.*

School' fulfil this ambition. Not only does Heaney make his personal autobiography more accessible and inter-textual, his references to William Wordsworth and W. B Yeats ensure a certain literary harmony.

Heaney's tone, pitch, and stance has changed in 'Singing School' and the poet's voice seems quite different to the one in *Stations*. There we have a voice not too dissimilar to the mind's internal echo, perhaps too selfconsciously reflecting his Romantic predecessor, while in 'Exposure' we have a man speaking of himself, as in *The Prelude*. Yet, ironically, however much the political content in 'Exposure' may distinguish Heaney's writing from Wordsworth's, the poem finishes *North* by seeking out Wordsworthian raptures in nature. Heaney has said that the poem 'canvasses the notion of uncertainty about the artistic enterprise', and adds, 'I would hope that the overall drift in [*North*] and in my life is towards a belief in it.'⁹² In fact he had already begun to outline his own poetic manifesto in 'Feeling into Words', identifying in *The Prelude* 'a view of poetry which I think is implicit in the few poems I have written.'⁹³

III

An attempt to define and interpret the present by bringing it into significant relationship with the past

Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*⁹⁴

This section could be happily subtitled 'continuity and revision'. Much of what preoccupied Heaney in *Stations* and 'Singing School' is reworked in 'Feeling into Words'. Partly

⁹² Caroline Walsh, 'The Saturday Interview: Caroline Walsh talks to Seamus Heaney', *The Irish Times* (6 December, 1975), p. 5.

⁹³ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 41.

⁹⁴ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 60

autobiographical, the essay contains some vivid recollections of local legends, artisans, early childhood experiences and memories of learning rhymes and poems by heart, including work by Wordsworth such as this line from *The Prelude*, ‘All shod with steel./ We hiss’d along the polished ice’. Its remarkable sibilance and noise are not unlike the rich sound in Heaney’s early poems.⁹⁵ Like *Stations* and ‘Singing School’, ‘Feeling into Words’ begins by drawing on *The Prelude*, however, the essay also makes use of other works by Wordsworth, including ‘The Thorn’, the 1800 ‘Preface’, *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface (1815)* and to Wordsworth’s 1843 letter to Isabella Fenwick. It hardly seems a coincidence that ‘Feeling into Words’, originally a lecture delivered to the Royal Society in October 1974, should open with the same quotation from *The Prelude* that closes *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, produced in May, 1974:

The hiding places of my power
Seem open; I approach, and then they close
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all, and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future restoration.⁹⁶

If in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* these lines are quoted by Heaney because he sees them as central to Wordsworth’s ‘Romantic vision of man, ‘the heart of man and human life’,⁹⁷ then in ‘Feeling into Words’ the Irish poet selects this passage as a statement of his own views about poetry — ‘Implicit in those lines is a view of poetry which I think is implicit in the few poems I have written that give me any right to speak’. And Heaney’s gloss on them — poetry as

⁹⁵ For example in ‘Shore Woman’ the dominating male figure is described as ‘Skittering his spit across the stove.’ *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 67.

⁹⁶ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 41. Also see William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book IV, l. 439-440, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 132.

⁹⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 224.

‘divination’, ‘revelation’, ‘restoration’ and ‘continuity’⁹⁸ — seems to translate this passage from *The Prelude* in much the same way Heaney’s ‘stations’ were a translation of Wordsworth’s ‘spots of time’.

As in *Stations*, in ‘Feeling into Words’ we are given a description of his ‘hiding places’ as something ‘I dug . . . up’, ‘a dig for finds that end up being plants’. His suggestion that ‘digging becomes a sexual metaphor, an emblem of initiation, like putting your hand into the bush or robbing the nest, one of the various natural analogies for uncovering and touching the hidden thing’,⁹⁹ gives a startling earthy, agricultural, amorous and perhaps even sinister inflection to Wordsworth’s ‘glimpses’ and scarcely seen recollections in *The Prelude*. Indeed, Heaney’s memories seem more immediate and coarse than those of the Lake poet who ‘May scarcely see at all’.¹⁰⁰ If the excerpt from *The Prelude* worries about losing a voice, ‘Digging’ is, in contrast ‘an interesting example of what Heaney’s calls ‘finding a voice’, and, despite Wordsworth’s anxieties in these lines, they seem to have assisted Heaney in finding his own oral signature, for ‘Digging’ could be re-evaluated as a miniature *Prelude* — the letting of a shaft down into your own life — equally an exploration of human psychology, but perhaps more archeological, than Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem.

Even though there are differences in both poets’ self-assuredness, even though Heaney seems more self-conscious about his own ground as a site possessed and repossessed, and not merely a place of beauty, it seems evident that from reading ‘the hiding places’ passage, the Irish poet

⁹⁸ Seamus Heaney, ‘Feeling into Words’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 41.

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p. 42.

¹⁰⁰ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805), Book XI, l. 339, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 448.

recognized. 'a connection between the core of a poet's speaking voice and the core of his poetic voice, between his original accent and his discovered style.'¹⁰¹ We might say, as Heaney has done in 'Feeling into Words', that through reading those lines from *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's sounds flowed in through Heaney's ear and entered into the echo-chamber of his head, delighting the whole nervous system of the Irish poet. In fact, at a poetry reading at Dove Cottage, Heaney would remark:

I feel very close to Wordsworth because his work is in me, in my memory and I can work myself into the grains of it just by closing my eyes and thinking of the lines. But there is also something in his finding of poetry and finding of self in memory that makes me personally feel close to the kind of writer he is.¹⁰²

I would suggest that Heaney heard in the 'hiding places' passage from *The Prelude* the ideal speaker of the lines [the Irish poet] was making up. Wordsworth's autobiographical enterprise, with its softer intonations and often intimate voice, was attractive to Heaney because it contrasted with the sharper Ulster accent that W. R. Rodgers characterized, if not satirized, so well in his poem 'The Character of Ireland.' The voice in *The Prelude* represented the kind of poetry Heaney wanted to write. Wordsworth's lines were not consonantal, 'bumpy, alliterating music' like Gerard Manley Hopkins's verse, but rather something that flowed, water music, something which Heaney would elaborate upon in 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978). It would appear that Heaney's reading of Wordsworth's poetry might then be a search for something other than 'the noise' of his own cultural intonations and even literary tradition.

¹⁰¹ Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 43. Heaney, as we shall see, will later develop upon this connection in his essay 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978).

¹⁰² Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

Heaney confesses that those lines from *The Prelude* spoke to him as ‘something you recognize instinctively as a true sounding of aspects of yourself and your experience. And your first steps as a writer will be to imitate, consciously or unconsciously, those sounds that flowed in, that in-fluence.’¹⁰³ His candour seems remarkable because it appears to lack any sense of anxiety often attributed to one poet’s influence upon another. If Heaney is saying that his own writing actively imitates Wordsworth’s poetry, he also, admittedly, has imitated the verse of Hopkins, Keats and Kavanagh. Yet Heaney’s relationship with Wordsworth’s poetry is not diminished. If anything it serves to highlight the intimacy of Heaney’s engagement with Wordsworth’s poetry. Although the Irish poet may self-consciously seek to identify his own work with Wordsworth’s, what he chooses to omit in his responses to his predecessor’s poetry might be more interesting. For instance, ‘Feeling into Words’ neglects to mention that it was written, or at least polished off, just after Heaney made *William Wordsworth Lived Here* and his description of those lines from *The Prelude* in the essay seems to be about not giving a critical account of how the passage works as a piece of verse or as a snippet of autobiography. Rather, the Irish poet’s selection of Wordsworth’s lines is about how they can be used to self-reflexively.

For Heaney, ‘the hiding places’ passage appears to be chosen because it is not only a good example of the finding of self through memory, but also appears an instance of good ‘craft’ and perhaps better ‘technique.’ ‘Craft’, according to Heaney, is what you learn from others’ verse. ‘Craft is the skill of making’ and the Irish poet’s description of how craft works seems most revealing:

Learning the craft is learning to turn the windlass at the well of poetry. Usually you begin by dropping the bucket halfway down the shaft and winding up a taking of air.

¹⁰³ Seamus Heaney, ‘Feeling into Words’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 44.

You are miming the real thing until one day the chain draws unexpectedly tight and you have dipped into waters that will continue to entice you back.¹⁰⁴

We might think of this passage as a prose version of what Heaney had been trying to achieve in his poem 'Personal Helicon', which recreates a Wordsworthian moment of childhood discovery. However, Heaney's decision to liken poetic craft to drawing water at a well might well recall his first visit to Dove Cottage. It was in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* that Heaney drew attention to the fact that, 'William also sank his own well, as ever in search of the secret enhancing water.'¹⁰⁵ For the Irish poet to ally poetic craft with drawing water at a well was not only consciously self-referential but perhaps an unconscious revelation, that for Heaney, Wordsworth is a master of poetic craft and that the Irish poet wants to be seen to have imitated, if not equalled, his Romantic predecessor's skill.

If Wordsworth's craft was exemplary for Heaney, so too was the Romantic poet's technique. According to the Irish poet, technique involves a writer's 'discovery of ways to go out of his normal cognitive bounds and raid the inarticulate: a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience'. What the Irish poet says here is surely a re-description in prose of what Wordsworth reveals in the 'hiding places' passage. As with Wordsworth's autobiographical project, Heaney places equal importance upon memory and experience. The phrase, 'to go out of his normal cognitive bounds', might be another way of saying a 'spot of time'. However, the Irishman's phrase, 'to raid the inarticulate', also carries connotations of plundering that have greater political, historical and violent resonance than that given to the plunderer of nests in *The Prelude*. If to 'raid the inarticulate' hints at the role of

¹⁰⁴ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 47.

¹⁰⁵ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 221.

history in shaping an Irish poet's responses to his places, memories and experiences, one figure that represents 'pure technique', seemingly untroubled by colonial consequences, might to be a water diviner.

Describing the craft of dowsing or divining, Heaney writes: 'it is a gift for being in touch with what is there, hidden and real, a gift for mediating between the latent resource and the community that wants it current and released.'¹⁰⁶ Heaney's definition, his use of the word 'hidden', seems to want to recall Wordsworth's language in *The Prelude*. Like the diviner, the Lake writer's work, as Heaney has already noted in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, 'reminds us of Wordsworth's sense of hidden, flowing water as the element which tutored his poetic voice.'¹⁰⁷ Since making *William Wordsworth Lived Here* Heaney was probably more self-conscious of the Wordsworthian dimension to his poem and that those 'secret stations' that the diviner searches for imitated the role of Dove Cottage in Wordsworth's creative energies as 'a station from which he could contemplate those 'natural forms' around which his feelings grew pure and steady.'¹⁰⁸ So a diviner in search of water resembles, not just a poet, not just Heaney, 'in his function of making contact with what lies hidden, and in his ability to make palpable what was sensed or raised', as the Irish poet intimates, but we might claim more specifically that the local artisan is the Grasmere poet in disguise, Wordsworth as diviner, Heaney as diviner as Wordsworth. Even Heaney's retelling of how he came to write 'The Diviner' seems to be couched in the language of Wordsworth's 'Preface' — 'The poem was written simply to allay

¹⁰⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 47-48

¹⁰⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 219.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* p. 219.

an excitement and to name an experience' . . . 'I am pleased that it ends with a verb, 'stirred', the heart of the mystery.'¹⁰⁹

As we have seen in *Stations* and 'Singing School', the fact that Heaney found words and verse to be bearers of 'history and mystery' gave poetry and language quite different connotations than could be found, by the Irish poet, at this time, in Wordsworth's poetry. As in *The Prelude* and in his mini *Prelude* 'Tintern Abbey', the Romantic writer speaks of: 'the burthen of mystery/ In which the heavy and the weary weight/ Of all this unintelligible world/ Is lightened.'¹¹⁰ Yet, for the Irish poet 'history' and 'mystery' were sources of fear. Yet even though 'Feeling into Words' discusses a writer's sense of responsibility 'to search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament',¹¹¹ I would argue that the same violent history and sectarian divisions in Ireland that furthered the gap between Heaney's artistic enterprise and his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry in *Stations* and 'Singing School', seems to be kept to a minimum in 'Feeling into Words'. There Wordsworth's poetry remains a 'touchstone', without being completely undermined by the otherness of Heaney's fosterage in Northern Ireland.

As a school child the literary enterprises of 1798 were more strange to Heaney than the political ideals in Ireland in that year. Recalling the writing of the poem, 'Requiem for the Croppies', Heaney writes: '1916 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

¹⁰⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Poems 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 48.

¹¹⁰ William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendons Press, 1952), p. 50.

¹¹¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 56.

rebellion of 1798.’¹¹² Yet this statement, its diction and syntax, recalls something he said in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. In the programme he refers to *Lyrical Ballads* as a ‘work in which human emotions and natural forces coalesced in a bold new idiom.’¹¹³ In both comments the Irish poet admires those feelings, those human emotions, those notions of new ideals, be they literary or political, that involve struggle away from present conditions. And to use the word ‘coalesce’, common to both statements, suggests the extent to which literary and political struggle cannot be separated in Heaney’s imagination.

Despite cultural, political and literary differences between both poets, in ‘Feeling into Words’ Heaney offers us a spirited defence of Wordsworth’s poem, ‘The Thorn’, which is oddly more convincing than Wordsworth’s own in his letter to Isabella Fenwick. Through his defence of Wordsworth’s poem, Heaney advocates, not only his Romantic predecessor’s poetic procedures, but the Irish poet appears to be justifying his own. Heaney describes ‘The Thorn’ as ‘a nicely documented example of feeling getting into words in ways that parallel much of my own experience’¹¹⁴ and these words echo his earlier description of composing ‘Digging’ when ‘I thought my *feel* had got into words.’¹¹⁵ Wordsworth’s story had similar elements — ‘murder and distress’: it is ‘superstitious’, even magical in quality — which characterise much of Heaney’s own poetry, especially those poems, ‘The Diviner’, ‘Bogland’, ‘Undine’ and ‘The Tollund Man’ poems that are referred to in ‘Feeling into Words’. In fact Wordsworth’s poem on a thorn tree did have a special cultural significance that came within the circumference of the Irish poet’s own

¹¹² Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

¹¹³ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 217-218.

¹¹⁴ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 51.

¹¹⁵ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 41.

experiences. In his essay, 'The Poet as Christian', Heaney recalls how 'the single thorn tree bound us to a notion of the potent world of fairies — and when the Blessed Virgin appeared in a thorn bush in Ardboe, a few miles up the country, the fairy tree took on a new set of subliminal attributes.'¹¹⁶ Perhaps these same attributes allowed Heaney to give his reading of 'The Thorn' a slightly Catholic inflection. If Wordsworth's poem stirred and legitimised his rural and religious upbringing, revealing the resources of Derry to Heaney's sensibility, what he would also say about the Romantic poet in 'The God in the Tree: Early Irish Nature Poetry', hints that what he found in Wordsworth was in some ways reflective of the Irish writer's own aesthetic values and those of his literary tradition.

In 'The God in the Tree' Heaney praises early Irish nature poems for 'their unique cleanliness of line'.¹¹⁷ He celebrates how in these poems there is 'the tang and clarity of a pristine world full of woods and water and birdsong seems to be present in the words.'¹¹⁸ He describes them as 'little jabs of delight', suggesting that 'Wordsworth's phrase, 'surprised by joy', comes near to catching the way some of them combine suddenness and richness.'¹¹⁹ In effect, Heaney's defence of 'The Thorn' in 'Feeling into Words' seems to be about adjusting the temperature of English poetry, perhaps to suit his own verse. In an interview, notably called, 'A Rain Drop on a Thorn', a title which comes from the review, Heaney extols the Romantic movement for investing the 'world with an extra dimension'¹²⁰ and he argues that 'except for a few places in

¹¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'The Poet as Christian', *The Furrow*, (Vol. 29, 1978), p. 605.

¹¹⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'The God in the Tree', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 181

¹¹⁸ *ibid*

¹¹⁹ *ibid*

¹²⁰ Robert Druce, 'An interview with Seamus Heaney', 'A Raindrop on a Thorn', *Dutch Quarterly* (9, 1979), p. 36.

Wordsworth',¹²¹ and we might include 'The Thorn', the 'temperature of English poetry, on the whole, is a little bit warmer than the temperature of actual English weather'.¹²² It would be difficult to argue that *Stations* and 'Singing School' sought the kindlier, more benign temperature of Wordsworth's poetry, and it would then seem that 'Feeling into Words', had been attempting to adjust the thermostat of the Romantic writer's work. By investing Wordsworth's poem with a cooler tone, the Irish poet could then bring the Romantic poet's work into a more significant relationship with his own writing.

By depreciating his own first attempts at a poem as having, 'No experience. No epiphany. All craft—and not much of that—and no technique',¹²³ Heaney implies that 'The Thorn' or the opening of *The Prelude* are moments of 'epiphany'. Once more he seems to have translated Wordsworthian vision, just as 'spots of time' became 'stations' in *Stations*. The word 'epiphany' seems to have been deliberately selected because its resonances are peculiar to Catholicism and to the prose of James Joyce. Heaney's diction suggests, although rather oddly, that he wanted to re-read Wordsworth's poetry within the contexts of his own experiences, giving it an Irish Catholic and modernist relevancy. However, and most importantly, the essential elements in Wordsworth's 'hiding places' passage — psychological development, personal experience, which is often self-delighting, mysterious, fearful and restorative — are not lost to the varieties of pessimistic revelations common to the stories in Joyce's *Dubliners*.¹²⁴

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 47.

¹²⁴ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (London: Granada, 1977).

Using Wordsworth's letter to Isabella Fenwick, Heaney goes on to discuss the opening to *The Prelude*, like 'The Thorn', as an example when Wordsworth would have 'composed . . . with great rapidity.'¹²⁵ To argue that Wordsworth took up his pen and wrote automatically, without revisions and hesitations, goes against the grain of critical opinion on Wordsworth's writing. My introduction has already highlighted how he habitually revised what he wrote and how, as a result, Heaney's claims about his work are often inconsistent with his use of different versions of Wordsworth's poems. However, Heaney's claim does serve to highlight how his own artistic inclinations are like Wordsworth's. When Heaney remembers the composition of 'Bogland' he names memory as:

the faculty that supplied me with the first quickening of my own poetry, I had a tentative unrealized need to make a congruence between memory and bogland . . . I wrote it quickly, . . . having slept on my excitement, and revised it on the hoof, from line to line, as it came¹²⁶

Here Heaney's recollection is surely an example of emotion recollected in tranquillity. And his affiliation between the creative mood and rapid writing was something he had previously touched upon in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. There he points to the illegibility of Wordsworth's manuscripts as an indication of 'the quick of the poetic matter'¹²⁷ and it could be argued that the Irish poet was enlarging upon this previous observation in 'Feeling into Words' when he turned to Wordsworth to affirm and defend his own poetic processes.

If in 'The Thorn', as Heaney argues, Wordsworth 'donned the traditional mask of the tale-teller, legitimately credulous, entering and enacting a convention',¹²⁸ what the Irish poet promotes

¹²⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 50.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* p. 54-55.

¹²⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), Appendix, p. 223.

¹²⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980) p. 51.

is arguably the kind of self-absorption in writing to which Heaney wished to aspire. But the Irish poet, distracted from the storyteller's role by his sense of responsibility to be a political commentator, must not only entertain but also offer 'befitting emblems of adversity'.¹²⁹ equal to both the cultural and personal life from which they emerge and in which they are engaged. Wordsworth's 'The Thorn' reminds Heaney of those Irish ballads that 'are full of conclusions where briars and roses and thorns grow out of graves in symbolic token of the life and death of the buried one.'¹³⁰ This image of a grave being marked by a natural growth also carries a political potency. It reminds us of Heaney's sonnet, 'Requiem for the Croppies', where barley grows out of the graves of those who were killed in the 1798 rebellion. So, when the Irish poet defends Wordsworth's poem, 'The Thorn', it might be said that he seeks to legitimise his own artistic inclinations to follow Wordsworth's example, as well as to reflect the traumas of Irish politics. Indeed, I would argue, that it is this dual disposition, this double bind, that informs the Irish poet's explanation of his own feeling getting into words in his essay.

'Feeling into Words', like 'Singing School' and *Stations*, not only draws on *The Prelude* and other poems by Wordsworth but 'the hiding places' passage serves to reinforce the relationship that Heaney has created between his own poetry and Wordsworth's. What the Irish poet finds in his predecessor's lines controls the temperature of Heaney's verse and his portrayal of himself as subject — in all senses of the word. The recollections in *The Prelude* demonstrated that childhood memories, especially those of growing up in a natural environment, could be a source for poetic inspiration and that through Wordsworth's poetic device in *The Prelude*, his 'spots of time', the Irish poet found a method with which to visit his own past. In *Stations* we have seen

¹²⁹ *ibid* p. 57

¹³⁰ *ibid* p. 51.

how he 'translated' his experiences from 'spots of time' into 'stations', retelling incidents, recognizably like those in *The Prelude*, but also equally true to a Northern Irish upbringing. Yet in 'Singing School', Heaney's use of *The Prelude* is surely used as an effective contrast to his own fosterage. In that sequence, from *North*, but more so in 'Feeling into Words', Heaney's use of *The Prelude* has controlled the tone of his writing. In 'Singing School' the passage from *The Prelude* seems to be selected so as to highlight the bitter sweet nature of Heaney's own childhood experiences. By contrast, in 'Feeling into Words', the Irish poet's states that in 'the hiding places' passage is 'a view of poetry which . . . is implicit in the few poems I have written'.¹³¹ There is the suggestion that the more Heaney speaks and writes about poetic composition the more he turns to Wordsworth's writing as the ideal speaker of his own lines, drawing the Irish writer's own work into the mainstream of English Romantic verse.

If in 'Feeling into Words', Heaney's use of *The Prelude* was sped by his tour of Dove Cottage, the essay does not ignore those political and violent circumstances that have also coloured the Irish poet's own life. Yet, in 'Feeling into Words' the sectarian dimensions to life in Northern Ireland are examined but not so intently as in *Stations* and 'Singing School.' The solitary figure of the Romantic poet (it was Wordsworth who emphasised the unity of all things as in 'The Thorn') counterbalances those other cult figures — Mother Ireland, Cromwell, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, William of Orange, Shan Van Vocht or Edward Carson, all symbolic of Ireland's historic divisions. For in 'Feeling into Words' the savage history between both islands is dealt with but not dwelt upon. The literary affinities Heaney makes between his own poetic enterprise and Wordsworth's appear to be there to reinforce the perception of a relationship

¹³¹ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 41.

between his own poetry and the Lake poet's. And it is in *Field Work* (1979), in particular the 'Glanmore Sonnets', that Heaney appears to follow Wordsworth's example, putting poetry at the centre of his life, defending and risking 'the name of Poet'.¹³²

¹³² Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 60.

Chapter 3: Envy and Identifications: Glanmore and Grasmere

Glanmore is not Grasmere.
That was a different ministry of fear.

Seamus Heaney, 'Two Poems: Glanmore II', from *Prospect*, 1976¹

'I won't relapse
From this strange loneliness I've brought us to.
Dorothy and William-' She interrupts:
'You're not going to compare us two.'

Seamus Heaney, 'Glanmore Sonnet III', from *Field Work*, 1979²

The Wicklow life was in some sense an equivalent to the Grasmere life; it was a withdrawal to try to get centred and to try to get some writing done.

Seamus Heaney introducing the 'Glanmore Sonnets' at Dove Cottage, 1996³

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard suggests that 'the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.'⁴ If a poet's home can be a space where thoughts might grow, it is in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974) that Heaney teases out that relationship between where a poet lives and what a poet writes. Grasmere, as Heaney suggests, 'was the hub of the landscape of [Wordsworth's] youth . . . and the cottage at Towne End was a station . . . around which his feelings grew pure and steady.'⁵ Similarly with Heaney at Glanmore, however, his own life at Co. Wicklow was not without an underlying sense of displacement and tension. For contrary to what the Irish poet suggested at a poetry reading at Dove Cottage in 1996 (quoted above), which seems to be an attempt to revise and steer how

¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Two Poems: Glanmore II', *Prospect* 5, 1976, p. 64.

² Seamus Heaney, 'Glanmore Sonnets, III', *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 35.

³ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

⁴ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Beacon: Boston, 1964), p. 6.

⁵ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 219.

the 'Glanmore Sonnets' are interpreted, there were a number of underlying tensions that prevented Glanmore, at that time, becoming an equivalent to Grasmere. And the two quotations from early and revised versions of the sonnets, which open the chapter, give an outline to my general argument.

I will argue that Heaney was enduring the same political strains which we have seen in 'Singing School' in *North*, and subsequently early drafts of the 'Glanmore Sonnets', published refuses his instinctive need to make identifications between his life at Glanmore and Grasmere. Furthermore it will be suggested that 1976 to 1979 was an important period of transition in Heaney's poetry. It was around this period that his own feelings, as he said of Wordsworth's, gradually 'grew pure and steady'.⁶ Reflecting upon this period he said that he learned to 'trust melody, to trust art as reality, to trust artfulness as an affirmation and not to go into the self punishment so much'.⁷ As you will see, the chapter has been divided into three sections, each with its own preface. The first section offers an analysis of sonnets, 'Opened Ground'⁸ and 'Two Poems: Glanmore I, II',⁹ which first appeared in periodicals. The second section offers an analysis of the revised and final versions of 'Glanmore Sonnets II' and 'III' in *Field Work*.¹⁰ Since Heaney produces different responses to Wordsworth in both sonnet publications, under differing artistic and political stresses, it seems appropriate to begin by treating them separately. The third section of the chapter then compares and contrasts the earlier and later sonnets.

⁶ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit

⁷ Frank Kinnahan, 'An Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Critical Inquiry* (Spring, vol.8, no.3, 1982), p. 412.

⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'Opened Ground', *Poetry Wales* (vol. II, no.1, 1975), p. 24.

⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Two Poems (Glanmore I, II)', *Prospect* 5 (1976), p. 64.

¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Glanmore Sonnets I, II, III', *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 33-35.

concluding with a brief examination of how Heaney's identification with Wordsworth's poetry develops through the rest of the sonnet sequence.

Before coming to that first section it seems important to preface it with something of the context in which those earlier sonnets were written. At this time Heaney had been renting Glanmore Cottage in Co. Wicklow for almost two years. He had visited Wordsworth's home at Grasmere and he had written and presented *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. So, the Irish poet's experience at Dove Cottage would have still been fresh in his mind. He would have been acutely sensitive to all those details of Wordsworth's cottage life that closely matched his own in Glanmore. In fact, Heaney remembers how at this time he was 'tempted very much to draw all kinds of self-inflating equations between the Wicklow and Grasmere experience.'¹¹ For not long after his return from Grasmere to Wicklow, when he 'was writing some of those *North* poems',¹² he recalls how on one evening, while 'sitting upstairs in the study in the month of May',¹³ he heard 'a cuckoo calling on the hillside in the wood; there were rabbits playing up the field; there was a corncrake' and how this 'iambic, melodious line — "This evening the cuckoo and the corncrake/ (So much, too much) consorted at twilight"¹⁴ — came to him. From that one line Heaney 'skimmed on and did the sonnet ("Glanmore Sonnet, III)".¹⁵ What we have, in this line-and-a-half, appears to be a pastoral vision, inspired by the natural surroundings at Glanmore and no doubt by Heaney's visit to Wordsworth country. For although Heaney may have gone to the

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

¹² Frank Kinahan, 'An Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Critical Inquiry* (Spring, vol.8, no.3, 1982), p. 412.

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁵ From the evidence of the earlier publication we know that the original lines that came to him were 'This evening the cuckoo and the corncrake -/ Too much, too much - consorted at twilight.', 'Two Poems: Glanmore I' in *Prospect* 5, (1976), p. 64.

Lake District with ‘no firm visual impression’¹⁶ of the place, he had come home surprised to find the domain of Wordsworth’s imagination ‘so palpable and compact, so monumental and serene’.¹⁷ With Wordsworth’s country impressing itself upon the Irish poet’s own imagination, he found that he was reopening his awareness to the woods and hills of Wicklow. Even though Heaney was attracted to ‘that music, the melodious grace of the English iambic line’,¹⁸ and we might add Wordsworth’s pastoral vision, Heaney felt it ‘was some kind of affront, that it needed to be wrecked’.¹⁹ and while he loved the sonnet, he ‘felt at the time that its sweetness disabled it somehow.’²⁰

Then, in 1975, *North* was published. As we have seen, ‘Singing School’, with its epigraph from *The Prelude*, serves, in part, to highlight just how different Heaney’s fosterage was compared to Wordsworth’s. The Irish poet’s ‘ministry of fear’ was troubled by political issues that were, for Heaney, more terrible than Wordsworth’s benign educational experience in nature. *North* had shouldered the responsibility of finding symbols adequate to the political predicament in Northern Ireland. The temperament of Heaney’s verse at this time was still coloured by those feelings he explored in ‘Exposure’, the book’s last poem. So, it is with his initial ‘need to wreck’²¹ that pastoral vision, and the sonnet form, and Heaney’s rejection of a relationship

¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974). Appendix, p. 217.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Frank Kinahan, *loc. cit.*

¹⁹ Frank Kinahan, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Frank Kinahan, *loc. cit.*

²¹ Frank Kinahan, *loc. cit.*

between his life at Glanmore with Wordsworth's at Grasmere, that we begin section one on 'Opened Ground' and 'Two Poems: Glanmore Sonnet I, II'.²²

I

'It needed to be wrecked'

Seamus Heaney speaking to Frank Kinahan about the sonnet form²³

'Opened Ground' was published in *Poetry Wales* in 1975 and it is within the context which I have outlined above, what we might call post *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, post *Stations*, post 'Singing School', that I want to analyse 'Opened Ground'. Heaney's use of the sonnet form contrasts with the overall design of *North*. There the most memorable poems use a fairly constricted²⁴ line. Admittedly, Heaney lengthens the line in 'Singing School' and its fifth poem, 'Fosterage', is a sonnet, however, the overall design of the 'Singing School' sequence, like *North* itself, tends towards long episodic poems. So, 'Opened Ground' would no doubt have come as a surprise to readers of Heaney's poetry and with his use of the sonnet form come all sorts of different poetic contracts.

For Heaney, the sonnet form meant a 'rhythmic contract of metre and iambic pentameter' where the 'long line implies audience'.²⁵ To use the sonnet was to make a contract with an audience already familiar with the development of the sonnet form in the English literary tradition, through Shakespeare to Milton to Wordsworth. With the sonnet form also comes a

²² As these earlier versions of the sonnets will be unfamiliar I have taken the liberty of quoting them in full.

²³ Frank Kinahan, loc. cit.

²⁴ Frank Kinahan, loc. cit.

²⁵ *ibid.*

contract with the aesthetics of art. It required a discipline with metre and perhaps a more intimate voice, as much reading into itself, as to an audience, and we can hear something of Heaney's less public voice in the first eight lines of 'Opened Ground':

Vowels ploughed into other: opened ground.
The mildest February for sixty years
Is mist-bands over furrows, a deep no sound
Vulnerable to distant gargling tractors.
Our road is steaming, the turned-up acres breathe.
Now the good life could be to cross a field
And art a paradigm of earth new from the lathe
Of ploughs.²⁶

Here Heaney's reference to Wordsworth remains implicit in the octave. The pastoral images of the setting, right down to its analogy of poet / ploughman are synonymous with Wordsworth, recalling the Romantic poet's celebration of the durability of 'rural occupations'²⁷ in his 1802 'Preface'. Heaney's praise of 'the good life', symbolised by the crossing of a field, was not just part of his rural childhood experience but also part of life at Glanmore, creating a consonance between both worlds. And the image of walking across a field further reminds us of Wordsworth's sentiment in the 'Preface' where he argues that in rustic life there was a better soil for the passions of the heart to find maturity, less restraint, plainness of language, feelings of simplicity and an accuracy and force of communication. Heaney may have been reassured by the Romantic poet's conviction which brought a gravity to his childhood and Co. Wicklow experiences and indeed he may have seen that the form a sonnet took on a page to be like a field, while its fourteen lines were the furrow's left by a plough.

²⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Opened Ground', *Poetry Wales* (vol.II, no.1, 1975), p. 24.

²⁷ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 153.

As with Heaney's review of *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse*,²⁸ published around the same time as 'Opened Ground' was written, it would appear that Heaney's sonnet offers a defence of 'pastoralism' and pastoral poetry. The Irish poet's line, 'The mildest February for sixty years', seems to present a comfortable optimism and lulls us into the security of his pastoral vision. The image of mist rising over furrows is consoling, consolation being an emotion sought after but almost completely absent from *North*. There is that most impossible of ideals, 'no sound'. The 'turned-up acres breathe' and that word 'breathe' carries deep into the heart of the Wordsworthian imagination, again emphasising a relationship between Heaney's writing and *The Prelude*. As in Wordsworth's long poem, Heaney is not just offering us autobiography but also a poetry that seems therapeutic. For the Irish poet's line recalls Wordsworth's more elevated moods and it also reminds us of those fields, with cheerful spirits, in which Wordsworth's Michael breathed.

Having begun 'Opened Ground' with what appears to be an upholding of the pastoral tradition, it is important to note that Heaney qualifies his claims for the 'good life' with the word 'could'. Pleasure 'could' be gained from the crossing of a field and ploughing 'could' be a paradigm of art. This suggests some wavering on the Irish poet's part and this degree of uncertainty asks us to question the usefulness of Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the Irish poet. It is at this point that the sonnet turns in upon itself, like the plough turning round at the headland. What we then have in those first eight lines could be described as an attempt to surrender to a Wordsworthian pastoral vision. The poet experiences something of a serene mood and finds that the natural surroundings have some sort of appeasing effect. But the permanency that

²⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'In the Country of Convention: English Pastoral Verse', *TLS* (11 July, 1975). Included in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), pp. 173-180.

Wordsworth attributed to nature in his 'Preface' and in his poetry remains more 'vulnerable' in Heaney's pastoral scene. And it seems to me that the sonnet attempts to contain — in one holding field — the Irish poet's contradictory and conflicting impulses.

If we analyse the diction of 'Opened Ground' further, it becomes clear that Heaney's political tones in *North* are still being worked through. Neil Corcoran has already opened up Heaney's phrase, 'opened ground', demonstrating how it glances back to 'Act of Union' in *North*²⁹ where the rape of a female Ireland by a male England, leaves her violated. The image of the upturned earth in the sonnet brings to mind the rawness of this metaphor with all its violent and political undertones. And at this time of writing, 1975, it would seem that Heaney had only begun to dream about what Corcoran refers to as, 'translating historical agony into the realm of aesthetics.'³⁰ For what we are offered in 'Opened Ground' is not quite a translation from one state into another, as 'stations' were 'spots of time'. What we have is momentary 'appeasements' and 'surrenders', words that resonate with both artistic as well as political meanings. Yet these momentary lapses — what we might call Heaney's desire to recreate his Co. Wicklow experiences as Wordsworth recreated Grasmere — may have only been made possible by the Irish poet's then recent visit to Dove Cottage and his making of *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. However, the pastoral world that Heaney attempts to recreate in the octet seems too fragile to have a self-sustaining existence.

Those 'distant gargling tractors' remind us just how vulnerable this scene is. They act as powerful and disturbing external forces. The machines may represent the daily routine of

²⁹ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 101-102.

³⁰ *ibid.*

agricultural work but they are also a threat to an older agricultural existence by a new mechanised way of farming. That older order is, in the poet's own words, 'vulnerable', like the English pastoral tradition itself when it is brought into the Irish countryside. The tractors may even represent a disruption not too dissimilar to 'the sirens in the air'³¹ that jammed Heaney's 'other tentative if insistent signals',³² in *Stations*. The phrase, 'gargling tractors', seems to have been filched by Heaney from his early poem, 'Tractors'³³, that appeared in *The Belfast Telegraph* in 1966. In 'Tractors' Heaney concludes that they 'inspire no fear'³⁴ and since 'fear is the emotion that the muse thrives on',³⁵ their presence in the sonnet cannot create that emotion which was a fundamental aspect of Wordsworthian experience and indeed Heaney's. They can only be a disruptive presence, creating tensions, however subtle, within the sonnet.

Yet, despite the symbolic implications of the tractor, which appear to detract from the beauty of the scene, the poet becomes 'quickened', personally and poetically by memory and by his senses:

... Appeasements, plenary and old,
Surrenders to this quickening redolence
Of the fundamental dark unblown rose
Subside below the subsoil of each sense.³⁶

But again there appears to be a tension sustained in these lines. Here we find that the poet 'surrenders' to the scent of a 'dark unblown rose', a phrase which not only recalls that 'late

³¹ Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Seamus Heaney, 'Tractors', *The Belfast Telegraph* (28 November, 1962).

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ John Haffenden, 'An Interview with Seamus Heaney', *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 69.

³⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Opened Ground', *Poetry Wales* (vol. II, no.1, 1975), p. 24.

Romantic . . . Yeats',³⁷ but also the violence of romantic nationalism. The word 'unblown' has unnerving and potentially explosive connotations and as in 'Singing School' Heaney once again couples Wordsworth with Yeats.

We have already seen Heaney couple Wordsworth and Yeats in *Stations*, 'Singing School' and 'Feeling Into Words'. In each work the poets represent diametrically opposing artistic and creative forces. But unlike the direct use Heaney makes of them in 'Singing School', here, in the sonnet, their presence is implicit and has been ploughed into the subsoil of the poem. The reference to a 'rose' recalls, not only Yeats's symbol for Ireland, but also Mangan's translation, 'My Dark Rosaleen' — 'You'll pray for me, my flower of flowers/My Dark Rosaleen!'³⁸ — so this Wordsworthian scene has been scented with the politics and nationalism particular to Irish soil. If Heaney seems to have deliberately evoked the picturesque scene not unlike what we find in Wordsworth's poem 'Michael' or the Irish poet's description of Dove Cottage in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, he simultaneously transports that scene into an Irish setting. The setting is not rural like in his poem 'At a Potato Digging'. It is more beautified than that, creating a sense of tension within the sonnet. So, Heaney's enjoyment of his Co. Wicklow retreat has thus been flawed from the beginning. The pastoral vision that he creates, through a Wordsworthian lens, then seems to be more like an envy or need to possess the kind of Romantic hideaway which Heaney describes and felt empowered by in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. And it is with a sense of loss that the sonnet ends, suggesting that such a Romantic ideal should not be forced. 'Wait then . . .', Heaney writes, and then imagines:

³⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974). Appendix, p. 221.

³⁸ James Clarence Mangan, 'My Dark Rosaleen', *The Nation* 30 May, 1846. *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, ed. Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), vol. II, p. 27.

Breasting the mist, in sowers' aprons,
Ghosts come striding into their spring stations.
The dream grain whirls like freakish Easter snows.³⁹

In a post *North* context, in which this sonnet was written, it seems difficult to know if these lines contain any sense of renewal or what Heaney calls, via *The Prelude*, poetry as divination, revelation, restoration and continuity. In 1975, these ghosts could equally be a reference to the bloody ghosts of Irish history or the other literary presences of Wordsworth or Yeats. Indeed, we are left wondering what that 'dream grain' will grow out of the furrow. Will the growth be creative? Or does the image hint at a more sinister meaning by echoing that barley that grew out of the soil-grave in the sonnet, 'Requiem for the Croppies'?⁴⁰ Certainly, 'Opened Ground' seems to be a testament to the extent to which Heaney was drawn by Wordsworth to the sonnet form, to recreating his own landscape within the pastoral tradition, to Wordsworthian appeasements in nature. At the same time, Heaney becomes torn from all this by darker, political undertones. What we are left with seems full of tensions and ambiguities that are potentially unresolvable.

Tensions, similar to the ones we have seen in 'Opened Ground', seem to preoccupy the Irish poet in 'Two Poems: Glanmore I, II', which appeared in *Prospice* 5, 1976. These two sonnets were published in 1976 and again in both poems Heaney's first inclination is to ally his own experiences with those of Wordsworth's. After his visit to Grasmere, Heaney evidently felt the need to make some analogy between his own life in Co. Wicklow and the Lake poet's. However, in creating a relationship between himself and Wordsworth, the Irish poet then chose to suppress his sense of identification with his Romantic predecessor. We have seen in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* how much of the detail that Heaney picks up on in Wordsworth's life also seems to

³⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Opened Ground', *Poetry Wales* (vol. II, no. 1, 1975), p. 24.

⁴⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Requiem for the Croppies', *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 12.

be amplifying much of the Irish poet's own experiences at Glanmore and even Mossbawn. Heaney has recalled, at a poetry reading at Dove Cottage, that the opening lines — 'This evening the cuckoo and the cornrake – / Too much, too much – consorted at twilight' — in the first of these two sonnets, 'Two Poems: Glanmore I, II', came to him in 'May, 74',⁴¹ which, it should be remembered when ever these poems are read, was almost immediately after he had returned from his first visit to the Lake District. But it was not until 1975 that he returned to them again, around the same time 'Opened Ground' was published. This suggests that all three sonnets could have been written around the same time, although 'Two Poems: Glanmore I and II', were published almost a year later. When we look at Heaney's uses of Wordsworth in all three sonnets what we find seems to be a gradual rejection of the Romantic writer, where the Irish poet makes a direct comparison between his own and Wordsworth's life, only to follow that comparison with a denial of their autobiographical similarities and likenesses as poets.

Some of the autobiographical parallels between their lives are touched upon by Heaney, in 'Glanmore I'. There Heaney focuses upon the type of life he lived, drawing attention to the possible parallels that could be made between his life, with his wife Marie, and Dorothy and William's lives at Grasmere. Although such a comparison may seem reasonable, Heaney seems to make such an analogy in order to deflate the comparison with some mild humour. This humour, not unlike his joke in the 1998 keynote address at Grasmere, may disguise Heaney's embarrassment at making a self-inflationary equation between the Glanmore and Grasmere experiences. A reader of Freud's study on jokes may argue that Heaney's humour covers-up a more resolute need to privilege his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry and a Freudian may add that Heaney's humour thinly disguises a hostility towards Wordsworth and the kind of poetic

⁴¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

freedom the Irish poet associated with his Romantic predecessor's life at Grasmere, a hostility it might add which stems from envy. If there is antagonism in Heaney's rejection of his identification between Glanmore and Grasmere it is not without a sense of loss:

Glanmore

I

This evening the cuckoo and the corncrake -
Too much, too much - consorted at twilight.
It was all crepuscular and iambic.
Out on the field a baby rabbit
Took his bearings, and I knew the deer -
I've seen them too from the front door of the house
Like connoisseurs, inquisitive of air-
Were careful under birch and May-green spruce.¹²

What Heaney seems to have lost is laid down in the octet. There we have typical pastoral images as in 'Opened Ground'. These images could be interpreted as Wordsworthian for they are drawn from the natural world which appears, not only to impose itself upon the poet's imagination, but also to shape poetic inspiration. What Heaney paints for us becomes symbolic of the sequestered life. But if we look closely enough at the details, the sonnet seems at once invigorating and lifeless. I have already quoted from Heaney's interview with Frank Kinahan, where he tells how the opening scene in 'Glanmore I' was actually an experience that happened to him in Co. Wicklow. His commentaries upon the poems are normally trustworthy and a revealing source on his work but in this instance it would seem safer to suggest that the cuckoo, the baby rabbit, the deer, and the birch are forms too typical of pastoral convention for the scene to preserve a sense of reality.

¹² Seamus Heaney, 'Two Poems: Glanmore Sonnet I', *Prospect* 5, (1976), p. 64.

The cuckoo is a careful literary gesture to Wordsworth's joy on hearing the cuckoo in his poem 'To the Cuckoo'⁴³, and the deer in the sonnet reminds us of the hopeful Wordsworth who imagined himself like a roe bounding over hills and streams in 'Tintern Abbey'.⁴⁴ These self-conscious literary details in the sonnet indicate that Heaney had not succumbed to the sounds and beauty of the scene but rather how it can be described through the diction of Romantic poetry, while the presence of the 'corncrake', likened by Heaney to a 'sentry' in 'Dawn Shoot',⁴⁵ perhaps represents the poet's need to defend himself as in the 'station', 'Nesting ground'.

If it was the sound of a cuckoo's call that spurred those lines in Heaney's imagination, that bird can be heard to resound more through English rather than Irish verse. The cuckoo, an occupier of other birds nests, perhaps suggests something of the Irish poet's own willingness to occupy a territory closely affiliated with Wordsworth's writing. Heaney had used the cuckoo and corncrake together in an earlier poem, 'Nostalgia in the Afternoon'⁴⁶, published in 1959, to present his childhood in an Edenic light and this may have been the desired effect of the Glanmore sonnet. Yet, like the recreation of his first place as an Eden, the sonnet's scene is, in its own way, artificial, an artifice perhaps best represented by those deer, not roaming wild, but man reared herds, reared, no doubt, for the swish restaurants of Dublin which, as Heaney wryly comments, 'I knew the deer – / I've seen them too from the front door of the house/ Like connoisseurs, inquisitive of air – '. Yet, despite this artificiality, the drama within the sonnet

⁴³ William Wordsworth, 'To the Cuckoo', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 95.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 51.

⁴⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Dawn Shoot', *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 29.

⁴⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Nostalgia in the Afternoon', *Gorgon* (November, 1959), p. 17.

helps it escape being cold pastoral. The whole imagined scene retains an element of life brought about by the very presence of the poet and his chastising wife:

I have said earlier, 'I won't relapse
From this strange loneliness I've brought us to.
Dorothy and William - .' She interrupts:
'You're not going to compare us two . . . ?'
Outside a rustling and twig-combing breeze
Refreshes and relents. Is cadences.⁴⁷

In the sestet the scene has now shifted from a prospect of Co. Wicklow to the intimate atmosphere within the family home. Heaney confesses to us of an 'earlier' conversation, 'I won't relapse/ From this strange loneliness I've brought us to./ Dorothy and William - .' The comparison is, of course, between himself and Marie at Glanmore, with William and Dorothy Wordsworth. The presence of William and Dorothy inevitably recalls their life at Dove Cottage as well as Heaney's understanding of that idyllic life when he first visited the Lake District in May, 1974. For Wordsworth's life, at his cottage home, to find its way into Heaney's poetry suggests the extent to which Grasmere had been 'socketed into'⁴⁸ the Irish poet's imagination, shaping his own appreciation of his life at Glanmore. But Wordsworth's home also highlighted, for Heaney, the extent to which his own cottage retreat did not completely fill him with a sense of 'tranquil restoration'.⁴⁹ If the opening eight lines of the sonnet have suggested something of Heaney's frustrated need to put poetry at the centre of his life, as Wordsworth had done, if like the Romantic poet, the Irishman had made Glanmore the subject and the place of poetry — making what was essentially private, public, as in *Stations* or in Wordsworth's poems 'Home at

⁴⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Two Poems: Glanmore Sonnet I', *Prospect* 5, (1976), p. 64.

⁴⁸ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 218.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

Grasmere' and *The Prelude* — Heaney fractures his Glanmore/Grasmere comparison, no doubt in fear of 'hubris'.⁵⁰

Perhaps through the voice of his wife, Marie Heaney, the Irish poet has been quick to criticise the analogies he would make: 'She interrupts:/ 'You're not going to compare us two . . .?'. The indignant tone of the line is comical and deflates any of Heaney's 'self-inflating equations between the Wicklow and the Grasmere experience'.⁵¹ Yet, ironically, Marie's role as critic serves to remind us of Wordsworth's indebtedness to Dorothy. Heaney had already referred to Dorothy as William's 'passionate and articulate'⁵² sister who not only helped to copy out Wordsworth's manuscripts but also helped to shape the poetry. For even though Marie — who was highly critical of *Stations* — refuses the literary identification (perhaps on Heaney's behalf) the Irish poet seems to refuse to let go of his Glanmore/Grasmere analogy and all its literary promise, and the poem finishes with a flourish of Wordsworthian epithets — 'Outside a rustling and twig-combing breeze/ Refreshes and relents. Is cadences.'

If 'Opened Ground' began an implicit, if wobbly, identification with Wordsworth, 'Glanmore I' destabilises the connection altogether. Dove Cottage however flawed had represented for Heaney a 'dedicated retreat',⁵³ unhampered by personal and political conflict and civic responsibility. As in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* there seems to be a slight suggestion, in 'Opened Ground', that Heaney envisioned Glanmore as having the same refreshing potential.

⁵⁰ A term also used by Heaney in his interview with John Hallienden in *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 61.

⁵¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage', 6 August, 1996.

⁵² Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 220

⁵³ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 224

Yet, 'Glanmore I' disturbs such cadences and 'Glanmore II' finally ushers in Heaney's refusal to find a comparison between himself and Wordsworth, between Glanmore and Grasmere and his tone in this sonnet seems not unlike what we have heard in 'Singing School', in particular 'The Ministry of Fear'. It is in 'Glanmore II' that the Irish poet appears to admit that, although he may desire Glanmore to be equal to Wordsworth's Grasmere — to be a resort, a kind of retreat of the imagination — and we might add all that Heaney experienced while visiting Dove Cottage for the first time, such an analogy between the Irish and Romantic poet's homes cannot hold under the circumstance in which Heaney wrote:

II

Sensings, mountings, from the hiding places,
Words entering almost the sense of touch
Ferretting themselves out of their dark hutch.
'These things are not secrets but mysteries,'
Oisín Kelly said. I wonder. Yes
And no. Glanmore is not Grasmere.
That was a different ministry of fear.
Out of the cave of the mouth I would raise
The antique strains of slug-horns and blown lurs
That might continue, hold, dispel, assuage,
Yet something in this conjuring demurs.
My age demands a sense of my own age
Perhaps? Perhaps. An eleven-plus aesthete
Making the daring leap from quote to quote.

Yet is Heaney's climactic comment, 'Glanmore is not Grasmere', too resolute to be believed? The reason for such a refusal to compare both homes would appear to have something to do with temperament. I would suggest that the angry voice, which, as I have argued characterises *North*, was still too much with Heaney. He had not yet learned to use the protective bole and bark of Wicklow as a natural protection from the political situation in the North without some anxiety, as he would do later in the sonnet sequence 'Glanmore Revisited' in *Seeing Things*.⁵⁴ Having created a tense and uneasy relationship between his own literary life and

⁵⁴ Scamus Heaney, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), pp. 31-37.

Wordsworth's in 'Opened Ground' and in 'Glanmore I', Heaney in 'Glanmore II' appears to disrupt it further. The opening line of the sonnet may borrow from *The Prelude*, extracting the phrase 'hiding places' from Wordsworth's 'The hiding places of my power'.⁵⁵ As we have seen in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974) and 'Feeling into Words' (1974) this passage has played an important role in shaping Heaney's appreciation of his own and Wordsworth's poetic development. What this literary reference suggests, within the Irish poet's sonnets, is that, like the Romantic poet, Heaney's powers arise from sources that he can only partly comprehend, what Heaney calls 'sensings', and that these powers arise in him mysteriously, what Heaney refers to as 'mountings' and even his use of plural participles, reminds the critic Blake Morrison how Heaney is once again 'like Wordsworth'.⁵⁶

In the sonnet, Heaney's phrase, 'dark hutch', denotes what stirs from the subconscious and I would argue that it echoes Heaney's use of a similar phrase, 'hutch like',⁵⁷ which he used to describe Dove Cottage in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. If Heaney adapts his earlier phrase, this adaption hints that the Irish poet had already begun to equate, in his subconscious, his own cottage with his poetic powers, just as he had done with Wordsworth in his programme. It then seems ironic that in 'Glanmore II', as in 'Opened Ground', both of which are loaded with allusions to Wordsworth's poetry, that Heaney should then write — "These things are not secrets but mysteries."/ Oisín Kelly said, I wonder. Yes/ And no. Glanmore is not Grasmere/ That was a different ministry of fear' — a startling quasi-rejection of Wordsworth.

⁵⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book XI, l. 336, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 448.

⁵⁶ Blake Morrison, *Seamus Heaney* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 85.

⁵⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

I would suggest that Heaney's declaration, 'Glanmore is not Grasmere', might call into question the similarities between his own and Wordsworth's life without completely refuting them. For Oisín Kelly's position, which appears to favour religious or even Jungian 'mysteries' over a Wordsworthian 'secret', seems to be treated by Heaney with some scepticism, 'Yes/ And no', he ponders. It is unclear if the Irish poet's reply is to himself or to Kelly or both. But it does at least demonstrate some doubt about privileging either position. Yet despite his sense of doubt, Heaney seems to be almost provoked into a defiant resistance to any identification he could construct between Wordsworth and himself. (We might ask where does this defiant position come from?) The neat semi-rhyme between Grasmere and 'fear' returns us to 'Singing School' and that quite different 'ministry of fear'.⁵⁸ There the dramatic differences between Heaney's own fosterage and Wordsworth's were laid bare. Yet to persist with an analogy, even with a view to dismiss it, might indicate that Heaney secretly envies Wordsworth and that he would, if he could, recreate Glanmore and his literary life there as he had done in his programme on Wordsworth's life at Dove Cottage. The more intimate tones that Heaney established in 'Opened Ground' and in 'Glanmore I' have given way to that more politically active speaker in *North*. And it seems logical to suppose that at this time Heaney still felt too keenly the political pressures upon him as a writer to 'say something' about the political climate in Northern Ireland.

Something of this political pressure seems to push through the twelfth line of the sonnet — 'My age demands a sense of my own age'. 'My age' puns on, not only the idea of an historical period but also Heaney's actual age at the time of writing, thirty-seven. In an interview with Caroline Walsh,⁵⁹ Heaney remembers how during this period he was going through a personal

⁵⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 59.

⁵⁹ Caroline Walsh, 'An interview with Seamus Heaney', *The Irish Times* (6 December, 1975), p. 5.

‘crisis’ and what he would write about Wordsworth seems equally applicable to himself. The ‘crisis’ that the Irish poet underwent in this period of his poetic career happened, ‘somewhat prematurely on the chronological scale, but with perfect timing on the psychological one. He was about to undertake the Dantesque, midlife journey in memory, back through the ‘dark wood.’⁶⁰ And the title of my chapter, ‘Envy and Identifications’, drawn from Heaney’s essay on Dante and the modern poet,⁶¹ hopefully suggests something of the emotional and intellectual strains that we see in Heaney’s poetry. It might be suggested that the tone of that line, ‘Glanmore is not Grasmere’, seems to be not so much a denial but a disgruntled admission, that the political and historical differences between his own and Wordsworth’s experiences inevitably separate them. So, unable to trust in the melody of art, Heaney surrenders to an agitated voice. He would like to ‘raise’ those ‘antique strains’ of the ‘slug-horns’ (a cognate with slogan, from the Irish sluagh - army - plus *gairm* - yell)⁶² and the sound of the ‘blown lurs’⁶³ or uilleann pipes, but the antiquity of these references are denied by the demands of his ‘own age’.⁶⁴

In ‘Opened Ground’, ‘Glanmore I’ and ‘Glanmore II’ — the periodical versions of the sonnets — Heaney seems to construct a relationship between his own poetry and Wordsworth’s, only to deconstruct it. Yet there seems to be a reluctance to let go of the analogy he created. There appears to be some sort of frustrated affiliation with Wordsworth’s literary life. This may well be the result of that first visit to Dove Cottage and that sense of ‘tranquil restoration’ Heaney

⁶⁰ Seamus Heaney, ‘Introduction’, *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 5.

⁶¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘Envy and Identifications: Dante and the Modern Poet’, *The Irish University Review* (Spring: 1985), pp. 5-19.

⁶² Thomas O’ Grady, ‘Heaney Redivivus: the Fine Art of Renovation’, *Poetry Ireland Review* (Spring, 1999), p. 77.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Seamus Heaney, ‘Two Poems: Glanmore II’, *Prospice* 5, 1976, p. 64.

felt when walking around Wordsworth's home. Yet Heaney did choose not to republish these sonnets in their original form. Instead he reworked them into the final sequence that would appear in *Field Work*. The fact that they were reworked also demands that these sonnets be revisited by the reader and reinterpreted. But before analysing the first three sonnets of *Field Work*, I think that an outline of some of Heaney's use of Wordsworth between 1976 and 1979 may help us to understand the transition that occurred in Heaney's writing and in his identifications with Wordsworth's poetry.

By the end of 1976 Heaney and his family had moved from Glanmore Cottage to a much grander home in Sandymount Strand in Dublin — his Rydal Mount? This move of location was accompanied by a shift in perspective. The tone of the earlier published sonnets changed. The anxiety the Irish poet felt about his analogy between Glanmore and Grasmere seems assuaged, or at least kept at bay, allowing him to focus on the pursuit of poetry, even when he still seemed subject to the demands of civic responsibilities. From 1977-78, Heaney wrote a number of prose pieces, two of which in particular, 'The Sense of Place' (1977) and 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on the Poetry of Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978), seem to demonstrate a shift in the Irish poet's relationship with his Romantic predecessor's writing. And it seems reasonable to suggest that it was during this period that Heaney began to revise the first published versions of his sonnets — 'Opened Ground' and 'Glanmore I and II'.

In 'The Sense of Place',⁶⁵ as we shall see in Chapter 4, Heaney uses Wordsworth's poem 'Michael' to discuss the 'ways in which place is known and cherished',⁶⁶ and the Irish poet argues that Wordsworth 'was perhaps the first man to articulate the nurture that becomes available to the feelings through dwelling in one dear perpetual place'.⁶⁷ What Heaney maintained was not without irony. He had chosen to leave Derry to live in Southern Ireland, first in the beautiful landscape of Co. Wicklow and then in the city of Dublin. So, Heaney's claims in 'The Sense of Place' not only steered appreciation of him as a poet, encouraging critics to see him as an 'Irish Wordsworthian',⁶⁸ but his claims were also challenged by the facts of his life. For unlike Wordsworth he did not choose to live in the district in which he grew up. Yet in 'The Makings of a Music' the Irish poet chooses to evoke much of his rural upbringing and his early poetry, for example 'Follower', when discussing Wordsworth's poetry, likening the Romantic poet's composition procedures to a ploughman. What Heaney describes in prose in 'The Makings of a Music' seems to prepare the way for or reply to the central scene in 'Glanmore Sonnet', 'I' and 'II'. Wordsworth's 'Preface' had placed poetry at the heart of rural life. And the warmer temperature emanating from the 'Glanmore Sonnets', a temperature, on the whole, a little warmer than Ireland's or England's actual climate, appealed to or tapped into an audience already cultivated by Wordsworth some centuries earlier in the *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Prelude*.

⁶⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), pp.131-149.

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 131.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 145.

⁶⁸ Hugh Haughton, 'Even now there are places where a thought might grow': Place and Displacement in the Poetry of Derek Mahon', *The Chosen Ground*, ed. Neil Corcoran (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1992), p. 100.

‘The line and the life are intimately related’

Seamus Heaney interviewed by Frank Kinahan, 1982⁶⁹

Using the revised sonnet sequence that appears in *Field Work*, I will argue in this section that Heaney seems more self-assured in his relationship with Wordsworth’s poetry. At the heart of this volume are these ‘marriage poems’,⁷⁰ as Heaney has called them. The term is as apt as it is flexible. For the sonnet sequence seems to be about contracts: literary contracts made with other poets, in particular Heaney’s relationship with Wordsworth, a contract that obeys the sonnet form, that relies upon memory and, more literally, the marriage contract between Heaney and his wife. ‘Glanmore Sonnet I’ does not deviate far from Heaney’s original version ‘Opened ground’. But now placed in a different context, the sonnet acquires different meaning.

In his review of *Field Work*, Harold Bloom notes that the ‘Glanmore Sonnets’ open with Heaney’s emphasis on vowels, in particular O⁷¹ — ‘Vowels ploughed into other: opened ground/ The mildest February for twenty years.’ The first word, ‘Vowels’, brings to mind the significance of the ‘o’ sound and shape in ‘Gifts of Rain’ in *Wintering Out*, where Heaney associated water with memory and the music of poetry, an association, which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, appears to reenact Wordsworth’s description of the river Derwent in *The Prelude*. So, Heaney’s opening ‘vowel’ has implicitly written Wordsworth into the sonnet. For in these fourteen lines the focus upon language, rural occupation and the soil suggests that poetry has to be cultivated

⁶⁹ Frank Kinahan, ‘An Interview with Seamus Heaney’, *Critical Inquiry* (Spring, 1982), p. 411.

⁷⁰ John Haffenden, ‘An Interview with Seamus Heaney’, *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 72.

⁷¹ Harold Bloom, ‘The voice of kinship’, *TLS* (London: 8 February, 1980), p. 137.

in the same way as a field. To associate language and soil subsequently awards these vowels with an earthy materiality. Heaney might be suggesting here that language has inalienable texture, that it can be as grainy, solid and reliable as the earth itself, although this may be a rather ironic claim as Heaney is also the poet of the bogs and those places where the wet centre is bottomless. However, the 'subsoil' that Heaney's plough turns up and over seems to be Wordsworth's argument in the 'Preface'. There the Romantic poet suggests that it is in 'rural occupations' that 'men communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived'.⁷² So, Heaney's claim in the sonnet might not be about breaking new ground, but returning us to the established terrain of Wordsworth's poetic manifesto, as an expression of his own views about poetry.

The reflective tone in the poem may demonstrate something of the Irish poet's new found purpose. The mildness of the season acts as an objective correlative with the poet's own mood. It contrasts with Heaney's wintery atmosphere in 'Exposure'.⁷³ There it is December, 1973. The falling rain creates a bleak atmosphere. The alders drip, the ash tree, a symbol of death, is cold to look at. If the comet acts as a positive omen, it has also been missed and the portentousness of 'Exposure' serves to highlight the rather quiet reassurance in 'Glanmore Sonnet I', where the poet records that this is the mildest February for twenty years. Originally Heaney had written 'sixty years' and this change in the sonnet's time scale keeps the poem within the poet's own life time and at the same time returns us to 1958, a period of transition in Heaney's life when he gained entry to Queen's University Belfast. If this redating has been intentional, it might also

⁷² William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, (1802), *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 153.

⁷³ Seamus Heaney, 'Exposure', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 66-67.

express something of Heaney's relief during those early years before he felt he was becoming a spokesperson for the Catholic minority. So, the sonnet might well be about breathing a sigh of relief along with those 'turned-up acres'.

I would suggest that the sonnet demonstrates an unassuming or at least growing confidence that was absent from the original poem published outside the context of the sequence that finally appeared in *Field Work*:

..... My lea is deeply tilled.
Old ploughsocks gorge the subsoil of each sense
And I am quickened with a redolence
Of the fundamental dark unblown rose.
Wait then . . . Breasting the mist, in sowers' aprons,
My ghosts come striding into their spring stations.
The dream grain whirls like freakish Easter snows.

Heaney provides his 'lea' with a depth which would seem to signify it can hold more meaning, even mystery, as with the bottomless bog in 'Bogland'. It has a tone of authority, strength and independence, especially when compared to the earlier version in 'Glanmore II' that speaks of 'Appeasements, plenary and old.' The myth-making symbol of the bog, it could be argued, has been superseded in the Irish poet's imagination by the opening of the ground. Ploughing seems more reflective and philosophical, allowing the fragrance of the earth to reach the receiving poet. Here the 'insistent signals'⁷⁴ that jammed his artistic endeavours in *Stations* appear to be causing little or no interference. This is not to say that opening up ground was not without risk. *North*, with its archeological digging, after all revealed the savage history of violence and bloodletting in a northern landscape and how one layer was camped on before. (This echoes Heaney's comments in *The Redress of Poetry* and in *The Government of the Tongue*). However, in this *Field Work* sonnet the revealing of the earth seems to be making a poetry that was more personal and sympathetic, exactly what Wordsworth implied it should be. The sown grain implies a

⁷⁴ Seamus Heaney, *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

literary fertility, rather than the violent rites explored in the bog poems, or the barley growing up out of the grave in 'Requiem for the Croppies'. For this sonnet, like the 'Glanmore Sonnets' sequence, seems to be in part about the growth of a poet's mind, enabled by those mysterious presences that Heaney refers to as 'My ghosts'.

Heaney's use of the possessive adjective, 'my', is revealing. It implies deliberate choice, suggesting that the Irish poet has laid claim to ghosts that are an inspiration rather than a legacy. Their presence seems central to the development of Heaney's poetry and the sonnet sequence. And even though the literary presences have different histories, different artistic procedures, Heaney feels connected to them because they all presume the name of poet. Among the writers referred to are W.B Yeats⁷⁵, Boris Pasternak,⁷⁶ Osip Mandelstam,⁷⁷ William Shakespeare,⁷⁸ Sir Philip Sidney,⁷⁹ and Thomas Wyatt,⁸⁰ all of whom lend the sonnet sequence a high literary tone. Yet even though the presence of these dead poets is detectable, the sequence seems to be mostly 'foreshadowed' (Heaney's word in his 1998 keynote address) by William Wordsworth, and this is particularly evident in sonnet 'II'.

⁷⁵ The 'Glanmore Sonnets' have as an epigraph, 'our heartiest welcomer' taken from W. B. Yeats', 'In Memory of major Robert Gregory', which notably also refers to J.M Synge on whose family estate Heaney was living.

⁷⁶ Heaney's line, 'Now the good life could be to cross a field', seems to be reworked from Pasternak's 'Hamlet'. It ends with a Russian proverb which Robert Lowell translates in *Imitations*, 'To live life is not to cross a field'. See Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 103.

⁷⁷ Heaney, according to Neil Corcoran, has also drawn from a W.S. Merwin and Clarence Brown's translation of 1973, poem no.62. According to Corcoran, 'it is a poem which the 'Glanmore Sonnets' could be said secretly to nurture and address'. *ibid.* p.102.

⁷⁸ Shakespeare's presence can be detected in sonnets VIII and X. In sonnet VIII the lines, 'lush with omen' and 'spattering dark on the hatchet iron', borrows its atmosphere from *Macbeth*, according to Elmer Andrews. See Elmer Andrews, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: All the Realms of Whisper* (London: MacMillan, 1988), p.138. Heaney also refers to Shakespeare's 'eloping lovers', Lorenzo and Jessica, from *The Merchant of Venice*. See Neil Corcoran, *ibid.* p. 103.

⁷⁹ In sonnet IX Heaney draws on the title of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*: Seamus Heaney, 'Glanmore Sonnets', *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 41.

⁸⁰ In sonnet X Heaney's line, 'how like you this?' draws from Thomas Wyatt's poem 'They flee from me.' See Seamus Heaney, 'Glanmore Sonnets', *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 42, and, 'They flee from me, that sometime did me seek', is also included by Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes in their anthology for children, *The School Bag* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 522.

As with the first published version of ‘Glanmore II’, Heaney opens the revised version of sonnet II, in *Field Work*, with a string of Wordsworthian epithets — ‘Sensings, mountings from the hiding places./ Words entering almost the sense of touch/ Ferreting themselves out of their dark hutch’. The Irish poet’s phrases, such as ‘hiding places’ and ‘dark hutch’, that remind us of *The Prelude* and what Heaney said about Dove Cottage’s role in Wordsworth’s poetry in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, are kept. So, the opening of the poem seems to proclaim Heaney’s allegiance to a Wordsworthian understanding of the origins of poetry and again his understanding is challenged by the artist Oisín Kelly. However, the challenge made by Kelly, which seems to suggest that artistic inspiration is closer to religious experience, does not appear to convince the poet. Heaney’s original dismissal that ‘Glanmore is not Grasmere’ is cut and instead he focuses upon Glanmore as an example of a hedge-school and the sonnet seems all the more subtle with this analogy.

A ‘hedge-school’ was originally ‘a school established in response to the suppression of legal means of education for Catholics in Ireland, first under Cromwell and later under the Penal laws introduced in 1695.’⁸¹ The name comes ‘from the initial location of such schools in the secrecy of hedges’⁸² and this reference adds political meaning to the poem, implying that, like the Catholics of 17th Century Ireland, Heaney felt excluded. Yet within the context of the sequence, it could be argued that the phrase, not only reminds us of Irish politics, but also of some of Wordsworth’s lines from *The Prelude* — ‘By the highways and hedges; ballad-tunes,/Food for

⁸¹ Richard Wall, ‘A Dialect Glossary for Seamus Heaney’ in *The Irish University Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, (Spring/Summer), 1998, p. 78.

⁸² *ibid.*

the hungry ears of little Ones./ And of old Men who have surviv'd their joy'⁸³ — where nature and poetry are intertwined. We might then think of Heaney's 'hedge-school' as being, in part, about a Wordsworthian education that comes through close contact with nature and Heaney valued Wordsworth's theory enough to consider doing a thesis on Wordsworth's educational ideas.⁸⁴ In fact the original title of the sonnet sequence was *Hedge School* when it was published privately,⁸⁵ in 1979. And that initial title suggests that the first 'Glanmore Sonnet', though hinting at Irish history, was also inclusive of Wordsworth's views on education.

The Glanmore experience, it would appear, alerted Heaney to all that was educative in that pastoral / agricultural life, that it had acquired a potent and resilient explanation in the Romantic poet's 'Preface' and poems. The new circumstances of his city home in Dublin, from where he now reflected on his country cottage, now coloured his memories of those years spent in Co. Wicklow which he had temporarily given up. I would suggest that this relocation in Dublin — or further form of displacement — gave Heaney an opportunity to reflect upon his time at Glanmore, allowing him in to re-imagine the whole experience as he did Derry and Mossbawn. He re-imagines this place, as a place of learning, benign in form, where there is a creative relationship between poetry, nature and his home, similar to what Heaney found when he first visited Wordsworth's home at Grasmere. Heaney's re-imagined life at Glanmore also contrasts with the learning experience he shared with us in 'Singing School'. What could be referred to as Heaney's manifesto in sonnet 'II', where the poet 'hopes to raise/ A voice', demonstrates that

⁸³ William Wordsworth. *The Prelude*. (1805) Book V, ll. 211-213, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 148.

⁸⁴ Neil Corcoran has claimed that, after graduating from Queen's University, Belfast, Heaney 'had a thesis on Wordsworth's educational ideas in mind'. *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 243.

⁸⁵ Seamus Heaney, *Hedge School* (Oregon, Janus Press, 1979).

he has quite successfully achieved his aims. For this version of his 'hedge-school' experience would appear to have held off political pressures, dispelled his anxieties about his responsibility as a writer and about his predatory instincts in examining and finding identifications with other poets and now, in the third section of this chapter, I want to draw a comparison between the early and finished versions of the 'Glanmore Sonnets.'

III

Further identifications

'Opened Ground', which eventually became 'Glanmore I', assumes new meaning within the context of *Field Work*, as we have seen. Those alterations to the time span in the poem and the added detail of the deeply tilled lea are changes that allow this opening sonnet to connect with the rest of the sequence. Indeed the intention of the sequence has been revealed in this sonnet. Each subsequent sonnet seems to be like a 'station' or perhaps closer to a Wordsworthian 'spot of time'. In each poem, the finding of self in memory and in poetry are significant forces whereas in the earlier versions, as in 'Opened Ground', the poems seem too self-contained to work properly within a sequence. But perhaps the most significant change that was made from 'Opened Ground' to 'Glanmore I' has been Heaney's identification with those ghosts. Originally, in 'Opened Ground' they were simply 'ghosts'; they were without definition. But in 'Glanmore I' they are 'My ghosts', a possessive term that subtly indicates just how much Heaney's confidence had developed as a poet, implying that he can draw from other literary sources without anxiety. The Irish poet, it would seem, moved from being a proclaimer of other writers to a claimer of other writers. Envy turned into identification, and this change can be seen in the rewriting of 'Glanmore II' for *Field Work*.

The revised sonnet that appears in *Field Work* subtly insists on connections, on lineage and on the creation of a tradition with which the individual talent can make identifications. This in turn indicates that Heaney has become more aware of how his activities as poet are not just a surrendering to natural energies, as he will argue Wordsworth's were in 'The Makings of a Music', but what the Irish poet might call, a masculine forging and self-conscious literary process, more akin to his descriptions of Yeats in that essay. The contrast between both sonnets could not be more dramatic and as we come to read 'Glanmore Sonnets III', we do so, in a different literary context, with a transformed appreciation of the first two *Field Work* sonnets. The Wordsworthian agenda, in Heaney's third sonnet, does not come as an unexpected surprise. And the Irish poet's comparison between himself and his Romantic predecessor in sonnet III — when read in the light of these revised poems and indeed what Heaney said of Dove Cottage and its role in Wordsworth's poetic development in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* — seems almost inevitable.

There are three identifiable differences between 'Glanmore I' which would be later reworked as 'Glanmore Sonnet III'. There are changes to punctuation and an alteration of a line. Of the two, the line changes are the most significant. The original, 'Too much, too much' from 'Glanmore I' becomes '(So much, too much)' in 'Glanmore Sonnet III', removing the awkward repetitiveness of the earlier poem and at the same time adjusting the poet's voice and our sense of his experience, bringing fresh meaning to the poem. Whereas the earlier 'Too much, too much' conveys a sense of the poet's agitated resistance to his experience of being overwhelmed, even, 'So much, too much', carries something of that original meaning but at the same time suggests that the poet is in a state of excitement, perhaps not overcome but more able to filter and deal with the differing sensations. If the poet is experiencing a sense of conflicting sensations in

'Glanmore Sonnet III', this may in turn highlight Heaney's confidence in comparing himself to Wordsworth. For despite the criticism made by his wife, the comparison is still made. And the shift in Heaney's perspective on his Glanmore experience is suggested by the fact that in 'Glanmore I' Heaney's observations are made from 'outside of the house', whereas in the revised 'Glanmore Sonnet III' the Irish poet's observations are made from 'the window of the house', suggesting a commitment to his dwelling, to his cottage life as a place to write. This places an importance upon the role of Glanmore Cottage in shaping the Irish poet's development, just as Heaney emphasises the role of Dove cottage in Wordsworth's poetic growth. Although Heaney's comparison between himself and Marie and William and Dorothy, still retains a critical edge, it also delicately, but powerfully, instructs us how Heaney was re-imagining Glanmore as his own Wordsworthian place of retreat to concentrate on poetry, a place for 'tranquil restoration'. And the sonnet's closing images — 'Outside a rustling and twig-combing breeze/ Refreshes and relents. Is cadences' — hint that the Irish poet was imagining his Co. Wicklow experience to be like that of Wordsworth's in the Lake District. Like *The Prelude* the sonnets seems to emphasise an alignment between creativity and the natural world, what we might call Wicklow's 'correspondent breeze' and Heaney's commitment to a Wordsworthian poetic appears to filter through the rest of the sonnet sequence from here.

As in the first three poems, Heaney's voice in the 'Glanmore Sonnets' in *Field Work* seems more self-assured than in the earlier published poems. In her recent book on Heaney, the critic Helen Vendler notes that 'in the ten poems called 'Glanmore Sonnets' (which ring changes on both Shakespearean and Italian forms) Heaney writes a deliberately middle-voiced Wordsworthian sequence'.³⁶ Although I would agree with Vendler's argument that Heaney seems

³⁶ Helen Vendler, *Seamus Heaney* (London: Collins, 1998), p. 66.

drawn to a more settled Wordsworthian voice, her discussion of the sequence does not take into account the earlier publications. These possess something of Heaney's own voice in 'Singing School' or the transition between the different versions of the sonnets. However, Vendler's comment does suggest that she too believes that Heaney's voice has achieved a different and perhaps more self-assured intimacy. Like Vendler, I am inclined to point up the restorative value of the Glanmore experience for Heaney, and the Irish poet's need for continuity and confidence in his vocation. Yet I do not want to diminish those points, made by other critics, who have highlighted images that trouble and complicate the Glanmore sequence.

Some of the more troubled references that darken the sonnets are the allusions to *Macbeth*. Elmer Andrews has commented upon these in his book *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: All the Realms of Whisper*. He found, in sonnet VIII, echoes of *Macbeth* in the phrases 'big raindrops', 'lush with omen', 'spattering dark on the hatchet iron' and in the reference to a sleeping horse that evokes thoughts of 'armour and carrion.'⁸⁷ Similarly, in sonnet 'IX' there are images that have previously denoted fear in Heaney's poems in *Death of a Naturalist* and *Door into the Dark*. There we have a 'big black rat/ Swaying on the briar like infected fruit', recalling Heaney's childhood fears, while the description of the rats being 'like infected fruit' reminds us of 'Strange Fruit' in *North* and ritualised violence. But despite these images that would serve to darken Heaney's 'Eden', in both sonnets 'VIII' and 'IX', the poet's wife becomes an enduring presence, comforting and humorous. And when, in sonnet 'X', Heaney likens himself and his wife to the exiled lovers Lorenzo and Jessica and Diarmuid and Grainne, the comparison suggests that, like the literary lovers, they will find consolation in each others arms. And again his wife's presence offers consolation in sonnet 'IX'. There Heaney asks, 'What is my apology

⁸⁷ Elmer Andrews, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: All the Realms of Whisper* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 138.

for poetry?’, as did Sir Philip Sidney. The answer appears to come through an image of his wife, but an image, it might be added, created through a Wordsworthian lens. Heaney writes:

What is my apology for poetry?
The empty briar is swishing
When I come down, and beyond, your face
Haunts like a new moon glimpsed through tangled glass.⁸⁸

This ‘briar’ may be swishing by the force of a mild creative breeze but more importantly, the last image recalls Heaney’s own comment in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* about Dorothy’s presence in Wordsworth’s poetry. In the programme Heaney states, ‘It’s Dorothy whose spiritual presence is mirrored like moonlight on the surface and under the surface of William’s poetry.’⁸⁹ Heaney’s connection between his wife’s presence and the moon may also recall Wordsworth’s similar image in ‘Tintern Abbey’ — ‘From joy to joy: for she can so inform/ The mind that is within us. . . .Therefore let the moon/ Shine on thee in thy solitary walk.’⁹⁰ As in the ‘Lucy Poems’, ‘Tintern Abbey’ and *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, a female presence serves as an emotional and intellectual support and resource in Heaney’s sonnets, poems ‘in which human emotions and natural forces coalesce’.⁹¹

In some of the other sonnets, in particular ‘IV’, ‘V’ and ‘VI’, Heaney seems to recreate memories that are, as Neil Corcoran has suggested, recreations of significant childhood events ‘analogous to the ‘spots of time’ in *The Prelude*’.⁹² We might be tempted to describe these sonnets as ‘stations’ like these memories, for instance, in ‘Glanmore Sonnet IV’:

⁸⁸ Seamus Heaney, ‘Glanmore Sonnets’, *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 41.

⁸⁹ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 220-221

⁹⁰ William Wordsworth, ‘Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey’, *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose* ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), ll. 125-135, p. 53.

⁹¹ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 217.

⁹² Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p.103.

I used to lie with an ear to the line
For that way, they said, there should come a sound
Escaping ahead, an iron tune
Of flange and piston pitched along the ground,
But I never heard that. Always, instead,
Struck couplings and shuntings two miles away
Lifted over the woods.⁹³

This appears similar to ‘Nesting-ground’, where Heaney puts an ear to an ‘abandoned hole’ and listens ‘for the silence under the ground’. They are perhaps more reminiscent of incidents in *The Prelude* when Wordsworth, as a child, lay with his head upon the ground, ‘Cheered by the genial pillow of the earth.’⁹⁴ In her essay on the ‘Glanmore Sonnets’, Deborah McLoughlin draws our attention to, ‘DeQuincey’s sketch of Wordsworth’s demeanour as he awaited the arrival of the mail coach . . .’⁹⁵. She quotes:

At intervals, Wordsworth had stretched himself at length upon the high road, applying his ear to the ground, so as to catch any sound of wheels that might be groaning along at a distance.⁹⁶

This, McLoughlin argues persuasively, is ‘echoed in the “Glanmore Sonnets” by Heaney’s portrayal of his own habitual listening attitude.’⁹⁷ Other lines in the sonnet seem to be reworked in Heaney’s autobiographical prose. Those ‘Struck couplings and shuntings two miles away’ are heard again in the autobiographical prose piece ‘Mossbawn’. There Heaney remembers as a child ‘the heavy shunting of an engine at Castledawson station.’⁹⁸ But where the train has political connotations in that prose memoir, in the poem the central concerns remain specifically Wordsworthian, uninterrupted by other possible meaning.

⁹³ Seamus Heaney, ‘Glanmore Sonnets’, *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 36.

⁹⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 88, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 6.

⁹⁵ Deborah McLoughlin, ‘“An Ear to the Line”: Modes of Receptivity in Seamus Heaney’s “Glanmore Sonnets”’, *Papers on Language & Literature* 25, (Spring, no.2, 1989), p. 201.

⁹⁶ Deborah McLoughlin, op. cit. p. 201.

⁹⁷ Deborah McLoughlin, loc. cit.

⁹⁸ Seamus Heaney, ‘Mossbawn’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 20.

In sonnet 'VI' we are presented with a childhood story of a man racing his bicycle across the frozen Moyola river, in 1947. Although the poet 'never saw' the event, he is 'quickened' by the tale of the man's daring and risk. The word 'quickened', returns us to sonnet I and so carries with it that earlier 'redolence', turning up and over earlier associations with Wordsworth into the subsoil of the sonnet sequence. As with many of Wordsworth's solitaires, Heaney's figure in sonnet 'VI' remains nameless. The cyclist might remind us of Dixon, who appears in 'Kernes' in *Stations*,⁹⁹ but the political overtones in that prose poem are subdued in this poem. The poet's recollections of how 'the snow/ Kept the country bright as a studio', in sonnet 'VI', return us to the 'freakish Easter snow' in sonnet 'III', suggesting that there are times, as Wordsworth had intimated in *The Prelude*, when memory can have a restorative virtue, enabling the poet to endure periods that need, in Heaney's own phrase, 'wintering out'. In his study of Heaney, T.C Foster finds a connection between Heaney's sonnet 'VI' and one of Wordsworth's ballads. Foster argues that the first lines of sonnet 'VI', "'He lived there in the unsayable lights," is an almost direct transcription of the famous Lucy poem, "She dwelt among the untrodden ways."¹⁰⁰ He does not elaborate upon this comment and his intention in drawing the comparison seems incomplete. Certainly his comment signifies how readily Heaney's poetry had become identified with Wordsworth by critics. In fact Foster could have extended his comparison with Wordsworth to suggest that the 'The elderflower at dusk like a risen moon' would appear to play with Wordsworth's use of the moon and flora in 'Strange fits of passions have I known'.¹⁰¹ But unlike Wordsworth's poem which has a dark atmosphere, Heaney's sense of sudden anticipation is

⁹⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Kernes', *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ T.C. Foster, *Seamus Heaney* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 1989), p. 97.

¹⁰¹ William Wordsworth, 'Strange fits of passion have I known', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 69.

‘bright as a studio.’ As in sonnet ‘VI’, the previous sonnet, ‘V’, also refers to a moment from childhood, creating a sense of continuity within the entire sequence.

In sonnet ‘V’ the Boortee was Heaney’s ‘bower’ as a child, where he played “touching tongues”, an erotic activity that may signify his adoption of both the Irish and English linguistic traditions. Certainly the word ‘bower’ reverberates through English Romanticism. It recalls Coleridge’s poem, ‘This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison’, but unlike Coleridge, Heaney has not lost ‘beauties and feelings, such as would have been/ Most sweet to me’.¹⁰² This is not to say that the Irish poet’s memories are sweet to the point of being devoid of political, cultural and religious tensions. These traumas can be detected in this sonnet, in words like, ‘shot’, ‘spawn’ and ‘shoot’, that recall some of the substrata of hostilities alluded to in *Death of a Naturalist*.

In each sonnet, in which Wordsworth has been a ghost, Heaney’s relationships, both personal and creative, with nature and with memory, begin to take precedence over those other political responsibilities he faced as a writer. If this refocus had been partly aided by the Glanmore cottage experience, the *Field Work* sequence also demonstrates that, through Wordsworth’s example in *The Prelude* or through some of his poems in *Lyrical Ballads* or the all important 1802 ‘Preface’, Heaney has been able to create “A haven!/ The word deepening, clearing, like the sky”, which does not imply that he has absconded from his responsibilities as an Irish writer. Indeed at a poetry reading at Dove Cottage, Heaney hints that the origins of this phrase, ‘A haven’, may come from Wordsworth’s sonnet, ‘With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh’,¹⁰³

¹⁰² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’, *Coleridge: Poems and Prose*, selected by Kathleen Raine (London: Penguin Books, 1957), p. 34.

¹⁰³ William Wordsworth, ‘With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh’, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. III, p. 18.

which Heaney read along with 'Glanmore Sonnet VII', along with another Wordsworth sonnet, 'Composed near Calais on the Road Leading to Ardres, August 7, 1802'.¹⁰⁴

In Glanmore sonnet 'VII', Heaney recalls a time, late in the evening, when he listened to the shipping forecast. He begins with a litany of names, 'Dogger, Rockall, Malin, Irish Sea:'. In doing so he re-enacts an earlier memory of his childhood at Mossbawn, one which was already explored in 'Feeling Into Words'. By implicitly layering Wordsworth's presence in this sonnet, and throughout the entire sequence, Heaney has attempted to govern our interpretation of the poems. And as with Wordsworth's sonnets, in 'Glanmore Sonnet VII', the names of the ships act as some sort of objective correlative. But apart from revealing something of the poet's emotions, Heaney has incorporated into his ships other dimensions. The ships are French and the political implications of French ships in an Irish bay cannot be ignored. The image acts as a little beacon, subtly illuminating Irish history when French fleets assisted Irish insurrectionists during the 1798 rebellion. At the same time it remembers the political yearning of the young Wordsworth towards the ideals of the French Revolution. So, when Heaney read Wordsworth's sonnet, 'Composed near Calais, on the Road leading to Ardres, 7 August, 1802', at Dove Cottage, he may have been suggesting that, like Wordsworth, he too was experiencing a sense of 'new-born Liberty'¹⁰⁵ when writing the sequence. However, perhaps this liberty is, in part, about not being committed to a more political poetry. Like the Romantic poet, Heaney was living in a time undergoing political transition when 'possibilities were even more assiduously debated and espoused'.¹⁰⁶ Certainly, something of Heaney's own poetic transition can be seen in

¹⁰⁴ William Wordsworth, 'Composed near Calais, on the Road Leading to Ardres, August 7, 1802', *ibid.* vol. III, p. 110.

¹⁰⁵ William Wordsworth, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 10.

sonnet 'VII'. There his use of the word 'sirens', a word weighted down with political meaning in the preface to *Stations*, now seems to refer to siren music. The sonnet's metrics speed us on towards safety, as Thomas C. Foster has claimed, leading to 'the greater safety offered by the sheltered bay'.¹⁰⁷ Like the trawler, Heaney has found his harbour. That harbour might be called Co. Wicklow, the English pastoral tradition, the sonnet form, or perhaps, to put it more simply, Wordsworth's example at Grasmere.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas C. Foster. *Seamus Heaney* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1989), p. 95.

Chapter 4: Wordsworth: Essays and an Introduction

In this chapter I look at three lectures where Heaney listens into the different strains emanating from Wordsworth's poetry and I conclude with a discussion of the Irish poet's introduction to and selection for *The Essential Wordsworth*. In his revised critical study, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (1998), Neil Corcoran discusses the Irish poet's major prose, in particular, *Preoccupations* (1980) and *The Government of the Tongue* (1988) acknowledging the importance of Wordsworth in Heaney's writing. Corcoran eloquently argues that:

the permeability of Heaney's critical consciousness to Wordsworth makes his basic conceptions of poetry essentially late Romantic ones, however much they may have been put through a Modernist or, in some respects, a post-modernist filter. Approbation, celebration and self-identification, rather than irony, temper and measure, are the characteristic motives and moods of his criticism.¹

And Heaney's absorbing of these lessons in Wordsworth's poetry is primarily what my chapter is about.

In this chapter, I have grouped together 'The Sense of Place' (1977), 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978) and 'Place and Displacement' (1984), for they are all centrally preoccupied by Wordsworth and very often *The Prelude*. If these essays demonstrate an active engagement with Wordsworth's poetry they do so in order to affirm Heaney's own poetic procedures and manifesto whereas the 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth*, it will be suggested, signals a more judicious approach on Heaney's part to his Romantic predecessor's writing. Much of what I have to say in this chapter will be based on

¹ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 229. In a recent interview with Karl Miller, Heaney was asked does he read his literary critics. Corcoran's book was the first criticism that came into his mind and evidently, from Heaney's comment, Corcoran's study has proven influential. Heaney states — 'I read Neil Corcoran's first book completely, and I read the revised version swiftly. I like it. Apart from anything else, he has a feeling for the domestic life I've lived. He's what I would call Hiberno-British. He's Catholic too, which gives him a feeling for the things I do.' See, *Between the Lines: Seamus Heaney in Conversation with Karl Miller* (London: BTL, 2000), p. 53.

these prose pieces but I will also be drawing, whenever possible, on Heaney's poetry and on other prose, including 'The Indefatigable Hoof-taps: Sylvia Plath' in *The Government of the Tongue*.²

I

'The Sense of Place'

That temperate understanding of the relationship between a person and his place

Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place'³

It seems appropriate that I should begin by discussing 'The Sense of Place'. In the previous chapter we have seen how a poet's relationship with their place can be a subject for debate and conflicting sensations. If in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* Heaney saw Dove Cottage to be an ideal, the various versions of the 'Glanmore Sonnets' might be described as a reaction to and envy of the Romantic poet's experience. In some respects 'The Sense of Place' both continues and attempts to resolve that debate. The essay that appears in *Preoccupations* was originally given as a lecture at the Ulster museum in Belfast in January, 1977. At this time Heaney had already explored his profound relationship with places, especially those of his childhood home. *Wintering Out* (1972) for instance, had demonstrated the Irish poet's detailed knowledge about the rural Catholic farming background in which he grew up, and the volume's placename poems are in some ways an equivalent to Wordsworth's 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. Yet, Heaney's discussion of Wordsworth's pastoral poem 'Michael' and the Irish poet's concluding

² The title of Heaney's second prose collection might well have come from a book that was in Wordsworth's private library. According to the reference work *Wordsworth's Library: A Catalogue*, eds. Chester L. Shaver and Alice C. Shaver (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979) he had a copy of *The Government of the Tongue* by Richard Allestree, published in Oxford, 1674. Allestree's book is a study on Christian conduct but I have found little evidence, as yet, to indicate that Wordsworth's may have read the book and it is unclear if it helped to shape his poetry. However the presence of Allestree's book in Wordsworth's library asks us to question if Heaney, who would have had access to the Shaver reference guide by the time he published *Field Work*, read and was influenced by Allestree's book and title. I am currently expanding upon my findings, and researching the relationships between Allestree's work, Wordsworth's poetry and Heaney's *The Government of the Tongue*, for my essay entitled 'Powers of the Tongue'.

³ Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 145.

assertion in the lecture that ‘we are dwellers’⁴ would have been something of a surprise to his audience in the Ulster museum. Presumably, that collective ‘we’ refers, not only to those who listened, but to Heaney himself and to those poets whom he discusses. But there was something of an irony in Heaney’s promotion of place, given the fact that Heaney was no longer dwelling in Northern Ireland and those dislocations within his own life worked through in his early poetry, in particular *Death of Naturalist*. Heaney’s subject, how we sense our place, was an issue already keenly felt by that Belfast crowd, which was only too aware how their own sense of place or knowing their place was defined by cultural, political and religious differences and by not belonging to other places. Yet, despite this contentious identification with place, Heaney’s claim that ‘we are dwellers’ seems to be without any sense of irony, so ‘The Sense of Place’ should be understood as a Wordsworthian argument for the stability that dwelling offers.

By ‘dwelling’ Heaney did not mean a sense of place ‘regulated by laws of aesthetics, by the disciplines of physical geography’, as in the account he quotes from Robert Lloyd Praeger’s book *The Way That I Went*. Rather the Irish poet promotes Wordsworth’s sense of his surroundings, and how the Romantic poet’s senses were regulated ‘by the primary laws of our nature, the laws of feeling’.⁵ And although Heaney seems to make too grand a claim for Wordsworth’s argument, suggesting that the Grasmere poet ‘was perhaps the first man to articulate the nurture that becomes available to the feelings through dwelling in one dear perpetual place’,⁶ the Irish poet nonetheless convincingly argues, through his own autobiographical examples, for the feelings of ‘pleasure’ that can be gained through an intimacy with that site you call home ground. ‘Dwelling in one dear perpetual place’ is perhaps a closer echo of Yeats’s line ‘in one dear perpetual place’

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 148.

⁵ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 145

⁶ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

in his remarkable poem 'A Prayer for my Daughter' and an instance when Heaney appears to be reading Yeats through Wordsworth.

Heaney's notion of the 'power of place', of its spirit, shifts the interpretative procedures away from the rational and into the realm of feelings. Place, or landscape becomes appreciated not for its geographical features but the contours it leaves upon the mind. The emotional impact upon the mind takes precedence, just as Wordsworth argued it should in *The Prelude*. And for Heaney a poet's relationship to place demonstrates 'just how vital this matter of feeling is'⁷ for poetic restoration to happen. Place, in other words, can have a therapeutic value. It may be a rather bizarre promotion by an Irish poet. It even seems to be something intuitively felt by Heaney in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* and knowingly expressed in the 'Glanmore Sonnets'. And what Heaney refers to as 'our *sensing* of place'⁸ — which for the Irish poet is bound up with a writer's emotional response to their place — he traces back to Wordsworth's 'Preface' and to his pastoral poem 'Michael'. 'Michael', in particular, seems to be, for Heaney, a wonderful demonstration of the power of place upon the dweller. Heaney sees that:

. . . the way the Westmorland mountains were so much more than a picturesque backdrop for his shepherd's existence, how they were rather companionable and influential in the strict sense of the word 'influential' — things flowed in from them to Michael's psychic life.⁹

Like the critic Matthew Arnold, Heaney evidently identifies in 'Michael' something of 'Wordsworth's unique power'.¹⁰ Through his uses of this pastoral poem with its portrait of the good shepherd, Heaney seems to suggest that 'the surface of the earth can be accepted into and

⁷ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 144.

⁸ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 132.

⁹ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 145.

¹⁰ Matthew Arnold, 'Preface', *The Poems of Wordsworth*, reprinted in *Essays in Criticism*. See, *Wordsworth: Lyrical Ballads*, eds. Alun R Jones and William Tydeman (London: MacMillan, 1972), p. 74.

be a steadying influence upon the quiet depths of the mind'.¹¹ The land would have a 'steadying influence' and an influence that is the result of individual experience. The lesson to be learnt from 'Michael' appears to be that we gradually find ourselves becoming native 'through the accretions of human memory and human associations.'¹² For Heaney, Wordsworth's 'laws of feeling' are what govern a poet's response to place. It suggests that a Wordsworthian awe of nature has been steered by Heaney's own appreciations of place. Yet, Heaney's reference to the poetry of John Hewitt might indicate that the Irish poet does not dismiss the need for a politicised intelligence. Heaney celebrates the work of his contemporaries, Derek Mahon, Paul Muldoon and Michael Longley, who are only too aware that 'we are no longer innocent, we are no longer just parishioners of the local.'¹³

But in spite of acknowledging a need for a politicised intelligence, irony and wry wit, Heaney seems to refuse the directions taken by these poets and what their poetry can offer and instead draws his conclusion from Wordsworth. Indeed the essay has been building towards this definitive statement: 'Yet those primary laws of our nature are still operative. We are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers, we make homes and search for our histories.'¹⁴ Heaney's diction, his use of the phrase 'primary laws of our nature' comes straight from Wordsworth's 'Preface.' Through the Romantic poet's manifesto the Irish poet justifies his own claims. And the absence of quotation marks around the Wordsworthian phrase suggests that Heaney wished at least to

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

¹² Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 147

¹³ Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 148.

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.148-149.

have Wordsworth's argument identified with his own. His essay on Plath is an example when the 1802 'Preface' has been written into the constitution of the Irish poet's own writing.

Heaney could have started his 'exploration much further back . . . because in Irish poetry there is a whole genre of writing called *dinnseanchas*, poems and tales which relate the original meanings of place names' and, as he suggests, 'constitute a form of mythological etymology.'¹⁵ However, it is more significant that the Irish poet chooses instead to marry into a Wordsworthian vision that sees the 'laws of feeling' as central to any understanding of place, that emphasises the role of place in psychological development and which privileges a rural existence.

If, as the poet John Montague has suggested, the Irish landscape is a manuscript we have lost the skill to read, then Heaney's reason for choosing Wordsworth's poem, 'Michael', seems all the more extraordinary. Rather than attempt to recover what was lost in the Irish literary tradition, Heaney espouses a Wordsworthian way in which place may be experienced and read and valued for its psychological impact. The 'Lake District', the Irish poet writes, 'was not inanimate stone but active nature, humanized and humanizing',¹⁶ and the Irish poet quotes the following extract from 'Michael' to support his Wordsworthian argument:

And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 131.

¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 145.

The certainty of honourable gain;
Those fields, those hills - what could they less - had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.¹⁷

The pace of this passage could be described as invigorating, as it seems to capture the breathing of the poet as he climbs. And the internal rhyme between 'climbed' and 'mind' creates a vivid impression of how the landscape elevates Wordsworth's mood, suggesting that the body and the inner spirit reached a higher state. The landscape in which the shepherd wanders is 'like a book'. It preserves memory in much the same way as Heaney's 'Bogland'. By presenting this passage from 'Michael', where the landscape has been compared to a text, Heaney suggests that his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry has given him a way with which to read his own place within the margins of the Romantic poet's writing. The implication may be that it was Wordsworth who first encouraged the Irish poet to read himself back into his familiar childhood places. With Wordsworth firmly established as the teacher from whom we learnt how to interact with our places, Heaney is confident enough to claim that the 'nourishment that springs from knowing and belonging to a certain place and a certain mode of life is not just an Irish obsession, nor is the relationship between a literature and a locale with its common language a particularly Irish phenomenon.'¹⁸

The Irish poet's use of the word 'springs' and phrases such as 'a certain mode of life' and 'common language' remind us that his diction seems to be in a continual dialogue with Wordsworth's 'Preface'. Heaney may complicate what it means to be a dweller by adding that the 'peculiar fractures in [Irish] history . . . have rendered the question' of a writer's sense of

¹⁷ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

¹⁸ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 136.

place ‘particularly urgent’.¹⁹ yet the Irish poet’s autobiographical descriptions in this essay seems to underplay the sectarian dimension of his own childhood in order to accommodate a Wordsworthian ethos. *Stations* and ‘Singing School’ may remember the emblems and signs of the sectarian divisions where Heaney grew up. We are struck by how those earlier poems appear to be much more complex, anxious and even bitter in tone. We might then want to call Heaney’s revised autobiographical description in his essay a more ‘temperate understanding of the relationship between a person and his place’,²⁰ just as in Wordsworth’s poem ‘Michael’. In a place riven with conflicting notions of identity and what boundaries and borders actually define that place, Heaney seems to have taken on a role akin to Wordsworth’s in his letter to Charles James Fox. Like Wordsworth, Heaney wished to:

excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by showing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us.²¹

Wordsworth’s image of the landscape as a book was not the only element in ‘Michael’ that would be an obvious attraction for Heaney. And it might be suggested that some of the elements that Heaney read in Wordsworth’s poem have been written into his own poetry. For instance, Heaney’s description of himself as a ‘nuisance, tripping, falling, / Yapping always’²² seems uncannily close to Wordsworth’s image of Luke following his father, an ‘urchin’, ‘something between a hindrance and a help’.²³ For the rural details in ‘Michael’ not only reminded Heaney

¹⁹ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

²⁰ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 145.

²¹ William Wordsworth, ‘W.W to Charles James Fox’, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 1787-1805*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and revised by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 315.

²² Seamus Heaney, ‘Follower’, *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 25.

²³ William Wordsworth, ‘Michael’, *William Wordsworth: The Poems* vol. I, l. 189, ed. John O’ Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 460. We know from *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988) that Heaney started using the O’ Hayden edition of Wordsworth’s poems in 1977. So I will refer to this edition so as to keep in tandem with the texts that were shaping the Irish poet’s sense of his predecessor.

of the life he knew but validated the directions of his own poems, which are, in part, about sharing the beneficent influences of a rural 'occupation and abode.'²⁴

If, for Heaney, Wordsworth's poem brought into the literary arena the simple details of rural existence — 'pottage and skimmed milk', what it meant to have 'wrought' in a field, 'baskets piled with oaten cakes/ And their plain home-made cheese' and 'repairs done to 'sickle, flail, or scythe' — the Irish poet would have been aware that his early poems, such as 'Churning Day' and 'The Barn', were tapping into a literary taste, in part created by Wordsworth by which Heaney's own County Derry experiences could be enjoyed. The fact that 'Michael' grew around a tale that Wordsworth heard while 'yet a boy / Careless of books'²⁵ and a memory of seeing a ruined sheep fold and old oak, may have shown the Irish writer the potential of those rural details and stories that were part of his own Ulster childhood, and that these tales and details kept a ghost-life that transmits the energies of the past into the present.

We might then say that Wordsworth's responses to his own places as things to cherish, assisted Heaney's own appreciation of his home. Just as the unfinished sheep-fold in 'Michael' had a kind of moral force because it had been seasoned with human contact, so too had the ruined church on Church Island for Heaney, or the stories around the magical thorn, or the wondrous preservative qualities of Lough Neagh. If it is a truism that the more a poet dwells upon his own place, the more richly he will write and the more restored his inner life, then Heaney's descriptions of Lough Beg, or 'the unmistakable hump of Slemish', surely invokes, as Wordsworth's poetry had done, the 'power of natural objects', suggesting that Heaney sought to

²⁴ William Wordsworth, 'Michael', l. 26, *ibid.* p. 456.

²⁵ William Wordsworth, 'Michael', ll. 27-28, *op. cit.* p. 456.

bring his own memories within the security of the Romantic fold. These places for the Irish poet, like Westmorland for Michael, were ‘companionable and influential in the strict sense of the word ‘influential’ — things flowed in from them’ and into the ‘psychic life’²⁶ of the Irish poet. It is as if, through Wordsworth’s appreciation of the Lake District, the Irish poet found a way in which to read his own landscape, ‘not as inanimate stone but active nature, humanized and humanizing’.²⁷ This reading seems remarkable humanitarian, particularly if we recall the violent poems in *North*.

When we think of the politically charged prose poems in *Stations* it seems difficult to imagine Heaney’s Derry as humanizing. If anything those childhood recollections in a natural setting can be dehumanizing. ‘The Sense of Place’ may enlist poems by W. B. Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh, John Montague and John Hewitt so as to support Heaney’s Wordsworthian claims. Yet if places such as Drumcliff, Ben Bulbin or Innisfree lived in Yeats’s imagination were they not loaded with mythology and by politicised intelligence quite unlike Wordsworth’s? Kavanagh’s poems on the by-ways of Monaghan such as ‘Inniskeen Road, July Evening’,²⁸ ‘Epic’²⁹, ‘Kerr’s Ass’³⁰ and ‘A Book on Common Wild Flowers’³¹ may show a love of place, of local speech and the ordinary ways of rural life, something which Wordsworth called for in his ‘Preface’. Indeed, in the essay, ‘From Monaghan to the Grand Canal’, Heaney argues that what we have in Kavanagh’s poetry ‘are matter-of-fact-landscapes, literally presented, but

²⁶ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Sense of Place’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 145.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Patrick Kavanagh, *Patrick Kavanagh: The Complete Poems*, ed. Peter Kavanagh (Newbridge, Goldsmith Press, 1972), p. 18.

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 238.

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 254.

³¹ *ibid.* p. 262.

contemplated from such a point of view and with such intensity that they become ‘a prospect of the mind’.³² a choice Wordsworthian phrase, which again draws Kavanagh’s vision of place closer to Wordsworth’s reading of the landscape. However, the uncompromising, unspectacular countryside of Monaghan, what we might call Kavanagh’s Ireland of ‘The Great Hunger’, seems too long-suffering to re-imagine as a heavenly place, as a Wordsworthian Lake District.

On the other hand, John Montague’s *The Rough Field* might secretly share in a Wordsworthian appreciation of landscape more than he would freely admit — ‘no Wordsworthian dream enchants me here.’³³ Yet it is difficult to find in the violent dehumanizing politics of Ireland, which Montague’s volume explores, an undiminished sense of place that can be called ‘humanizing’. In his essay ‘Seamus Heaney and the Possibilities of Poetry’, John Lucas has rightly noted how ‘it is difficult to see that the road from Wordsworth’s ‘Michael’ to Hewitt’s ‘Conacre’ runs direct because Hewitt’s poem is a good deal less humanised, a good deal more picturesque than Wordsworth’s’.³⁴ However, Heaney’s insistence upon cementing ‘a country of the mind’³⁵ shared by all these writers, including himself, suggests that through constructing and therefore having to maintain his relationship with Wordsworth’s poetry, Heaney has had to skim over significant differences that would complicate and perhaps collapse the Wordsworthian model he has set up. So, his relationship with Wordsworth’s poetry has been partly constraining, something from which his own poetry has suffered. And the insistent opening to ‘The Sense of Place’ seems to be about ensuring that all these poets can be embraced within a tradition, which

³² Seamus Heaney, ‘From Monaghan to the Grand Canal’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 120.

³³ John Montague, *Collected Poems* (Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1995), p. 9.

³⁴ John Lucas, ‘Seamus Heaney and the Possibilities of Poetry’, *Seamus Heaney: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Elmer Andrews (London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 125.

³⁵ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Sense of Place’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 132.

goes back to Wordsworth, and which puts place and the sensing of place firmly at the centre of the imagination. And I suspect that in the following paragraph, Heaney's image of a 'marriage' has its original undertow in a Wordsworthian argument for the bond between man, the heart of man and nature in the 'Prospectus' for *The Recluse*:

Irrespective of our creed or politics, irrespective of what culture or subculture may have coloured our individual sensibilities, our imaginations assent to the stimulus of the names, our sense of the place is enhanced, our sense of ourselves as inhabitants not just of a geographical country but of a country of the mind is cemented. It is this feeling, assenting, equable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind. . . . it is this marriage that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation.³⁶

Yet before writing 'The Sense of Place', it was as early as 1975 that Heaney had already begun to argue, with the help of Wordsworth's 1802 'Preface', that a poet's sense of place was about marrying the 'geographical place' with a place in 'the mind'. Heaney seem to be suggesting that what cements these poets together is how place is remembered and cherished. Yeats, according to Heaney, created 'a new country of the mind'; Kavanagh created a 'vision' of Monaghan in the mind's eye, as Montague did of Tyrone, and Hewitt's attachment was to an 'idea of country', all of which suggest how the poet's place has become an imagined country. We might call this, Heaney's imagined literary tradition and its sense of place, a poetic tradition which makes Wordsworth's poetry the source, a tradition that seems to be about resisting political, geographical and historical differences. And in its own perverse rendering and reading of these poets, 'The Sense of Place' argues, as Wordsworth had done, for the power of the imagination to heal and restore.

³⁶ *ibid.*

Those poets who would perhaps challenge Heaney's view, Derek Mahon, Paul Muldoon and perhaps Michael Longley,³⁷ have to different degrees a very different and un-Wordsworthian notion of place. According to Heaney their relationship with place 'symbolizes a personal drama' which all but eradicates a 'sacral vision of place'.³⁸ For Muldoon, Mahon and Longley, 'we are no longer innocent, we are no longer just parishioners of the local.'³⁹ But although Heaney seems to appreciate their shared position, surely he ultimately aligns himself and them with Wordsworth when he concludes 'The Sense of Place' with a statement that chimes with Wordsworth's 'Preface', 'yet those primary laws of our nature are still operative. We are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers, we make homes and search for our histories.'⁴⁰

Yet in order to talk about place, do we not also have to talk about displacement? Did Heaney not talk about his sense of place, south Derry, while displaced and living in Southern Ireland? It would not be until some seven years later, in 1984, that place and displacement would become the subject of a lecture Heaney gave at Dove Cottage. In that essay he returns to the poetry of Mahon, Muldoon and Longley and discusses how those less obviously Wordsworthian poets have been 'preyed upon in life by the consequences of living on this island'⁴¹ and how 'their art is a mode of play to outface the predatory circumstance'.⁴² Between 'The Sense of Place' and 'Place and Displacement' between those opposing tensions of rootedness and deracination, the poet is

³⁷ When Paul Muldoon was asked to select an edition of poems by an English Romantic poet for 'The Essential Poet' series, published by the Ecco Press, it seems significant that he chose that anti-Wordsworthian Byron. Muldoon's brief introduction to Byron's work contrasts with the thirteen pages that Heaney takes up to introduce us to Wordsworth.

³⁸ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 148.

³⁹ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* p. 148.

⁴⁰ Seamus Heaney, *op. cit.* pp. 148-149.

⁴¹ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

⁴² Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

stretched by the opposing truths of both states. In an effort to come to terms with both positions, and bring some harmony to the strains these conditions impose upon a poet, Heaney focuses upon the pleasures of poetic composition in 'The Making of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats'. In this essay the pleasures of sound, be it the poet's actual speaking voice or the babble of running water, excite the Irish writer. There is a vitality to this prose piece, the kind of exhilaration that is created when one poet identifies with and feels confirmed by a predecessor. The essay represents Heaney's next major discussion of Wordsworth's writing and hints at the relationship between his own and the Romantic poet's compositional procedures.

II

'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats'

What interests me is the relationship between the almost physiological operations of a poet composing and the music of the finished poem.

Seamus Heaney, 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats'⁴³

'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats' was given at the University of Liverpool on the 9th February, 1978. This was Heaney's second visit there but his first invitation to deliver the Kenneth Allott Memorial Lecture and he took the opportunity to pry into Wordsworth's compositional procedures. Much of what Heaney had to say seems to have been inflected through T.S. Eliot's literary criticism in *The Sacred Wood*,⁴⁴ as Heaney contrasts and compares Wordsworth's compositional procedures with those of W. B. Yeats. But unlike Eliot, Heaney makes greater claims for Wordsworth, both addressing and redressing Eliot's claim that Wordsworth was a 'pedestrian' poet. And, as Eliot has pointed to the literary relationships

⁴³ Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 61.

⁴⁴ T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1920), p. 41.

between one poet and another. it could be argued that much of what is written about the Lake poet in 'The Makings of a Music' must be assessed in terms of the kind of poetry Heaney wants to write and the kind of poet he wants to be. even though Heaney does not directly refer to his own poetry in the essay. Heaney's comparison of Wordsworth with Yeats in 'The Makings of a Music' will be looked at in the last section of this chapter on *The Essential Wordsworth*.

Heaney's own poetry had already created a visual metaphor by which we might understand the nature of his 'reflections' upon Wordsworth. As in his self-reflexive poem, 'Personal Helicon', where the poet rhymes 'To see myself, to set the darkness echoing', the 'reflections' in 'The Makings of a Music' might be described as enacting a similar process where Heaney was re-making his Romantic predecessor in his own image. It might have been expected that Heaney would sooner or later have to address the importance of the poetry of W. B. Yeats — Yeats is an obvious poetic master for an Irish poet as they share some common lineage, some familiar places and cultural conditions — however, Heaney's discussion of Wordsworth is nonetheless a surprise, for what could a contemporary Irish poet find relevant and indeed contemporary in the 'testings and hesitations' of the 'workshop' of an Eighteenth century English writer?

In his opening remarks of 'The Makings of a Music' Heaney outlines his argument:

What interests me here is the relationship between the almost physiological operations of a poet composing and the music of the finished poem. I want to explore the way that certain postures and motions within the poet's incubating mind affect the posture of the voice and the motions of rhythms in the language of the poem itself. I want to see how far we can go in seeking the origins of a poet's characteristic 'music'.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'The Making of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 61.

What seems most surprising in this paragraph is Heaney's use of the expression 'the incubating mind'.⁴⁶ First used in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* to describe Wordsworth's home, Dove Cottage. It is a striking phrase that presents 'a vision of poetic creation as a feminine action, almost parthenogenetic, where it is the ovum and its potential'⁴⁷ that underlies poetic origin. And because Heaney's phrase suggests embryonic development it would seem to chime with Eliot's own phrase, 'the dark embryo'.⁴⁸ It also rhymes with Wordsworth's rather foetal like idea of the 'growth of the poet's mind', and seems to replay the foetal themes in Heaney's earlier poems such as 'Limbo', 'Elegy for a Still Born Child' or 'Cana Revisited', which I have discussed in Chapter 1.

The phrase, 'the incubating mind', implies that Heaney still placed a great deal of importance upon his actual experience of Wordsworth's home. Its reappearance in 'The Making of a Music' suggests the extent to which his memories of Grasmere and Dove Cottage were guiding this later appreciation of the Romantic poet. In order to document Wordsworth's compositional procedures Heaney draws on Wordsworth's own accounts in *The Prelude* and those of the Reverend Canon Rawnsley and Hazlitt, both of whom actually witnessed Wordsworth's composing. Those images of Wordsworth in his study at Dove Cottage, or speaking his lines of verse while walking up and down the gravel path, 'conjures green'⁴⁹ we might say, must have reassured Heaney about the significance of Wordsworth's home in his poetic development. As in 'Feeling into Words', where Heaney sees 'that there is a connection between the core of a poet's speaking voice and the core

⁴⁶ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

⁴⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'The Fire in the Flint', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 83.

⁴⁸ Heaney would have been familiar with the importance of Eliot's phrase, having read a study of Eliot by C.K. Stead in *The New Poetic* (London: Hutchinson, 1964) during the sixties. He also uses Eliot's phrase in 'The Fire in the Flint', *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'The Gravel Walks', *The Spirit Level* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 40.

of his poetic voice, between his original accent and his discovered style',⁵⁰ Wordsworth's walking and the speaking aloud of his poetry is what primarily interests the Irish poet. But Heaney is also taken by the freedoms that the Romantic poet experienced while taking the paths and roads of his Lake district as he composed. Place allowed Wordsworth to give voice to his feelings and proclaim his verse to the hills. The 'Makings of a Music' subtly implies that the environment in which he composed enabled his characteristic poetic sound. It gave room for artistic expansion. We can see in this claim a reflection of Heaney's own aims in his writing. So, even though four years have passed since the making of *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, here in 'The Makings of a Music', we seem to have a revisiting of Wordsworth's country in Heaney's mind and arguments that take their premise from that first experience of Grasmere.

Having established that the reuse of the phrase 'the incubating mind' in 'The Makings of a Music' gestures to the importance of place in composition, Heaney is anxious to tie Wordsworth's poetry, not just to Alfoxden, but to settle his reader in and around the woods of Dove Cottage. So for Heaney, Wordsworth becomes 'a voice of the spirit of the region' where he grew up and lived, just as Heaney has become the voice of his place. Wordsworth was not only a dweller, namer, lover, home-maker and searcher of history, as Heaney suggests in 'The Sense of Place'. In fact Heaney implies in the phrase 'the incubating mind', as used in 'The Makings of a Music', that there must be some sort of confluence of energies between the home and the centre and circumference of Wordsworth's vision, which we might add equally applies to Heaney. It hardly seems surprising to find an image of the Irish poet lingering in the woods above Dove Cottage, just as he had done in 1974 when concluding *William Wordsworth Lived Here*:

⁵⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 43.

— ‘I want to linger in the wood above Dove Cottage where the poet occasionally composed. At the moment all is quiet there, but it is an active quiet, the late morning of 29 April, 1802’.⁵¹

In ‘The Makings of a Music’ such is Heaney’s concentration upon how and where Wordsworth wrote his verse, be it ‘toing and froing’ on the gravel path, or walking up and down in the woods, that the music of the finished poem becomes interlinked with the how and where of the creative process, so we can no more tell them apart than we can the dancer from the dance. Heaney’s interest in how Wordsworth composed and the music of his finished poem can only be read as a thinly disguised and ‘predatory curiosity of a poet interested in the creative processes of another poet.’⁵² His analysis of Wordsworth’s compositional procedures must then be assessed in relation to the way in which Heaney composes and how his places have shaped his own composition. Yet, if ‘The Makings of a Music’ reveals as much about Wordsworth’s poetry as Heaney’s and the relationship between their work, that same relationship hinted at by the Irish poet tends to circumvent their different histories and cultural and literary divergences.

At the time of writing ‘The Makings of a Music’ it seems unlikely that Heaney would have been aware that Wordsworth had toured Ireland in 1829 for five weeks. He had walked old Derry’s walls and even travelled along the eastern side of Lough Neagh, from Ballymena to Lurgan, to take in its immensity.⁵³ Despite such remarkable historical coincidences, I am interested here in Heaney’s imaginings of Wordsworth, ‘toing and froing like a ploughman up and down a field, his voice rising and falling between the measure of his pentameters’. This

⁵¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 68.

⁵² Seamus Heaney, ‘The Fire in the Flint’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 79.

⁵³ William Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth V, The Later Years Part II 1829-1834*, ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

analogy not only writes Wordsworth into a rural context but ultimately writes him out of his own pastoral Lake district. The ploughman image associates unabashedly and unmistakably with Heaney's own experiences of growing up on a farm in Derry. It is true that Wordsworth would have been familiar with the ploughman scene, as we know from 'Michael' or 'Resolution and Independence', where Wordsworth makes his own connection between farming and being a poet. He describes Robert Burns as both poet and farmer, 'who walked in glory and in joy/ Behind his plough, upon the mountain-side'⁵⁴ and elsewhere Wordsworth offers us a rather idealised image of the ploughman in 'Written in March' — 'whooping — anon — anon:/ There's joy in the mountains:/ There's life in the fountains:/ Small clouds are sailing,/ Blue sky prevailing:/ The rain is over and gone!'.⁵⁵ But Wordsworth was essentially an observer of rural labour, and did not partake in agricultural toil, unlike Clare or Bloomfield. We could add, neither did Heaney, who observed the tasks of farm life at a distance. His use of the word 'under' in 'Digging' gives him an actual and emotional distance — 'Under my window, a clean rasping sound . . . / I look down'⁵⁶ — trading his agricultural roots for literary pursuits, early on replacing the plough and spade with the pen and poetry.

We have seen in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* the attention given by Heaney to those details of Wordsworth's life that closely align with his own experiences. Heaney gives us images of Wordsworth sowing his own crops, harvesting them, even sinking his own well, and these details, which Heaney chose to draw out, show that he could not only identify with Wordsworth's

⁵⁴ William Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence', *William Wordsworth: The Poems*, vol. I, ed. John O'Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 533.

⁵⁵ William Wordsworth, 'Written in March', *William Wordsworth: The Poems*, vol. I, ed. John O'Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 532.

⁵⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Digging', *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 13.

life but that the Irish poet was seeing it through the lens of his own experiences. But the image of Wordsworth as ploughman in 'The Makings of a Music' seems to go a step further in creating an image of the Romantic poet closer to a caricatured self-portrait of Heaney. Here, Heaney introduces Wordsworth into what might be described as a Bellaghy scene.

In order to find origins for the image of Wordsworth as ploughman we must go back to Heaney's poem 'Follower' and to the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*. What Wordsworth wrote in his 1802 'Preface' must have given Heaney a sense of free critical reign, to imagine Wordsworth in his own image. The Romantic poet's manifesto had argued that poetry should find its conditions in 'low and rustic life' and celebrate what can be gained from 'rural occupations', like Heaney did in *Death of a Naturalist* and *Door into the Dark*, and from there it must have seemed natural and self-reflexive to imagine Wordsworth like a ploughman. Indeed, as we have seen, Heaney creates his own connection between rural occupation and the writing of verse in the 'Glanmore Sonnets'. His comparison between Wordsworth walking his gravel path and the ploughman speeding the plough is one that only Heaney could have made so convincingly and as he had already created an original model for this image in his early poem 'Follower' or as he would later do in his 1998 keynote address, where he imagines himself and Wordsworth as young boys surveying a beautiful landscape.

In 'Follower' we have an image of a child following his father as he ploughs a field:

His eye
Narrowed and angled at the ground,
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake,
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;
Sometimes he rode me on his back

As the boy stumbles in his father's 'wake', the voice of the adult poet interrupts to tell us how 'all I ever did was follow/ In his broad shadow around the farm'. The parental shadow or 'foreshadow' signifies an emotional and generational distance between father and boy. It represents those filial bonds that the child must liberate himself from, be they bonds to an actual biological father, or a network of literary loyalties and attachments. By comparing Wordsworth to a ploughman Heaney has placed Wordsworth in that original parental role. He has established a relationship where Wordsworth plays the role of father and Heaney his son, implying that as a literary forefather or foreshadow — as in 'Digging' and the 1998 keynote address' — Heaney will follow in the steps of how he has characterised Wordsworth's compositional procedures. In 'Follower', where the father figure dips and rises as he plods along, so does Wordsworth in 'The Makings of a Music' as he is described 'to-ing and fro-ing like a ploughman up and down a field, his voice rising and falling between the measure of his pentameters, uniting 'the old walking meaning *versus* with the newer, talking sense of verse.'⁵⁸ This connection between father and literary forefather may imply that Heaney was creating his own literary tradition with which to follow. Yet it must be noted that in 'The Makings of a Music' there are no threatening shadows broadcast by Wordsworth as he ploughs his pentameters. Quite the opposite.

The reverie with which Heaney elaborates upon his image of Wordsworth as ploughman, as literary father figure, a version of the Bellaghy man in 'Follower', and the absence of a shadow cast by Wordsworth, suggests that there are no literary anxieties like those described by Harold

⁵⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Follower', *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 24.

⁵⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 65.

Bloom in the *Anxiety of Influence*.⁵⁹ In fact, what we have in 'The Makings of a Music' is one poet celebrating, defending and defining another poet's poetic composition. Yet is there not something dangerous and tangled about the Irish poet's analogy? Does the image of the poet as a ploughman not also emphasise how this traditional form of employment, handed on from father to son, has been discontinued by Heaney? Heaney may suggest in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* that Wordsworth actually planted and interacted with the land, yet like the Romantic poet the Irish writer knew but had also distanced himself from such rural labour. If, in 'The Sense of Place', Heaney saw in Wordsworth's poetry a way with which to identify how we inhabit and dwell, if in 'The Makings of a Music', Heaney uses *The Prelude* to reaffirm the relationship between place and the pleasures of composition, then in 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (1984), the Irish poet chooses Wordsworth's long autobiographical poem to address those forces that threaten discontinuity and to deracinate the poet and to inhibit poetic inspiration.

III

'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland'

I want to emphasise: the profound relation . . . between poetic technique and historical situation.

Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' ⁶⁰

Exactly a decade earlier Heaney had visited Dove Cottage for the first time and felt a sense of 'tranquil restoration'⁶¹ just from being there. But on this occasion, instead of reflecting upon

⁵⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁶⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland', (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 7.

⁶¹ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

his first 'impressions of the Wordsworth country'⁶² in 1974. Heaney discusses that sense of displacement felt by poets from Northern Ireland. Since the publication of *Field Work*, Wordsworth seems to be one of a medley of literary ancestors asserting themselves in Heaney's writing. *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* and *Selected Poems 1965-1975*, not only gave a more condensed shape to Heaney's poetry, guiding how it was to be read, but the references to Wordsworth in these selected works, along with the 'Glanmore Sonnets' and the anthology *The Rattle Bag* (which he co-edited with Ted Hughes), confirm the enduring presence of the Romantic poet in the Irishman's affections.⁶³ Given this, it is curious Heaney does not make any direct identification with Wordsworth in 'Place and Displacement'. But what Heaney has to say about his fellow poets from Northern Ireland in the lecture is hinged upon an extraordinary comparison between the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland and the 'disaffected Wordsworth'.

I begin this third section of the chapter with a look at Heaney's pamphlet 'An Open Letter'. Using it, I want to tease out the kind of identifications Heaney is making with the sentiments explored in book X of *The Prelude*. There the Irish poet found an image of the Romantic poet who endured and worked through demeaning conditions and conflicting sensations, that paralleled much of his own experience. In *Stations* and 'Singing School', Heaney had rightly highlighted the sectarian dimension of his Ulster childhood as making his fosterage more sinister than that of the Lake poet. Heaney had found it necessary to translate Wordsworthian 'spots of

⁶² *ibid.* p. 217.

⁶³ 'Place and Displacement' has become a significant element in any appreciation of Heaney's poetry. At the same time it has also provided the terms of reference by which other poets, such as Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon, are discussed and its inclusion in *Contemporary Irish Poetry* has secured its position as an essential essay by the Irish poet on poetry and place. For examples, see Hugh Haughton's essay on Derek Mahon, 'Place and Displacement in Derek Mahon', *The Chosen Ground*, ed. Neil Corcoran (Mid Glamorgan: Seren Books, 1992), pp. 87-123 and *Poets of Modern Ireland*, by Neil Corcoran. (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1999).

time' into 'stations', where sectarian suffering becomes a significant element in being fostered by 'beauty and fear.' Yet, now, in 'Place and Displacement' his reading of *The Prelude* seems much more politically informed as an uncertain Wordsworth, troubled and torn, a kind of 'Incertus' figure, Heaney's persona at the end of *Stations*.

For Heaney to discuss recent poetry from Northern Ireland without referring to his own poetry seems a startling omission. In 'Place and Displacement' there are no autobiographical statements as in 'The Sense of Place'. There are no reminders of Heaney's own writing as in 'The Makings of a Music', nor are there any explicit references to parallels between him and Wordsworth, as in the 'Glanmore Sonnets'. Yet clearly, when reading this essay, we must keep Heaney in mind. Indeed the passage Heaney quotes from *The Prelude* could be read as a veiled restatement of the Irishman's own political alienations. In order to lift the veil and get some sort of sense of what Heaney may have identified with in Wordsworth's poem, I want to use Heaney's pamphlet, 'An Open Letter', published the previous year. Both these texts, 'An Open Letter' and book X of *The Prelude*, deal with a 'conflict of sensations'⁶⁴ and it is a conflicted Wordsworth who is to the foreground in Heaney's critical prose.

In 'An Open Letter' Heaney humorously, yet firmly, protests against the inclusion of his poetry under the adjective British, in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*,⁶⁵ edited by Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion. This public stance to distance himself from a 'British' identity comes at a time when readings of his poetry were becoming more political, and his

⁶⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book X, ll. 229-274. Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 3.

⁶⁵ *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, eds. Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982).

rejection of the British label appears to have a correlative in 'Place and Displacement'. In fact the term 'British' had ironically supplanted an earlier title, 'Opened Ground', which Motion and Morrison had taken from Heaney's 'Glanmore Sonnets' where, as we have seen, Wordsworth has a significant presence. As Heaney does in 'An Open Letter', Wordsworth in book X tells how he too winces when 'the strength of Britain was put forth'⁶⁶ and England declares war on France. Both poets may have experienced different, yet interrelated histories, however, they both recall, with equal force, their sense of refusal to make any kind of political gesture contrary to their own political aspirations. If 'An Open Letter', as Heaney would later state, 'took up the whole question of naming',⁶⁷ then so too does *The Prelude*, for the whole passage appears to be about trying to work through 'a conflict of sensations without a name'.⁶⁸ Wordsworth's struggles in Book X to give a name to his condition provided a model for Heaney to make sense of his feelings about the divisions of his country. It could be said that for Heaney, *The Prelude*, at this point, had a therapeutic value as it seems to help him articulate what he felt about the predicament faced by poets from the North, without actually having to involve himself directly. Though Heaney uses a passage from Jung to demonstrate how a seemingly 'insoluble problem'⁶⁹ may be worked through, it is to the richness of Wordsworth's *Prelude* that the Irishman turns 'as a working model for that evolution of a higher consciousness in response to an apparently intolerable conflict'.⁷⁰ The passage provides Heaney with a way to speak about the reaction of poets from Northern Ireland to 'unnatural strife'. This is a very different version of 'feeling into

⁶⁶ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book X, ll. 229-274, loc. cit.

⁶⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Frontiers of Writing', *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 203.

⁶⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book X, ll. 229-274, loc. cit.

⁶⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 1.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

words', much more alert to political power in *The Prelude* than Heaney's earlier prose accounts.

Wordsworth's complex sense of the heady mix of Church and State would have been familiar to Heaney. If we look at 'Punishment'⁷¹ (*North*) we can see how Heaney's account there — 'I who have stood dumb' — meant that it was easy for him to identify with Wordsworth's own betraying silence. The account in 'An Open Letter' of his household's abstinence from toasting the Queen mirrors a corresponding moment in *The Prelude* when Wordsworth refused to pray for British victories. Indeed, verse 14 of 'An Open Letter' appears to pre-empt how Heaney will liken Wordsworth to the Nationalist minority in 'Place and Displacement':

A British one, is characterized
As British. But don't be surprised
If I demur, for, be advised
My passport's green.
No glass of ours was ever raised
To toast *The Queen*.⁷²

Compare this verse with the following passage in the essay:

The Nationalist will wince at the Union Jack and "God Save the Queen" as tokens of his place in the world, he will withhold assent from the solidarities implicit in these emblems rather as Wordsworth withheld assent from the congregation's prayers for the success of the English armies. Yet, like Wordsworth among his patriotic neighbours, the northern Nationalist conducts his daily social life among Unionist neighbours for whom these emblems have pious and passionate force, and to whom his nationalist principles, his hankering for a different flag and different anthem, are as traitorous as Wordsworth's revolutionary sympathies.⁷³

Heaney had said that his 'poetry is born out of the watermarks and colourings of the self' and that it takes its 'pulse from the inward spiritual structure of the community to which it belongs', adding that 'the community to which I belong is Catholic and nationalist.'⁷⁴ Heaney likens

⁷¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Punishment', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 31.

⁷² Seamus Heaney, 'An Open Letter' (Derry: Field Day, 1983), p. 25.

⁷³ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland', (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 4-5.

⁷⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'Unhappy and at Home: Interview with Seamus Heaney' with Seamus Deane, *The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies*, eds. M. P. Hederman and R. Kearney (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1982), p. 67.

Wordsworth's position to that of Nationalists and in so doing likens himself to the revolutionary Wordsworth. The political ideals and icons of Heaney's family and the Catholic Nationalist community in which he grew up — figures such as Munro, Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet and the Croppies of 98, and the political ideals with which these figures were associated — took their political colourings from the 'equal ground'⁷⁵ of the French Republic. These have been discussed in Chapter 1. And it would appear that in 'Place and Displacement', Heaney continues to recognise how he and his community share political aspirations similar to those of the revolutionary Wordsworth. Heaney's declaration that 'my passport's green'⁷⁶ was another way of asserting his own republican values, just as Wordsworth had done by refusing to pray for British victories. Heaney's claim was as much for his 'Irishness' as it was a rejection of the British political state of his birth, a rejection which echoes Wordsworth's in *The Prelude*.

My discussion of the poems in *Stations* or 'Singing School' have highlighted Heaney and Wordsworth's political differences and I have emphasised how, as a boy, Wordsworth registered 'no shock/ Given to more moral nature',⁷⁷ like that Heaney registered in 'Death of a Naturalist' or 'The discharged soldier', with their sense of profound political division. But in 'An Open Letter', in verses 10 and 11, we have the first indications of Heaney's emphasis upon the duality of British and Irish experiences, gesturing to how the Northern Irish writer, including Heaney, might find an English literary parallel in Wordsworth. It might be said that, by now, the Irish poet had discovered, perhaps for the first time, that Wordsworth had experiences in his

⁷⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book IX l. 230, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude* ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) p. 326.

⁷⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'An Open Letter' (Derry: Field Day, 1983), p. 25.

⁷⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book X, l. 265; Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 2.

‘ingenuous youth’ of ‘unnatural strife’⁷⁸ that paralleled those Heaney reveals in his own poetry. So, we can imagine Heaney’s sense of recognition when he read in Book X how Wordsworth felt — ‘Now from my pleasant *station* was cut off’.⁷⁹ I have italicised ‘station’ because here, in this passage from *The Prelude*, was Heaney’s own term for the ‘psychic turas’⁸⁰ a poet makes. Wordsworth’s use of the word must have been at once confirming, validating and enriching to the Irishman. Even Wordsworth’s concluding remark — ‘shall I add./ Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come!’⁸¹ — has a note recognisably familiar as it calls to mind the last lines of ‘Punishment’ — ‘yet understand the exact/ and tribal, intimate revenge.’⁸²

It seems that Heaney was drawn to this passage from *The Prelude* because it showed a political and emotional susceptibility with which he could identify. Wordsworth’s poem told of the individual’s refusal to conform to the wishes of the collective. The autobiographical account was, for Heaney, a perfect illustration of the Irishman’s description of poetry as a ‘revelation of the self to the self’.⁸³ It tells of a complicated, fraught, anxious and even angry allegiance to political ideals and to art and poetry as a means to work through conflicting sensations. It tells of self-division. We might call ‘Place and Displacement’ a template with which Heaney could map out the different historical conflicts in Ulster and the individual stances of the Northern Irish poets towards it. Heaney’s claim that Wordsworth’s story in *The Prelude*, ‘is symptomatic of the historical moment’, and that, ‘its principle of development and its structural and rhetorical life

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰ Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

⁸¹ William Wordsworth, *loc. cit.*

⁸² Seamus Heaney, ‘Punishment’, *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 31.

⁸³ Seamus Heaney, ‘Feeling into Words’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 41.

are to be found . . . in the autonomous habits of the poet's imagination', could be said to be true of the Irishman's own poetry. To make a claim for 'the autonomous habits' of Wordsworth's imagination was in itself a political gesture. We could say that Heaney was bringing Wordsworth within the political fold of the *Field Day* (1980) project which argued that artists, including Heaney, to explore cultural identities outside the constraints of the existing traditions. The project offered a 'fifth province of the mind', echoing Wordsworth's, 'the growth of a poet's mind', separate to the political and historical moment and where poetic freedoms and the imagination hold sway over all other authority.

In 'Place and Displacement' we have seen a politicizing of Heaney's view of Wordsworth. His account of the Romantic poet has become more complicated. Wordsworth was no longer the Romantic writer dwelling in an idyllic place, as suggested in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* or 'The Sense of Place' or 'The Makings of a Music'. The Lake poet is given a more torn sense of belonging. Indeed, the way Heaney envisages Wordsworth in 'Place and Displacement' corresponds with the Irish poet's own relationship with place in such poems as 'The Toome Road' and 'The Strand at Lough Beg' from *Field Work*. These poems, like the prose poems in *Stations*, marked new and more public accounts of his childhood places. In 'The Toome Road' the speaker adamantly resists the presence of soldiers in an armoured car. Their presence represents the imposition of a different political ideal on a minority and a threat to the sources of poetry, what Heaney calls 'The invisible, untopped omphalos'.⁸⁴ In 'The Strand at Lough Beg' the actual scene may be described as 'beautiful',⁸⁵ it is shrouded in a mist, but it is also the spot where a cousin of Heaney's was murdered. So, the vision of good that he encountered while

⁸⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'The Toome Road', *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 15.

⁸⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'The Strand at Lough Beg', *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 18.

growing up in the district of Bellaghy was, as with his comment on Wordsworth, located elsewhere. In 'The Sabbath-breakers',⁸⁶ from *Stations*, the tricolour symbolises his tribe's 'implacable' political vision of a united Ireland. This flag, and their singing of 'The Soldier's Song' represented the utopian aspirations of a small Ulster, Catholic farming community. Heaney's shifting sense of his Derry upbringing in *Field Work* (1978) and later in *Station Island* (1984) was changing his appreciation of Wordsworth.

According to Heaney, Wordsworth felt 'like a traitor' in the 1790s, and we could say that in 'Place and Displacement' Heaney's appreciation of Wordsworth gives us that same sense of uncomfortableness that he talks about in 'Exposure' — 'I often think of . . . / . . . the anvil brains of those that hate me'.⁸⁷ Indeed, Heaney's summary of Wordsworth's 'conflicting sensations' in the essay can be read as a re-description of the experience that Heaney had given an account of in 'The Tollund Man'. Here we have, in 'Place and Displacement', a picture of the Romantic poet as a figure who feels 'lost/ Unhappy and at home'.⁸⁸ As with the passage from *The Prelude*, a poem such as 'Oysters' demonstrates how Heaney's own 'appetitive intelligence'⁸⁹ had been 'knocked out of alignment'⁹⁰ and there can be sensed in his critique of Wordsworth's situation, in the essay, something of his anger in that opening poem to *Field Work*. What Heaney argues happens with Wordsworth, was equally as applicable to himself. 'The shock waves in his consciousness', keep him from putting his trust, 'In the clear light, like poetry or freedom/

⁸⁶ Seamus Heaney, *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Press, 1975), p. 13.

⁸⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Exposure', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 66.

⁸⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'The Tollund Man', *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 48.

⁸⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 3.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

Leaning in from the sea.’⁹¹ Yet, as Elmer Andrews has argued, ‘poetry and freedom both have to be striven for’, and because they, ‘do not exist as divinely bestowed gifts’, the poet must dedicate himself ‘to the word, to art’:⁹²

I ate the day
Deliberately, that its tang
Might quicken me all into verb, pure verb.⁹³

Certainly there has been a quickening of Heaney’s identification with Wordsworth in ‘Place and Displacement’, born out of his responses to the political turmoil in Northern Ireland and Heaney would continue to return to Wordsworth’s example in later essays, in particular ‘The Interesting Case of Nero, Chekhov’s Cognac and a Knocker’⁹⁴, ‘Frontiers of Writing’⁹⁵ and even in his recent *Crediting Poetry*.⁹⁶ In each of these works Wordsworth is held up as an example; the Romantic poet’s response to the demeaning conditions of political life in his time is seen as a vivid illustration of how poetry might afford a saner, more complex response to a moment of historical crisis.

It seems odd that Heaney would choose Grasmere, a place almost inseparable from Wordsworth’s poetry and personality, to present ‘Place and Displacement’. But I would suggest that it was precisely because Heaney felt at home in Grasmere that he was able to use this spot to reflect on place and displacement in contemporary Northern Irish poetry. As we have seen in Chapter I, since making *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, Heaney had associated Grasmere with

⁹¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘Oysters’, *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 11.

⁹² Elmer Andrews, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: All the Realms of Whisper* (London: MacMillan, 1984), p. 121.

⁹³ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

⁹⁴ Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. xi-xxiii.

⁹⁵ Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 186-203.

⁹⁶ Seamus Heaney, *Crediting Poetry* (Gallery Press, 1995).

artistic reassurance and recovery, stating, 'When William Wordsworth spoke of the assuaging influence of 'the spirit of place' he used the phrase 'tranquil restoration' and that is exactly the effect that Dove Cottage has on me.'⁹⁷ It is a note which I have argued can be heard echoing through the Irish poet's subsequent writing. So, we can see that, for Heaney, Grasmere was, almost superstitiously, at the very heart of poetic creativity. It was emblematic of a poet's conscious decision to put the writing of poetry at the very centre of his life during a time of political crisis.

The actual writing of poetry, Heaney argues, was a way with which to 'outface the predatory circumstances' in Northern Ireland. For him poetry was the 'higher ideal' and he claims that "'pure" poetry [was] perfectly justifiable in earshot of the carbomb.' But this claim in 'Place and Displacement' indicates an important change in Heaney's attitude towards his art and its responsibilities, one perhaps sped by Wordsworth's example. In the essay, 'The Interesting Case of Nero, Chekhov's Cognac and a Knocker', he recalls how, after a bomb attack on Belfast, the sirens of ambulances and fire engines blocked his artistic signals. His recollection expresses feelings not unlike those voiced in the Preface to *Stations*.

In both instances the sound of emergency 'sirens' marred Heaney's 'attempts to touch what Wordsworth called "spots of time"'.⁹⁸ They were reminders of the conflicts in his community, which in turn created a conflict within the poet. At this time 'pure poetry' was not possible. And as I have discussed in Chapter II, Heaney's reflections upon important moments from his own childhood in retrospect are complicated by a violent dimension. It is the sectarian that troubles

⁹⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BIBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 223.

⁹⁸ Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

the earlier work and prompts him to illustrate how he was fostered by a different 'ministry of fear' than that which educated Wordsworth. But, ironically, in 'Place and Displacement', Heaney appears to have discovered in the passage he quotes from *The Prelude*, in the story of an English poet, a way with which to work through unresolved conflicts, a story that we can now say Heaney felt mirrored his own. We have already seen how Heaney would have identified with much of the sentiments in book X. I would suggest that he was now using Wordsworth's model to justify his own position as a poet, and to illustrate to an English audience how one of their own poets had endured a situation not dissimilar to that faced by poets from Northern Ireland.

In 'Place and Displacement' Heaney makes the following claim:

Like the disaffected Wordsworth, the Northern Irish writers I wish to discuss take the strain in being in two places at once, of needing to accommodate two opposing conditions of truthfulness simultaneously . . . They belong to a place that is patently riven with the notion of belonging to other places.⁹⁹

The poets Heaney discusses are Derek Mahon, Paul Muldoon and Michael Longley. The connections he makes between them and Wordsworth, makes me wonder to what extent Heaney's examination of recent poetry from Northern Ireland is an attempt to rehabilitate these Ulster poets as Romantic writers, just as he did Eliot, via C.K. Stead's study *The New Poetic* (1964). Is he gesturing to his essay, 'The Fully Exposed Poem',¹⁰⁰ where he argues, that 'in spite of a period of castigation about the necessity for 'intelligence' and 'irony'',¹⁰¹ that the work of these Northern Irish writers 'has not moved all that far from the shelter of the Romantic tradition'?¹⁰² I suspect that they would be the last to encourage any comparison between

⁹⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: The Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 4

¹⁰⁰ Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), pp. 45-54.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*

themselves and the English writer. So it seems to be, that with a certain degree of slipperiness and resolution, not unlike what we have seen in 'The Sense of Place' where Heaney insists 'we are dwellers', that the Irish poet manages to scout around the different cultural and political histories of Wordsworth and these other Northern poets. Although Heaney may not directly refer to his own poetry, when reading 'Place and Displacement', we do get a sense that through discussing Wordsworth's experiences and inner conflict we are brought face to face with the Irish writer's own predicaments. It is the single-mindedness of Heaney's project that emphasises what these writers have in common, that is, 'a profound relation between poetic technique and historical situation.'¹⁰³ None evades the issues that confront them. They all see a therapeutic value in poetry that goes beyond the merely personal in being able to reconcile opposing conditions. For Heaney, these opposing conditions are worked out 'in the autonomous habits of the poet's imagination'.¹⁰⁴ In 'Place and Displacement' the opposing conditions of truthfulness were political. But Wordsworth's example in *The Prelude* taught the Irish poet to trust art and artfulness as a source. However, Heaney's prose has also discussed other opposing conditions, namely different artistic creative approaches, embodied by the work of Wordsworth and Yeats. In the final section of this chapter, I want to outline those contrary poetic approaches to writing and Heaney's changing view of Wordsworth's poetic style.

¹⁰³ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 7

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* p. 4.

IV

The Essential Wordsworth

The essential poet remains the one struggling to become a whole person, to reconcile a sense of incoherence and disappointment forced upon him by the external circumstances of life with those intimations of harmonious communion promised by his childhood visions, and seemingly ratified by his glimpses of a society trembling at the moment of revolution.

Seamus Heaney, *The Essential Wordsworth*¹⁰⁵

Since the 1970s Heaney had set Wordsworth in opposition to Yeats. Their biographies set them apart in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. There Wordsworth is a maker of his retreat as a poet. He works the land he lives in, whereas Yeats is a dreamer of his idyllic place. In 'Singing School', their autobiographies are seen to be distinct. In this sequence from *North*, Wordsworth's natural ministry is set in opposition to Yeats's political mythologies. The distinctions Heaney creates between both poets become even clearer in 'The Makings of a Music'. There Heaney's descriptions of both poets seems to be born out of Heaney's two poems 'The Diviner' (Wordsworth) and 'The Forger' (Yeats), both representing two very different ways of composing poetry. The first is somnambulant, feminine in form, a poetry of 'technique', with the poet as a 'receiver of implacable energies'; the second is masculine, a forger, who hammers the subject into shape. But in his 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988) Heaney re-describes Wordsworth's compositional procedures, likening them to those of W. B. Yeats, and in doing so he seems to blur the distinctions he made between the stylistic workshops of both poets, between Yeatsian 'control' and Wordsworthian 'wise passiveness' in 'The Makings of a Music':

Wordsworth's power over us stems from the manifest strength of his efforts to integrate several strenuous and potentially contradictory efforts. More than a century before Yeats imposed upon himself the order to hammer his thoughts into unity, Wordsworth was fulfilling it with resolute intent. Indeed, it is not until Yeats that we

¹⁰⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 12.

encounter another poet in whom emotional susceptibility, intellectual force, psychological acuteness, political awareness, artistic self-knowledge, and bardic representativeness are so truly and responsibly combined.¹⁰⁶

It might also be added that when Heaney delivers his Keynote Address on Wordsworth at the 1998 bicentenary celebration of *Lyrical Ballads*, his portrait of the English Romantic master changes again. In that address Heaney looks at Wordsworth as a poet 'intended and complete'. Heaney's phrase knowingly echoes Yeats's in 'A General Introduction to my Work', and it revises his previous understanding of Wordsworth's artistic enterprise, ultimately making him more like the earlier portrait of that forging Yeatsian figure we meet in 'The Makings of a Music'.

Heaney's descriptions of Wordsworth in his 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth* and his selection from Wordsworth's poetry, however, are not without inconsistencies. Although few of the poems chosen by the Irish poet were written by Wordsworth after 1807, Heaney's selection is based upon Wordsworth's final edition of his poems published and edited by him in 1849-50. By then, as Heaney claims, Wordsworth's Romantic quest had 'mutated into a Victorian eminence and his achieved calm had turned into an impregnable placidity.'¹⁰⁷ So, the Wordsworthian figure whom Heaney seems to prefer and privilege in his 'Introduction' — the Romantic poet who by 1799, had taken up residence at Dove Cottage — is not necessarily well represented in this selection. It was while living at Grasmere, according to Heaney, 'that the truly Wordsworthian realms were occupied'. Despite these incongruities, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974), 'The Makings of a Music' (1978), the 'Glanmore Sonnets' (1979) and the 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988), are all evidence that the Irish poet favoured

¹⁰⁶ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 4. As this text is now representative of Heaney's Wordsworth it will be referred to when ever possible.

¹⁰⁷ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 12.

that Wordsworth who lived and loved in Grasmere. It is this Romantic poet who had come through personal and national crises, who married, fathered four children, who was piecing together the first thirteen book *Prelude* and who had settled and achieved a robust ‘cheerfulness’¹⁰⁸ [sic]. This is what Heaney calls a ‘justifiably positive attitude in the face of evil and injustice, a comprehension that could acknowledge the ubiquity and affront of pain while yet permitting itself to be visited, without anxiety, by pleasure — this was the goal of Wordsworth’s quest in the 1790s and its meaning for our lives in the 1980s is no less central.’¹⁰⁹

Making-up Wordsworth (hence my title ‘Heaney’s Wordsworth’) in order to make him relevant to contemporary readers, has been part of Heaney’s literary agenda. By steering how Wordsworth is read, Heaney in turn has steered how we read the Irishman’s poetry. Heaney’s shifting identities for Wordsworth tell us as much about the Irish poet’s own ambitions and the changes in his own poetic development. As Heaney began to see his own poetry more as a hammering than a hankering after thoughts and feelings, so his earlier representations of Wordsworth, and indeed Yeats, needed to change. Heaney’s evolving identities for the English Romantic poet and the dissolving of the stricter distinctions he made between the early and later Romantic poet seems to have also facilitated further comparisons between Wordsworth and other modern poets in *The Government of the Tongue* (1988). Reviews of that prose collection, even reviewers as crafty and knowledgeable about Heaney’s writing as Derek Mahon, fail to mention that it ends with a large quotation from Wordsworth’s ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads*. In the last essay, ‘The Indefatigable Hoof-taps: Sylvia Plath’,¹¹⁰ Heaney illustrates three stages of poetic

¹⁰⁸ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁹ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

¹¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Indefatigable Hoof-taps: Sylvia Plath’, *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), pp. 148-170.

creativity by quoting from 'There was a boy' in *The Prelude*.¹¹¹ His need to draw on Wordsworth in a study on Plath's work demonstrates the extent to which Wordsworthian poetry and doctrine inform his own understanding of the poetic enterprise, just as when he gave a lecture on Auden, he found he was actually talking more about the Romantic poet. It might also hint, as with his 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth*, how Heaney saw Wordsworth's condition. He describes the Romantic poet as 'one struggling to become a whole person, to reconcile a sense of incoherence and disappointment forced upon him by the external circumstances of life'¹¹² and sees Wordsworth's predicament as symptomatic of the condition of modern poets. And this comment in the 'Introduction' revisits that Wordsworth in turmoil already explored in 'Place and Displacement'. For when the Irishman is confronted by the violence and dislocations of Plath's work, rather than addressing it on its own terms, Heaney's work drinks from Wordsworth's 'spots of time', when the Lake poet learnt to call to the hooting owls. When faced with the challenges of very different poets and poetics, Heaney's responses have been through a Wordsworth that has more relevancy to himself than to the 'indefatigable Hoof-taps' of Plath, or for that matter the verse of Mahon, Muldoon and Longley.

Through Wordsworth's authority in the 'Preface', or his example in *The Prelude*, Heaney has consistently argued in 'Place and Displacement' and his 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth* for the Romantic poet's ability to communicate with contemporary readers because the work is 'the hard-earned reward of resolved crisis, the steady emotional keel beneath . . . tempestuous conditions.'¹¹³ If, as Heaney remarks, 'a poem floats adjacent to, parallel to, the

¹¹¹ Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 153-154.

¹¹² Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 12.

¹¹³ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit. p. 5.

historical moment'.¹¹⁴ then with these essays we can see how, for Heaney, poetry was a vehicle for healing divisions.

It is almost with a sense of having fulfilled a duty, of having come through crises and thus earned reward that Heaney's poetry re-imagines moments from childhood. Unlike *Death of a Naturalist*, *Stations* or *North*, *Seeing Things* (1991) presents us with more harmonious experiences. It would be the imaginative signature of Wordsworth, who spoke of 'seeing into the life of things', that would help Heaney shape his poems in *Seeing Things*. There memories are unhampered by politics. They are not weighed down by those 'preoccupations' that encumbered his everyday life. With an emphasis upon weightlessness the book indicates the poet's wish to detach himself from local anxieties. He is the author of his own solitude. If the end of art has been peace, or in Wordsworthian terms, 'pleasure',¹¹⁵ then *Seeing Things* risks a poetic freedom that is true to only one 'frontier'¹¹⁶ — the unfettered imagination. He would climb out of the 'marvellous and actual' as he had known it and into the 'marvellous'.¹¹⁷ He would credit poetry.

¹¹⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'Sounding Aiden', *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 93.

¹¹⁵ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), pp. 81-87.

¹¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'The Frontier of Writing', *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 186-203.

¹¹⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Lightenings viii', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 62.

Chapter 5: Wordsworth: the ‘heartland of the ordinary’¹

I believe in the atheist position, or the Wordsworthian position — it’s not in the Elysian fields but on this earth that we find our happiness, in the inner theatre or the theatre of relationships, in society or the home.

Seamus Heaney talking about *Seeing Things* in an interview with Blake Morrison²

In ‘Place and Displacement’ we have seen how Wordsworth’s response to his moment of crisis in *The Prelude* was, for Heaney, a suitable model with which to assess the responses of recent poetry written during the height of ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland. The composing of poetry, as its own self-justifying act, becomes the central preoccupation in the Plath lecture at the end of *The Government of the Tongue*, where again Heaney turns to a Wordsworthian ‘spot of time’. For the Irishman this exemplifies what he refers to there as the ‘three degrees of poetic achievement’: the making of the poem, the making of ‘social relation and emotional persuasion’ and ‘an unconceding pursuit of poetic insight and poetic knowledge.’ We have also seen in Heaney’s lengthy introduction to *The Essential Wordsworth* the Irish poet’s attempts to shape our appreciation of Wordsworth and his re-descriptions of Wordsworth’s poetic procedures. In this chapter, I want to discuss Heaney’s relationship with Wordsworth’s visionary poems with that Romantic feeling that:

While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills.³

¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Journey Back’, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 7.

² Blake Morrison, ‘Seamus Famous: Time to be dazzled’, *Independent on Sunday*, 19 May, 1991, p. 27.

³ William Wordsworth, ‘Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey’, *The Essential Wordsworth*, ed. Seamus Heaney (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1977), p. 46.

I will begin by briefly looking at *Hailstones*⁴ (1984) and *The Tree Clock*⁵ (1990) as transitional works where Heaney prepares the way and tests the directions he would take in *The Haw Lantern*⁶ (1987), in *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (1990) and *Seeing Things*⁸ (1991). However, my principal consideration will be *Seeing Things* and the presence of Wordsworth as a secret literary background in that book, just as he had been in *Death of a Naturalist*, *Door into the Dark* and *Wintering Out*, at the outset of Heaney's career. Using the poem 'Fosterling', which first appeared in *The Tree Clock*, I want to draw out how Heaney's use of the Romantic poet enabled the Irish poet to transform the ordinary into the visionary. In Heaney's 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth*, he highlights how Wordsworth was animated by those closest to him, Dorothy and Coleridge. I would suggest that the Romantic poet also assisted Heaney to get in touch and 'to cherish as a gift and a natural education every significant experience that occurs in the ordinary run of a lifetime'⁹ and to 'credit marvels.'¹⁰ I am particularly interested in the kind of spaces that are created in *Seeing Things*, be they natural places, or domestic settings, or ordinary situations. I want to suggest that Wordsworth's 'spots of time' and his poetic manifesto in the 'Preface' assisted Heaney in creating those spaces and in turning them into metaphors for an unfettered imagination.

⁴ Seamus Heaney, *Hailstones* (Dublin: Gallery Press, 1984).

⁵ Seamus Heaney, *The Tree Clock* (Belfast: Linen Hall, 1990).

⁶ Seamus Heaney, *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

⁷ Seamus Heaney, *New Selected Poems 1966 - 1987* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).

⁸ Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).

⁹ Blake Morrison, op. cit. p. 27

¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Fosterling', *ibid.* p. 50.

In December of 1984, not long after delivering the lecture, 'Place and Displacement', Heaney published *Hailstones*.¹¹ If we can say that the lecture at Grasmere was ostensibly about substantiating the 'autonomous habits of the poet's imagination',¹² then *Hailstones*, a small pamphlet of poems, signifies that Heaney had already begun testing new directions for his poetry in which the imagination becomes like a fishing lure. 'Reeled through him upstream, snagging on nothing.'¹³ This thin collection contained some of the poems that were to be published later in *The Haw Lantern* a book that primarily deals with riddles and the semi-autobiographical, and according to Helen Vendler, it is Heaney's 'first book of the virtual'.¹⁴ Vendler's use of the word 'virtual' hints at how the book explores the freedoms of the imagination, the possibilities of poetry and a personal vision. Neil Corcoran has made a similar point, recognising that "'Hailstones' knowingly incorporates a history of visionary transcendence in English Romantic poetry".¹⁵ And although there are no explicit references to Wordsworth in *The Haw Lantern*, some of those earlier associations that Heaney had made with the Romantic poet, seem to haunt quatrain nine of the opening poem 'Alphabets' a poem about Wordsworthian beginnings and formative experiences. In 'Alphabets' we have an image of 'the scribe/ Who drove a team of quills on his white field./ Round his cell door the blackbirds dart and dab. Then self denial.

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, *Hailstones* (Dublin: Gallery Press, 1984).

¹² Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry from Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 4.

¹³ Seamus Heaney, 'The Spoonbait', *Hailstones* (Dublin: Gallery Press, 1984), p. 13.

¹⁴ Helen Vendler, *Seamus Heaney* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 113.

¹⁵ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 140.

fasting, the pure cold.’¹⁶ These lines appear to rework the comparison Heaney had made between Wordsworth and a Celtic monk in the woods in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*¹⁷ and between the Romantic poet and a ploughman in ‘The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats’¹⁸ suggesting that Heaney’s view of the Romantic poet was now more focussed on the aesthetic than the political.

The Haw Lantern begins to touch on the importance of those spaces, both in a personal and communal realm, that will have more significance in *Seeing Things*. In sonnet ‘8’ of ‘Clearances’,¹⁹ a sequence which reflects upon the death of his mother, Heaney tells us how he felt like ‘walking round and round a space/ Utterly empty, utterly a source’,²⁰ while in another poem, ‘From the Frontier of Writing’, he recalls an encounter with an army checkpoint where he experiences ‘The tightness and the nilness round that space’.²¹ What makes the loss of his mother and his intimidation as a citizen ‘bearable’²² in such poems is the sensation of lift and release when ‘suddenly you’re through’,²³ be it through grief or intimidation. This leads him to a separate re-imagined world, as in the epigraph to *The Haw Lantern* in which he writes, a ‘riverbed, dried-up, hall full of leaves. Us, listening to a river in the trees.’²⁴ Here the imagination

¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, ‘Alphabets’, *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

¹⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 222.

¹⁸ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats’, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 65.

¹⁹ Seamus Heaney, *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 32.

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘From the Frontier of Writing’, *ibid*, p. 6.

²² Pun on ‘bear’ in Seamus Heaney, ‘Lightnings viii’, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 62.

²³ Seamus Heaney, ‘From the Frontier of Writing’, *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 6.

²⁴ Seamus Heaney, epigraph, *ibid*.

creates a space in which to find some sort of release from other political pressures. So, that 'black current of a tarmac road' in 'From the Frontier of Writing',²⁵ a poem about a military interrogation by British soldiers at the border between North and South, swept him through and into visionary experience and he makes the first crossings into this larger realm beyond the 'frontier' of writing in *The Tree Clock*.

In earlier writing, such as in *Stations*, 'Singing School', *Station Island* and *Place and Displacement*, we encounter images of the poet 'stretched between politics and transcendence',²⁶ between the music of what happens and the music of the finished poem. Now, in *The Tree Clock*,²⁷ which prepares the way for *Seeing Things*, Heaney appears to commit himself to a single position — to lyric buoyancy, to the visionary. This is not to say that he is giving any credence to a world beyond or an afterlife. Rather, as Heaney states in an interview with Blake Morrison: 'I believe in the atheist position, or the Wordsworthian position . . . the theatre of relationships, in society or the home'.²⁸ What the Irish poet says here may allude to the following lines from *The Prelude*:

Not in Utopia, subterraneous Fields,
Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where,
But in the very world which is the world
Of all of us, the place in which, in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all.²⁹

²⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'From the Frontier of Writing', *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 6.

²⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 2 August, 1984), p. 8.

²⁷ Seamus Heaney, *The Tree Clock* (Belfast: Linen Hall Library, 1990).

²⁸ Blake Morrison, 'Seamus Famous: Time to be dazzled', *Independent on Sunday*, 19 May, 1991, pp. 26-27.

²⁹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book X, ll. 723-728, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 408.

Nature's common theme might be the death of fathers, and, as if echoing this, the death of a father figure is common to both *The Prelude* and *Seeing Things*. But rather than see death as a darker or sinister element in both books, I would suggest that the ghostly figures are a way of telling about death and making it into an artistic creation, an opportunity for the visionary. Hence among the 'spots of time' in *The Prelude* Wordsworth tells of the loss of his father, and, as if following the Romantic poet's example, Heaney, in his most visionary book so far, recreates memories of his father among classical myths of the underworld. As with Wordsworth, the Irish poet makes out of loss an opportunity for creativity. Heaney's affirmation, corroboration and identification with the Wordsworthian position certainly justifies John Carey's claim that 'more than any other poet since Wordsworth he can make us understand that the outside world is not outside, but what we are made of'.³⁰ Indeed, as Heaney indicates in the interview with Blake Morrison, the lines from 'Lightenings i' offer a paraphrase of the Romantic poet's perspective — 'Just old truth dawning: there is no next-time-round./ Unroofed scope. Knowledge-freshening wind.'

Heaney's new found vision, with all its Wordsworthian intonations seems particularly evident in 'Fosterling', the last poem of *The Tree Clock* and the central piece in *Seeing Things*. The title, 'Fosterling',³¹ cleverly alludes to the Romantic and the Irish literary traditions and in doing so acknowledges Heaney's indebtedness to both. In fact, it gestures to different kinds of fostering. It recalls that most Wordsworthian of words, 'fostered', — 'Fair seedtime had my soul, and I grew up/ Fostered alike by beauty and by fear'.³² Here Heaney's appropriation of

³⁰ John Carey, 'Touching the Void', *The Sunday Times: Books* 2 June, 1991, p. 2.

³¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Fosterling', *The Tree Clock* (Belfast: Linen Hall Library, 1990), p. 28 and *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 50.

³² Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 56.

Wordsworthian diction indicates that the inspiration for 'Fosterling' is indebted to the thematic concerns of the Romantic master, suggesting how, like Wordsworth's, Heaney's 'seedtime' has been a source of inspiration. A 'Fosterling' is also a 'foster-child, and Heaney evokes the idea of a foster-child of his native place'³³ and this native dimension to the poem can also be seen in the 'one-line prologue'³⁴ -- 'That heavy greenness fostered by water'.³⁵

In 'Fosterling' the octave winches up all those images that would normally be associated with Heaney's previous poetry:

At school I loved one picture's heavy greenness -
Horizons rigged with windmills' arms and sails.
The millhouses' still outlines. Their in-placeness
Still more in place when mirrored in canals.
I can't remember never having known
The immanent hydraulics of a land
Of *glar* and *glit* and floods at *dailigone*.
My silting hope. My lowlands of the mind.³⁶

All the key elements to books such as *Death of a Naturalist* seem to be here. We have an image of a flooded landscape, but the word 'hydraulics' intimates that it is a mechanized place, shaped and worked by those who live in it. The 'millhouses'' in the schoolroom picture indicate something of that mechanized life, but also denote an earlier and more traditional form of agricultural labouring which evidently reminded him of his own childhood landscape, while the 'heavy-greenness' of the picture serves to remind us of the more concrete language and weighty metaphors of Heaney's earlier poetry. The impressions of physical place upon the mind in 'Fosterling' seem as evident here, as in those more sublime moments in Wordsworth's *Prelude*.

³³ Douglas Dunn, 'Quotidian Miracles: *Seeing Things*', *The Art of Seamus Heaney* ed. Tony Curtis (Mid Glamorgan: Seren Books, 1994), p. 216.

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ This line comes from John Montague's poem, 'The Water Carrier', *Collected Poems* (Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1995), p. 189.

³⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Fosterling', *The Tree Clock* (Belfast: Linen Hall, 1990), p. 28.

'I can't remember never having known/ The immanent hydraulics of a land,' Heaney tells us, yet the landscape in this sonnet could be described as being more metaphysical than anything in the earlier work. In fact, the octet seems to demonstrate one of Heaney's dictums on Wordsworth's poem 'Michael' that argues that place was 'companionable and influential in the strict sense of the word 'influential' — things flowed in from them to Michael's psychic life.'³⁷ And this observation seems equally applicable to Heaney's sense of Co. Derry, which was, for him, 'not inanimate stone but active nature, humanized and humanizing.'³⁸

This relationship between person and place seems to be further developed in the poem by the phrases, 'my silting hope', and 'my lowlands of the mind'. In these we have some sense of the human mind assuming the geographical characteristics of a place. It is as if the land shapes the poet's intelligence. Indeed, with this 'country of the mind', this 'prospect of the mind' comes a degree of archaism in the sonnet as it imports the words 'glar', 'glit' and 'dailigone' from the dialect of 17th Century Scots settlers, a dialect which would not have been unfamiliar to Wordsworth.³⁹ The word 'wrought' for example. This diction which refers to muddy ooze and stagnant water at twilight adds to the sheer sense of stagnancy in that first section of the poem, the kind of stagnancy that may recall the festering flax dam at the heart of the community in 'Death of a Naturalist'. This was the kind of poetry which was, 'Sluggish in the doldrums of what happens', a line which in part recalls Heaney's earlier phrase in *Preoccupations*, 'the music of what happens',⁴⁰ and motions to how his earlier writing was perhaps over respectful of the

³⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 145.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ The *Concise Ulster Dictionary* ed. C. L. Macafee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) indicates that both these words are of Scots - Ulster descent and that they all had some usage in Northern England. The dictionary indicates that these words were probably brought to Ulster by settlers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

⁴⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Foreword', *op. cit.* p. 14.

literal. In being faithful to this kind of poetic music, Heaney seems to be suggesting that his own spirit experienced a kind of 'heaviness of being', something which we may equate with him having to endure the predatory circumstances in *North*. It might be said that the early work was weighed down by political and historical 'gravities', and had neglected the music of grace whereas, in the sestet to 'Fosterling', we have a renewed sense of the possibilities of poetry:

Me waiting until I was nearly fifty
To credit marvels. Like the tree-clock of tins cans
The tinkers made. So long for air to brighten,
Time to be dazzled and the heart to lighten.⁴¹

From those sluggish, silted, choked opening lines, Heaney now seems to be 'saying that he is a fosterling of the elemental and pure'.⁴² The sestet seems now to have a fresh clean quality. It is as if the poet is able to 'breathe again',⁴³ indicating the new airier direction for his writing. And this intake of breath seems fresher than the one taken in the 'Glanmore Sonnets'. And it may have been with this renewed sense of his writing that he re-selected his poetry for *New Selected Poems 1966-1987*,⁴⁴ the same year *The Tree Clock* appeared. I want to consider this selection first, before I come to the crediting of marvels in *Seeing Things*.

When we wade into Heaney's earlier poetry in *New Selected Poems* we find ourselves waist deep in the details of rural places — in the gunnels, shucks and moss holes, in a hearth life that fed a heart and in the political ideals of a small community that would shape a mind. But when we dip into this selection our impressions of the Irishman's writing and our sense of Wordsworth's place there has been extended. Ironically, this reconstruction of the earlier literary

⁴¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Fosterling', *The Tree Clock* (Belfast: Linen Hall, 1990), p. 28.

⁴² Douglas Dunn, loc. cit. p. 216.

⁴³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book 1, l. 19, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Seamus Heaney, *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).

self owes more to the poetic enterprise of the later Yeats than to Wordsworth. Patrick Crotty⁴⁵ has argued how all that happens in the *New Selected Poems* was revision and Helen Vendler has already stated that the book represents ‘an unsparingly severe winnowing of twenty-one years . . . of his work.’⁴⁶ I would agree with both these critics’ observations and add that a *New Selected* seems to be strengthening a sense of continuity in his work. The selection seems to suggest a movement from the earthly to the ethereal, from the anxious, politically troubled sufferings of the early work, through to the efficacy of pure lyric utterance. It seems quite deliberate that the last line of *New Selected Poems* should be ‘all I believe that happened there was a vision.’⁴⁷

I would suggest that this volume emphasises a movement in the work and that from this selection we can divine Heaney’s broader use of Wordsworth throughout his writing. If we look through this book, we find that in *Death of Naturalist*, *Door into the Dark* and *Wintering Out*, which deal principally with memories of childhood experiences in nature, with native crafts and with natural phenomena such as local rivers, the Romantic poet is detectable but not an explicit presence. Unlike Heaney’s *Selected Poems 1965-1975*,⁴⁸ of a decade earlier, *New Selected Poems* also includes prose poems from *Stations*, which as we have seen owed much to the notion of ‘spots of time’. In fact it is with *Stations* that the presence of Wordsworth’s poetry is first discernible in Heaney’s writing, poetry. Then in ‘Singing School’ we have again the first explicit references to *The Prelude*, while it is the biographical facts of Wordsworth’s life that next come

⁴⁵ Patrick Crotty, ‘All I Believe That Happened There Was Revision’, *Selected Poems 1965-1975 and New Selected Poems 1966-1987*, *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, ed. Tony Curtis (Mid Glamorgan: Seren Books, 1994), pp. 191-204.

⁴⁶ Helen Vendler, *Soul Says* (London: Belknap Press, 1995), p. 201.

⁴⁷ Seamus Heaney, ‘The Disappearing Island’, *New Selected Poems: 1966-1987* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 240.

⁴⁸ Seamus Heaney, *Selected Poems: 1965-1975* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980).

to the fore in the 'Glanmore Sonnets' before we find in *Station Island* a further disguised reference to *The Prelude* and to 'spots of time'.⁴⁹

Strangely, Wordsworth makes his most explicit appearance, not in the early poems of childhood memories and natural details, but in the poetry that increasingly engages with the political conflict in Northern Ireland. In other words, in the poems from *Stations* to *Station Island* (published the same year as 'Place and Displacement'), Heaney directly borrows from Wordsworth, and in particular *The Prelude*. This confirms the continual and prolonged sense of engagement with the Romantic master during the mid 1970s and 80s. The implicit and explicit references to Wordsworth in *New Selected Poems* provide a cryptic guide to Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry. However, from *The Haw Lantern* (1987) onwards there are no more direct borrowings from Wordsworth and with *Seeing Things* we come full circle. As in the early poetry, Wordsworth is once more 'mirrored like moonlight'⁵⁰ beneath the surface of Heaney's writing. However, although Wordsworth's writing haunts *Seeing Things* there are explicit references to other poets. In 'Settings xxii' and 'Crossings xxxiv', as in earlier work such as in the epigraphs for 'Singing School' and 'Glanmore Sonnets' and in 'The Makings of a Music', Heaney captures the questioning voice of Yeats's ghost. He also opens a dialogue with Dante in 'Crossings xxxvi'. He recounts a moment in the life of Ivan Malinowski in 'Settings xxiii' and Thomas Hardy in 'Lightenings vi' and 'vii'. These ghosts that walk abroad through the scheme of the book are held in by the journey of Aeneas into the underworld in 'The Golden Bough' and Charon ferrying the souls of the dead over the river Styx in 'The Crossing'. But I now want to divine for those more hidden Wordsworthian presences.

⁴⁹ Seamus Heaney, *Station Island* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) p. 67.

⁵⁰ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 221.

II

Spaces: huts, nests and homes

... and from my Mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
A naked Savage, in the thunder shower.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*⁵¹

Since Heaney spoke of his 'Secret nests in County Derry'⁵² as early as 1977, it has been easy to see how the Irishman's own childhood places have a literary background in Wordsworth, as they have many of the characteristics of the English poet's 'hiding places'.⁵³ As we will see, from huts to nests to homes, Heaney's poems bespeak a continuous need to seek out a space where the imagination can have free reign and rein.

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*,⁵⁴ has discussed the philosophical implications of such places as metaphors of imagination. In his enquiry he dwells upon the significance of the hut and we may remember that in *The Prelude* Wordsworth tells how it was from his 'Mother's hut',⁵⁵ that he ran 'in wantonness'⁵⁶ into the natural world, bathing in a stream, or climbing the lofty heights. The very natural world into which Wordsworth ran as a boy is seen by the adult poet as an extension of the maternal womb. Often the natural world in his autobiographical poem assumes a kind of mothering kindness and we could interpret those

⁵¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, ll. 302-304, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 18.

⁵² Seamus Heaney, *The Listener* (1 September, 1977), p. 265.

⁵³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book XI, l. 336, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 448.

⁵⁴ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Beacon: Boston, 1964).

⁵⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 302, op. cit. p. 18.

⁵⁶ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 303, loc. cit.

isolated places, as quasi-maternal, womb-like spaces. It was in such places that Wordsworth remembered, not only 'how she felt, but what she felt'.⁵⁷ He had, what might be called, a foetal sensitivity to the nurturing of those places and it was in those places, in a state of isolation, he drank the 'visionary power'.⁵⁸ Heaney's autobiographical prose and poetry seem to have picked up on this maternal aspect in the Romantic poet's work and on the importance of seeking out isolated locations. We find in 'Mossbawn'⁵⁹ and 'In the Beech'⁶⁰ images of a childhood self, 'spending time in the throat of an old willow',⁶¹ or in the fork of a beech, listening to the sounds of the natural world, conjuring up images of isolation that cannot but remind us of those in *The Prelude*. These spaces provided Heaney with his own 'spots of time', moments in which, as he says, he felt 'socketed'⁶² into natural energies, spaces which also signified moments in which the child's imagination was extended.

These spaces in the natural world where the child self would like to hide away, were what he calls in the Nobel lecture a 'kind of den life, which was more or less emotionally and intellectually proofed against the outside world'.⁶³ These spaces were like Wordsworth's 'hiding places' in *The Prelude*. The lecture, 'Feeling into Words', had already demonstrated the importance of this passage from Wordsworth. Yet, we have the later Heaney obtaining his laureateship with no sense of fear that his powers could be fading. There seems to be no doubt

⁵⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*. (1805) Book II, l. 335, op. cit. p. 60.

⁵⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*. (1805) Book II, l. 330, op. cit. p. 60.

⁵⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Mossbawn', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980).

⁶⁰ Seamus Heaney, *Station Island* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 100.

⁶¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Secret nests of County Derry', *The Listener* (1 September, 1977), p. 265.

⁶² Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 218.

⁶³ Seamus Heaney, *Crediting Poetry* (Lougherew: Gallery Press, 1995), p. 9.

or anxiety that he ‘may scarcely see at all’⁶⁴ his past. Those poems in *Seeing Things* amply illustrate that he has not lost the spirit of his past. Many of the poems deal with vivid childhood memories that draw us into ‘an intimate, physical, creaturely existence’⁶⁵ as with the poems about his boyhood in Derry in the early books. But in *Seeing Things* even more than previous work we have childhood moments that are ‘ahistorical.’⁶⁶

It would seem that, just as Heaney viewed Wordsworth’s life and poetry in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* outside politics, he began to revisit his own memories in a similar way. Here the myth of childhood plentitude sketched in Wordsworth’s ode, ‘Intimations of Immortality’,⁶⁷ is given a more successful modern form. Just as those memories from childhood demonstrate a continual search for special spaces, the poet then creates his own retreats that seem more like resorts and resources. Like his account of nesting as a boy in the natural world, Heaney’s ‘Glanmore Sonnets’ are about a similar kind of adult retreat, about creating a personal and imaginative space where the poet feels ‘at home’ as Wordsworth was at Grasmere. As with the willow or beech tree, the house shelters the poet, protects his dreaming in peace. In *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, Heaney was quick to pick up on how Wordsworth’s home was also emblematic of his imagination. He describes the downstairs room of Dove Cottage as having ‘a cellar like atmosphere’⁶⁸ and he seems to use this comparison to draw out the subterranean and mysterious forces in the Englishman’s poetry. For Heaney, the cellar-like atmosphere of

⁶⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book XI, l. 339, loc. cit.

⁶⁵ Seamus Heaney, loc. cit.

⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁷ William Wordsworth, ‘Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’, *The Essential Wordsworth*, ed. Seamus Heaney (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 139-145.

⁶⁸ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 218

Wordsworth's home seems 'completely appropriate for a man whose inspiration was stored in the cellars of his consciousness'.⁶⁹ Indeed, Heaney had already referred to his own writing as a drawing from the 'cellars of the self' in a preface to his work in *Modern Poets in Focus 2* (1973). When he comes to write about his own Wicklow home in 'Glanmore Sonnets' we see how much they draw on personal energies. For, in the 'Glanmore Sonnets', he draws, not only on the significance of the thatched house as a retreat for the adult poet, but on the cellars of the self to reveal memories from childhood. However, the very nature of the cellar as an image from where the mind draws poetic inspiration, suggests something more sinister. It suggests, a buried, dark location, a place that might wall in and fill the imagination with fear.

It is the two sensations of fear and anxiety that seem forever present in those spaces recalled in earlier autobiographical poetry and prose from 'Death of a Naturalist' to 'Feeling into Words'. Yet these fostering disciplines seem to have all but disappeared in Heaney's memories in *Seeing Things*. Even poems that recall his father, such as 'Man and Boy' and 'Seeing Things' itself do so with a sense of intimacy, affection and love that serve to contrast with the portraits in his first poems. In the sequence, 'Glanmore Revisited', Heaney takes 'full possession'⁷⁰ of his country home, with the help of the Wordsworthian sonnet form. But he brings us up from the 'cellar' of his consciousness into the attic, from the dark into the light, we might say. In the seventh sonnet of 'Glanmore Revisited', 'The Skylight', he experiences an almost Biblical cure for that self which still loved the 'claustrophobic, nest-up-in-the-roof/ Effect'⁷¹ of his space. He seems subtly to acknowledge what his own secret nests owed to Wordsworth in the phrase, 'all hutch and

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Seamus Heaney, '2 The Cot', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 32.

⁷¹ Seamus Heaney, '7 The Skylight', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 37.

hatch',⁷² which recalls his early descriptions of Dove Cottage in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* as having an 'almost hutch like'⁷³ quality. For the Irish poet this was suggestive of the 'incubating mind'.⁷⁴ In contrast to those early spaces in his autobiographical prose or in the early poetry, that seem darker and darkly imagined, suddenly, with the addition of a skylight, 'extravagant/ Sky entered and held surprise wide open.'⁷⁵ An added architectural detail brings change and gives the poet a new angle, and new light to work under and to cast onto familiar spaces.

As in 'Squarings xx',⁷⁶ where a cleared space in front of the brick wall of the Kremlin is 'dizzying' and prompts 'a dream of flying', the attic space in 'The Skylight' brings a new educative value, and Heaney's sestet recalls some of the teachings of the philosopher Simone Weil. Up to *Seeing Things* the poet of 'nests' had been obedient to the force of gravity, to 'heaviness of being',⁷⁷ which Weil called the 'greatest sin'.⁷⁸ Now, with a skylight, the poet's space becomes flooded with light. We get an almost childlike sense of relief as the whole place becomes 'airier'.⁷⁹ Whereas in the earlier 'Glanmore Sonnets', in *Field Work* (1979), we can detect something of the political pressures intruding upon the hearth life at that time, now with the 'extravagant sky' comes a sense of the visionary, of what Weil called 'grace'. Now in

⁷² *Ibid*

⁷³ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), p. 223.

⁷⁴ Seamus Heaney, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁵ Seamus Heaney, '7 The Skylight', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 37.

⁷⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Settings xx', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 76.

⁷⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Fosterling', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 50.

⁷⁸ From *Gravity and Grace* by Simone Weil and quoted by Seamus Heaney in *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 3.

⁷⁹ Seamus Heaney, '6 Bedside Reading', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 36.

'Glanmore Revisited', 'whatever rampaged out there couldn't reach us./ Firelit, shuttered, slated and stone-walled.'⁸⁰

In one sense the aspirations that were articulated in the 'Glanmore Sonnets' in *Field Work* are finally achieved in 'Glanmore Revisited'. The emphasis upon the solid, resilient and resistant alludes to those very qualities he emphasised in Dove Cottage during a reading at a Wordsworth summer conference in 1996. The poet seems to have finally found or rather earned a space that protects against 'whatever rampaged', a phrase that hints at how, this time, wild natural forces as well as political upheavals cannot interrupt the central activity of a poet, playing with language, here symbolised by the game of scrabble. In fact, this scene in the sonnet seems to recall a similar moment in *The Prelude* where Wordsworth states, 'I do not doubt/ That in this later time, when storm and rain/ Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day/ When I am in the woods, unknown to me/ The workings of my spirit thence are brought'.⁸¹ Heaney's poem echoes these sentiments. To revisit his Co. Wicklow home while writing *Seeing Things* was to realise its potential as a space that offered more than just domestic security. Like the nests of his childhood, it was a 'bastion of sensation',⁸² but importantly it also enabled him to commit himself, without wavering, to focus on craft and technique. For the first time here and in other poems in *Seeing Things* we see Heaney recall moments from his childhood where he was solely engrossed in games and play as symbols for the enterprise of poetry.

* Seamus Heaney, 'I Scrabble', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 31.

⁸¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book XI, ll. 385-389, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) p. 452

⁸² Seamus Heaney, 'in Lightnings', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 56.

III

bicycles, skating and 'a new momentum'⁸³

The bicycle in 'A Constable Calls', in *North*, was the transport of a local RUC officer and the details that Heaney is able to recall tells us of its impact upon his imagination. Its 'black handlegrips'⁸⁴ and dynamo 'cocked back'⁸⁵ reflect the colour and texture of the uniform, gun and holster carried by the policeman. Even the sound of the bike as it 'ticked, ticked, ticked' seems to suggest a coercive presence, disapproving and threatening. Some critics would suggest that the 'ticking' of the bicycle signals the increased sectarian tension in the North and subsequent bombing campaigns by paramilitaries. But now, in *Seeing Things*, a bicycle has been transformed into an altogether more magical object. In 'Wheels within Wheels'⁸⁶ we have another childhood memory. A boy, about the same age as the one in 'Death of a Naturalist' or in 'An Advancement of Learning', has found himself a spot in a field, where there was a hole with water in it and a small hawthorn tree. According to Heaney the place had a 'sump-life'⁸⁷ of its own and it was in there that the boy turned his bike upside down and 'learned the art of pedalling/ (By hand)'. Heaney recalls with intimate detail how he:

drove
Its back wheel preternaturally fast.
I loved the disappearance of the spokes,
The way the space between the hub and rim
Hummed with transparency. If you threw
A potato into it, the hooped air
Spun mush and drizzle back into your face;
If you touched it with a straw, the straw frittered.
Something about the way those pedal treads

⁸³ Seamus Heaney, 'Wheels within Wheels', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 46.

⁸⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'A Constable Calls', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 60.

⁸⁵ *ibid*

⁸⁶ Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 46-47.

⁸⁷ Blake Morrison, 'Seamus Famous: Time to be dazzled', *The Independent on Sunday*, 19 May, 1991, p. 27.

Worked very palpably at first against you
And then began to sweep your hand ahead
Into a new momentum - that all entered me
Like an access of free power, as if belief
Caught up and spun the objects of belief
In an orbit coterminous with longing.⁸⁸

We might refer to this moment as a Heaney 'station', but these iambic lines would be more accurately described as a Wordsworthian 'spot of time'. For, unlike a 'station', we have a memory so immersed in the experience that it seems to be without any anxiety. Here the gritty potato becomes a child's play object, wantonly and wastefully spun into mush, an object which in a poem such as 'At a Potato Digging'⁸⁹ was once a symbol of the Irish Famine, representing political and agricultural monoculture and English misgovernment in Ireland. The poem's central concern is about being caught up in the revolutions of the actual wheel and the quoted passage gives us a sense of the child's giddy excitement in being preoccupied by this force. And the whole dynamics of the story that Heaney tells has much in common with Wordsworth's skating passage in *The Prelude*.

Heaney had been familiar with the skating passage since his days as a boarder in St. Columb's College in Derry. In *Preoccupations* he recalls how he learnt by heart and how he enjoyed the sibilance of the lines, 'All shod with steel,/ We hiss'd along the polished ice'.⁹⁰ He says he remembers this section from Wordsworth's autobiographical poem as a 'touchstone of sorts, where the language could give you a kind of aural gooseflesh.'⁹¹ That delight in language and sound would remain with him. In fact, we know from an essay by John Montague that Heaney gave this passage special attention when he first visited Dove Cottage in 1974.⁹²

⁸⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'Wheels within Wheels', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 46.

⁸⁹ Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 31.

⁹⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 46.

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² John Montague, 'The Sweet Way', *Irish Writers and Their Creative Process*, ed. Jacqueline Genet and Wynne Hellegouarch (Buckinghamshire, Gerrards Cross, 1996), p. 35.

Heaney's close inspection of the first draft of the skating episode indicates the part it plays in the Irish poet's imagination and writing. It would seem to me that 'Wheels within Wheels' attempts to recapture some of the intimate and cosmic forces that we see at work in Wordsworth's piece which I would like to quote in full:

It was a time of rapture: clear and loud
The village clock tolled six; I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting, like an untired horse,
That cares not for his home.— All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
The Pack loud bellowing, and the haunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din,
Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees, and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed; while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the image of a star
That gleamed upon the ice. And oftentimes
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks, on either side,
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion; then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short, yet still the solitary Cliffs
Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round.
Behind me did stretch in solemn train
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.⁹³

Note how in this passage Wordsworth uses the phrases, 'I wheeled about', 'spinning still' and 'wheeled by me' which would have been particularly relevant for Heaney. All recreate the

⁹³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, ll. 457-489, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) p. 26-28.

sensation of motion and the individual's response. So, we can recognise how much of the material for 'Wheels within Wheels' is drawn from and shaped by Heaney's deep appreciation of this passage or the earlier 1799 version used in *The Essential Wordsworth*. In *The Prelude*, as in 'Wheels within Wheels', we are presented with autobiographical experiences. Certainly, as the 'Preface' to *Stations* shows, Wordsworth's 'spots of time' confirmed for Heaney the importance of some of his own childhood experiences, no matter how different he may have imagined them at that time. In the skating episode, as in the poem from *Seeing Things*, we are given a detailed account of a boy's interaction with the natural world. Both poets present us with intimate details in order to render the encounter more authentic. Wordsworth feels the wind upon his body and senses the 'Cliffs' revolving around him, whereas Heaney recalls smelling the 'dungy ooze' and watches the lace and dirt being spun before his eyes. Indeed, it may be added that Heaney manipulates his bicycle, just as Wordsworth manipulated his skates, putting their toys to uses other than the original intention.

In Heaney's poem the boy turns the bike upside down so as to create the effects that he wanted and Wordsworth uses the skates, not to flow majestically across the ice, but rather to stop abruptly. In each case this reuse of their childhood vehicles enhances their enjoyment of their toys and their place. Perhaps, most notable of all, both experiences are at their most profound when they are on their own. The Romantic poet tells how he leaves 'the tumultuous throng'⁹⁴ to have his experience, while the Irish poet tells that, not until he saw the 'circus ring, drumrolled and spotlit'⁹⁵ with its cowgirls and tumblers, could an experience match that occasion with his bicycle. Heaney's line 'At the still centre of the lariat' quotes from T.S Eliot's poem 'Four

⁹⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 476, op. cit. p. 28.

⁹⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Wheels within Wheels', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 47.

Quartets”⁹⁶ — ‘at the still centre of the turning world.’ The visionary whispers from that Anglo-American, modernist poet are, as we have seen, inflected through Heaney’s reading of Eliot as a Romantic poet, via C. K. Stead. It is in this private space in the natural world that both boys — poets — can be completely engaged in their activity. Certainly, Wordsworth’s own description of his fun, comparing his boyhood antics to those of ‘an untired horse,/ That cares not for its home’.⁹⁷ seems to be picked up upon in section II of ‘Wheels within Wheels’. There Heaney seems to have put a spin on Wordsworth’s image, comparing the sight of a tyre spinning water to the lashing of a mare’s tail. So, both the skating passage and ‘Wheels within Wheels’ connect by needing to retell or recapture something of the literalness of the event and giving a moment both momentum and permanence in the imagination, just as Wordsworth’s 1802 ‘Preface’ claimed such incidents should do.

Both works also meet on a much more profound level. In ‘Wheels within Wheels’ there is a greater ‘acknowledgement of distance; there is a sense that this child is being invigilated at a distance with affection and some kind of comprehension.’⁹⁸ In Heaney’s previous poetry, as in *Death of a Naturalist*, our view of the child is more up close, as Heaney himself said, ‘much more child’s eye view, much more hot breathed and close in.’⁹⁹ In cinematic terms the poetry dealing with childhood in *Death of a Naturalist* is a ‘close up’¹⁰⁰ while ‘Wheels within Wheels’ is in ‘longshot’.¹⁰¹ The longshot gives us ‘an airier view, it gives a greater sense of

⁹⁶ T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 191.

⁹⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, ll. 459-460, op. cit. p. 26.

⁹⁸ Seamus Heaney, Interview with Melvyn Bragg, *The South Bank Show* (London: I.W.T., 1991).

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

comprehending the littleness of the creature in the largeness of the territory.’¹⁰² This very shift in perspective thus makes Heaney’s poem more like a Wordsworthian ‘spot of time’. I would suggest that, as with the skating piece, Heaney has tried to connect the revolutions of the wheel of the bike back to more universal and fundamental forces and rhythms in nature. Admittedly, Wordsworth’s aspiration to make the link between the wheeling motion he experienced and something more cosmic is more apparent than Heaney’s. The Irishman creates a subtler connection between the revolving bicycle wheel and the universe. Nonetheless, Heaney tells us how his hand gets swept on, ‘as if belief/ Caught up and spun the objects of belief/ In an orbit coterminous with longing.’¹⁰³ The whole generative motion of these lines and the diction suggests the movement of an orrery. And in fact, Heaney’s use of the word ‘orbit’¹⁰⁴ suggests the planetary dimensions of what he is experiencing. As with the passage from *The Prelude* there seems to be a sense of how such an intimate moment is caught up with a greater immensity.

This is not the first time that Heaney relates how he felt caught up in greater elemental forces. We have already seen these earthly forces at play in ‘A Lough Neagh Sequence’¹⁰⁵ but there they assume a more sinister dimension that the child finds threatening. In ‘Wheels within Wheels’ the space Heaney creates for himself seems un-disrupted by any such fear; it focuses instead upon the aesthetics of childhood experience. It is as if Heaney’s child figure has disappeared into that ‘space between the hub and rim/ Hummed with transparency.’ For the potency of that image, the accurate focus upon the moment and the way the language recreates

¹⁰² Melynn Bragg, op. cit.

¹⁰³ Seamus Heaney, ‘Wheels within Wheels’, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 46.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*

¹⁰⁵ Seamus Heaney, ‘A Lough Neagh Sequence’, *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 26-33.

it with an almost photographic accuracy, do not belie how the lines also reflect the artistic pleasure in relishing this instant of play. As Heaney would claim, 'when it comes to poetic composition one has to allow for the presence, even for the pre-eminence, of what Wordsworth called 'the grand elementary principle of pleasure' and that pleasure comes from the doing-in-language of certain things.'¹⁰⁶ What Heaney has been 'doing' with the language in 'Wheels within Wheels' has been recreating the sheer 'pleasure' of that boyhood moment, a pleasure without anxiety. Play becomes art and art a mode of play and it is how ordinary things are presented to the mind in an unusual way in *Seeing Things* that I want to look at in this next section of the chapter.

IV

Transforming the ordinary

In *Seeing Things* Heaney revisits a number of memories, objects, places and situations from his childhood and in each memory he appears to be obeying the Wordsworthian imperative as set out in his 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*. The 'Preface' declares:

The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and . . . to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way.¹⁰⁷

In 'A Basket of Chestnuts', Heaney recalls his equivalent to 'Nutting'. But unlike the Wordsworthian account, there is no savagery in Heaney's recollection of the natural world as in the poem by the Romantic poet. The heavy natural details that we would have got in an early piece such as 'Blackberry Picking' are replaced by 'a giddy strange assistance/ That happens

¹⁰⁶ Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 24.

¹⁰⁷ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *The Essential Wordsworth*, ed. Seamus Heaney (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 78.

when you swing a loaded basket./ The lightness of the thing seems to diminish' and it is not only a basket of chestnuts that can become airy. In 'The Pitchfork' Heaney takes an ordinary object, found in 'low and rustic life',¹⁰⁸ over which he has thrown 'a certain colouring of imagination.'¹⁰⁹

The Pitchfork

Of all implements, the pitchfork was the one
That came near to an imagined perfection:
When he tightened his raised hand and aimed with it,
It felt like a javelin, accurate and light.

So whether he played the warrior or the athlete
Or worked in earnest in the chaff and sweat,
He loved its grain of tapering, dark-flecked ash
Grown satiny from its own natural polish.

Riveted steel, turned timber, burnish, grain,
Smoothness, straightness, roundness, length and sheen.
Sweat-cured, sharpened, balanced, tested, fitted.
The springiness, the clip and dart of it.

And then when he thought of probes that reached the farthest,
He would see the shaft of a pitchfork sailing past
Evenly, imperturbably through space,
Its prongs starlit and absolutely soundless —

But has learned at last to follow that simple lead
Past its own aim, out to an other side
Where perfection — or nearness to it — is imagined
Not in the aiming but the opening hand.¹¹⁰

The description of this implement is highly suggestive. Heaney's 'starlit' pitchfork stands in direct opposition to that first farming tool that Heaney describes in *Death of a Naturalist*. You could say that we have moved from the flax-dam at the heart of the townland to what Heaney calls the 'heart land of the ordinary.'¹¹¹ In 'Digging' the point of the spade, 'the lug, the shaft',¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ William Wordsworth, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁹ William Wordsworth, loc. cit.

¹¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'The Pitchfork', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 23.

¹¹¹ Seamus Heaney, 'The Journey Back', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 7.

¹¹² Seamus Heaney, 'Digging', *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 13.

and its coarse work were analogous to his early poetic enterprise. Now, the pitchfork symbolises something more 'accurate and light'. It seems useful to remember that in 'The Wife's Tale' in *Door into the Dark* (1968), such an implement reminds us of historical conflict, a marker of 'lost battlefields'.¹¹⁵ Now, however, in his imagination he can play 'the warrior or the athlete', and this choice allows him to imagine the use of the implement however he likes. Yet, the sheer joy of this farming tool 'is imagined/ Not in the aiming but the opening hand.' The overflow of adjectives in quatrain three has rendered it an impressive object. What Heaney calls 'the clip and dart of it' suggests how the object has become permanently an impressive as something wondrous as he imagines it 'sailing past/ Evenly, imperturbably through space.' The space that this down-to-earth farming tool has travelled into is the poet's imagination. 'Its prongs starlit and absolutely soundless' suggests a magical quality which is as distant as the celestial bodies, but not portentous like the comet in 'Exposure'. The pitchfork assumes the visionary dignity of the spear of Achilles or of the boyhood spear of Cuchulain or some such epic weapon, perhaps even Beowulf's.

Just as an ordinary object like a pitchfork is transformed in the poems of *Seeing Things* so are places that Heaney knew from his youth. In 'Crossings xxi' he describes the experience of driving on the road that brings you to the north Antrim coast in Northern Ireland:

xxxi

Not an avenue and not a bower.
For a quarter-mile or so, where the county road
Is running straight across North Antrim bog,

Tall old firs trees line it on both sides.
Scotch firs, that is. Calligraphic shocks
Bushed and tufted in prevailing winds.

¹¹⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'The Wife's Tale', *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 15.

You drive into a meaning made of trees.
Or not exactly trees. It is a sense
Of running through and under without let.

Of glimpse and dapple. A life all trace and skim
The car has vanished out of. A fanned nape
Sensitive to the millionth of a flicker.¹¹⁴

There seems to be something of the light catching, light reflecting qualities of the pitchfork in this scene. I would also draw attention to how the poem's form, as in the entire sequence of 'Squarings', with their quasi-sonnet shape, imitate those pieces in *Stations*. Each one, more disciplined than the earlier 'stations', is in itself like a little 'spot of time'. 'Crossings xxxi' has that same swift, unexpected suddenness, as if it sailed through the air — 'all trace and skim', like 'The Pitchfork'. Indeed, this twelve line poem could be likened to a moment of Wordsworthian 'visionary dreariness'. Heaney's use of the word 'glimpse' implicitly reminding us of *The Prelude* passage quoted at the beginning of 'Feeling into Words' and *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. But as I have all ready pointed out the Derry poet does not seem to fear that his own poetic powers will fade. On the contrary, his 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth* demonstrates that he has learnt from Wordsworth's poetic decline.

In the opening to 'Crossings xxxi' we can see that Heaney still envisions himself as the 'Romantic quester'. despite his new way of 'seeing things'; he is not calm or placid, as Heaney has described the later Wordsworth in his 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth*.¹¹⁵ Indeed in 'Squarings xli' the Irish poet affirms that 'The places I go back to have not failed'.¹¹⁶ Rather he continues to deal with challenging experiences as he struggles with language and images to create the sensations of passing through a particular place which, as the negative in this line

¹¹⁴ Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 89.

¹¹⁵ Seamus Heaney, *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 12.

¹¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Squarings xli', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 101.

suggests. 'Not an avenue and not a bower', is almost indescribable. Yet our sense of the mysteriousness of this event of passing through something is not vague. Rather, here we have a space 'of glimpse and dapple' where the imagination experiences some sort of quickening. Indeed, Heaney transforms the external scene into something in the mind, in the same way that he claimed that Wordsworth's 'imagination transformed the external scene into a county of the mind.'¹¹⁷ And we can see a similar kind of transformation happening in number x of 'Lightenings'

x

Overhangs of grass and seedling birch
On the quarry face. Rock-hob where you watched
All the cargoed brightness travelling

Above and beyond and sumptuously across
The water in its deep dangerous holes
On the quarry floor. Ultimate

Fathomableness, ultimate
Stony up-againstness; could you reconcile
What was diaphanous there with what was massive?

Were you equal to or were you opposite
To build-ups so promiscuous and weightless?
Shield your eyes, look up and face the music.¹¹⁸

Here Heaney's 'overhangs of grass' on the quarry face recalls similar moments or 'music' in *The Prelude*. A composite of images come to mind from books I and II — the plundering boy among the fissures of the rocks, the cliffs that seemed to rise up behind him after stealing the skiff and those cliffs that rolled around during skating and the boy who stood alone beneath some rock, drinking in a visionary power. Of these different incidents, Heaney's poem seems to recall, in particular, the moment when Wordsworth tells how, as a boy, he 'hung/ Above the raven's

¹¹⁷ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 217.

¹¹⁸ Seamus Heaney, 'Lightenings x', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 64.

nest, by knots of grass.’¹¹⁹ Admittedly, it is difficult to tell if ‘Lightenings x’ recalls an incident from his childhood, and the quarry face that so impresses itself upon his imagination is a man made creation as opposed to those ‘beautiful and permanent forms of nature’¹²⁰ that so impressed Wordsworth and the Romantic poets.

We could say that neither the passages from *The Prelude* or ‘Lightenings x’ are pieces written for people with vertigo, as once again an individual finds himself within a space, up high, in which the imagination is ‘heightened’ and can freely engage with all that surrounds him. We can see in this solitary, natural place a Heanyesque equivalent of the Romantic sublime. In that space, as we shall see, come definably different sensations that stir the imagination. In both ‘Lightenings x’ and *The Prelude* book I, ll. 341-350, the geographical sobriety fills the single on-looker with awe. Wordsworth recalls how he seemed to be ‘shouldering the naked crag’¹²¹ and the sheerness of the rock face contrasts with the mysterious sky that ‘seemed not a sky/ Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds!’¹²² The tone of these lines seem to be self questioning and within the passage Wordsworth seems to bring together two antithetical states. It would appear that Heaney’s twelve line poem not only echoes Wordsworth’s questioning tones but attempts to draw together opposite elements. As with the Romantic poet’s original scene, in ‘Lightenings x’, the sky reflected in the flooded quarry creates a crossing, horizontal movement that counteracts the ‘Stony up-againstness’, the verticalness of the quarry face. Here the ‘diaphanous’ and the ‘massive’ counteract one another. But, Heaney seems to be asking, can the

¹¹⁹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 342, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 20.

¹²⁰ William Wordsworth, ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *The Essential Wordsworth* ed. Seamus Heaney (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 78

¹²¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, l. 346, op. cit. p. 20.

¹²² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, ll. 349-350, op. cit. p. 20-22.

poet 'reconcile' such opposites? When he concludes, 'Shield your eyes, look up and face the music,' what he appears to be doing is putting his trust in poetry's melody and art's ability to draw together and be faithful to contraries. If we face the music, as Heaney asks us to, do we not also come face to face with Wordsworth's assertion that 'the mind of man is framed even like the breath/ And harmony of music'?¹²³ Does it not then appear that Heaney wishes to appropriate daintily the Romantic's claim as his own? It would seem that 'Lightenings x' suggests what Wordsworth referred to as the 'dark/ Invisible workmanship',¹²⁴ the idea that poetry can reconcile 'discordant elements, and make them move/ In one society.'¹²⁵

Just as ordinary places are given extraordinary dimensions so too are every day situations. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth recalls playing different games, such as cards and in *Seeing Things* the poet is testing what he writes and its faithfulness to his 're-envisagings' by imagining a game of marbles. The squaring off of an area of play becomes a 'space' where wondrous things can happen, as in the poem 'Markings'. Using the predominately medium-to-light stresses of Wordsworthian blank verse, the soft, reflective voice in the poem, remembers how, 'We marked the pitch: four jackets for four goalposts./ That was all.' As with the area squared off for playing marbles, this rectangular area again launches an ordinary football match into a game within the imagination, where the pitch in the mind becomes more important than the actual field of play. And it might be useful to remember that the football played here is Irish, Gaelic football, and not the English game.

¹²³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, ll. 351-352, op. cit. p. 22.

¹²⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, ll. 352-353, loc. cit.

¹²⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book I, ll. 354-355, loc. cit.

In a recent programme *Something To Write Home About* (1998), which Heaney made for Flying Fox, he wistfully recalls how he was a goal keeper for his local Bellaghy team.¹²⁶ Although the programme discusses boundaries and crossing boundaries, his comments on playing football in the programme do not have the same political heaviness as the earlier volumes of poetry. In *Stations*, Gaelic football and the GAA clubs are associated with the political ideals of Heaney's Nationalist, Catholic community. It was at these games they flew the Tricolour as a symbol of those political aspirations and their obstinate refusal to accept British rule in Ireland. But in 'Markings', the game the children play has quite different associations. The lines of 'longitude and latitude' that ran 'Under the bumpy thistly ground, to be/ Agreed about or disagreed about/ When the time came.' mark out for us a space free from all those earlier political implications. The children are preoccupied with a dream state:

Youngsters shouting their heads off in a field
 As the light died and they kept on playing
 Because by then they were playing in their heads
 And the actual kicked ball came to them
 Like a dream heaviness, and their own hard
 Breathing in the dark and skids on the grass
 Sounded like effort in another world . . .
 It was quick and constant, a game that never needed to
 Be played out. Some limit had been passed.
 There was fleetness, furtherance, untiredness
 In time that was extra, unforeseen and free.¹²⁷

Here we seem to have all the hurry and flurry of a Wordsworthian episode in *The Prelude* but with none of the anxiety associated with Heaney's early poems. There are those familiar childhood breathings as in Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, but Heaney's recollection brings his moment into another magical dimension. As with many 'spots of time' in *The Prelude* the moment he describes seems to transcend time. His football match, he tell us, occurs, 'In time that was extra, unforeseen and free', punning on the actual rules and terminology associated with

¹²⁶ Seamus Heaney, *Something to Write Home About* (Belfast: Flying Fox Productions, 4 March, 1998)

¹²⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Markings', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 8.

the game. Wordsworth had also attempted to transform a game of football into something more visionary in *The Excursion*.¹²⁸ Heaney's 'Introduction' to *The Essential Wordsworth* indicates that he may have read *The Excursion* precisely for its visionary qualities. There he writes that 'memory in this poetry became not just an inert coffer of images, but a great projector of enabling light. . . . And such is the great theme of . . . *The Excursion*.'¹²⁹ Indeed, Heaney's comment about Wordsworth's poem seems equally applicable to *Seeing Things* and in 'Markings' his image of the boys 'shouting their heads off in a field' seems to echo that of the 'shouting field' in *The Excursion*.¹³⁰ But Wordsworth's moment seems to be deflated by his unlikely comparison between the flight of the football and that of a lark, or the curve of a rainbow. A leather case seems far too robust an object to invite such description. In fact the next poem in *Seeing Things*, 'The Point', draws up for us something similar. But rather than compare the flight of a 'leather football' to something in nature, as Wordsworth had done, Heaney recaptures its energy and speed by focussing upon the 'booting of a leather football', and the physical sensation of actually making contact and making it travel. He finishes by questioning — 'Was it you// or the ball that kept going/ beyond you, amazingly/ higher and higher/ and ruefully free?'

Perhaps, after reading Wordsworth's example in *The Excursion*, Heaney avoided the mistake of drawing up such analogies. Hence in 'The Point' and in 'Markings' the ball itself seems relatively unimportant compared to what the children have done with it. So, in 'Markings', we find that the focus is upon the twilight and dreamy play of the game in a space that 'marked the

¹²⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Book VII, l. 742, *William Wordsworth: Poems*, vol. II, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 241

¹²⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *The Essential Wordsworth* (Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988), p. 11-12.

¹³⁰ William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Book VII, l. 744, op. cit. p. 242.

spot, marked time and held it open.”¹³¹ Clearly, by using the word ‘spot’, Heaney would be gesturing, once again, to those Wordsworthian ‘spots of time’¹³² and directing our appreciation of his poem, so we see it as a visionary moment comparable to those of the Lake writer.

If a preface could be added to *Seeing Things* it would have its premise in the ‘Preface’ to *Stations*. There, as we have seen, Heaney tells how his first prose poems had been ‘attempts to touch what Wordsworth called “spots of time”, moments at the very edge of consciousness which had lain for years in the unconscious as active lodes of nodes’.¹³³ As there was no longer any sense that the poetic signals were being jammed, it would seem that with *Seeing Things* the Irish poet has confidently pursued those earlier directions and re-attempted and succeeded in capturing those very visionary qualities he had first associated with a Wordsworthian moment.

As ‘Markings’ returns us to a particularly memorable situation from childhood, an instance which has become extra-ordinary for the older poet, so too do many of the other twelve line poems in ‘Squarings’ return to childhood memories. In the opening poem to the ‘Squarings’ sequence Heaney indicates how the poetry will be full of ‘Unroofed scope. Knowledge-freshening wind.’ This image cannot but recall Wordsworth’s own metaphor of the breeze in *The Prelude*. There is a sense of the up-lifting in ‘Lightenings i’ as in Wordsworth’s declaration, ‘Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze’. The critic, M. H Abrams, in his essay, ‘The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor’,¹³⁴ which Heaney read while a student-teacher at

¹³¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘Markings’, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 9.

¹³² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book XI, l. 258. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 444.

¹³³ Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Press, 1975), p. 3.

¹³⁴ M. H. Abrams, *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism* (Oxford: OUP, 1953), pp. 37-54.

Queen's, has already discussed the connection the Romantic poets, and in particular Wordsworth, had made between the wind and inspiration. By using such an image at the beginning of 'Squarings', Heaney seems to want to breathe new life into his 'plain, big, straight, ordinary' origins and the world of his father, and indeed the image sets the tone for the whole sequence as having its source in early Romantic imagery.

'Squarings xl' and 'xli' are reminders of how ordinary Heaney's origins were but, nonetheless how fraught memories might have intimations of the visionary. He looks back to when he was four and recalls the sights of 'a clay floor', 'milk poured for cats', 'splash-darkened mould' and a 'half-door/ Opening directly into starlight.' What he recalls he refers to as, 'cold memory-weights/ To load me, hand and foot, in the scale of things',¹³⁵ and this image implies that he recognises and has weighed up the value and the limitations of those experiences. In 'xli' he realises how those places have been a continual source of inspiration but that they 'will not last'. It would appear that in these two pieces we are brought back to 'Feeling into Words' (1974). How uncanny and ironic that we return to that first semi-autobiographical prose piece where he saw in *The Prelude* an expression of his own views about poetry:

the hiding places of my power
Seem open. I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all. and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future restoration.

Implicit in those lines is a view of poetry which I think is implicit in the few poems I have written that gave me any right to speak.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Seamus Heaney, 'Squarings, xl', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 100.

¹³⁶ Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 41.

Like Wordsworth, Heaney seems to be admitting that the ‘hiding places’ of his power are fading as age comes on. As the Irishman re-enters ‘the swim, riding or quelling/ The very currents memory is composed of,’ he takes inspiration from a ‘Lick of fear. Sweet transience. Flirt and splash’,¹³⁷ the very foster stuff of Wordsworth. But in *Seeing Things* and in ‘Squarings’ he looks for the visionary, what will never disappoint and in doing so he returns to the idea of running water as an image of poetic inspiration. This image was Heaney’s own favourite Wordsworthian invention and one which he had discussed in ‘The Makings of a Music’. In that essay, discussed in Chapter 4, he emphasised how the Derwent flowed into Wordsworth’s dreams and sustained his processes of composition. But Heaney also sees, as did the Romantics, that the flow of a river has larger symbolic connotations. He is reaffirming, as the Lake poet had done, that he is ‘an inmate of this active universe’.¹³⁸ From the beginning, the Romantic poet had been showing Heaney how childhood nests and those details and objects of rural life, including his cottage retreat in Co. Wicklow, could be more than just ordinary. The imagination could throw a certain colouring over those spaces, that they had always been potentially visionary — a purer source.

¹³⁷ Seamus Heaney, ‘Squarings, xli’, op. cit. p. 101.

¹³⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book II, l. 266, op. cit. p. 58.

CODA

From the beginning, Wordsworth's poetry gave Heaney a new way of imagining, and with the publication of *Seeing Things* (1991) it seems that we have come full circle. As with *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1968), and *Wintering Out* (1972), the Romantic poet is once again a secret literary background, yet he remains central to Heaney's explorations of childhood, memory and rural life. It was with the Irish poet's first three volumes of poetry that the story of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's writing began. (Yet we may want to think of it beginning with Heaney's education, for through the kind of poetry he read he was able to justify the poetry he wanted to write). It was in those first three volumes of poetry that Heaney rhymed his experiences with those of the Lake poet's. It is as if the Irish poet found a literary blessing in what Wordsworth who wrote in the 1802 'Preface' and *The Prelude*. It was not so much the revolutionary poet of 1798 and the author of the *Lyrical Ballads*, or the stately figure who lived in Rydal Mount, but rather the writer whose political aspirations were embodied in the French Revolution, the poet who had come through inner conflicts that were both a paradigm of a divided nation and the artistic enterprise. But in order to assimilate Wordsworth's poetry and prose — regardless of which editions of the Romantic poet's work he may have used or privileged — the Irish poet had to manipulate and translate Wordsworth's writing so it could be assimilated into an Irish context.

The Romantic poet only begins to occupy the literary foreground in Heaney's writing after the making of *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. His experience of the Lake District seems to have been pivotal to his appreciation of Wordsworth's life and writing. The visit to Grasmere,

in 1974, highlighted the violence in the North of Ireland. For Heaney, Grasmere was the embodiment of the place of poetry. It exemplified Wordsworth's 'resolution, his independence'¹ as a poet, and Heaney's visit there further idealised his view of his Romantic predecessor, whom he tended to read outside a political and historical context. Initially, Wordsworth country showed the Irish poet how his own childhood moments could not be called 'spots of time'. They had to be translated. They would become 'stations'² that encompassed the unshakeable facts of a sectarian state. The Irish poet's 'ministry' in 'Singing School', was not only a pun on those Wordsworthian ministries in *The Prelude*, but a revelation of his education that was Catholic and politicised. In that sequence from *North* there is no Wordsworthian splendid isolation, but rather exile and cunning. So the Irishman does more than pose questions about his own identity and experiences 'within the matrix of British Romanticism'.³ On the contrary, Heaney's telling of his own story has transcribed and shaped his Wordsworthian touchstone for present use. If Heaney's appreciation of Wordsworth's life at Dove Cottage can be called naive, the Irish poet's appreciation served to highlight the differences in their fosterage. Yet, in 'Feeling into Words', Heaney persistently reshapes and recasts to find in Wordsworth's 'hiding places' passage from *The Prelude* as a view of poetry reflective of his own.

The parallels Heaney makes between his own cottage retreat and Dove Cottage, in the 'Glanmore Sonnets', may misrepresent Wordsworth's poetic life as untroubled and free, as in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*, yet if Glanmore was not Grasmere, the parallel that Heaney makes tells us what the Irish poet dreams of, what he wishes for and desires. The sonnets may

¹ Seamus Heaney, *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (London: BBC, 1974), Appendix, p. 222.

² Seamus Heaney, preface to *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975), p. 3.

³ David Lloyd, 'Pad for the dispossessed', *Seamus Heaney: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Elmer Andrews (London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 88.

be murky and unresolved, but they are an example when the Irish writer struggled to sustain his relationship with the Romantic writer, even when he found himself diverted from his Wordsworthian path by a sense of responsibility to his 'age', and had to engage with the predatory circumstances in the North. Yet the 'Glanmore Sonnets' and *Field Work* (1979) are also softer exposures of the commitments of a full time poet from the North and they mark a tangled period of transition in Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry.

If in the 'Glanmore Sonnets' Heaney accommodates the strains of opposing directions, one which went the way of Wordsworth's dedicated life, the other which brought him face to face with the casualties in the North, then in 'The Sense of Place' (1977) Heaney seems to make a more assured contract with a Wordsworthian vision. In that essay, Heaney defends the Romantic poet's almost indefensible assertion that 'we are dwellers'.⁴ This commitment to Wordsworth's claim in 'Michael' meant putting to one side the available literary tradition of *dinnseanchas* in Irish writing. It meant coopting contemporary Northern poets into a Romantic tradition, poets such as Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon, who might be described as more cautious and less innocent about their notion of place and belonging. Heaney's argument is not entirely persuasive and has some of those limitations that the critic David Llyod has suggested. Indeed, it is one example, when his very aspiration of a relationship between his own and Wordsworth's poetry, might be the very thing that the Irish writer suffers from. For, it seems to me, it limits his responses to how he relates to place and to other poets. Wordsworth is not the only important literary shade in Heaney's writing. There are other mentors — Yeats, Eliot, Auden, Kavanagh and Plath. Yet, as I have suggested, and Heaney himself has admitted, his discussions of these poets has often been through a Wordsworthian lens. So we might want to question just how

⁴ Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 148.

broad is Heaney's indebtedness to the English literary tradition, if we agree that his understanding of these literary exemplars has been working within a Wordsworthian matrix.

Heaney continues his defence of Wordsworth's poetry, and hence his relationship with the Romantic poet in 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978). There the Irishman's argument goes some way to redressing Eliot's claims about Wordsworth in his essay 'The Music of Poetry' and *The Sacred Wood*. For Heaney, Wordsworth is more than a 'pedestrian poet' and Wordsworth's 'Preface' with its well rubbed phrase, 'emotion recollected in tranquillity', is more than just 'one poet's account of his recollections of his methods'⁵ but as Heaney claims 'the finest account I know of the problematic relation between artistic excellence and truth, . . . between poetry as impulse and poetry as criticism of life'.⁶ And in the 1998 keynote address, Heaney again acknowledges the significance of the 1802 'Preface', declaring that it 'has not dated and it is still a thrill to open it at random, almost anywhere and you can feel the conviction coming straight down the lines'.⁷

In the light of Heaney's confident and bracing celebration of Wordsworth's manifesto, in his 1998 keynote address perhaps we should be cautious about claims that his conceptions of Wordsworth, 'have been put through a Modernist or, in some respects, a post-modernist filter'.⁸ His appreciations of Wordsworth's writing may become more judicious, but to label Heaney as a Modernist or post-modernist may only put limits on his achievement. I would be equally

⁵ T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. xi.

⁶ Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 169.

⁷ Seamus Heaney, keynote address, *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge* (Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1998).

⁸ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998), p. 229.

hesitant in claiming that his poetry suffers from any Bloomian sense of anxiety, or that it only emanates or imitates English Romanticism or that he writes only as an Irish poet. It might be more helpful to describe the story of Heaney's relationship with Wordsworth's poetry as a response to a poet and an internalisation of poems, rather than the following of a poetic movement or a literary theory. And my title, 'Poet to Poet: Heaney's Wordsworth', or better still 'Heaney's Wordsworths', hints at just how individual the Irish poet's responses are.

What has sustained Heaney's engagement with Wordsworth's poetry has been the changes in the Irish poet's own poetic style and his increasingly politicised engagements with literature. As his own writing develops, so too did his appreciation of the Lake poet. What we have is perhaps more shifty than we suspected. In 'The Makings of a Music' (1978), *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988) and the 1998 keynote address, Heaney's comparison between Wordsworth and Yeats twists and contorts the English Romantic poet's compositional style from being the opposite to his appreciation of Yeats's, to being partly like the Yeatsian figure he created, to being the same as the Yeats's stylist we meet in 'The Makings of a Music'. It also seems ironic that politics or politically informed reading — which, at first, prevented Heaney from integrating the Romantic poet's writing into a Derry landscape — would intensify his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry and through a more politicised reading of *The Prelude* the Irish poet gave, in 'Place and Displacement', a more convincing account of the Romantic writer's personal and national conflicts, that intimates much of the Irish writer's own predicaments. It is in 'Place and Displacement' that Wordsworth becomes like that 'inner emigre',⁹ like that figure 'lost, unhappy and at home',¹⁰ which we find in Heaney's early-to-middle poetry.

⁹ Seamus Heaney, 'Exposure', *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 67.

¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, 'The Tollund Man', *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 48.

In my 'Introduction', I argued that to identify Heaney as an Irish Wordsworth might be a more useful description of the Irish poet. The phrase hints at the different directions and strains in his writing. It alerts us to the duality of Irish identity and the Irish literary tradition. It asserts, in a politically useful way, that a Derry poet can find literary mentors outside Ireland, that 'common ground'¹¹ is not necessarily a geographical entity, but lies in the shifting nature of the imagination. Indeed, we might think of a poem and the mind as a place, a piece of 'opened ground' — perhaps Heaney's covert phrase for the imagination. If the imagination is a country independent of the centre of power, it is not a place that evades realities. But, as with Heaney's poetry and prose, it responds to reality, not by obeying the conditions or representing them, but by remaining faithful to the reaction which these conditions provoke in the consciousness. This requires courage and a readiness to brave the challenge of "irrelevance", but Heaney found in Wordsworth's poetry, that no work of beauty and truth, which also emerges from an awareness of the prevalence of their opposites, can be called irrelevant. And it was through Wordsworth's example in *The Prelude*, that Heaney was able to recast his memories in *Seeing Things*.

In *Seeing Things* the bonds of earth are broken. The Irish poet chooses visions of air. He transforms the work-a-day into the extra-ordinary and unforeseen. In this volume memories are altogether more luminous than in the early autobiographical poems. By excluding those heavier details of his life, Heaney has, in fact, drawn his poetry closer to Wordsworth's. It is here, and perhaps for the first time, Heaney truly occupies those Wordsworthian realms, which he had first wanted to imitate in *Stations* (1975). Many of the poems are like Wordsworthian 'spots of time', in that they mark time and hold it open. What Heaney read in Wordsworth's poetry and prose allowed him to re-score the music of his childhood. Instead of the still sad music of a sectarian

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, 'Gifts of Rain', *Wintering Out* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 25.

upbringing. *Seeing Things* is about the pleasures and music of the finished poem and what might happen. If collections such as *The Spirit Level* (1996) and *Electric Light* (2001) signal quite different Yeatsian and Classical directions for the Northern Irish poet, the roads taken in these books do not diminish the fact that Heaney and Wordsworth are companion poets, as suggested by the 1998 keynote address. It is through his relationship with Wordsworth's poetry that Heaney's poems have explored and come through childhood and national trauma. It is through Wordsworth's life at Grasmere that Heaney was able to make Glanmore into his own poetic haven and through that most Wordsworthian of faculties, the imagination, that Heaney could see the marvellous in the ordinary, and stand with the Romantic poet, 'at the brink of wonder'.¹²

¹² Seamus Heaney, keynote address, *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge* (Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1998). 'Keynotes Address'

APPENDIX

William Wordsworth Lived Here (1974)

INTRODUCTION

The details of how Seamus Heaney came to make *William Wordsworth Lived Here* are not entirely clear. The programme was made for the BBC and their records state that it was written and narrated by Seamus Heaney, produced by David Haycock, directed by David Wilson, edited by David Thomas, that the camera-person was Henry Farrar and sound recorder Basil Harris. A Post Production Script of the programme, dated 7th October, 1974, states that the transmission date for the programme was Thursday, 28th November, 1974, at 8.45 pm, BBC 2. The archive records also indicate that the programme was part of a series, commissioned by Lady Antonia Fraser, which looked at a contemporary poet's responses to a writer they admired, and the place most associated with their life and writing. According to Robert Woof, curator at Dove Cottage, the actual filming of the programme began a few days before Heaney signed the visitors book at Dove Cottage, on the 24th May, 1974. The original master copy of the programme, which was stored at the BBC's archives in London, is no longer available. So, my transcript has been taken from a VHS video, made by Flying Fox Production, which has presumably been copied from the original master tape. It has also been checked against a post production script of the programme which is still available from the BBC's archives department in London.

All effort has been made to follow Heaney's words exactly. This has meant keeping true to Heaney's pronunciation of words, so, for example, 'it's' is retained instead of the more formal 'it is'. There have also been difficulties with structuring sentences and paragraphs. Sentences are

more or less constructed around the rhythms of Heaney's speech. Where he seems to take natural breaks or breaths new sentences and paragraphs have been created. Some sentences may seem clipped. For instance, 'the landscape became a mindscape' or, 'Dove Cottage. There it was, socketed into the hillside like an elemental power point . . .'. On other occasions, Heaney has a tendency to string together a number of complex sentences and in order to make these more manageable, it has been necessary to begin some sentences with the word 'And'.

Another difficulty has been Heaney's use of quotations. The Irish poet draws from a range of writers in the programme and occasionally he misquotes. For instance, reading from Dorothy Wordsworth's journal he uses the word 'room' instead of the plural 'rooms'. In another instance, Heaney's pronunciation of the place name Wythburn, from an entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's journal, is so indistinct, that I have had to rely upon the post production script of *William Wordsworth Lived Here* in order to clarify what Heaney said. On other occasions he changes some of Dorothy Wordsworth's words. Most telling is the change from the word 'coal' to 'peat', an example, perhaps, when the Derry poet seems to be letting his own experiences of rural life rewrite what he found in Wordsworth's.

Often Heaney alludes to or paraphrases from Wordsworth's poetry. Perhaps the most obvious examples are 'a country of the mind', which seems to be Heaney's equivalent to Wordsworth's 'a prospect of the mind' or the phrase 'his resolution, his independence as a poet' which seems to play on the title of Wordsworth's poem 'Resolution and Independence'. Sometimes the Irish poet's references may be drawn from Keats and his 'magic casement' or Hopkins's notion of 'inscape' or Yeats's poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. These have been footnoted and appropriate references given. Footnotes have been given to times when what

Heaney has to say about Wordsworth, such as he planted potatoes, or dug his own well, appear chosen to reflect upon his own poetry and experiences or when the Irish poet appears to recycle words and phrases in later writing— and it should be remembered that by 1974 Heaney was already living in his own stone cottage, Glanmore, in Co. Wicklow.

Footnoting Heaney's quotations from *The Prelude*, however, has not always been straight forward due to a number of textual difficulties. Such textual complications have already been outlined in my introduction but it is still worth raising the question: — which edition of *The Prelude* did Heaney use when making *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974)? I would argue that he used *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, edited by Ernest de Selincourt and revised by Helen Darbishire (1959). It would have had nostalgic significance for him as it was this edition that was available while he was a student and lecturer at Queen's University Belfast. But, perhaps more importantly, he acknowledges his debt to this text as a reader and then compiler of Wordsworth's writing in *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988), even though there had been many editions of *The Prelude*, since De Selincourt's, which corrected De Selincourt's errors and attempted to restore the original identity of the poem.¹ And Heaney's faithfulness to these editions of Wordsworth's poetry seems to suggest that the Irish poet's appreciation of the Lake writer does not lean towards a radical rereading of his texts and life but is, in fact, rather conservative.

Even if we might be sure that Heaney read De Selincourt's edition of *The Prelude*, it has not always been possible to identify which version of Wordsworth's poem has been used in the

¹ See, for example, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude. A Parallel Text*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (London: Penguin, 1971) which corrects a number of errors made by de Selincourt. It is noticeable that Heaney should select the Penguin edition of Wordsworth's poems and not *The Prelude* from which to construct his own edition of Wordsworth's poetry, or *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: OUP, 1984).

programme. Although I have consulted the post production script of the programme, on the whole, it cannot be relied upon for accurate quotations from Wordsworth's poetry. Often what appears in the transcript and what Heaney actually says in the programme do not align. Indeed, it might be argued the quotations from Wordsworth's text seem to have come from Heaney's memory rather than being a faithful reproduction from a chosen text. As a result my footnotes to my transcript refer to both the 1805 and 1850 versions of *The Prelude*, except for two instances when it has been possible to identify that the line 'a prospect in the mind' has been quoted from the 1850 version of the poem, while the 'The hiding-places of my power' passage has been taken from the 1805 *Prelude*. Heaney, it would seem, does not privilege either version of *The Prelude*. And it is worth remembering that no version of *The Prelude* is privileged in Heaney's writing until after the publication of *The Government of the Tongue* (1988) and 'Place and Displacement: Reflections on Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland' (1984) and there is no particular bias toward a single edition until Heaney came to select the poems and prose for *The Essential Wordsworth* (1988).

It may not be possible to determine Heaney's reasons for quoting from both the early and later versions of *The Prelude* in *William Wordsworth Lived Here*. He may have chosen to cite both texts because he was indiscriminate in his use of either version of the poem. His choice might be the result of not entirely being swayed by De Selincourt's claim that the 1850 version was the better composition,² or by the fact that W. J. Harvey's lecture, 'Poetic Vision in the World of Prose' (1966),³ to which Heaney acknowledges a debt of gratitude in 'The Makings of

² Ernest de Selincourt, 'Introduction', *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. lvii.

³ W. J. Harvey, 'Poetic Vision in the World of Prose', New Lecture Series, no. 29, Inaugural Lecture at Queen's University Belfast (Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 1966).

a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats',⁴ chooses to illuminate and favour the 1805 *Prelude* and so Heaney follows this academic example. To speculate further, it might be that some of Wordsworth's lines were more suited to Heaney's own purposes, or that he was in the process of developing his own sense of a perfect *Prelude* and believed a combination of both the 1805 and 1850 versions would create an ideal text.

Other references to Wordsworth's poetry, to his letters, prose, or to Dorothy Wordsworth's journals have been relatively straight forward. Among the texts that I have consulted for Wordsworth's poetry are *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose* edited by David Nichol Smith (1921), a minor edition, admittedly, but most importantly we know that Heaney read this while he was a student at St. Columb's College, Derry. I have also consulted *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (1952) which Heaney had access to at Queen's University Belfast. It should be noted that De Selincourt's and Darbishire's edition, like David Nichol Smith's, reprints the poems as they appeared in Wordsworth's final volumes of 1849-50, and are perhaps more representative of the figure of Rydal Mount than the poet of Dove Cottage, whom the Irish poet seems to admire most. Due to availability I have not been able to refer to Grosart's *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (1876), which I suspect Heaney read at Queen's University. So I have referred to *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by J. B Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (1974).

My references to Wordsworth's letters have also been taken from editions by De Selincourt which again were available to Heaney while he was a student and lecturer: *The Letters of William*

⁴ He remembers this lecturer with gratitude in his essay, 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 62.

and *Dorothy Wordsworth 1787-1805* (1935), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 1806-1811* (1937), and, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 1811-1820* (1937), as were *The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by De Selincourt (1941) and *Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals*, edited by Helen Darbishire (1958). Since neither of these editions were readily available, I have used *The Grasmere Journals: Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by Pamela Woof (1991). For further biographical details on Wordsworth's life I also read Mary Moorman's biography *William Wordsworth: The Early Years* (1957) which Heaney refers to in his essay 'The Makings of a Music: Reflection on Wordsworth and Yeats' (1978).⁵ Although I have made every effort to source the texts Heaney may have used I have not exhausted all the textual and inter-textual references in *William Wordsworth Lived Here* (1974). But it seemed that to supply many more footnotes in my transcript would have impinged upon Heaney's text.

⁵ Seamus Heaney, op. cit. p. 71.

William Wordsworth Lived Here (1974)

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.⁶

Before I came to Grasmere I had no firm visual impressions of the Wordsworth country because one of the striking things about Wordsworth is the way his imagination transformed the external scene into a country of the mind.⁷ The landscape became a mindscape.⁸ So it's a slight and delightful surprise⁹ to find the domain of his imagination¹⁰ so palpable and compact, so 'monumental' and 'serene'¹¹.

When Wordsworth arrived in Grasmere, at the age of twenty-nine, he had already written many of the poems which are now so indelibly present to our imaginations. It's hard to imagine a time when the English language didn't possess them, things like the 'Lucy Poems' and the *Lyrical Ballads*, work in which human emotions and natural forces coalesced in a bold new

⁶ William Wordsworth, 'Lines Written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), II, 75-83, p. 51-52.

⁷ Heaney would later reuse this expression, 'a country of the mind', an Irish equivalent to Wordsworth's 'prospect of the mind' in 'A Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 132.

⁸ 'Heaney's word, 'mindscape', may be a combination of the Wordsworthian mind, as haunt and region of his song, and Hopkins' term 'inscape', which he used to describe design or pattern. The word seems to be used by Heaney to stress the extent to which the landscape of the Lake District has been refashioned in the mind of the poet.

⁹ Heaney's expression, 'a slight and delightful surprise', seems to play upon the title of Wordsworth's poem, 'Surprised by joy', *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vol. ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. 3, p. 16.

¹⁰ Heaney's phrase, 'domain of his imagination', might recall the line 'Have felt his presence in his own domain' from *The Prelude* (1805) Book, VIII, 392 or 'I felt his presence in his own domain', (1850) Book, VIII, l. 257. See, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 284 or 285.

¹¹ Both words, 'monumental' and 'serene' are reminiscent of Wordsworth's diction in *The Prelude* (1805) Book, XII, l. 335 or (1850) Book, XIII, l. 334 — 'The Monumental hillocks, and the pomp' — *ibid.* p. 472 or 473 and 'Lines Written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' — 'Is lightened: - that serene and blessed mood' — *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. eds. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. 2, p. 259.

idiom. So, as he and his sister Dorothy approach the hamlet of Towne End in that stormy December of 1799,¹² he was at the height of his powers, both physically and mentally.

Dove Cottage. There it was, socketed into the hillside, like an elemental power point, an emblem of the poet's instinctive decision to make this new and nourishing connection with his origins. Years later Dorothy recalled their arrival: 'We had returned to our native mountains, there to live'.¹³ And their first impressions would have been formed in this downstairs room, which is something of a cross between a kitchen and a parlour. An old neighbour called Molly Fisher had come across the road to tidy up and to try and take the cold look off things for them, but she couldn't banish altogether the winter atmosphere of an unoccupied stone house in mid-December. 'We found no preparations', Dorothy wrote, 'except beds without curtains in the rooms upstairs and a dying spark in the grate of the gloomy parlour'.¹⁴ And there certainly is a cellar-like atmosphere in these downstairs rooms, and particularly through here in the kitchen and in the larder. And yet this cellar¹⁵ atmosphere seems to me completely appropriate for a man whose inspiration was stored in the cellars of his consciousness, a man who traced the birth of his poetic vocation to the noise of river water murmuring in his infant ear, a man whose voice is at its most characteristic and most powerful when it seems 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,/ With rocks, and stones, and trees.'¹⁶ The windows here are set like portholes just below

¹² Heaney's detail is probably taken from Dorothy Wordsworth's letter to Catherine Clarkson, 'December 23, [1815]'. See, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years II 1812-1820*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), letter 537, p. 687.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Heaney had already used a similar image of the 'cellar' to explain the surfacing of his own poetic mind in an introduction to a selection of his work: 'the cellars of the self . . . has been and will be my study so long as I continue to write'. See, *Modern Poets in Focus 2*, ed. Jeremy Robson (London: Woburn Press, 1971), p. 102.

¹⁶ William Wordsworth, 'A slumber did my spirit seal', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 72.

earth level. The natural growths involve themselves with the natural light. And in this larder, again with almost metaphoric force, a branch of the neighbouring stream runs underneath the flagstone. Now, practically, this meant that the food was always kept cool. But metaphorically it recalls submerged feelings always ready to 'spontaneous overflow',¹⁷ and it reminds us of Wordsworth's sense of hidden, flowing water as the element which had tutored his poetic voice.

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, lov'd
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams?¹⁸

Right from his earliest days Wordsworth's creative powers were nourished by the presence of water. In Cockermouth, where he was born in 1770, the river Derwent ran at the bottom of the garden. And later when he went to school at Hawkshead, a brook ran quietly through the garden of the cottage where he boarded. So, Grasmere, lying between his birth place and Cockermouth and the school in Hawkshead, was the hub of the landscape of his youth, a confluence of energies from the whole circumference of his mind and feelings, and the cottage at Towne End was a station¹⁹ from which he could contemplate those 'natural forms'²⁰ around which his feelings grew pure and steady. Certainly, Dove Cottage is admirably equipped to house the Wordsworthian enterprise of 'plain living and high thinking'.²¹ The cooking facilities in this kitchen would invite and encourage frugality. And in fact the Wordsworths were quite

¹⁷ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, op. cit. p. 154-171.

¹⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805) Book. I, ll. 271-276 or (1850) Book. I, ll. 269 -274. See, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised Helen Darbishire, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 16 or 17.

¹⁹ Heaney's description of Wordsworth's home as a 'station' foreshadows his volume of prose poems *Stations* (Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975) and his use of 'spots of time' to give a shape to the autobiographical moments in that volume.

²⁰ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805) Book. III, l. 124 or (1850) Book. III, l. 130, op. cit. p. 78 or 79.

²¹ Ernest de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 1933), p. 118.

poor during their time here. They lived on porridge and potatoes.²² for the most part, and they washed that down with their own home-made beer. The drinking of tea and coffee was a bit of a luxury for them, so that when they used this coffee grinder it would have been a special occasion. And in fact the drinking of tea was enough of a treat for them for Dorothy to record that in her journals.²³

She also records each time they receive a load of peat²⁴ from Wythburn. While they were here they more or less lived off the land in a way. They fished, they picked mushrooms, they picked herbs and on occasions they even improvised their own furniture. It's said that the Wordsworths' children, when they were very small, slept underneath here, underneath this draining board affair, in a meat basket — they improvised a cradle from a meat basket that the Wordsworths bought for two and six-pence and the children slept in here and when they were there they would be close to their father and mother in the down stairs bedroom through here.

This had been at first Dorothy's room, but when in 1802, William married Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy yielded ground and William moved in here with his new bride. The, the only pictures we have of her were painted much later in her life. In fact, Mrs Wordsworth has been overshadowed by her more passionate and articulate sister in law. It's Dorothy who has left us the letters and journals that illuminate their imaginative and domestic life together. It's Dorothy

²² Wordsworth digging potatoes has obvious significance for Heaney whose poetry begins with 'Digging' as a metaphor for the act of writing.

²³ Heaney may have taken these details from *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2 vols. ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London: 1952) but for the purposes of my thesis it has been easier to make use of *The Grasmere Journals*, ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford: OUP, 1991).

²⁴ Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere Journals* 'Saturday [17th]' May 1800, records, 'T. Ashburner brought us coals'. Heaney appears to have changed 'coals' to 'peat', a change which was more in keeping with his own semi-autobiographical poems at that time. See, 'Digging' in *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 13 -14.

whose spiritual presence is mirrored like moonlight on the surface and under the surface of William's poetry. In fact, we rarely think of William Wordsworth as a husband or a father. Yet in this room his three children were born and it was here that he lay listening for those pigmy darlings²⁵ broadcasting from the meat basket next door.

But in October, eighteen hundred and two, Dorothy moved upstairs like a usurped queen. The stairs may have been darker then because it wasn't until two years later that William cut a door on the landing to give access to the garden. This was a matter of fact Wordsworthian version of the 'magic casement',²⁶ opening onto the fairyland of the hillside. A late Romantic like Yeats might dream of his 'nine bean rows',²⁷ but a founding father like Wordsworth actually planted them. They'd a vegetable patch for things like broccoli, peas, radishes;²⁸ they trained runner beans along the wall.²⁹ They planted apple trees and shrubs and embroidered the whole area with wild flowers, ferns and mosses.³⁰ William also sank his own well³¹ — as ever in search of the secret enhancing water. He set these stone steps into the hillside to lead up to the terrace in the orchard.³² And up in the orchard he actually built a hut, rather like this one here, lined with

²⁵ Heaney's phrase 'pigmy darlings' seems to be taken from 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 114.

²⁶ John Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale' published in *Annals of the Fine Arts* (1820), p. 69. See *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard (London: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 346-348. Heaney has already used Keats's phrase in 'Mossbawn', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 22, to describe the 'technicolour splendours' of the comics he read as a child.

²⁷ W. B. Yeats, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', *Yeats's Poems*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (Dublin: MacMillan, 1989), p. 74.

²⁸ See *The Grasmere Journals: Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Pamela Woolf (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p. 269.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 270.

³¹ This detail had particular resonance for Heaney who celebrates the importance of wells in his poem 'Personal Helicon', *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 57-58. There are a number of entries in Dorothy Wordsworth's diary that refer to Wordsworth's well in April and May, 1802. See *The Grasmere Journals: Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Pamela Woolf (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p. 97.

³² *ibid.*

mosses, an 'Indian shed'³³ as he called it, a moss lined bower, where they sat drinking, perhaps tea or maybe just the atmosphere. As I say there's something monastic in the whole set-up. Wordsworth sitting composing here like a Celtic monk in his cell in the woods.³⁴

But walking was their favourite occupation.³⁵ Up Easedale, up Grisedale. Down to Ambleside for the post, round to Rydal for tea, up to Thirlmere to fish, or up to White Moss Common to watch the sun set in the lake. And on these walks they met the figures who would, sooner or later, find their way into the poetry — vagabonds, discharged soldiers, tinker children, an old leech gatherer.³⁶ His resolution, his independence³⁷ as a poet had to do with this capacity to be flooded by the durable, sustaining influences of rock, stream, hill, wind and cloud.

Of in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind.³⁸

But needless to say not all the composing was done out of doors. The upstairs sitting room often served as William's study. In the winter of 1807, 1808, Dorothy wrote that the severe

³³ William Wordsworth, 'Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain-ground'. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. eds. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. II, p. 23.

³⁴ Heaney's image of a poet as a scribe is one that he will later reserve for his semi-autobiographical poem, 'Alphabets'. Here he imagines the child - poet as 'the scribe/ Who drove a team of quills on his white field./ Round his cell door . . .'. See, *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 2.

³⁵ In 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats', Heaney would again return to Wordsworth walking around the gravel paths of his cottage home. In that essay the Irish poet associates the length and pace of his poetic line with the Romantic poet's gait and pace. Heaney calls this the 'pedestrian' Wordsworth, a description which knowingly puns on T.S. Eliot's comment in his 1942 memorial lecture, 'The Music of Poetry'. The link between poetry and walking is further developed by Heaney when he imagines 'walking round and round a space/ Utterly empty, utterly a source' in *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 32.

³⁶ We think of poems such as 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', 'The Discharged Soldier', 'We are Seven' and 'Resolution and Independence'. The reference to tinker children might even hint at Wordsworth's *J.F.* note on 'Lines left upon a seat in a Yewtree', vol. I, op. cit. p. 92.

³⁷ Heaney obviously puns here on the title of Wordsworth's poem, 'Resolution and Independence', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), p. 88.

³⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1850) Book, II, l. 367-371. See, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 62.

weather 'has often compelled my brother to the sitting room, when in a milder season he would have composed out of doors: indeed, I cannot but admire the fortitude and wonder at the success with which he has laboured in that one room common to all the Family, to all visitors and where the children frequently play beside him'.³⁹ This obviously was the 'beating heart'⁴⁰ of the Wordsworth house. In this room, the women did their needle work — Dorothy, for example, did the cross-stitch work on this cushion. In this room they transcribed William's poems. Uh, Mary did a fair copy of parts of the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* here, because William's original manuscripts — the quick of the poetic matter — were often fairly illegible. Or perhaps on the open grate they cooked a supper of porridge and sat together talking until four in the morning, with Coleridge, who had arrived late, or with Sir Walter Scott, or Southey, or De Quincey, who was to occupy this house when the Wordsworths left it.

When William Wordsworth spoke of the assuaging influence of 'the spirit of place'⁴¹ he used the phrase 'tranquil restoration'⁴² and that's exactly the effect that Dove Cottage has on me. For although it is now a museum it seems to exude a strange residual life — secluded, integrated with the ground, battened down for action, almost hutch like.⁴³ It suggests to me the incubating mind, the dedicated retreat of that decade, when Wordsworth founded his Romantic vision of man, 'the

³⁹ Dorothy uses the following phrase, 'his verses in open air', not as Heaney states 'he would have composed out of doors'. See, *The Letters of William Wordsworth: The Middle Years 1806-811*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), letter 318, p. 172.

⁴⁰ This phrase recalls those used by Wordsworth in *The Prelude* ((1805) Book. VII, l. 523 or (1850) Book. VII, l. 493, op. cit. p. 248 or 249. Also see, *The Excursion* Book. 6, l. 194, and *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* part II, XI.II, l. 2. See, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* 5 vols, eds. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), vol. V, p. 192 and vol. III, p. 402.

⁴¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805) Book. XI, ll.163 or (1850) Bk. XII, l. 120, op. cit. p. 438 or 439.

⁴² William Wordsworth, 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 49.

⁴³ Heaney reuses the image of a 'hutch' in 'Glanmore Sonnet II', *Field Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 34 and in the sonnet sequence 'Glanmore Revisited' in the poem '7 The Skylight', *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 37.

heart of man, and human life'⁴⁴ upon those 'beautiful and permanent forms of nature',⁴⁵ and in the poetic acts which engendered that vision coupled the childhood years of 'glad animal movement'⁴⁶ with those later years 'that bring the philosophic mind':⁴⁷

The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life: the hiding-places of my power
Seem open; I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all, and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future restoration.⁴⁸

William Wordsworth Lived Here: Seamus Heaney at Dove Cottage

Commissioned by: Antonia Fraser
Writer and Narrator: Seamus Heaney
Producer: David Haycock
Director: David Wilson
Sound: Basil Harris
Camera: Henry Farrar
Film Editor: David Thomas
BBC (c) BBC, 1974

⁴⁴ William Wordsworth, 'Michael', *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), l. 33, p. 74. Heaney uses 'Michael' again to discuss place, not as a picturesque backdrop but as 'active nature, humanized and humanizing' in 'The Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 145. See my chapter, 'Wordsworth: Essays and an Introduction', for a more detailed discussion.

⁴⁵ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *Wordsworth: Poetry & Prose*, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 153.

⁴⁶ William Wordsworth, 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey', *ibid.* p. 51.

⁴⁷ William Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood', *ibid.* p. 117. In 'Dylan the Durable?' Heaney compares Wordsworth's 'Ode' with Dylan's 'Fern Hill'. See *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 142.

⁴⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, (1805), Book, XI, l. 334 - 343. *op. cit.* p. 448-450.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

chronological

Primary Sources

- 'Nostalgia in the Afternoon'. *Gorgon*, no.3, 17 November, 1959.
- 'Aran'. *Gorgon*, no.4, 7 February, 1960.
- 'Dockers'. Groupsheet Two, 1963.
- 'Tractors'. *The Belfast Telegraph*, 28 November, 1962.
- 'Poor Man's Death'. *The Dubliner*, vol.2, summer, 1963.
- 'Mid-term Break'. Groupsheet One, November, 1963.
- 'Mid-term Break'. *Kilkenny Magazine*, no. 9, 1963.
- 'Mid-term Break'. *The Listener*, 29 July, 1965.
- 'Death of a Naturalist'. Groupsheet Four, 1964.
- 'Digging'. Groupsheet Four, 1964.
- 'Personal Helicon'. Groupsheet Five or Six, 1965.
- 'The Diviner'. Groupsheet Five or Six, 1965.
- 'End of a Naturalist'. *Poetry Ireland* 5, no.5, spring, 1965.
- 'Lint Water'. *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 August, 1965.
- Eleven Poems*. Belfast: Festival Publications, Queen's University, 1965.
- Death of a Naturalist*. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.
- 'Gate'. *The Dublin Magazine*, spring, 1966.
- 'Undine'. *The Listener*, 11 April, 1968.
- 'Orange drums: Tyrone 1966'. *The Listener*, 29 September, 1966.
- 'Canticles of the Earth'. *The Listener*, 22 August, 1968.
- 'Old Derry's Walls'. *The Listener*, 24 October, 1968.

- ‘England in Amber’. *The Listener*, 28 December, 1968.
- ‘A Lough Neagh Sequence’. *University Review*, winter, 1967.
- Door into the Dark*. London: Faber and Faber, 1969.
- Foreword*. ‘The Poetry of John Hewitt’. *Threshold*, summer, 1969.
- ‘Delirium of the Brave: — Seamus Heaney writes about the Ireland of Wolfe Tone and the persistence of anachronistic passions’. *The Listener*, 27 November, 1969.
- ‘King of the Dark’. *The Listener*, 5 February, 1970.
- Munro*. *Everyman*, no. 3, 1970.
- ‘Views’. *The Listener*, 31 December, 1970.
- ‘Introduction’. *Modern Poets in Focus*. London: Corgi Books, 1971.
- ‘Seamus Heaney praises Lough Erne’. *The Listener*, 4 February, 1971.
- ‘Whatever You Say, Say Nothing - Seamus Heaney gives his Views on the Irish Thing’. *The Listener*, 14 October, 1971.
- ‘A Poet’s Childhood’. *The Listener*, 11 November, 1971.
- ‘Belfast’s Black Christmas’. *The Listener*, 23 December, 1971.
- ‘Craig’s Dragoons (Air: ‘Dolly’s Brae’)’. *Review*, autumn-winter, 1971-1972.
- ‘After the Synge-Song - Seamus Heaney on the Writings of Patrick Kavanagh’. *The Listener*, 13 January, 1972.
- ‘The Naturalness of Ulysses’. *The Listener*, 2 March, 1972.
- ‘Jaggy Climbs’. *The Listener*, 26 October, 1972.
- Wintering Out*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972.
- ‘A New Life’. *The Listener*, 22 February, 1973.
- ‘Singing-School’. *Worlds: Seven Modern Poets*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974.
- ‘Opened Ground’. *Poetry Wales*, vol.II, no.1, 1975.
- ‘The Train’. *Poetry Wales*, vol.II, no.1, 1975.

- ‘Remembering Forecasts’. *The Listener*, 5 June, 1975.
- ‘Thunderlight’. *The Listener*, 5 June, 1975.
- ‘Hiatus’. *Little Word Machine*, no.7, 1975.
- ‘In the Country of Convention: English Pastoral Verse’. *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 July, 1975.
- Stations*. Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975.
- North*. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.
- ‘Seamus Heaney writes . . .’. *Poetry Book Society Bulletin*, no. 61, summer, 1975.
- ‘A Night in the Cold’. *Prospice* 5, 1976.
- ‘Two Poems: Glanmore I, II’. *Prospice* 5, 1976.
- ‘The North: Silent Awarenesses’. *Rambles in Ireland*. Old Greenwich: Devin-Adair, 1977.
- Glanmore Sonnets*. Hamburg: Monika Beck, 1977.
- ‘Secret nests of County Derry’. *The Listener*, 1 September, 1977.
- ‘Introduction’. *Collected Short Stories of Michael McLaverty*. Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1978.
- ‘The Kenneth Allott Lectures 1: The Makings of a Music: Reflections on the Poetry of Wordsworth and Yeats.’ Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1978.
- ‘The Poet as Christian’. *The Furrow*, vol.29, no. 10, 1978.
- ‘Sonnet’. *New Yorker*, 26 February, 1979.
- ‘Feeling into Words’. *Essays by Divers Hands: Innovation in Contemporary Literature*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1979.
- ‘From Glanmore Sonnets’. *Aquarius II*, 1979.
- ‘VIII’. *Aquarius II*, 1979.
- ‘Seamus Heaney writes . . .’. *Poetry Book Society Bulletin*. no. 102, autumn, 1979.
- Hedge School: Sonnets from Glanmore*. Oregon: Janus Press, 1979.
- Field Work*. London: Faber and Faber, 1979.

Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978. London: Faber and Faber, 1980.

‘Preface’. *The Crane Bag: Book of Irish Studies*. Dublin: Blackwater, 1982.

Among Schoolchildren. Belfast: John Malone Memorial Committee, 1983.

‘An Open Letter’. *Ireland’s Field Day*. London: Hutchinson, 1983.

Hailstones. Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 1984.

‘Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland.’ Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 1984.

‘Envy and Identifications: Dante and the Modern Poet’. *The Irish University Review*, spring, 1985.

‘Foreword’. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*. London: Methuen, 1986.

The Haw Lantern. London: Faber and Faber, 1987.

The Government of the Tongue. London: Faber and Faber, 1988.

‘Introduction’. *The Essential Wordsworth*. Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988.

‘Learning from Eliot’. *Agenda*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1989.

The Place of Writing. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.

‘Correspondents: Emigrants & Inner Exiles’. *Migrations: The Irish at Home and Abroad*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990.

The Tree Clock. Belfast: Linen Hall Library, 1990.

Seeing Things. London: Faber and Faber, 1991.

‘The Sense of the Past’. *History Ireland*, vol.1, no.4, winter, 1993.

The Redress of Poetry. Faber and Faber, 1995.

Crediting Poetry. Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 1995.

‘Place, Pastness, Poems: A Triptych’. *The New Salmagundi*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

The Spirit Level. London: Faber and Faber, 1996.

Television and Radio scripts written by Seamus Heaney

‘Today and Yesterday in Northern Ireland: People at Work; “Poet”.’ BBC Northern Ireland, 15 March, 1968.

‘The Long Garden’. *Explorations*. 17 January – 28 February, 1973

‘Bitter Honey’. *Explorations*. 17 January – 28 February, 1974.

William Wordsworth Lived Here. BBC, 1974.

Something to Write Home About. Flying Fox Productions, 1998.

Interviews with Seamus Heaney

Cooke, Harriet. ‘Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *The Irish Times*, 6 December, 1973.

Walsh, Caroline. ‘The Saturday Interview: Caroline Walsh talks to Seamus Heaney’. *The Irish Times*, 6 December, 1975.

Druce, Robert. ‘A Raindrop on a Thorn: An Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *Dutch Quarterly Review*, no. 9, 1979.

Randall, James. ‘An Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *Ploughshares*, vol.5, no.3, 1979.

O’Driscoll, Denis. ‘In the Mid-course of His Life’. *Hibernia*, 11 October, 1979.

Mills, Georgina. ‘Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *Strawberry Hill*, 5 February, 1980.

Haffenden, John. *Viewpoints: Poet’s in Conversation*. London: Faber and Faber, 1981.

Kinahan, Frank. ‘An Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *Critical Inquiry*, vol.8, no.3, spring, 1982.

Deane, Seamus. ‘Unhappy and at Home: an interview with Seamus Heaney’, vol. 1, no. 1, spring, 1977, *The Crane Bag: Book of Irish Studies*. Blackwater Press, 1982.

O’Donnell, Thomas & Campbell, Donna. ‘Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *Cottonwood 30*, spring, 1983.

Lee, Hermione. *Third Ear*. BBC Radio 3, 6 December, 1988.

Keyes, John. ‘A Dramatic Conversation’. *Fortnight*, 28 October, 1990.

Bragg, Melvyn. *The South Bank Show*. LWT, 1991.

Quinn, John. ‘My Education: Seamus Heaney’. *RTE Radio 1*, 11 and 18 April, 1996.

Miller, Karl. *Seamus Heaney in Conversation with Karl Miller*. London: *Between the Lines*, 2000.

Murphy, Mike. *Reading the Future: Irish Writers in Conversation*. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000.

Poetry Readings by Seamus Heaney

Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin: A Faber Poetry Cassette. London: Faber and Faber, 1983.

'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage'. Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1996.

Seamus Heaney, keynote address at *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge*. Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1998.

Secondary Sources

Books on Seamus Heaney

Buttel, Robert. *Seamus Heaney*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975.

Broadbridge, Edward. ed. *Seamus Heaney*. Copenhagen: Denmark Radio, 1977.

Curtis, Tony. *The Art of Seamus Heaney*. Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1982.

Morrison, Blake. *Seamus Heaney*. London: Methuen, 1982.

Corcoran, Neil. *Seamus Heaney*. London: Faber and Faber, 1986.

Bloom, Harold. ed. *Seamus Heaney: Modern Critical Views*. New Haven: Chelsea House Publications, 1986.

Maguire, Aisling. *Selected Poems of Seamus Heaney*. Harlow: Longmans, 1986.

McGuinn, Nicholas. *Seamus Heaney: A Students Guide to the Selected Poems: 1965-1975*. Leeds: Arnold-Wheaton, 1986.

Genet, Jacqueline. ed. *Studies on Seamus Heaney*. Caen: Centre de publications de l'Universite de Caen, 1987.

Andrews, Elmer. *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: All the Realms of Whisper*. London: MacMillan, 1988.

Foster, Thomas C. *Seamus Heaney*. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1989.

- Tamplin, Ronald. *Seamus Heaney*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989.
- Burris, Sydney. *The Poetry of Resistance: Seamus Heaney and the Pastoral Tradition*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990.
- Andrews, Elmer. ed. *Seamus Heaney: A Collection of Critical Essays*. London: MacMillan, 1992.
- Hart, Henry. *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progression*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993.
- Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of a Poet*. London: MacMillan, 1993.
- Wade, Stephen. *More on the Word-Hoard: the work of Seamus Heaney*. Nottingham: Pauper's Press, 1993.
- McGuinness, Arthur E. *Seamus Heaney: Poet and Critic*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994.
- O'Donoghue, Bernard. *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.
- Foster, John Wilson. *The Achievement of Seamus Heaney*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1995.
- Garrat, Robert F. ed. *Critical Essays on Seamus Heaney*. London: Prentice-Hall, 1995.
- Malloy, Catherine and Carey, Phyllis. eds. *Seamus Heaney: The Shaping Spirit*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996.
- Murphy, Andrew. *Seamus Heaney*. Plymouth: Northcote House Publishing, 1996.
- Allen, Michael. ed. *Seamus Heaney*. London: MacMillan, 1997.
- Corcoran, Neil. *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.
- Vendler, Helen. *Seamus Heaney*. London: Harper Collins, 1998.

Books that contain essays on Seamus Heaney's poetry and prose

- Weaters, William. ed. *The Nature of Identity*, Tulsa: University of Tulsa, 1981.
- Johnston, Dillon. *Irish Poetry after Joyce*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
- Garratt, Robert. F. *Modern Irish Poetry: Tradition & Continuity from Yeats to Heaney*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

- Longley, Edna. *Poetry in the Wars*. Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1986.
- McCormack, W.J. *The Battle of the Books*. Gigginstown: Lilliput Press, 1986.
- Hogan, Robert. Henderson, Gordon, Danaher, Kathleen. eds. *The Journal of Irish Literature*, vol.XVI, no.3, Spetember, 1987.
- Zach, Wolfgang and Kosok, Heinz. eds. *Literary Interrelations: Ireland, England and the World, 2: Comparison and Impact*. Tübingen: Narr, 1987.
- Vendler, Helen. *The Music of What Happens: Poems, Poets, Critics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Allen, Michael and Wilcox, Angela. eds. *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1989.
- Vance, Norman. *Irish Literature: A Social History*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Foster, John Wilson. *Colonial Consequences: Essays in Irish Literature and Culture*. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991.
- Corcoran, Neil. ed. *The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland*. Bridgend: Seren Books, 1992.
- Longley, Edna. *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994.
- Pattern, Eve. ed. *Returning to Ourselves: Second Volume of Papers from the John Hewitt International Summer School*. Belfast: Lagan Press, 1995.
- Vendler, Helen. *Soul Says: On Recent Poetry*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995.
- Vendler, Helen. *The Breaking of Style: Hopkins, Heaney, Graham*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Genet, Jacqueline and Hellegouarc'h, Wynne. eds. *Irish Writers and Their Creative Process*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1996.
- Corcoran, Neil. *After Yeats and Joyce: Reading Modern Irish Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Corcoran, Neil. *Poets of Modern Ireland*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999.

Articles in periodicals, journals and newspapers on Seamus Heaney's writing and life

- Luddy, Thomas E. 'Book Review'. *Library Journal*, 91, vol. 19 November, 1966.
- Bredin, Hugh. 'Book Review'. *Newman Review*, 1 December, 1969.
- Longley, Edna. 'Book of the Day: Poetry from the North'. *Irish Times*, 21 April, 1976.
- Press, John. "Ted Walker, Seamus Heaney and Kenneth White: Three New Poets". *Southern Review*, 5, summer, 1969.
- Monie, Begley. 'The North: Silent Awareness with Seamus Heaney'. *Rambles in Ireland*, 1977.
- Bloom, Harold. 'The voice of kinship'. *Times Literary Supplement*. 8 February, 1980.
- Agresto, John & Riesenburt, Peter. eds. *The Humanist as Citizen*. Chapel Hill: National Humanities Centre, 1981.
- Richard, Max. 'Fit for Digging: Seamus Heaney', *Helix*, 9/10, 1981.
- Clines, Francis X. "Poet of the Bogs: Seamus Heaney, Ireland's Foremost Living Poet Commands a Growing Audience". *New York Times Magazine*, 13 March, 1983.
- Gravil, Richard. "Wordsworth's Second Selves?", *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. xiv, no.4 autumn, 1983.
- Kemp, Peter. "The tools of the trade". *The Independent*, 24 June, 1987.
- Molino, Michael R. "Heaney's 'Singing School': A Portrait of the Artist". *Journal of Irish Literature*, 16, 3 September, 1987.
- Hart, Henry. "Crossing Divisions and Differences: Seamus Heaney's Prose Poems". *The Southern Review*, 25, no. 4, autumn, 1989.
- McLoughlin, Deborah. "'An Ear to the Line': Modes of Receptivity in Seamus Heaney's 'Glanmore Sonnets'". *Papers on Language & Literature*, vol. 25, no. 2, spring, 1989.
- Wilmer, Clive. "Jubilation and Truancy". *PN Review*, vol. 15, no. 6, 1990.
- Morrison, Blake. "Seamus Famous: time to be dazzled". *The Independent on Sunday*, 19 May, 1991.
- Carey, John. "Touching the Void". 'Books' section of *The Sunday Times*, 2 June, 1991.
- Crotty, Patrick. "Lyric Waters". *Irish Review*, 11 winter, 1992.
- O'Graddy, Thomas. 'Heaney Redivivus'. *Poetry Ireland Review*, spring, 1999.

Deane, Seamus. 'The Famous Seamus'. *The New Yorker*. 20 March, 2000.

Reference guides

Pearson, Henry. "Seamus Heaney: A Bibliographical Checklist". *American Book Collector*, 3 March-April, 1982.

Durkan, Michael. "Seamus Heaney: A checklist for a Bibliography". *Irish University Review*, vol.16, spring, 1986.

Durkan, Michael and Brandes, Rand. *Seamus Heaney: A Reference Guide*. New York: G.K. Hall, 1996.

Brandes, Rand. *A Bibliography of Seamus Heaney*. Yet to be published by The Gallery Press.

Wall, Richard. *A Dialect Glossary for Seamus Heaney's Works*. *Irish University Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, spring/summer, 1998.

Theses

Matthews, Steven. "'When Centres Cease to Hold': 'Locale' and 'Utterance' in Some Modern British and Irish Poets." Ph.D dissertation, University of York (England), 1989.

Horton, Patricia. "Romantic Intersections: Romanticism and Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry." Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University Belfast. 1996.

Editions of William Wordsworth's writing consulted

Smith, David Nichol. ed. *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.

De Selincourt, Ernest and Darbishire, Helen. eds. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.

De Selincourt, Ernest, revised by Darbishire, Helen. eds. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959.

De Selincourt, Ernest, revised by Saver, Chester L. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

Maxwell, J. C. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude: A Parallel Text*. London: Penguin, 1971.

De Selincourt, Ernest, revised by Moorman, Mary. Hill, Alan G. *The Letters of William and*

Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years II 1811-1820. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

Owen, W. J. B and Smyser, J. W. eds. *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

O Hayden, John. *The Poems*. 2 vols. London: Penguin, 1977.

Hill, Alan G. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years Part II 1829-1834*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

Wordsworth, Jonathan. Abrams and M. H, Gill Stephen. eds. *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*. London: Norton, 1979.

Darlington, Beth. ed. *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1982.

Gill, Stephen. ed. *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Wordsworth, Jonathan. ed. *The Two-Part Prelude*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Heaney, Seamus. ed. *The Essential Wordsworth*. Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988.

Secondary material on Wordsworth

De Selincourt, Ernest. *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933.

Moorman, Mary. *William Wordsworth: The Early Years 1790-1802*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.

Moorman, Mary. *William Wordsworth: Later Years 1803-1850*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

Harvey, W. J. 'Poetic Vision in the World of Prose'. Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 1966.

Maxwell, JC. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude A Parallel Text*. London: Penguin, 1971.

Harvey, W. J. and Grivil, Richard. eds. *Wordsworth: The Prelude*. London: MacMillan, 1972.

Jones, Alun R. and Tydeman, William. eds. *Wordsworth: Lyrical Ballads*. London: MacMillan, 1972.

McMaster, Graham. ed. *William Wordsworth*. London: Penguin, 1972.

Abrams, M.H. ed. *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Gravil, Richard. *The Wordsworth Circle* vol. xiv, no. 4, autumn, 1983.

Simpson, David. *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement*. London: Methuen, 1987.

Gill, Stephen. *William Wordsworth: A Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Woof, Pamela. ed. *The Grasmere Journals: Dorothy Wordsworth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Wu, Duncan. *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Wu, Duncan. *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Other Texts Consulted

Allestree, Richard. *The Government of the Tongue*. Oxford, 1674.

Waugh, Arthur. ed. Johnson, Samuel. *The Lives of the Poets*. London: World Classics, 1906.

Eliot, T.S. *The Music of Poetry*. Glasgow: Jackson, 1942.

Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.

Raine, Kathleen. *Coleridge: Poems & Prose*. London: Penguin, 1957.

Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963.

Stead, C.K. *The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot*. London: Hutchinson, 1964.

Beckett, J.C. *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.

Bruce-Mitford, Robert. trans. P.V Glob. *The Bog People*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1969.

Russel, Daniel. trans. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

Hill, Geoffrey. *Mercian Hymns*. London: Deutsch, 1971.

Robson, Jeremy. ed. *The Young British Poets*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1971.

Kavanagh, Peter. ed. *Patrick Kavanagh: The Complete Poems*. Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1972.

- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Keats, John. *The Complete Poems*. London: Penguin, 1973.
- Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. London: Paladin, 1977.
- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. London: Granada, 1977.
- Flanagan, Thomas. *The Year of the French*. London: MacMillan, 1979.
- Morrison, Blake and Motion, Andrew. eds. *The Penguin Books of Contemporary British Poetry*. London: Penguin, 1982.
- Devlin, Polly. *All of us there*. London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983.
- Farrel, Edith R. trans. Bachelard, Gaston, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Material Imagination*. Michigan: Braun-Brumfield, 1983.
- Deane, Seamus. *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985.
- Longley, Michael. *Michael Longley: Poems 1963-1983*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1985.
- Quinn, John. ed. foreword. Heaney, Seamus. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*. London: Methuen, 1986.
- Phillips, Adam. *Winnicott*. London: Harper Collins, 1988.
- Jeffares, Norman A. *Yeats's Poems*. London: MacMillan, 1989.
- Crozier, Murna. *Cultural Traditions in northern Ireland*. Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 1990.
- Fallon, Brian. ed. introd. Heaney, Seamus. *Collected Poems*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1990.
- Deane, Seamus. ed. *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. 3 vols. London: Faber and Faber, 1991.
- Kenneally, Michael. ed. *Irish Literature and Culture*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1991.
- Strachey, James trans. Strachey, James and Richards, Angela. eds. *Sigmund Freud: Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. London: Penguin, 1991.
- Longley, Michael. *Tuppenny Stung: Autobiographical Chapters*. Belfast: Lagan Press, 1994.
- Jolas, Maria. trans. Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

- Montague, John. *Collected Poems*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1995.
- Concise Ulster Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Deane, Seamus. *Reading in the Dark*. London: Cape, 1996.
- Eliot, T.S. *The Sacred Wood*. reprint. London: Faber and Faber, 1997
- Phillips, Adam. *Promises Promises*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000.
- Wieseltier, Leon, ed. Trilling, Lionel. *The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

alphabetical

Primary Sources

- ‘After the Synge-Song - Seamus Heaney on the Writings of Patrick Kavanagh’. *The Listener*, 13 January, 1972.
- ‘A Lough Neagh Sequence’. *University Review*. winter, 1967.
- Among Schoolchildren*. Belfast: John Malone Memorial Committee, 1983.
- ‘A New Life’. *The Listener*, 22 February, 1973.
- ‘A Night in the Cold’. *Prospice* 5, 1976.
- ‘An Open Letter’. *Ireland’s Field Day*. London: Hutchinson, 1983.
- ‘A Poet’s Childhood’. *The Listener*, 11 November, 1971.
- ‘Aran’. *Gorgon*, no.4, 7 February, 1960.
- ‘Belfast’s Black Christmas’. *The Listener*, 23 December, 1971.
- ‘Canticles of the Earth’. *The Listener*, 22 August, 1968.
- ‘Correspondents: Emigrants & Inner Exiles’. *Migrations: The Irish at Home and Abroad*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990.
- ‘Craig’s Dragoons (Air: ‘Dolly’s Brae’)’. *Review*, autumn-winter, 1971-1972.
- Crediting Poetry*. Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 1995.

‘Death of a Naturalist’. Groupsheet Four, 1964.

Death of a Naturalist. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.

‘Delirium of the Brave: — Seamus Heaney writes about the Ireland of Wolfe Tone and the persistence of anachronistic passions’. *The Listener*, 27 November, 1969.

‘Digging’. Groupsheet Four, 1964.

‘Dockers’. Groupsheet Two, 1963.

Door into the Dark. London: Faber and Faber, 1969.

Eleven Poems. Belfast: Festival Publications, Queen’s University, 1965.

‘End of a Naturalist’. *Poetry Ireland* 5, no.5, spring, 1965.

‘England in Amber’. *The Listener*, 28 December, 1968.

‘Envy and Identifications: Dante and the Modern Poet’. *The Irish University Review*, spring, 1985.

‘Feeling into Words’. *Essays by Divers Hands: Innovation in Contemporary Literature*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1979.

Field Work. London: Faber and Faber, 1979.

‘Foreword’. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Foreword. ‘The Poetry of John Hewitt’. *Threshold*, summer, 1969.

‘From Glanmore Sonnets’. *Aquarius II*, 1979.

‘Gate’. *The Dublin Magazine*, spring, 1966. .

Glanmore Sonnets. Hamburg: Monika Beck, 1977.

Hailstones. Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 1984.

Hedge School: Sonnets from Glanmore. Oregon: Janus Press, 1979.

‘Hiatus’. *Little Word Machine*, no.7, 1975.

‘In the Country of Convention: English Pastoral Verse’. *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 July, 1975.

‘Introduction’. *Collected Short Stories of Michael McLaverty*. Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1978.

- ‘Introduction’. *Modern Poets in Focus*. London: Corgi Books, 1971.
- ‘Introduction’. *The Essential Wordsworth*. Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988.
- ‘Jaggy Climbs’. *The Listener*, 26 October, 1972.
- ‘King of the Dark’. *The Listener*, 5 February, 1970.
- ‘Learning from Eliot’. *Agenda*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1989.
- ‘Lint Water’. *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 August, 1965.
- ‘Mid-term Break’. Groupsheet One, November, 1963.
- ‘Mid-term Break’. *Kilkenny Magazine*, no. 9, 1963.
- ‘Mid-term Break’. *The Listener*, 29 July, 1965.
- Munro. Everyman*, no. 3, 1970.
- ‘Nostalgia in the Afternoon’. *Gorgon*, no.3, 17 November, 1959.
- North*. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.
- ‘Old Derry’s Walls’. *The Listener*, 24 October, 1968.
- ‘Opened Ground’. *Poetry Wales*, vol.II, no.1, 1975.
- ‘Orange drums: Tyrone 1966’. *The Listener*, 29 September, 1966.
- ‘Personal Helicon’. Groupsheet Five or Six, 1965.
- ‘Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland.’ Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 1984.
- ‘Place, Pastness, Poems: A Triptych’. *The New Salmagundi*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.
- ‘Poor Man’s Death’. *The Dubliner*, vol.2, summer, 1963.
- ‘Preface’. *The Crane Bag: Book of Irish Studies*. Dublin: Blackwater, 1982.
- Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*. London: Faber and Faber, 1980.
- ‘Remembering Forecasts’. *The Listener*, 5 June, 1975.
- ‘Seamus Heaney praises Lough Erne’. *The Listener*, 4 February, 1971.

- ‘Seamus Heaney writes . . .’. *Poetry Book Society Bulletin*. no. 102, autumn, 1979.
- ‘Seamus Heaney writes . . .’. *Poetry Book Society Bulletin*, no. 61, summer, 1975.
- ‘Secret nests of County Derry’. *The Listener*, 1 September, 1977.
- Seeing Things*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991.
- ‘Singing-School’. *Worlds: Seven Modern Poets*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974.
- ‘Sonnet’. *New Yorker*, 26 February, 1979.
- Stations*. Belfast: Ulsterman Publications, 1975.
- ‘The Diviner’. Groupsheet Five or Six, 1965.
- The Government of the Tongue*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988.
- The Haw Lantern*. London: Faber and Faber, 1987.
- ‘The Kenneth Allott Lectures 1: The Makings of a Music: Reflections on the Poetry of Wordsworth and Yeats.’ Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1978.
- ‘The Naturalness of Ulysses’. *The Listener*, 2 March, 1972.
- ‘The North: Silent Awarenesses’. *Rambles in Ireland*. Old Greenwich: Devin-Adair, 1977.
- The Place of Writing*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- ‘The Poet as Christian’. *The Furrow*, vol.29, no. 10, 1978.
- The Redress of Poetry*. Faber and Faber, 1995.
- ‘The Sense of the Past’. *History Ireland*, vol.1, no.4, winter, 1993.
- The Spirit Level*. London: Faber and Faber, 1996.
- ‘The Train’. *Poetry Wales*, vol.II, no.1, 1975.
- The Tree Clock*. Belfast: Linen Hall Library, 1990.
- ‘Thunderlight’. *The Listener*, 5 June, 1975.
- ‘Tractors’. *The Belfast Telegraph*, 28 November, 1962.
- ‘Two Poems: Glanmore I, II’. *Prospice* 5, 1976.

‘Undine’. *The Listener*, 11 April, 1968.

‘Views’. *The Listener*, 31 December, 1970.

‘VIII’. *Aquarius II*, 1979.

‘Whatever You Say, Say Nothing - Seamus Heaney gives his Views on the Irish Thing’. *The Listener*, 14 October, 1971.

Wintering Out. London: Faber and Faber, 1972.

Television and Radio scripts written by Seamus Heaney

‘Bitter Honey’. *Explorations*. 17 January – 28 February, 1974.

Something to Write Home About. Flying Fox Productions, 1998.

‘The Long Garden’. *Explorations*. 17 January – 28 February, 1973

‘Today and Yesterday in Northern Ireland: People at Work; “Poet”.’ BBC Northern Ireland, 15 March, 1968.

William Wordsworth Lived Here. BBC, 1974.

Interviews with Seamus Heaney

Bragg, Melvyn. *The South Bank Show*. LWT, 1991.

Cooke, Harriet. ‘Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *The Irish Times*, 6 December, 1973.

Deane, Seamus. ‘Unhappy and at Home: an interview with Seamus Heaney’, vol. 1, no. 1, spring, 1977, *The Crane Bag: Book of Irish Studies*, Blackwater Press, 1982.

Druce, Robert. ‘A Raindrop on a Thorn: An Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *Dutch Quarterly Review*, no. 9, 1979.

Haffenden, John. *Viewpoints: Poet’s in Conversation*. London: Faber and Faber, 1981.

Keyes, John. ‘A Dramatic Conversation’. *Fortnight*, 28 October, 1990.

Kinahan, Frank. ‘An Interview with Seamus Heaney’. *Critical Inquiry*, vol.8, no.3, spring, 1982.

Lee, Hermione. *Third Ear*. BBC Radio 3, 6 December, 1988.

Miller, Karl. *Seamus Heaney in Conversation with Karl Miller*. London: *Between the Lines*,

2000.

Mills, Georgina. 'Interview with Seamus Heaney'. *Strawberry Hill*, 5 February, 1980.

Murphy, Mike. *Reading the Future: Irish Writers in Conversation*. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000.

O'Donnell, Thomas & Campbell, Donna. 'Interview with Seamus Heaney'. *Cottonwood* 30, spring, 1983.

O'Driscoll, Denis. 'In the Mid-course of His Life'. *Hibernia*, 11 October, 1979.

Quinn, John. 'My Education: Seamus Heaney'. *RTE Radio 1*, 11 and 18 April, 1996.

Randall, James. 'An Interview with Seamus Heaney'. *Ploughshares*, vol.5, no.3, 1979.

Walsh, Caroline. 'The Saturday Interview: Caroline Walsh talks to Seamus Heaney'. *The Irish Times*, 6 December, 1975.

Poetry Readings by Seamus Heaney

'Reading at Wordsworth Conference at Dove Cottage'. Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1996.

Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin: A Faber Poetry Cassette. London: Faber and Faber, 1983.

Seamus Heaney, keynote address at *Of Poets and Poetry Today: A Bicentenary Celebration of the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge*. Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1998.

Secondary Sources

Books on Seamus Heaney

Allen, Michael. ed. *Seamus Heaney*. London: MacMillan, 1997.

Andrews, Elmer. ed. *Seamus Heaney: A Collection of Critical Essays*. London: MacMillan, 1992.

Andrews, Elmer. *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: All the Realms of Whisper*. London: MacMillan, 1988.

Bloom, Harold. ed. *Seamus Heaney: Modern Critical Views*. New Haven: Chelsea House Publications, 1986.

Broadbridge, Edward. ed. *Seamus Heaney*. Copenhagen: Denmark Radio, 1977.

Burris, Sydney. *The Poetry of Resistance: Seamus Heaney and the Pastoral Tradition*. Athens:

Ohio University Press, 1990.

Buttel, Robert. *Seamus Heaney*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975.

Corcoran, Neil. *Seamus Heaney*. London: Faber and Faber, 1986.

Corcoran, Neil. *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.

Curtis, Tony. *The Art of Seamus Heaney*. Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1982.

Foster, John Wilson. *The Achievement of Seamus Heaney*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1995.

Foster, Thomas C. *Seamus Heaney*. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1989.

Garrat, Robert F. ed. *Critical Essays on Seamus Heaney*. London: Prentice-Hall, 1995.

Genet, Jacqueline. ed. *Studies on Seamus Heaney*. Caen: Centre de publications de l'Université de Caen, 1987.

Hart, Henry. *Seamus Heaney: Poet of Contrary Progression*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993.

Maguire, Aisling. *Selected Poems of Seamus Heaney*. Harlow: Longmans, 1986.

Malloy, Catherine and Carey, Phyllis. eds. *Seamus Heaney: The Shaping Spirit*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996.

McGuinness, Arthur E. *Seamus Heaney: Poet and Critic*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994.

McGuinn, Nicholas. *Seamus Heaney: A Students Guide to the Selected Poems: 1965-1975*. Leeds: Arnold-Wheaton, 1986.

Morrison, Blake. *Seamus Heaney*. London: Methuen, 1982.

Murphy, Andrew. *Seamus Heaney*. Plymouth: Northcote House Publishing, 1996.

O'Donoghue, Bernard. *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.

Parker, Michael. *Seamus Heaney: The Making of a Poet*. London: MacMillan, 1993.

Tamplin, Ronald. *Seamus Heaney*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989.

Wade, Stephen. *More on the Word-Hoard: the work of Seamus Heaney*. Nottingham: Pauper's Press, 1993.

Vendler, Helen. *Seamus Heaney*. London: Harper Collins, 1998.

Books that contain essays on Seamus Heaney's poetry and prose

Allen, Michael and Wilcox, Angela. eds. *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1989.

Corcoran, Neil. *After Yeats and Joyce: Reading Modern Irish Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Corcoran, Neil. *Poets of Modern Ireland*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999.

Corcoran, Neil. ed. *The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland*. Bridgend: Seren Books, 1992.

Foster, John Wilson. *Colonial Consequences: Essays in Irish Literature and Culture*. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991.

Garratt, Robert. F. *Modern Irish Poetry: Tradition & Continuity from Yeats to Heaney*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Genet, Jacqueline and Hellegouarc'h, Wynne. eds. *Irish Writers and Their Creative Process*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1996.

Hogan, Robert, Henderson, Gordon, Danaher, Kathleen. eds. *The Journal of Irish Literature*, vol.XVI, no.3. Spetember, 1987.

Johnston, Dillon. *Irish Poetry after Joyce*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

Longley, Edna. *Poetry in the Wars*. Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1986.

Longley, Edna. *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994.

McCormack, W.J. *The Battle of the Books*. Gigginstown: Lilliput Press, 1986.

Pattern, Eve. ed. *Returning to Ourselves: Second Volume of Papers from the John Hewitt International Summer School*. Belfast: Lagan Press, 1995.

Vance, Norman. *Irish Literature: A Social History*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Vendler, Helen. *Soul Says: On Recent Poetry*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995.

Vendler, Helen. *The Breaking of Style: Hopkins, Heaney, Graham*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Vendler, Helen. *The Music of What Happens: Poems, Poets, Critics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Weaters, William. ed. *The Nature of Identity*, Tulsa: University of Tulsa, 1981.

Zach, Wolfgang and Kosok, Heinz. eds. *Literary Interrelations: Ireland, England and the World, 2: Comparison and Impact*. Tübingen: Narr, 1987.

Articles in periodicals, journals and newspapers on Seamus Heaney's writing and life

Agresto, John & Riesenburt, Peter. eds. *The Humanist as Citizen*. Chapel Hill: National Humanities Centre, 1981.

Bloom, Harold. 'The voice of kinship'. *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 February, 1980.

Bredin, Hugh. 'Book Review'. *Newman Review*, 1 December, 1969.

Carey, John. "Touching the Void". 'Books' section of *The Sunday Times*, 2 June, 1991.

Clines, Francis X. "Poet of the Bogs: Seamus Heaney, Ireland's Foremost Living Poet Commands a Growing Audience", *New York Times Magazine*, 13 March, 1983.

Crotty, Patrick. "Lyric Waters". *Irish Review*, 11 winter, 1992.

Deane, Seamus. 'The Famous Seamus'. *The New Yorker*, 20 March, 2000.

Gravil, Richard. "Wordsworth's Second Selves?", *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. xiv, no.4 autumn, 1983.

Hart, Henry. "Crossing Divisions and Differences: Seamus Heaney's Prose Poems". *The Southern Review*, 25, no. 4, autumn, 1989.

Kemp, Peter. "The tools of the trade". *The Independent*, 24 June, 1987.

Longley, Edna. 'Book of the Day: Poetry from the North'. *Irish Times*, 21 April, 1976.

Luddy, Thomas E. 'Book Review'. *Library Journal*, 91, vol. 19 November, 1966.

McLoughlin, Deborah. "'An Ear to the Line': Modes of Receptivity in Seamus Heaney's 'Glanmore Sonnets'". *Papers on Language & Literature*, vol. 25, no. 2, spring, 1989.

Molino, Michael R. "Heaney's 'Singing School': A Portrait of the Artist". *Journal of Irish Literature*, 16, 3 September, 1987.

Monie, Begley. 'The North: Silent Awareness with Seamus Heaney'. *Rambles in Ireland*, 1977.

Morrison, Blake. "Seamus Famous: time to be dazzled". *The Independent on Sunday*, 19 May, 1991.

O'Graddy, Thomas. 'Heaney Redivivus'. *Poetry Ireland Review*. spring, 1999.

Press, John. "Ted Walker, Seamus Heaney and Kenneth White: Three New Poets". *Southern Review*, 5, summer, 1969.

Richard, Max. 'Fit for Digging: Seamus Heaney', *Helix*, 9/10, 1981.

Wilmer, Clive. "Jubilation and Truancy". *PN Review*. vol. 15, no. 6, 1990.

Reference guides

Brandes, Rand. *A Bibliography of Seamus Heaney*. Yet to be published by The Gallery Press.

Durkan, Michael and Brandes, Rand. *Seamus Heaney: A Reference Guide*. New York: G.K. Hall, 1996.

Durkan, Michael. "Seamus Heaney: A checklist for a Bibliography". *Irish University Review*, vol.16, spring, 1986.

Pearson, Henry. "Seamus Heaney: A Bibliographical Checklist". *American Book Collector*, 3 March-April, 1982.

Wall, Richard. *A Dialect Glossary for Seamus Heaney's Works*. *Irish University Review*. vol. 28, no. 1, spring/summer, 1998.

Theses

Horton, Patricia. "Romantic Intersections: Romanticism and Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry." Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University Belfast, 1996.

Matthews, Steven. "'When Centres Cease to Hold': 'Locale' and 'Utterance' in Some Modern British and Irish Poets." Ph.D dissertation, University of York (England), 1989.

Editions of William Wordsworth's writing consulted

Darlington, Beth. ed. *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1982.

De Selincourt, Ernest and Darbishire, Helen. eds. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*.

5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.

De Selincourt, Ernest, revised by Darbishire, Helen. eds. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959.

De Selincourt, Ernest, revised by Moorman, Mary, Hill, Alan G. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years II 1811-1820*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

De Selincourt, Ernest, revised by Saver, Chester L. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

Gill, Stephen. ed. *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Heaney, Seamus. ed. *The Essential Wordsworth*. Hopewell: Ecco Press, 1988.

Hill, Alan G. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years Part II 1829-1834*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

Maxwell, J. C. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude: A Parallel Text*. London: Penguin, 1971.

O Hayden, John. *The Poems*. 2 vols. London: Penguin, 1977.

Owen, W. J. B and Smyser, J. W. eds. *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

Smith, David Nichol. ed. *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.

Wordsworth, Jonathan, Abrams and M. H., Gill Stephen. eds. *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*. London: Norton, 1979.

Wordsworth, Jonathan. ed. *The Two-Part Prelude*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Secondary material on Wordsworth

Abrams, M.H. ed. *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.

De Selincourt, Ernest. *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933.

Gill, Stephen. *William Wordsworth: A Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Gravil, Richard. *The Wordsworth Circle* vol. xiv, no. 4, autumn, 1983.

- Harvey, W. J. and Grivil, Richard. eds. *Wordsworth: The Prelude*. London: MacMillan, 1972.
- Harvey, W. J. 'Poetic Vision in the World of Prose'. Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 1966.
- Jones, Alun R. and Tydeman, William. eds. *Wordsworth: Lyrical Ballads*. London: MacMillan, 1972.
- Maxwell, J.C. *William Wordsworth: The Prelude A Parallel Text*. London: Penguin, 1971.
- McMaster, Graham. ed. *William Wordsworth*. London: Penguin, 1972.
- Moorman, Mary. *William Wordsworth: Later Years 1803-1850*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Moorman, Mary. *William Wordsworth: The Early Years 1790-1802*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- Simpson, David. *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement*. London: Methuen, 1987.
- Woof, Pamela. ed. *The Grasmere Journals: Dorothy Wordsworth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Wu, Duncan. *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Wu, Duncan. *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Other Texts Consulted

- Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Allestree, Richard. *The Government of the Tongue*. Oxford, 1674
- Beckett, J.C. *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Bruce-Mitford, Robert. trans. P.V Glob, *The Bog People*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1969.
- Concise Ulster Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Crozier, Maurna. *Cultural Traditions in northern Ireland*. Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 1990.
- Deane, Seamus. *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985.

- Deane, Seamus. *Reading in the Dark*. London: Cape, 1996.
- Deane, Seamus. ed. *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. 3 vols. London: Faber and Faber, 1991.
- Devlin, Polly. *All of us there*. London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983.
- Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963.
- Eliot, T.S. *The Music of Poetry*. Glasgow: Jackson, 1942.
- Eliot, T.S. *The Sacred Wood*. reprint. London: Faber and Faber, 1997
- Fallon, Brian. ed. introd. Heaney, Seamus. *Collected Poems*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1990.
- Farrel, Edith R. trans. Bachelard, Gaston, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Material Imagination*. Michigan: Braun-Brumfield, 1983.
- Flanagan, Thomas. *The Year of the French*. London: MacMillan, 1979.
- Hill, Geoffrey. *Mercian Hymns*. London: Deutsch, 1971.
- Jeffares, Norman A. *Yeats's Poems*. London: MacMillan, 1989.
- Jolas, Maria. trans. Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.
- Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. London: Paladin, 1977.
- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. London: Granada, 1977.
- Kavanagh, Peter. ed. *Patrick Kavanagh: The Complete Poems*. Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1972.
- Keats, John. *The Complete Poems*. London: Penguin, 1973.
- Kenneally, Michael. ed. *Irish Literature and Culture*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1991.
- Longley, Michael. *Michael Longley: Poems 1963-1983*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1985.
- Longley, Michael. *Tuppeny Stung: Autobiographical Chapters*. Belfast: Lagan Press, 1994.
- Montague, John. *Collected Poems*. Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1995.
- Morrison, Blake and Motion, Andrew. eds. *The Penguin Books of Contemporary British Poetry*. London: Penguin, 1982.
- Phillips, Adam. *Promises Promises*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000.

Phillips, Adam. *Winnicott*. London: Harper Collins, 1988.

Quinn, John. ed. foreword. Heaney, Seamus. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Raine, Kathleen. *Coleridge: Poems & Prose*. London: Penguin, 1957.

Robson, Jeremy. ed. *The Young British Poets*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1971.

Russel, Daniel. trans. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

Stead, C.K. *The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot*. London: Hutchinson, 1964.

Strachey, James trans. Strachey, James and Richards, Angela. eds. *Sigmund Freud: Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. London: Penguin, 1991.

Waugh, Arthur. ed. Johnson, Samuel. *The Lives of the Poets*. London: World Classics, 1906.

Wieseltier, Leon. ed. Trilling, Lionel. *The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000.