Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

_____ _____

Margaret A. Greaves Date

"East of Ireland: Ideas of Europe in Postwar British and Irish Poetry"

By

Margaret A. Greaves
Doctor of Philosophy

English

_____
Geraldine Higgins
Advisor

_____
Deepika Bahri
Committee Member

_____
W. Ronald Schuchard
Committee Member

_____
Nathan Suhr-Sytsma
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____
Date

“East of Ireland: Ideas of Europe in Postwar British and Irish Poetry”

By

Margaret A. Greaves
B.A., Agnes Scott College, 2008

Advisor: Geraldine Higgins, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in English
2015

Abstract

"East of Ireland: Ideas of Europe in Postwar British and Irish Poetry"
By Margaret A. Greaves

When Seamus Heaney claimed in his poem "Punishment" that a person living in 1970s Northern Ireland could "understand the exact / and tribal, intimate revenge" behind the sacrificial killings of Iron Age Denmark, he alighted on a deeply ingrained but overlooked impulse in postwar British and Irish poetry. This dissertation contends that from 1960 to the present, British and Irish poetry has largely been shaped by the concurrent temptation and resistance to reading conflicts in foreign parts of Europe as distorted images of unrest at home. While studies of nationalism and poetry abound, the ways in which myths of Europe, rather than myths of the nation, inflect poetry and poetics has received scant attention. Yet Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, and Tony Harrison, along with many of their peers, rework ideas of Europe that inspire innovations in their theories and practices of lyric poetry.

My project traces the relationship between poetry and ethnic conflict in Europe from the generation of post-Movement poets writing shortly after World War II through poets writing in the international climate of the War on Terror. In the postwar era, sporadic violence in Europe has frequently been coded as "tribal" to quarantine it from the idea of a unified Europe that has supposedly abolished internal conflict. By the 1990s, this rhetoric of tribalism had come to dominate interpretations of conflicts as diverse as the Northern Ireland Troubles and the Yugoslav Wars. I examine poetry's unique intervention in the rhetoric of tribalism, beginning with Hughes's metaphor of the poet as the shaman of a tribe in crisis—a notion that Heaney recalibrates through Eastern European poets. I then read Hughes's and Heaney's influences through two poetic trends: Northern Irish elegies for Bosnian Genocide victims in the 1990s, and contemporary sequences of lyric poems that assume the voice of a war correspondent reporting from warzones in Eastern Europe. In charting the aesthetic logic that underlies representations of internal European conflict, my project argues that these poets challenge the European imaginary to situate their own poetics as central, rather than marginal, to ideas of Europe.

“East of Ireland: Ideas of Europe in Postwar British and Irish Poetry”

By

Margaret A. Greaves

Advisor: Geraldine Higgins, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in English
2015

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my mentors, past and present. Above all, this list includes my advisor, Dr. Geraldine Higgins, who oversaw my Ph.D. with the love, generosity, and humor of a close friend. I also feel especially lucky that the timing of my Ph.D. allowed me to be one of the final students of Dr. Ron Schuchard and the first Ph.D. student of Dr. Nathan Suhr-Sytsma. In different ways, both of them have helped me to stay honest and energized about the kind of scholarship I want to produce. I am also thankful to Dr. Deepika Bahri, who is often the first to trust any strange new idea I might bring to her. In this way, Dr. Bahri reminds me of my undergraduate thesis advisor, Dr. Rachel Trousdale, whom to this day I can email with long paragraphs of messy thoughts and get a reply that begins, "I think this makes a lot of sense." I am deeply grateful, too, to Dr. Christine Cozzens, who helped me to develop careful compassion for many ways of thinking and writing—my own included. I would also like to thank Dr. Ben Reiss for being a behind-the-scenes mentor, Dr. Walter Kalaidjian for his support of my teaching, and Dr. Pat Cahill for being a grounding presence throughout my time at Emory.

I would also like to thank many of my friends and colleagues, first and foremost Emily Leithauser and Richie Hofmann, who helped me to remember and cultivate a notion that I had always suspected: that scholarship is a creative act. They are and will continue to be two of the defining friendships of my life. I would also like to thank, for intellectual and moral support (in alphabetical order), Anthony Carlton Cooke, Sumita Chakraborty, Ben Clary, Lisa Chinn, Guy Conn, Katy Crowther, Shanna Early, Amy Elkins, Ashley Gray, Dustin Gray, Lindsey Grubbs, Perry Guevara, Sarah Harsh, Shannon Hipp, Bellee Jones-Pierce, Claire Laville, Kady MacFarlane, Michelle Miles, Cannoli and Philip Ozgur, Dominick Rolle, Joel Rozen, Caroline Schwenz, Molly Slavin, and Marlo Starr—and many, many others who would well exceed the page limit.

For the opportunity to access and use materials that I allowed me to create the dissertation I wanted to write, I would like to thank the Mellon Foundation, the Laney Graduate School, the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library of Emory University, Ciaran Carson, and Tess Gallagher. I would also like to thank Seamus Heaney and his family for the opportunity to be part of a major exhibition of his life and work. He exemplified gratitude and grace.

Finally, and most of all, I would like to thank my family. My husband, Cagri Ozgur, helped me summon the courage to admit how much I wanted to pursue an academic career. Without his support and wholehearted conviction that I should be in this field, I may never have undertaken the Ph.D. He has been my constant. My mother, Kristy Snedden, who has always encouraged me with humor and complete acceptance to pursue whatever it is that I love. My father, for his calm and steady belief in me. My cousin, Lucy Slevin, for keeping me centered and constantly entertained. My uncle, Dr. Bill Streever, for challenging the lines between the sciences and humanities. And my aunt, Dr. Kathryn Temple, for first handing me a book of Blake poems when I was a child so I would stay quiet while she taught an English seminar at Georgetown—a role I hoped, even then, might one day be possible for me.

CONTENTS

Introduction

When asked in a *PBS NewsHour* interview in 2000 if the "honor-bound, blood-stained, vengeance-driven" culture of *Beowulf* reminded him of Ireland, Seamus Heaney refused to take the bait. He replied diplomatically but unequivocally, "Well, no. Ireland…[is] in a different kind of cultural situation." Instead, he suggested resonances between *Beowulf* and another fringe region of Europe, one often aligned with Ireland in the British and Anglo-Irish literary imaginations: the Balkans. Heaney compared the ethnic violence of the 1990s with the tribal allegiances of the Anglo-Saxon world, saying that what does strike the contemporary reader of *Beowulf*

> is that sense of small ethnic groups living together with memories of wrongs on each side, with a border between them that may be breached. I mean, after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, after Bosnia and Kosovo and so on, the feuds between the Swedes and the Geats, these little dynastic, ethnic, furious battles strike a chord.[1]

Heaney allows that "there is of course an ethnic energy and a vengefulness from the past" in Northern Ireland, but that these instincts are "more widespread than that"—radiating at least as insistently from southeastern Europe. By displacing his response onto former Yugoslavia, Heaney suggests that Ireland's historically specific situation should not be read too faithfully into the primitive landscapes of *Beowulf*.

This anecdote illustrates a deeply ingrained but overlooked impulse in British and Irish poetry from 1960 to the present. By juxtaposing remote regions of Europe, poets

---

[1] Elizabeth Farnsworth, "The New Beowulf," *PBS NewsHour* interview with Seamus Heaney, March 28, 2000, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june00/beowulf.html.

simultaneously comment on and deflect categorization of their own national or cultural situations. This dissertation contends that postwar British and Irish poetry has largely been shaped by the concurrent temptation and resistance to reading conflicts in foreign parts of Europe as distorted images of unrest at home. Much is at stake in these inclinations, from ethical concerns of cross-cultural appropriation to ramifications for translation studies. Here, however, I am predominately interested in the aesthetic logic that underlies these poets' investments in ideas of Europe. In responding to ethnic conflicts in parts of the continent imagined as atavistic, Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, and Tony Harrison, along with many of their peers, envision ideas of Europe that situate their own poetics as central, rather than marginal, to the European imaginary.

Lyric poetry from Britain and Ireland has responded powerfully to the discourse of primordialism that has shaped public opinion and even foreign policy in Europe's postwar problem spots. While studies of nationalism and poetry abound, the way in which myths of Europe rather than myths of the nation shape poetry has received scant attention. Yet in the postwar era, poets insistently develop and challenge ideas of Europe to argue for the importance of poetry in times of violence. In contrast to the provincial bias that Robert Crawford identifies in modernism, postwar poets tend to look outward to Europe to develop regional histories.[2] The meticulous maps of London and Dublin disappear, replaced by Jutland Peninsulas superimposed on Irish bogs. In this period, the particularly British and Irish tendency to identify with other fringe regions of Europe has a profound effect on poetic subject matter and craft.

---

[2] Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 270.

The chapters that follow trace the relationship between poetry and violence in Europe from the generation of post-Movement poets writing shortly after World War II through poets writing in the international climate of the War on Terror. In my analyses, I illuminate connections among postcolonial theory, the idea of Europe, and the rhetoric of tribal warfare as it emerges in lyric poetry. What I describe as a discourse of tribalism challenges divisions between the European and the postcolonial, suggesting that postcolonial readings of Irish poetry should not exclude its networks of British and European affinities.

Poetry and the Tribal Warfare Thesis

This project was sparked by the final two stanzas of Heaney's poem "Punishment" from his controversial volume *North*. Meditating on the preserved body of a sacrificial victim in Iron Age Denmark, the speaker likens the ritualistic violence of ancient Northern Europe to the intercommunal violence of the Troubles. Upsetting his claim to the "civilized" vantage point of a modern citizen of Europe, the speaker confesses to empathic identification with the primordial urge for revenge:

> I who have stood dumb
> when your betraying sisters,
> cauled in tar,
> wept by the railings,
>
> who would connive
> in civilized outrage

yet understand the exact

and tribal, intimate revenge.[3]

Accompanying Heaney's worksheets of *North* in the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library of Emory University is a newspaper clipping of an IRA punishment victim captioned "Tarred and shaven: Girl who dared love a British solider. Bogside, 1971."[4] The disturbing image of a young woman with hands bound and head shaved evokes the "little adulteress" of Heaney's poem, a figure based on the 2,000-year-old "Windeby Girl" found preserved in bog in Germany in 1952.[5] While *North* does at times perpetuate mythic rather than historically grounded interpretations of contemporary violence, as its detractors have argued, the newspaper clipping adds a dimension of unflinching realism.[6] These final stanzas infamously led Ciaran Carson to call Heaney "the laureate of violence—a mythmaker, an anthropologist of ritual killing" in his scathing review of *North*.[7] When I first encountered these same stanzas, I heard something else in the lines "tribal, intimate revenge": strange echoes not only from Europe's northernmost reaches,

---

[3] Seamus Heaney, "Punishment," in *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 31. All further references will be abbreviated in the body of the text as *N*.

[4] Photocopied worksheets of *North*, with clipping "Tarred and shaven," circa 1972, box 74, folder 8, Seamus Heaney papers, The Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[5] Heaney first learned of the Windeby Girl in P.V. Glob's *The Bog People: Iron-Age Man Preserved* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), which inspired his sequence of bog poems. In fact, recent DNA testing by anthropologist Dr. Heather Gill-Robinson has shown that the Windeby Girl was actually a sixteen-year-old boy whose hair likely fell out, rather than a fourteen-year-old girl whose head was shaven in punishment for adultery.

[6] I take up the terms "mythic" and "historical" in Chapter 1, challenging the critical tendency to use "myth" as synonymous with "fiction" and "history" as synonymous with "fact."

[7] Ciaran Carson, "Escaped from the Massacre?", *The Honest Ulsterman* 50 (Winter 1975), 183. Carson goes on to complain that the analogy Heaney draws between ancient Northern Europe and contemporary Northern Ireland suggests "suffering like this is natural; these things have always happened; they happened then, they happen now, and that is sufficient ground for understanding and absolution. It is as if there never were and never will be any political consequences of such acts; they have been removed to the realm of sex, death, and inevitability…"

but also from its southeastern ones, echoes that propel the afterlife of the poem into the realm of the civic more than the mythic. The lines evoked the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, with the media's tendency to explain away the violence among Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks as an instance of "tribal warfare" unfathomable to rational outsiders.[8] I sensed, in other words, awareness in the poem of the media's representation of contemporary violence in Europe as tribal warfare. As Ian McBride has noted, prior to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 the British press frequently perpetuated "the notion that the (northern) Irish are essentially tribal, driven to blood-sacrifice in order to appease the dark gods of their ancestors."[9] In fact, journals and magazines in which Heaney first published some of his poems of the 1960s and 1970s, including the *New Statesman* and the *Listener*, ran articles that took the explanation of tribal warfare for granted.

This "tribal warfare thesis," as I term it, was applied pervasively both to Yugoslavia and to Northern Ireland. Articles in British and American papers covering the Troubles and the Yugoslav Wars from the 1960s-1990s have such similarly suspect titles as "Europe's Restive Tribes," "Tribal Warfare," and "The White Tribes of Europe."[10]

---

[8] The Yugoslav Wars refer to a succession of military conflicts predominately in Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Macedonia from 1991-2001. When Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, further independence movements followed that led to violence among Serbs (who overwhelmingly identified as Orthodox), Bosniaks (a term for Muslim residents of Bosnia), and Croats (who identified as Catholic). "Tribal warfare," and even ethnic division, do not adequately account for the causes of these wars, as approximately one third of urban households were of mixed religious and ethnic identification at the time of the independence movements. However, the term "ethnic conflict" is the most commonly accepted way to describe the wars, as leaders framed nationalist arguments in terms of ethnic identification, rhetoric that led to the "ethnic cleansing" of Bosniaks and Croat Catholics by Bosnian Serb forces from 1991-1995. For background on the Yugoslav Wars and interpretations of predominant theories of their causes, see Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Penguin, 1999).

[9] Ian McBride, *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5. I explore the relationship between poetry and depictions of tribal warfare in the British press in some detail in Chapter 1.

[10] C.L. Sulzberger, "Europe's Restive Tribes," in the *New York Times*, January 18, 1976, refers specifically to Northern Ireland, but also to separatist movements in Europe more broadly; Lorraine Stone,

These articles and others all claimed, in some way or another, that tensions brought on by intimate proximity between neighboring tribes had unleashed ancient primordial hatreds into the present. The term "tribe" is a term that has been most often deployed by European imperialists to describe (and, indeed, often invent) the people groups they colonized in Africa and Southeast Asia. What were the motivations behind depicting people who were (overwhelmingly) visibly "white" and living in Europe in the late twentieth century as "tribes"? And what was at stake for poetry?

I began to wonder if poets had remarked on the parallels between how these conflicts at the far edges of Europe's imagined borders were cast. As it turned out, they had, and not just in Ireland: in addition to the Irish and Northern Irish poets who wrote Northern Irish-themed elegies for Yugoslavia (the topic of Chapter Three), Russian-American poet Joseph Brodsky, Lithuanian-Polish poet Czesław Miłosz, Welsh poet Gillian Clarke, and others had all made these connections between the "tribal" violence of Northern Ireland and former Yugoslavia. I came to see so-called tribal warfare in Europe as a matter not only for anthropology, but also for poetry.

Prior to the appearance of the tribal warfare thesis in the mainstream media in the 1960s, the metaphor of the poet as a spokesperson for a tribe was already familiar through high modernist poetics. Ezra Pound worried that the Dantean schema of his *Cantos* would become "mere matter for little Blackmurs and Harvud instructors *unless* I pull it off as reading matter, singing matter, shouting matter, the tale of the tribe."[11] In

---

"Tribal Warfare," *Newsday*, December 8, 1991, blames the upheavals in Yugoslavia on "intertribal warfare with roots buried deep in antiquity"; Rian Malan, "The White Tribes of Europe," The *Guardian*, April 3, 1993, likens the "tribal warfare" of the Troubles to Bosnia.

[11] Ezra Pound, Letter to John Lackay Brown, April 1937, in *The Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907-1941*, ed. D.D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 386. For a discussion of Pound's high modernist adaptation of Mallarmé's "*Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu*," see Michael André Bernstein,

crafting a "tale of the tribe," Pound sought to offer readers guidelines for participation in communal life, insisting on the public value of poetry. T.S. Eliot similarly reworked Mallarmé's "*Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu*" for *Four Quartets*. His unfaithful translation—"to purify the dialect of the tribe"—puts *Four Quartets* into dialogue with both Pound and Mallarmé.[12] Morag Shiach argues that Eliot's phrase aims to "to evoke histories and texts that stage a poetic argument about the social function and the poetic function of language."[13] Indeed, modernist poetry that draws on metaphors of the tribe often aims to insert poetry into public, collective life. The poetic leader of the tribe was not exclusively a male role; H.D. also crafted her poetic identity in these terms. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, she positions herself as a spiritual mediator for a tribe suffering through World War II, the quintessential poet-prophet of the Pound era.[14]

In the postwar British context, the poet-prophet entered the realm of "lyric" rather than primarily "epic" poetry.[15] Ted Hughes yoked these modernist sensibilities to his anthropological interests in shamanism among tribal peoples, developing a poetics rooted

---

The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 3-25.

[12] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in *T.S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, 1952), 141.

[13] Morag Shiach, "'To Purify the dialect of the tribe': Modernism and Language Reform," *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 1 (2007): 21.

[14] For a discussion of H.D.'s sense of the lyric poet as a spiritual leader of a tribe, see Adalaide Morris, "Signaling: Feminism, Politics, and Mysticism in H.D.'s War Trilogy," *Sagatrieb* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1990): 121-33.

[15] In using these terms, I do not mean to suggest that there is an organic distinction between "lyric" and "epic." As Gérard Genette argues, the idea of lyric as a genre came about through eighteenth- and nineteenth-century misattributions of a theory of three "natural" generic modes to Plato and Aristotle: the dramatic, the epic, and the lyric. Nowhere in his reading of the classics, however, can Genette find reference to the lyric genre as its modern proponents understood it. Rather, Genette claims, lyric comes into being as a category contemporaneously with, and as a byproduct of, European modernity. See Gérard Genette, "The Architext," trans. Jane E. Lewin, in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 17-27. I will take up the term "lyric" in more detail throughout this introduction and dissertation.

in the notion of the poet as a shaman of a tribe in crisis. Hughes's enthusiasm led to the designation of a group of English poets as the "Tribe of Ted," a label that Heaney strenuously opposed when Anthony Thwaite applied it to him in a review.[16] Heaney would take up and adapt Hughes's metaphor of the poet-tribal leader as the British press began to brand the Troubles as tribal warfare in the late 1960s. In this period, the notion of poet as leader of a tribe collided with the discourse of tribal warfare. Heaney's poetry of the late 1960s and early 1970s often shows the idea of the tribalism hovering between the mythic and civic registers as he resisted the role of spokesperson for the Catholic nationalist "tribe" (the topic of the first chapter). This political climate led Heaney, in part following Hughes's example, to Eastern European poetry. The consequence of this turn, with its dual effects on Heaney's theory of lyric and ideas of Europe, is the subject of Chapter Two. Turning from broad myths of Northern and Eastern Europe, Chapter Three looks specifically at poetry that challenges the tribal warfare thesis of the Yugoslav Wars through a (northern) Irish lens, considering elegies by Chris Agee, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Medbh McGuckian, and Harry Clifton, among others. Through the 1990s and the current millennium, the Hughesian poet-shaman frequently appears in the guise of a foreign war correspondent, using lyric poetry to report conflicts in Eastern Europe back to the British Isles. As Chapter Four explores, "tribe" may no longer be the operative word in poems like Tony Harrison's "Three Poems for Bosnia" or Ciaran Carson's "The War Correspondent," but issues of an uncertain European identity contained within the notion of the tribe remain.

[16] Anthony Thwaite, "Country Matters," *New Statesman* 77 (27 June 1969): 914.

Modernity and the Tribe

When used to discuss Europe, "tribe" seems to be a coded term for not-quite-Europe. The tribal warfare thesis, after all, has dominated discussions of European conflicts that seem removed from the center, such as the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the breakup of the Soviet Bloc, and the Yugoslav Wars. But there are many ways of being not-quite-Europe, and the dominant explanation that certain regions remain pre-modern does not tell enough of the story. Arjun Appadurai compellingly suggests that the hypothesis of tribal warfare emanates from a belief in the "primordial bug": societies bitten by the primordial bug are "attached in infantile ways to blood, language, religion, and memory," making them "violence-prone and ill-equipped for participation in mature societies."[17] Appadurai rejects the primordial bug as an inherent trait. While the European project of modernity seems to want to eliminate primordialism in favor of reason and democracy, according to Appadurai, the very existence of the nation-state depends upon exploiting and spreading primordialist sentiment as a means to control colonized populations.[18] Of course, Europe is not a nation-state, and Ireland and southeastern Europe are not its colonies (although both have experienced conquest and colonization within Europe). But the tribal warfare thesis seems to function similarly within Europe as in its more common deployment by a colonizing power to describe colonized peoples of the so-called Third World. The primordialist bug, then, must not be the chief factor at work in the tribal warfare thesis.

---

[17] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 143.

[18] Ibid., 146.

Appadurai's theory breaks down in the European context. The tribal warfare thesis would appear to assist with the project of European modernity, quarantining the violent, less developed regions that fall within European geography in a pre-modern discursive space. This formulation, though, reinscribes the division between tradition and modernity. Modernity is often associated with the rise of Europe as an idea, which can overwrite distinct ways of thinking about time, history, and community that exist within the political or geographical space called Europe. Dipesh Chakrabarty maintains that the thought processes that create the idea of history are the very ones that invent Europe as a "sovereign, theoretical subject."[19] History itself, as part of the larger project of modernity, becomes enmeshed with, indeed almost synonymous with, the idea of Europe. But in pointing to the intractability of discourses of modernity and discourses of Europe, Subaltern Studies risks making "modernity" sound like a list of often contradictory concepts rather than the totalizing project that criticisms of modernity depend on. As Chakrabarty has it,

> Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history. One simply cannot think of political modernity without these and other related concepts that found a climactic form in the course of the European Enlightenment and the nineteenth century.[20]

---

[19] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27.

[20] Ibid., 4.

The consequences of this argument are enormous and alluring, unveiling historicism itself as a cultural value rather than a universal norm and thus advocating ways of conceiving time and place that do not rely on teleological notions of development.

But in his aim to provincialize Europe, Chakrabarty risks reducing the complexity of Europe in ways that recall orientalist discourses that reduce India to an image of Europe's other. Historian Frederick Cooper convincingly contests Chakrabarty's version of Europe, arguing, "Instead of looking at the conflicting ways in which inhabitants of this province actually thought, he has been content to let the most simplistic version of the Enlightenment stand in for the European Province's much more convoluted history."[21] Nevertheless, Cooper's criticism does not fully take into account the aims of Chakrabarty's project; Chakrabarty is interested in a *representation* more than a *condition* of Europe, attempting to account for a "hyperreal" discursive space rather than the lived experiences of people there.[22] This distinction is, in fact, one of the slippages in the term "modernity" that Cooper calls attention to. He argues that the term has been applied so variously and loosely, wavering between condition and representation, ideology and epoch, that it risks at once losing interpretive power and distorting the historical situations its scholarly proponents hope to illuminate.[23] One consequence has been a warped understanding not only of the history of colonization but also of European history in all of its often bizarre and contradictory particularity; indeed, "viewing the history of Europe through the frame of modernity obscures the ongoing, unresolved

---

[21] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 122.

[22] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 27.

[23] Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 127.

conflicts at the heart of European culture and politics."[24] Discourses of modernity can eclipse the many fractures within the European experience, fractures that have often led to deep suspicion about a culturally, politically, or economically united Europe.[25] The equation of Europe with modernity, then, does not account for the state of Europe in conflict. Because modernity is defined by its exclusions, it is an inadequate framework to deal with the crises of the present.

Something else, then, motivates insufficient explanations of postwar violence in Europe as tribally motivated. "Tribe" does not quite align with pre-modern. Instead, the term and its variations—tribal, tribalism, and tribal warfare—suggest political fracturing. The term "tribalism," I venture, tends to refer to factions, divisions, and separatist movements within Europe. Obviously, Irish independence, Northern Irish movements for a united Ireland, Scottish independence, and Welsh nationalism all resonate with internal European division. But England has also long been cast as not fully of Europe, largely due to the British Isles' geographic and political distance from mainland Europe, leading to the rejection of the Euro and discussions of leaving the European Union. The English, Irish, Northern Irish Catholics, Northern Irish Protestants, Welsh, Scots, and Cornish have all at various times been seen as splintered factions, more interested in these smaller alliances than in honoring the unity of a larger political formation such as the United Kingdom or the European Union. Often, this separatist quality is described as pre-modern or primordial, but not always. The bigger issue of tribalism is resistance to a politically sanctioned notion of cultural or economic unity. A "tribe" refers to a group that pursues

---

[24] Ibid., 142.

[25] For an authoritative discussion of ideological and practical challenges to European integration, see Chiara Bottici and Benoit Challand, "Europe, Identity, and Legitimacy" in *Imagining Europe: Myth, Memory, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 15-39.

its own interests prior to those of the political entity that contains them, and "tribal warfare" implies conflicts that arise to contest belonging to a centralized power. Tribalism is so dangerous and denigrated in its European context because it challenges the presiding hope described by the European Economic Community following the devastation of World War II: that Europe, "if it only adheres to the principles of liberal democracy, will never [again] collapse into internal warfare."[26] As long as conflicts in postwar Europe retain their separateness, a condition made possible in part by the tribal warfare thesis, they need not threaten the notion of European unity with its claims to peace and stability.

The Problem with Europe

In writers' many attempts to imagine Europe as a united entity, Europe has always had problems with its edges.[27] The eastern edge has arguably had the most trouble, subject to Ottoman invasions and Soviet expansion. Through balkanization, a process Marina Todorova compares to English orientalism, the European imaginary comes to define itself through exclusion of its southeastern edge: the Balkans come to represent everything that a rational, united Europe is not.[28] Head too far south, as Robert M.

---

[26] Anthony Pagden, *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

[27] Many scholars have proposed timeframes for when Europe was first thought of as a united place or idea. Norman Davies has suggested the "barbarian" influx into the Roman Empire from roughly 330-800 AD, Marc Bloch prefers the Middle Ages, and many others point to sometime between the 15th and 18th centuries. All of these accounts, though, use borderlands of Europe (be they barbarian incursions or the exclusion of southern kingdoms) as ways to delineate Europe's boundaries. Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 238; Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 442.

[28] Marina Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). For a similar critique of the notion of Eastern Europe, see Larry Woolf, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

Dainotto shows, and the "clannish" or "tribal" impulses of the Greeks and Italians take hold. In conversation with Todorova's description of balkanization, Dainotto argues that "a modern European identity…begins when the non-Europe is internalized—when the south, indeed, becomes the sufficient and indispensable *internal* Other: Europe, but also the negative part of it."[29] Europe even has trouble with its west and north, often imagined as beacons of progress. Ireland is so far west that it becomes likened to the east, most obviously in pervasive discourses of Irish orientalism that track Irish pedigree to the Orient—an origin story that underlies much of Ted Hughes's poetry.[30] The British Isles have not often fared much better, imagined by the Romans and, later, the Normans, as outcasts of Europe. And in the minds of many Europeans, north evokes thoughts of extremity, adventure, and unfathomability, as Peter Davidson demonstrates: at the ultimate northerly point of the North Pole, the constancy of geography breaks down, its universal reference point rendered meaningless as it gives way to nothing but south.[31]

The trouble with Europe's edges is an intellectual problem for postcolonial theory to address. Indeed, most of the critics discussed above engage in some capacity with postcolonial concerns. The question of whether or not postcolonialism can apply within Europe has been much discussed, most intensely in its Irish and Eastern European contexts. David Chioni Moore believes that the "post-" in postcolonial does speak to the "post-" in post-Soviet, pointing out,

---

[29] Roberto M. Dainotto, *Europe (In Theory)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 4.

[30] See Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

[31] Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North* (London: Reaktion, 2005), 8-9.

> By most classic measures— lack of sovereign power, restrictions on travel, military occupation, lack of convertible money, a domestic economy ruled by the dominating state, and forced education in the colonizer's language – Central and Baltic Europe's nations were indeed under Russo-Soviet colonial control from roughly 1948 to 1989 or 1991.[32]

He seeks to broaden the reach of the term "postcolonial," to make it as fundamental an interpretive category as race or gender.[33] But there is plenty of disagreement over this inclination, with many Eastern Europeans rejecting the term postcolonial as a description of their situations. As part of a healthy skepticism about terms beginning with "post," Neil Lazarus objects that "the fields of vision generally governing 'postcolonial' and 'post-Soviet' criticism, respectively, constitute a block to rigorous historical understanding of colonialism."[34] In other words, the issue may not be whether or not the postcolonial can apply within Eastern Europe, but rather that both "postcolonial" and "post-Soviet" *both* miss the mark of historical reality. I am sympathetic to this position but also recognize that it is the impulse of poetry, as well as criticism, to identify patterns across discrete, highly individualized incidents. What I propose is to qualify the application of postcolonial theory in a European context through suggesting how discourses of tribalism within Europe complicate the idea of the postcolonial.

The clearest place to begin is with Ireland, the most scrutinized case of postcolonial identity within Europe. The genetic implications of the rhetoric of tribal

---

[32] David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique, " in *Baltic Postcolonialism: On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom and Moral Imagination in the Baltics*, ed. Violeta Kelertas (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006): 25.

[33] Ibid., 43.

[34] Neil Lazarus, "Spectres Haunting: Postcommunism and Postcolonialism," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 2 (May 2012): 120.

warfare in the Troubles context resonate with nineteenth-century English depictions of the Irish as racially inferior. This phenomenon has complicated the Irish claim to Europeanness and lent credence to the case for Irish postcolonial identity. But to complicate matters, in the Northern Irish context the tribal warfare thesis is at odds with claims to postcolonialism. As Loyalist political thinker Dawn Pervis has claimed, Republicans resisted the rhetoric of tribalism because "this notion of two warring tribes…left the government out of it," in essence denying that the core struggle was between a colonizing government and a unified indigenous people.[35] But the continuity between nineteenth-century racial formulations and the British-driven rhetoric of tribal warfare in twentieth-century Northern Ireland seems undeniable, and the existence of the tribal warfare thesis collapses any easy distinction between "Europe" and "postcolonial." For Deepika Bahri, the Irish paradox of visibly "white" and geographically European but racially other suggests that something prior to racial difference underlies the project of European colonialism.[36] Instead, Bahri proposes that the project of modernity itself, which can be as differencing for colonized peoples as color or language, is at the core of the colonial project—and that incompatibility with the values of modernity can exist anywhere, presumably even in the so-called center of Europe. This formulation suggests that not groups, but rather fractal arrangements, events, and circumstance, constitute the postcolonial. Bahri, then, offers a model for how it is possible for the Irish case to be read in both European *and* postcolonial frameworks: "It is possible…to be *in* the geographical space of Europe and to remain outside it by virtue of prototypically Third World relations

---

[35] Quoted in Tony Novosel, *Northern Ireland's Lost Opportunity: The Frustrated Promise of Political Loyalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 133.

[36] Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aeshtetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 70.

of production and attachments to belief systems considered outmoded by the project of modernity."[37] The implications of this vision of a postcolonial Ireland resonate with the coded meanings of tribalism: the fractures, factions, and divergences that make places on the edge of Europe both European and not. The shorthand for this condition—tribalism, with its attendant terms of tribe, tribal, and tribal warfare—seems to be a pervasive and common way of discussing the situation of contested postcoloniality within Europe that implies more than the idea of the pre-modern.

The pervasiveness of the rhetoric of tribalism to describe Ireland, then, suggests that the Irish case might be usefully read in both postcolonial and European frameworks at once. Despite the political divide in (northern) Irish poetry criticism, which (at the risk of oversimplifying matters) tends to take a postcolonial angle *or* a British and European perspective, the combination of these frameworks is not new for Irish Studies. Edna Longley speculates in *The Living Stream* that "internal European colonialism might constitute an apter (if not necessarily happier) model than those elaborated by Fanon or Said" to discuss the Irish situation.[38] And as Chris Agee puts it in his canon-forming introduction to *The New North*, "It might be said that Northern Ireland had emerged out of the historical equivalent of two colliding tectonic plates, one foundational, one contemporary: the Reformation in Ireland, and the disintegration of internal European empires."[39] The complex consequences of imperial disintegration within Europe led to

---

[37] Ibid., 69.

[38] Edna Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), 30.

[39] Chris Agee, *The New North: Contemporary Poetry from Northern Ireland* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University Press, 2008), xxv.

many of the issues of factions and ethnic conflict that frequently go by the code term of "tribal."

Myths of Europe, Myths of Lyric

I see "tribalism," then, as a rhetorical category that intervenes in and complicates the relationship between what is European and what is postcolonial. It is a particularly fascinating phenomenon in its European contexts because it fundamentally challenges the three dominant myths of Europe that have bolstered its attempts at functionalist integration since the eighteenth century: Europe as classical civilization, Europe as Christendom, and Europe as Enlightenment.[40] Many aspects of these myths are crucial to British and Irish postwar poetry. The predominance of Greek and Roman intertexts in (northern) Irish literature, from James Joyce's *Ulysses* to Michael Longley's adaptations of Greek epics to Marina Carr's 1998 play *Beside the Bog of Cats* (based on Euripides's *Medea*), attests to the importance of the myth of Europe as classical civilization to Irish literary identity.[41] The myth of Europe as Christendom, in addition to making a case for the central role Irish monasteries played as a haven for learning during the Middle Ages, often underlies explanations of the religious dimensions of the Troubles. It has also propelled speculations about British and Irish poets' engagements with conflicts in Eastern Europe, such as Northern nationalists' identification with Miłosz's Catholicism. Poets themselves have remarked on similarities between Protestant-Catholic tensions and

[40] Bottici and Challand analyze these three interwoven myths in detail in their authoritative chapter "Myths of Europe," in *Imagining Europe*, 94-101. They effectively demonstrate that none of these myths is separate; for instance, "The Greek and Roman civilizations served as models in the attempt at spiritual rebirth generated by Enlightenment supporters" (100).

[41] Yeats, for instance, compared Synge's *Riders to the Sea* with Greek tragedy.

the Orthodox-Catholic-Muslim divisions that (in some accounts) perpetuated violence in the Balkans. Indeed, (northern) Irish elegies for the Yugoslav Wars draw some of their authority from a sense that Northern Ireland and the Balkans suffer from fractures in the neat myth of Europe as Christendom, united through a belief system that structures both private and public life.[42]

While myths of classical civilization and Christendom have heavily influenced the content of much postwar British and Irish poetry, Europe as Enlightenment has had the greatest effect on conceptions of what lyric poetry might be. The term "lyric" is currently highly contested, and I will give a brief overview of the debates through recourse to the history of the term's ties to dominant myths of Europe as a way to arrive at the definition of lyric "I" use in this dissertation. The myth of Europe as Enlightenment and Europe as modernity stands behind Hegel's sense in the *Aesthetics* that lyric was the most important literary genre. As Bottici and Challand point out, Europe as the birthplace of modernity is a common variant of this myth. This version of Europe as Enlightenment traces the origin of its most visible byproduct—individualism (and individualism's most logical system of government, democracy)—to some time between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and sometimes as far back as the writings of Plato and Aristotle.[43] This myth stands behind Hegel's claim that Europe was "the end of history," a view that in turn supported his sense that in cultivating the ultimate expression of a unified, individual subjectivity, the lyric would drive the spirit of the age towards enlightenment.[44] This outlook, as

---

[42] For more on this topic, see Chapter Three.

[43] Bottici and Challand, "Myths of Europe," 100.

[44] G.W. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 2: 971.

Jonathan Culler has remarked, had a profound impact on the Romantic notion of lyric poetry that still influences ways in which the lyric is taught, written, and read. As Culler explains,

> Hegel gives the fullest expression to the romantic theory of the lyric, whose distinguishing feature is the centrality of subjectivity coming to consciousness of itself through experience and reflection. The lyric poet absorbs into himself the external world and stamps it with inner consciousness, and the unity of the poem
> is provided by this subjectivity.[45]

It is possible to track the Hegelian notion of lyric through twentieth-century reading practices summarized in Northrop Frye's popularization of John Stuart Mill's idea of lyric as "an utterance overheard"—an utterance of an identifiable, and usually singular, speaker.[46] If the dominance of the subjective lyric "I" owes something to the myth of Europe as Enlightenment via Hegel and others, it also resonates with myths of Europe as classical civilization (most apparently in Aristotle's notion of the individuality of the self).[47] The importance of "I" is also underscored by the myth of Europe as Christendom, particularly the post-Reformation emphasis on the individual's direct, unmediated relationship with the Christian God. This relationship is often explored and cultivated in

---

[45] Jonathan Culler, "Lyric, History, and Genre" (2009), in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 66.

[46] Ibid., 71.

[47] Bottici and Challand, *Imagining Europe*, 100. In the service of the Enlightenment myth, many thinkers have traced arguments for democracy and the individual backwards into ancient Greece, even if doing so takes a fair amount of selective reading of Plato and Aristotle.

the intimate space of a lyric poem, as Helen Vendler argues in *Invisible Listeners*.[48] But Vendler does not point out that this construction of the lyric as a private space itself has a history, one resonant with the dominant myths of Europe that celebrate individualism.

The authority of the lyric "I" not only resonates with three dominant myths of Europe: it has also been a central element in what might be thought of as an enduring myth of lyric. Bottici and Challand draw careful distinctions between narrative, symbol, and myth in their analysis of the creation of European cultural identity. "Not all symbols are mythical," they argue, and not all stories are myths. Rather, "[a] myth consists in the re-elaboration of a narrative that answers the human need for significance."[49] The telling and retelling of the development of the lyric "I" constitutes a critical narrative that gives significance and value to the idea of lyric as a genre: in other words, a myth. In *The Lyric Theory Reader*, an anthology that presents itself as a corrective to this myth, Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins trace the lineage of ideas of lyric to challenge lyric's claim to the status of genre. Lyric is not a genre but rather a way of reading, a discourse.[50] Jackson and Prins's account suggests that Western critics of the past several hundred years have tended to take lyric for granted as a genre, one that is often assumed to put forth an expression of subjectivity, cut off from historical context, the public, and the plural.[51] This way of reading is distilled in the New Criticism and its legacies, which is

---

[48] Helen Vendler, *Invisible Listeners*: *Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). See especially "George Herbert and God," in which Vendler charts a vertical address from Herbert to God to a horizontal one in which Herbert addresses God with the intimacy of a friend (9-30).

[49] Bottici and Challand, *Imagining Europe*, 89.

[50] Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, "General Introduction," in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 1-10.

[51] Virginia Jackson's watershed *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* also has the tone of a project that seeks to demythologize, unveiling the lyric as a mode of reading rather than a genre by

so ingrained that it is often invisible, its specific development in the 1930s American South forgotten. As I have found in teaching poetry classes to bright undergraduates, many of them come to poetry with the assumption that a poem communicates from a single speaker to a single listener, unhampered by the context of any cultural or historical particularities, in a process that is so intensely intimate as to be almost telepathic. The way this critical story has circulated constitutes a myth that has brought together many poets and critics in a common culture of reading.

The hold of the lyric "I", central to this culture of reading, has been challenged but not eliminated by what Walt Hunter has described as the collective turn in the New Lyric Studies. Hunter suggests that we are in an era of reading the lyric in its communal and collective context. This process has been part of a growing tendency to understand the lyric as a product of cultural and historical forces rather than a universal category, not as a stable genre but rather as a discourse.[52] Yet even in Hunter's account, the notion of individual self-expression remains core, if only to measure how far critical studies suggest lyric poets may deviate from it. In contemporary lyric studies, for instance, Ramazani's notion of an "all-encompassing, cross-civilizational, lyric 'I'…forging new and surprising connections in its travel across the globe" is an articulation of the story of the lyric "I" for a new critical age more invested in global than national literatures.[53] The vantage point may have widened, but we are still telling the story of lyric, and still more often than not telling it with the lyric "I".

---

dismantling a too-cohesive story about lyric's origins to reveal the historically specific processes by which lyric came to be seen as a stable genre the nineteenth century. See Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), especially 1-15.

[52] Walt Hunter, "Lyric and Its Discontents," *The Minnesota Review* 79 (2012): 81-82.

[53] Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 69.

My goal is not to dispose of the lyric as a genre any more than to deny that Europe is a place. Both are demonstrable claims for others to make, but for the poets I study, the importance of lyric and Europe as concepts supercedes the ontological issue of whether or not they are "real." While I do not pretend to resolve the ever-elusive definition of "lyric" (or, worse, "Europe"), I agree with Jonathan Culler's response to Virginia Jackson in claiming the critical usefulness of genres. Rather than seeking to "dissolve the category of lyric," as Jackson does, Culler argues,

> Generic categories frame both reading and writing—writers write in relation to other texts and textual traditions, but consciously and unconsciously, imitating, misreading, and rejecting, and readers approach works differently according to how they conceive them, even if those expectations are going to be disappointed.[54]

I do not use "lyric" as a neutral term, but rather claim that the poems I label as "lyric" work in ways that are theoretically and historically revealing. The specific poems I read in this dissertation share a set of conventions. They are all relatively short works that are interested in the speakers that govern them, draw on the interplay of sonic and visual effects, and suggest some relationship between form and content. These similarities link them generically in ways that facilitate productive comparison. As Ralph Cohen argues, "Classifications are empirical, not logical. They are historical assumptions constructed by authors, audiences, and critics in order to serve communicative and aesthetic purposes." Genres are not organic, but they "provide conventions for interpretation."[55] Cohen's work, and mine, is engaged with Frederic Jameson's theory of genres, particularly his

---

[54] Culler, "Lyric, History, Genre," 67, 64.

[55] Ralph Cohen, "History and Genre," *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 210.

hypothesis that a genre is a kind of contract between writer and reader.[56] If this is so, when writers disrupt a convention of the genre—at times, even pushing the boundaries of conventional understandings of the lyric *as* a genre—they are trying to communicate something to the reader, some way that what they think of as lyric falls short of the ability to address their subject matter. In the case of the poets in this study, experimentations and innovations within contractual conventions of lyric often mark their attempts to make their poems respond powerfully and ethically to crises within contemporary Europe.

In particular, lyric poetry can engage powerfully with the interplay of two concepts central to the rhetoric of tribal warfare: time and individualism. The idea of the tribe carries both within it, implying allegiance to a kinship network that precedes allegiance to a sanctioned political formation, resulting in a group that exists outside of the time that unfolds in the history of the nation or the European community. The tribe, as Johannes Fabian has it in *Time and the Other*, is relegated to another time as much as another place by European anthropologists. As opposed to fieldwork, which treats the object of study as coeval with (that is, in the same time as) the anthropologist, ethnographies relegate the anthropologist's object to a time prior to that of the anthropologist, a gesture that Fabian describes as "the denial of coevalness." Fabian calls this temporal disconnect between enthnographic research and anthropological writing the "schizogenic use of time."[57] Poetry's manipulation of time, from the mythic time that I explore in Chapter One to postmodern entanglements of narrative, diegetic, and historical time explored in Chapter Four, frequently resists the temporal distancing of conflicts in

---

[56] Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 105-107.

[57] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 31, 21.

parts of Europe coded as tribal. Time as described in discussions of modernity refers to too much: to be "pre-modern" can mean to exist outside of time, to exist in circular rather than linear time, or to be earlier in time than a "developed" nation. The poems I define as "lyric" have particular generic access to more multifaceted and nuanced ideas about time than those discussed within the modern/pre-modern divide. They similarly contest the idea that community implies a pre-modern condition, pointing towards ways of understanding community as valuable and viable both for postwar Europe and the postwar lyric.

Postwar British and Irish Lyric Poetry

In the era of transnational poetics, my choice to focus on representations of Europe as they have emerged specifically in Ireland and the United Kingdom may be surprising. There is important work, after all, to be done on ideas of Europe in poetry of former European colonies around the world. Joe Cleary, among others, has criticized the tendency of Irish postcolonial investigations to be narrow in reach, rarely looking beyond Britain.[58] Cleary convincingly argues that more revealing transnational studies of Ireland would do well to focus on the Americas. The innovative comparative studies of Irish and Caribbean literature over the past decade attest to the richness of such comparisons.[59] But as Ramazani writes, "to see all literatures as 'global' in the same way due to the

[58] Joe Cleary, "Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context," *Éire-Ireland* 42, no. 1 (2007): 11–57.

[59] The most focused and notable of these is Michael G. Malouf's *Transatlantic Solidarities: Irish Nationalism and Caribbean Poetics* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009). See also Mary Gallagher's "Circuitous Connections: Ireland and the Francophone Caribbean," in *Ici-Là: Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003): 279-92, and Ashok Bery's *Cultural Translation and Postcolonial Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), as well as a number of studies on Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott.

globalization of capital is…to risk evacuating the specificities of intercultural friction and assimilation."[60] Thus, while bearing in mind the impossibilities of confining transnational influence to a particular imagined community, I focus on Europe to avoid a "vacantly globalist" perspective.[61] By limiting my geographic and cultural scope, I aim to show both continuities and divergences in how British and Irish poets have understood their poetic legacies through their relationships with parts of Europe similarly described as backward and separatist—that is, as "tribal."

The British Isles and Ireland have been at once central to and ostracized from cultural and geographical ideas of Europe. The British case is as complex as the Irish, determined in part by a legacy of colonization within the British Isles and around the world. In particular, England's history as the center of the largest global empire and the cultural, political, and ideological autonomy that came along with that role is complicated by ways in which England has been imagined as tribal.[62] Thomas Hardy's, Geoffrey Hill's, and Ted Hughes's interests in the contested Europeanness of England led them all to situate their poetry in backdrops of ancient "tribal" English kingdoms—Wessex for Hardy, Mercia for Hill, and Elmet for Hughes. This trend arises from centuries-old notions of English parochialism that resonate with perceptions of Irish primitiveness. The chapters that follow thus suggest continuities, as much as oppositions, in how British and Irish poets have used, reworked, and contested the rhetoric of tribalism, and specifically tribal warfare, to make sense of their places in Europe. There has been little postcolonial

---

[60] Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 47.

[61] Ibid., 43.

[62] Arthur Aughey discusses England's contested relationship to Europe in *The Politics of Englishness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

scholarship on poets of Britain who are visibly "white." As Stan Smith has remarked, "If the English are truly the last people to be decolonised, then the politico-cultural *logomachia*…of such poets as Heaney…will show the way."[63] Focusing on discourses of tribalism is one way into what such a study might look like.

British and Irish poets frequently navigate their relationships to Europe through recourse to one another. As Declan Kiberd has argued, imagining Ireland as primitive and backwards molded England as modern and rational, but quintessentially English poets such as Ted Hughes have often turned to ideas of Ireland to make sense of their standing in Europe. Understanding the European backdrop of these poets uncovers as many solidarities as fractures in traditions that are often understood as distinct, if not delineated by their oppositions. The relationship between British and Irish poets has been fraught in the academy and not without its problems in the poetry community; poets of Britain and Ireland are often grouped together in anthologies and in critical studies (such as this one). When Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion published *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* in 1982, Heaney responded both playfully and seriously in "An Open Letter": "Be advised, my passport's green / No glass of ours was ever raised / To toast the Queen."[64] At the same time, influential friendships between poets across these supposed divides prevail, most famously the Hughes-Heaney friendship, but also those among David Harsent, Paul Muldoon, Tony Harrison, James Fenton, and Ciaran

[63] Stan Smith, *Poetry and Displacement* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 140.

[64] Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion's *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1982); Seamus Heaney, "An Open Letter" (Derry: Field Day, 1983). Heaney later remarked that his passport at that time was not, in fact, green.

Carson.[65] Harrison's poem "The Act," dedicated to Michael Longley and James Simmons, takes the Troubles as its backdrop but emphasizes friendship that cuts across contested national lines through the mutual enterprise of being poets. The poem depicts rowdy British soldiers bound for Newcastle on a short leave from Belfast. Harrison worries the soldiers will call him "queer" when they see him write "poet" rather than "Forces" as his occupation on his English entry card. Wary of his fellow countrymen, Harrison wistfully recalls Longley and Simmons driving him to the airport in Belfast that morning, concluding,

> I wish for you, my Ulster poet friends,
> pleasures with no rough strife, no iron gates,
> and letter boxes wide enough for books.[66]

Harrison's wish for "pleasures with no rough strife" gently alludes to the Troubles (and, playfully, to Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress"), suggesting the importance of poetry in difficult times. That an English poet alienated on the flight by his fellow Englishmen offers this support suggests that poetic rather than national solidarity underlies the poem.

English poet Ken Smith has also written of the Troubles in a mode that links, rather than separates, English and Irish experience. Smith underscores Donegal's status as a border county of Northern Ireland, caught in the confusing identity of being part of the Irish province of Ulster but not part of the Loyalist use of the term Ulster to designate the six counties of Northern Ireland. Smith begins, "Magowan the poet might have been Irish," imagining him

---

[65] In fact, the most obvious divisions suggested by the correspondence among British and Irish poets in the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library of Emory University—and obvious in this list—come down to gender, not nation.

[66] Tony Harrison, "The Act," *Critical Quarterly* 28, no. 1-2 (March 1986): 32-34.

butting out from Inishowen, head into the wind
That bears off the Atlantic from the edge of the known world,
northwest corner of the continent of Europe.

Where the neighbors don't like each other much,
here as elsewhere.[67]

"Neighbor" carries within it the connotations of what Appadurai calls the new ethnic warfare, often described as tribal. As he explains, "Our horror is sparked by the sheer intimacy that frequently frames the new ethnic violence. It is the horror at the neighbor turned killer/torturer/rapist."[68] Irish and Northern Irish poems are rife with allusions to "neighborly" violence, from Yeats's assessment that "great hatred, little room / maimed us at the start," to the "news… / of each neighborly murder" of the Troubles recorded in Heaney's "Funeral Rites."[69] As a poet who spoke frequently about human rights, worked in Eastern Europe, and produced radio programs for the BBC, Ken Smith was attuned to the conflicts in both Northern Ireland and former Yugoslavia. In fact, when he edited the volume *Klaonica: Poems for Bosnia,* Smith specifically commissioned a number of Irish and Northern Irish poets to contribute elegiac poems for Bosnian victims.[70] The reference to neighborly conflict in "The Donegal Liar" resonates with the intimacy of ethnic

---

[67] Ken Smith, "The Donegal Liar," in *Shed: Poems 1980-2001* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe, 2002), 330.

[68] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 154.

[69] W. B. Yeats, "Remorse for Intemperate Speech," in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 2008), 266; Heaney, "Funeral Rites," in *North*, 7.

[70] Ken Smith and Judi Benson, *Klaonica: Poems for Bosnia*, ed. Ken Smith (London: Bloodaxe, 1993). I discuss this anthology in some depth in Chapter 3.

conflict in both Ireland and Bosnia. But by the poem's end, we learn that Magowan, the poet "who might have been Irish," is actually English,

> Out on his own. Out on his ear at ten years
> one month, from then a working man,
> most of his days an itinerant unlettered landless labourer,
> a spalpeen in the English north country counting pennies.[71]

At the "corner of the continent of Europe," the plights of the Balkans, Northern England, and Northern Ireland blend. Smith's poem offers just one example of the many ways that Irish and British experiences find continuity through a shared feeling of isolation from the European center.

As the following chapters demonstrate, interrogating the rhetoric of tribal warfare in British and Irish poetry unleashes a nexus of concerns about politics and Europe at the heart of lyric. The first chapter attends to myths of Northern Europe in the work of English poet Ted Hughes and Northern Irish poet Seamus Heaney. Rather than viewing North as a compass point of universal orientation—that is, as a geographical shorthand for modernity—Hughes and Heaney provincialize Northern Europe as they explore the poet's role in responding to the "tribal" pasts and presents of England and Ireland. Drawing from the high modernist aesthetic of the poet-prophet, Hughes developed a metaphor for the poet as the shaman of the tribe prior to the outbreak of so-called tribal warfare in Europe. I argue that Heaney's volume *North* vacillates between two competing discourses of tribalism: the poet as shaman of the tribe inherited from
Hughes, and the media's disparaging (and despairing) suggestion that the Troubles were rooted in ancient, irresolvable hatreds between tribal peoples. Heaney thus grounds

[71] Smith, *Shed*, 332.

Hughes's mythic metaphor in historical specificity, influencing successive generations of Troubles poets.

The second chapter traces Heaney's turn from myths of Hughes's pre-modern Northern Europe to historical narratives of Eastern Europe, viewing the shift in light of Heaney's career-long preoccupation with what lyric is or should be. As Heaney sought to respond ethically to "the exact and tribal, / intimate revenge" of inter-communal violence, he called on Eastern European poets as guides for writing lyric poetry that could hold the weight of communal history. Heaney tempers his early sense of the lyric as a poem governed by a lyric "I" through the examples of poets like Czesław Miłosz and Osip Mandelstam, who deftly employ the first-person plural even in the expression of personal emotion. In this shift from "I" to "we," Heaney brings the legacies of marginalized sites in Europe into an alternative narrative of European unity that draws its communal force from the continent's excluded places.

The third chapter tests Heaney's assertion that poetry should be "strong enough to help," examining a sub-genre of lyric poetry that emerged in response to violence in the Balkans in the 1990s.[72] As reports of genocide in Yugoslavia made it back to the West, poets from Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Russia, and the United States (including Joseph Brodsky, Medbh McGuckian, and Chris Agee) elegized Muslim Bosnian genocide victims through the lens of the Troubles. In testing the limits of lyric intimacy across borders, these poems critique the facile alignment of the Northern Irish and Yugoslav conflicts under the rubric of tribal warfare.

---

[72] Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 191. Heaney borrows this phrase from George Seferis's remark on the Greek poet Makriyannis, written during "a time of World crisis and personal crisis."

The fourth chapter turns to another sub-genre of poetry that serves as a corrective to the mainstream media's primordialist depictions of Eastern European conflicts. I investigate lyric sequences by Tony Harrison, David Harsent, and Ciaran Carson in which the poet ironically assumes the voice of a war correspondent to report atrocities in Eastern Europe back to Britain and Ireland. Each of these sequences suggests that a responsible war correspondent must also be a poet, able to serve as an empathic eyewitness who balances the supposed factuality and impartiality of journalism. As poets engage with the idea of tribal warfare in Europe, the poems I call lyric work through the boundaries of the margin and the center, the public and the private, and the communal and the individual.

Chapter One

The Shaman and the Senate: The Tribal Warfare Thesis from Ted Hughes to Seamus Heaney

"Ted was no Vaclav Havel; he was more mythic than civic. When it came to remedying the ills of society, he was more liable to think of the shaman than the senate," Seamus Heaney once said of Ted Hughes.[73] This assessment underscores a divide in how literary critics have viewed European poets' responses to community upheaval since the Second World War: as mythic or civic, with Western European poets more likely to operate ahistorically while their Eastern European counterparts suffer under the burden of what Czeslaw Milosz described as the poet's "command to participate actively in history."[74] Of course, this setup is a false dichotomy: as Adorno suggests, myth *is* a mode of participation in history, and, as Bottici and Challand have shown, it is not always possible to separate cultural myths from politics.[75] To be sure, Hughes is not a "political" poet in the mode of Heaney or (more dramatically) the postwar Eastern European poets both admired; he was more interested in developing a method for poetry rooted in various myths than in trying to parse out the facts of history. But he was also not as divorced from the reality of his era as many critics suggest, particularly when it came to his promotion and translations of János Pilinszky, Vasko Popa, and other poets of the Eastern bloc. Indeed, Hughes's central metaphor for the poet—the shaman of a tribe in a state of

---

[73] Dennis O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 298.

[74] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*, trans. Catherine S. Leach (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 125.

[75] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 5. Bottici and Challand, "Myths of Europe," in *Imagining Europe*.

disaster—paved the way for British and Irish poets' more historically grounded responses to crises in (Northern) Ireland and Eastern Europe.

This chapter considers the shifting connotations of the idea of the tribe in the work of Hughes and Heaney from the 1950s-1990s. Particularly in his relatively neglected translations and prose, Hughes creates a foundation story for British poetry built on the relationship between poet and civic crisis. Beginning with Shakespeare, Hughes invents a poetic tradition in Europe's marginal regions, linking ancient England and modern Ireland with small Eastern European republics, to argue that poet-shamans emerge in a moment of what he calls "tribal breakdown": a time of spiritual, cultural, governmental, or even environmental catastrophe in a community. Heaney's earliest volumes show his experimentation with Hughes's notion of the tribe and cycles of intractable violence. But beginning in the mid-1960s, the media's pervasive use of the tribal warfare thesis to describe the Troubles led Heaney to complicate his inheritance of Hughes's tribal metaphor, a process most pronounced in *North*. He would eventually tamper with and in fact invert the implications of Hughes's tribal metaphor in his poem "Casualty" from the 1979 volume *Field Work*. These intersections point to the intertwined traditions of British and Irish poetry, as poets turn to one another's national narratives to negotiate ideas of tribalism in relation to postwar Europe.

The Shaman of the Tribe

When Hughes became British Poet Laureate in 1984, he publically assumed the role of a figure he had explored for decades in his poetry: the "shaman of the tribe." This phrase is so commonplace in Hughes criticism that its centrality to his work barely needs

justification.[76] Many critics have elaborated on the phrase in relation to Hughes's tumultuous personal life and his studies in anthropology at Cambridge; as Terry Gifford succinctly puts it, "From his university studies in anthropology he understood the ancient discipline of the poet as shaman of his tribe."[77] Shamanism is the process by which a spiritual leader achieves an altered state of consciousness to access the sacred realm, then brings the primitive energies contained there back to the mundane world to heal the psychic or physical ills of a community that has become unbalanced through its disconnection from natural, primal life energies.[78] Hughes criticism has focused so heavily on his investment in shamanism that it has tended to overlook the significance of the other term in the metaphor: the tribe. Tribes are everywhere in the work of Hughes. His library has substantial holdings on tribal peoples of the South Pacific and the Americas, and his poetry and prose frequently reference tribal leaders and practices from around the world. Hughes understood a tribe to be a group that recognizes a common mythology, expressed through a cluster of symbols, that unites them culturally and spiritually.[79] His writing often applies the term to any imagined group (sometimes imagined only by him) who share a healing experience brought about by a shamanic figure. A tribe, then, is not limited to time, space, or nationality; Hughes is as ready to find tribes in 1970s England as in Papua, New Guinea. It is a descriptor of small-group

[76] For instance, the phrase appears casually, with little to no explanation, in such widely referenced works as Elaine Feinstein's biography of Hughes, the *Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, and the Hughes entry in the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*.

[77] Terry Gifford, *Ted Hughes* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009), 2.

[78] I am distilling this definition from Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), the book that most influenced Hughes's own understanding of shamanism.

[79] Hughes never lays this definition out directly; I am using it based on his essays, particularly "Myth and Education" and "Myth, Metres, Rhythms," collected in Ted Hughes, *Winter Pollen* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995). All further references will be given in the body of the text as *WP*.

cohesion rather than merely or predominately an ethnic or racial code, although he does frequently use genetic markers to discuss tribal groups—a point that has been glanced over in critiques of Hughes's tribal metaphor and one to which I will return.

Hughes's most enduring ideology of tribes and shamanism comes not from his training in Cambridge anthropology but rather from Romanian religious historian Mircea Eliade, whose work on shamanism widened Hughes's imagination on the poetic potential of the shamanic journey in both his personal and poetic life. On first encountering Eliade's book *Shamanism* in 1964, Hughes wrote excitedly to Lucas Meyers,

> I got a magnificent book to review—"Shamanism"—it's a classic scholarly review of the whole field….Your eyes will pop. You'll be glad to know that your (& my) obsession with physical disintegration, being torn into fragments & fitted together again, is the great Shaman initiation dream, & that after such a dream, an Asiatic knows that if he does not take up serious shamanising he will die.[80]

After reading Eliade, Hughes came to see his much earlier poem "The Thought Fox" as the product of a shamanic initiation dream. The dream came at Cambridge in 1953, after Hughes had given up frustrating work on an English paper late in the night. A fox appeared to him and left a bloody paw print on his paper, saying, "Stop this—you are destroying us" (*WP* 9). The next day, Hughes changed his major to anthropology, a move that he credited with allowing him to become a writer. This poem, then, was his fundamental entry into Eliade's "serious shamanising." "The Thought Fox" is an *ars poetica* that describes poetic creation in terms of successful blending of the inner world of the passions and the outer world of reason.

---

[80] Ted Hughes, *The Letters of Ted Hughes*, ed. Christopher Reid (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 235.

"The Thought Fox" narrates the process by which the spiritual and material realms join forces to allow for poetic creativity. The outer world of reason dominates in the beginning of the poem:

> I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
>
> Something else is alive
>
> Beside the clock's loneliness
>
> And this blank page where my fingers move.[81]

The "clock's loneliness" and "blank page" across which the speaker's fingers move automatically shows the speaker cut off from his inner energies, the world of the passions held at bay but suggested by the mysterious living creature in the midnight forest. The fox then comes into sharp focus; it is startlingly real, evoked not as a symbol but as a real creature: "A fox's nose touches twig, leaf." Unlike the outer world governed by the clock's ticking, the fox's experiences are always immediate, part of the "animal/spiritual consciousness" in which what Fabian refers to as secular time has no place.[82] In contrast to the ticking of the clock in the speaker's room, for the fox there is no conscious awareness of time, only the immediate experience of existing in the "now": "Two eyes serve a movement, that now / And again now, and now, and now…" Ultimately, the fox enters "the dark hole of the head," merging with the speaker in the style of a totem animal merging with the shaman, blending the energies of outer and inner worlds. When the poet-shaman emerges from the vision, the balance of outer and inner is restored; at the

---

[81] Ted Hughes, *Collected Poems*, ed. Paul Keegan (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 21. All further references will be given in the body of the text as *CP*.

[82] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 26.

poem's end, "the page is printed," suggesting that the shaman's journey has led the poet out of writer's block and into a productive state.

Hughes's dream that prompted him to change his major from English to anthropology *so that* he could write underscores why Hughes's shaman of the tribe metaphor is more successfully understood as a poetic device than an anthropological concept. Through his readings of Eliade, Hughes saw the poet's journey in the shamanic journey, likening the poet's desire to "heal" personal or communal ills to "the shaman streak in the poetic temperament."[83] Andy Armitage has given the most lucid explanation of the affinity that Hughes saw between the shamanic and poetic journeys:

> The *visionary* poet heals not only himself but also his readers, indeed his entire 'tribe', because he speaks for what is neglected or forbidden in his culture and his society. The purpose of art, for Hughes, then, is to heal oneself and one's tribe by uncovering the neglected, forbidden thing and, in allowing it to speak, restoring the balance between the inner and outer worlds. Like the shaman, the poet must take an imaginative journey into the depths of the psyche in order to recover what Hughes elsewhere called the "healing energy."[84]

If this method seems to draw little from the anthropology Hughes studied at Cambridge in the 1950s, that is because it does not. As Rand Brandes has memorably put it, "Hughes does with anthropology, as Yeats argues the poet must do with philosophy: learn

---

[83] Hughes, *The Letters of Ted Hughes*, 461.

[84] Andy Armitage, "Poetry in the Making," *The Ted Hughes Society Journal* (2012), http://www.thetedhughes-society.org/poetryinthemaking.htm.

everything and then forget it when writing."[85] To get a sense of how far afield Hughes was from the contemporary anthropological trends in studying tribal peoples, we need only to turn to his review of C.M. Bowra's *Primitive Song* (1962). The presiding theories he encountered at Cambridge were anti-evolutionary, emphasizing Boasian cultural relativism and ahistorical structuralist notions of common patterns of tribal development regardless of time or place.[86] Yet Hughes writes of Bowra with an evolutionary slant:

> We imagine primitives to possess some of the qualities of ideal poetry—full of zest, clairvoyantly sensitive, realistic, whole, natural, and passionate; and so we might well look at their songs hopefully. And since only a captious anthropologist could doubt that in broad human essentials the songs reproduce the features of our own literature's embryonic stage, we wonder if these earliest stirrings of the poetic impulse might show something analogous to the gills in the human embryo, something as revealing as the inmost buried nature of the thing. (*WP* 33)

This mode of discussing "primitive poetry" sounds less apt for commenting on human development than for studying *poetic* evolutionary development. In fact, although Hughes insists that his interests in myth and legend predate his investment in literature and work as a poet, his shamanic journey is always more rooted in creating poetry than understanding mythology.

---

[85] Rand Brandes, "The Anthropologist's Uses of Myth," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, ed. Terry Gifford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). 68.

[86] For a discussion of Hughes's course readings in anthropology at Cambridge, see Paul Volsik, "Ted Hughes & the Folk Tale," in *Ted Hughes: Alternative Horizons*, ed. Joanny Moulin (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 121-122.

Reading Eliade's *Shamanism* in 1964, then, led Hughes to understand the poet-shaman as a figure who must undergo near-psychic and physical breakdown to bring healing to the tribe. This formulation of the poet-shaman resonated with Hughes's personal life. Hughes encountered Eliade for the first time the year after Sylvia Plath's suicide and continued to read him through the suicide of Assia Wevill and her murder of their daughter, as well as the death of Hughes's mother, in 1969. Eliade's thinking, as it came to help Hughes make sense of these personal tragedies, inflects Hughes's 1970 volume *Crow*. As Keith Sagar notes, Hughes wrote only two-thirds of the planned *Crow* sequence, truncating the shamanic journey at its lowest point, as Crow faces a landscape of complete psychic and physical degeneration.[87] The volume deliberately refuses the healing and wholeness that awaits the shaman who undergoes the full initiation rite; instead, Crow's journey concludes "at the bottom of all things, / utterly worn out and utterly clear" (*CP* 258).[88]

During this period of emotional exhaustion, Hughes spent long periods in Ireland, a place of mythic and personal importance for him. Hughes's fascination with myth began in childhood with Irish stories and legends, leading him to view Ireland as a spiritual storehouse. According to Brandes, Hughes associates Ireland with "a site outside the empire that is more in tune with and open to the 'nameless female deity'," a source of

---

[87] Keith M. Sagar, *Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000), xii.

[88] These lines captivated Seamus Heaney, who quoted them in his seminal essay "Englands of the Mind." Later, Heaney transported these lines out of Hughes's English context and into an elegy for his mother: "I thought of walking round and round a space, / utterly empty, utterly a source." Seamus Heaney, *Finders Keepers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 83; "Clearances," in *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 8.

divine inspiration that he adapts from Robert Graves.[89] Hughes's vision of a healing Ireland recalls Matthew Arnold's Celticism, wherein England is associated with materiality and Ireland with spirituality. Hughes has an Arnoldian conception of the relationship between England and its Celtic outliers: in the marriage of English rationality and Celtic passion, the United Kingdom could achieve balance, a process that Hughes thought he could contribute to as British Poet Laureate.[90] Eliade, meanwhile, had led Hughes to understand that the shaman had the power to heal the tribe by blending the inner world of the passions and the outer world of reason (*WP* 151). Hughes's sojourns in Ireland blend Celticism with Eliade's shamanism, mimicking the shaman's descent into the world of the passions to restore balance to the outer world of reason.

Hughes's reading of Eliade is also steeped in orientalism (as evinced in the attention Hughes gives to the "Asiatic" who must begin shamanizing after an initiation dream or die), but more specifically, his investment in Eliade is inflected with *Irish* orientalism. Joseph Lennon has analyzed orientalist images in literature from and about Ireland, remarking on how the geographic marginality of both Ireland and the Orient fed into these depictions:

> Such connections emerged from Ireland's imagined place in Greek texts as a wild, remote borderland, existing well off the western coast of the great Eurasian continent, in the Ocean that stretched around the sphere of the earth to the eastern end of the habitable world. Eventually, such

[89] Brandes, "The Anthropologist's Uses of Myth," 74.

[90] For a discussion of Arnold's Celticism in relationship to the United Kingdom and the role of the Poet Laureate, see Matthew Campbell, *Irish Poetry under the Union, 1801-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 138-139.

> representations gave birth to two antitheses of modern, enlightened Europe: the Celt and the Oriental.[91]

Hughes was also interested in the notion of the lost tribal kingdom of Elmet—the site of his contemporary Yorkshire—as a place removed from the Eurasian continent. Elmet was one of the last places in England to fall to conquerors; Hughes's volume *Remains of Elmet* laments the eventual Viking conquest: "The longships got this far" and left "A graveyard / For homeland" (*CP* 484). In his introductory note to the volume, Hughes describes how long Elmet resisted conquest, emphasizing that it was "the last British Celtic kingdom to fall to the Angles. For centuries it was considered a more or less uninhabitable wilderness, a notorious refuge for criminals, a hide-out for refugees" (*CP* 1200). This isolation, Hughes believed, "had its Darwinian effects on the natives" (*CP* 1201), using evolutionary language that recalls Arnold's depiction of what he called the Celtic race. Hughes, indeed, came to understand the implications of his "tribal" inheritance not through England but rather through Ireland's contemporary off-center position in the European imaginary. He once wrote, in a textbook example of Irish orientalism, "Ireland has an inner space—which [modern] England almost wholly lacks. To my feeling, Ireland is a bit like muslim countries."[92] He makes the comparison in more detail in his review of Eliade's *Shamanism*. Speculating that shamanism "might well be a barbarized, stray descendent of Sufism," he writes, "the Druidic tradition, like that of the early schools of poets in Ireland, shows surprising relationships to the outlook and training of the Sufis, who do not evangelize, have no established dogma, but wander

---

[91] Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*, xv.

[92] Hughes, *Letters of Ted Hughes*, 615.

all over the world planting schools, as at the root of Vedanta, and of Zen" (*WP* 58-9).[93] Hughes seamlessly aligns the shamanic process with the poetic one, aligning the bardic and Sufic traditions to conjure images like this one from *Gaudete*: "A flapping shape—A wild figure gyrating toward him. / A flailing-armed chimpanzee creature."[94] The whirling dervish figure combines with the degrading Irish-as-primate rhetoric that ran rampant in British literature and cartoons in the nineteenth century.[95] The Yeatsian "gyrating" descriptor seals the link between Ireland and Persia, conflating two distinct regional symbols—the gyres as the "tragic joy" cycle of (Irish) history and the dervish as a figure of meditative oneness with God—into a single mythic image of a guide into the spirit world—a spirit guide who happens to be a hybrid entity from Hughes's two favorite shamanizing lands.

Hughes further links Ireland and Eastern Europe—especially Hungary—through his conception of the history of shamanism within Europe. Critics tend only to mention Eliade in relation to Hughes's review of *Shamanism*, but Hughes owned another book by Eliade that profoundly shaped his historical sense of shamanism and tribal groups within Europe. Eliade's *Zalmoxis: The Vanishing God* (1972) contains a section right up Hughes's alley entitled "Romanian 'Shamanism'."[96] The chapter contends with a

[93] The shamanism Hughes discusses predates Islam, making this remark somewhat temporally confused. Hughes, though, was more interested in the potential of shamanism for a poetic method than in tracing an empirical history of shamanism.

[94] Ted Hughes, *Gaudete* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 13.

[95] For Hughes, however, the Irish and chimpanzee comparison is lest invested in racial stereotyping than in the "animal/spiritual consciousness" he associates with the spirit world.

[96] Mircea Eliade, *Zalmoxis: The Vanishing God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

geographical puzzle regarding shamanic practices in Moldavia.[97] According to Hungarian shamanic specialist V. Dioszegi, shamanism existed nowhere else in Romania or its immediately surrounding regions. While Romanian tribes often recognized "sorcerer" or "healer" figures, these spiritual leaders lacked key qualities associated with shamans, including the initiation dismemberment dream that Hughes was so drawn to, ritual costume and drums, and the ability to assume animal form. Yet in the seventeenth century, Archbishop Bandinus had chronicled the characteristics of the *incantatores* of Moldavia, who exhibited shamanic features so paradigmatic that Dioszegi could not ignore then. Using Dioszegi's response to Bandinus's research, Eliade draws a conclusion about the origins of shamanism in Europe. He concludes that the shamanic *incantatores* were most likely a Magyar people from the Moldavian Carpathians who had brought shamanism into Europe from Asia Minor. Eliade explains, "Since these specifically shamanic elements are documented…among all the Turkic, Finno-Ugrian, and Siberian peoples…shamanism constitutes a fundamental magico-religious element of the original Magyar culture. The Hungarians brought shamanism with them from Asia when they entered the territory that they occupy today."[98] Hughes's fascination with Hungarian poets, epitomized by but not limited to his friend János Pilinszky, may have been bolstered by his notion that shamanism came to Europe via Hungarian tribes. At any rate, Hughes certainly saw poets like Pilinszky as closer to the source of shamanism's healing powers than Western European or British poets, a view that speaks to how his

[97] Moldavia has been internationally recognized as Moldova since 1991; the Romanian-Moldovan border is currently the eastern border of the European Union, and has long been seen as a passage into the "other" Europe.

[98] Eliade, *Zalmoxis*, 194.

ideas of postwar Europe and notion of the healing power of poetry grew up alongside one another.

In short, Hughes gleaned from Eliade's work that shamanism—his prime poetic metaphor—came to Europe through Hungarian tribes, and that this phenomenon sprang up synchronically in the spiritually rich land of Ireland. This theory of shamanic migration also accords with Hughes's belief that shamanism is an offshoot of Sufism, which the Magyars were exposed to under Ottoman and Persian conquest. It is no coincidence, then, that Hughes's most admired scholar of shamanism came from Romania, a place that he associated with Ireland. The blend of Irish and Romanian influences in his work gave him access to considering England's relationship to his contemporary postwar Europe. In the 1970s and 1980s, this understanding of European history would lead Hughes to consider Yeats, Heaney, and Pilinszky three of his most celebrated poet-shamans of the twentieth century—a point that I will take up shortly.

Steeped as it is in discourses of primitiveness and Irish orientalism, Hughes's shaman of the tribe metaphor has come under critical scrutiny. It has equally perturbed critics who have trouble taking it seriously as a poetic method (recalling critical objections to Yeats's magical journeys) and postcolonial critics. Objections tend to fall into two camps: that the metaphor is ludicrous at best and unethical at worst. Terry Eagleton's sardonically titled "Will and Ted's Bogus Journey"—a cutting review of Hughes's Yeatsian inheritance—sums up the first school of criticism. Weightier critiques come from Tom Paulin and Sean O'Brien, who worry that Hughes's mythic method is a colonizing gesture that eclipses different experiences of people across time and space.[99]

[99] Tom Paulin, *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 258; Sean O'Brien, *The Deregulated Muse* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1998), 37.

This concern is tied to Hughes's primitivism, most problematically expressed in his tendency to link desirable primal powers and healing energies with both animals and "uncivilized" peoples. I would qualify these debates by adding that Hughes's poetry just as frequently applies primitivist and genetic language to European groups as to indigenous groups around the world described by European anthropologists. This is not to dismiss concerns of such representations: if anything, it exacerbates them. Considering that his career began in the decade after the Holocaust, it is alarming to see Hughes describe "tribal" peoples from Europe's margins as lagging evolutionarily behind the "civilized" center of the continent. The inhabitants of modern Devonshire (according to Hughes, ancestors of the *Dumnoni* tribe) are a "breed…so distinct" that they seem to be "almost a separate race…who seem only now to be emerging from the old oak forest," simian Irish caricatures populate *Gaudete*, the British themselves are "genetically the most mixed-up gallimaufry of mongrels on earth," and the postwar Serbs look to the primeval Wolf Spirit as an emblem for their racial heritage (*CP* 1203, 1224). These images are loaded given that tribal and eugenic discourse had come to a crisis in the middle of Europe in Hughes's lifetime. While eugenic language was not taboo in Britain of the 1950s and 1960s—perhaps because Britain was relatively sheltered from the Second World War after the devastation of the First—we expect poets to be particularly attuned to the implications and nuances of the language they use.[100] Indeed, George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language," written just after the war, is the paradigmatic example of an English writer making a case for the power of literary language, with its precision and freshness, to counter the facile language used for

[100] For a discussion of eugenics in postwar Britain, see Lucy Bland and Lesley Hall, "Eugenics in Britain: The View from the Metropole," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, eds. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

dangerous political ends. As Orwell has it, "one ought to recognise that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end." It would take a (Northern) Irish poet to begin to recognize the wariness with which poets ought to use the word tribe, which was becoming politically charged in new ways even as Hughes continued to develop his notion of the poet-shaman as the leader of an ailing tribe.

Northern Ireland's "Tribes"

The first reference to "tribal" violence in Northern Ireland comes two years after Hughes first read Eliade and developed his notion of the shaman of the tribe. In anticipation of the Loyalist parades on the twelfth of July, a *Guardian* article titled "The Threat to Tolerance in Ulster" from July 11, 1966, asks, "Will The Twelfth look like a demonstration of piety? Or will it look like a tribal rite? Will Ulster look ancient or modern?" This passage teems with the rhetoric of tribalism that would swamp the British press through the turn of the millennium. The *Observer*, for instance, ran dozens of stories between 1969 through the early 2000s using the rhetoric of tribalism. In "Ulster Clashes," from January 5, 1969, the *Observer* printed this story:

> The non-violence of the civil rights movement was forgotten in a frantic eagerness to charge through their own marshals to get at the police. Even the campaign's symbols were perverted. The crowd sang 'We Shall Overcome' like a tribal call to war, and then went straight into 'What Shall We Do with the Rev. Paisley?' To which the answer came lusty and clear: 'String the bastard up and burn him.'

The report goes on to describe the Catholic protestors as irrational and almost animalistic:

> They made wild, unnerving clashes from place to place, and later they began to break up the temporary traffic signs, using them to smash windows, wreck and overturn cars and erect temporary and ineffectual barricades. They set fire to the car of one of Paisley's aides, Major Bunting, and danced around it. Their faces had a look of catharsis as they watched it burn.[101]

The notion that ancient tensions "burst into the open in an explosion of hatred" is classic rhetoric of tribal warfare, suggesting that long-dormant, irrational inter-communal hatreds flare up unexpectedly in modern times. The reference to "We Shall Overcome" as a "tribal call to war" relegates engagement in a contemporary international civil rights movement to a pre-modern time, divesting it of any claim to authority as a rational peace-seeking demonstration. The anger of this violent tribe is abated only when they set property of the enemy on fire, gathering around it like a bonfire chanting their tribal songs until they reach catharsis.

Loyalist songs were frequently described in the media in a similar fashion, though not as baldly as in the piece on the Catholic civil rights march. Reporting on the release of a Loyalist leader from prison, correspondent Mary Holland wrote, "It was as comprehensive a show of tribal feeling as I have seen—old men, young children, women with their hair in curlers carrying babies in their arms. They were friendly and looked as poor and pinched as any civil rights march in Londonderry." Their songs, too, are described as "tribal": "The Shankill Conquerors Band, young boys dressed in royal blue uniforms, played the great tribal songs 'The Sash My Father Wore' and 'Old Derry's

[101] "Ulster Clashes," the *Observer*, January 5, 1969, 3.

Walls.' The men wore their Orange silk collars and red, white and blue sashes of the Ulster Protestant Volunteer Force." One of the banners, Holland reports, read "Civil Rights for Protestants."[102] Though the language used to describe Loyalist tribal demonstrations was generally less atavistic and demeaning than that used to frame the Catholic community, both sides were cast as participants in an ongoing tribal war unfathomable to the rest of the United Kingdom. A piece in the *Observer* from later in the same year laments the pervasiveness of the tribal warfare thesis: "the discussion of negotiable problems has been swamped by a kind of primitive tribal warfare. The situation is unpredictable because it has been taken over by largely irrational forces."[103] The ubiquitous tribal warfare thesis suggested, in other words, that the processes of rational government were impossible in Northern Ireland, the conflict irresolvable.

In the midst of these depictions of Northern Ireland's "tribal war," Seamus Heaney became, unwittingly, the shaman of a tribe in crisis. But in Heaney's case, unlike Hughes's, the role was not confined to the time and quality of myth. For instance, one news source in the 1970s ran the headline, "The voice of a silent tribe" next to a shot of a pensive-looking Heaney in profile.[104] Hughes would have been flattered, but this headline was precisely the type of branding that Heaney resisted in both the poetic and political realms. In a period when the Brits and the Irish frequently cast the Troubles as "tribal warfare," Hughes remained tone deaf to the implications of inaugurating the English poet as tribal leader; Heaney did not. Heaney loved Hughes deeply as a poet, friend, and

---

[102] Mary Holland, "O'Neill may call an election," the *Observer*, February 2, 1969, 3.

[103] "BRITAIN and ULSTER: Killings in our own backyard," the *Observer*, August 17, 1969, 6.

[104] Newspaper clipping, "The Voice of a Silent Tribe," unknown source, undated, box 74, folder 18, Seamus Heaney papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

mentor, reflecting that the first time he read Hughes's poem "View of a Pig" in 1962 that "suddenly, the matter of contemporary poetry became the material of my own life…I got this thrill out of trusting my own background, and I started writing about a year later."[105] And when Hughes died in 1998, Heaney spoke at his funeral and said that no death had ever affected him so deeply outside of his own family.[106] Despite this admiration, when British critic Anthony Thwaite designated Heaney as a follower in the "tribe of Ted," Heaney was angry.[107] "The tribe of Ted" designation, as Blake Morrison explains, categorized a type of "post-1945 nature poetry—an imprecisely defined genre, but one presided over by Ted Hughes and reputed to be in opposition to 'idealized' Georgian treatments of nature because of its emphasis on the harsh, actual, predatory and corruptible."[108] Heaney objected less to the designation of himself as a poet who saw violent imagery in the natural world than to the use of the term "tribe." In 1971 in a poem he sent to James Simmons, Heaney responds to these critics by fervently denying his affiliation with any "tribe" at all, be it the Belfast Group, Northern nationalism, or—an ongoing issue in his career—British poets. His private poem to Simmons declares:

> I just don't want to be parading out
>
> With the team. I want a solo run

---

[105] Quoted in Floyd Collins, *Seamus Heaney: The Crisis of Identity* (Cranbury, NJ, Rosemont Publishing, 2003), 34.

[106] Henry Hart, "Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes: A Complex Friendship," *Sewanee Review* 120, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 76.

[107] Anthony Thwaite used this term in his review of *Door into the Dark*, "Country Matters," in the *New Statesman* 77 (June 27, 1969): 914; A. Alvarez and Ian Hamilton had meanwhile implied that Heaney was a "lesser" Hughes.

[108] Blake Morrison, *Seamus Heaney* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 17.

And a drop kick to rattle the small net

Lined by Alvarez, Hamilton, and Thwaite.

Henry Hart illuminates the sports metaphor, explaining that Heaney "wanted to defeat his detractors on his own terms and on his own Irish ground—on a Gaelic football pitch...rather than on an English football field (where you're not allowed to drop-kick the ball)."[109] The Gaelic football metaphor critiques Heaney's canonization in British poetry over a decade before his famous objection in "An Open Letter" to being included in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*: "Be advised, my passport's green / No glass of ours was ever raised / To toast the Queen."[110]

Indeed, part of what Heaney objected to in Thwaite's "tribe of Ted" categorization was the deep-seated Englishness of Hughes's tribal metaphor, shrouded as it was in myths of Englishness. As a native of the now-extinct kingdom of Elmet, Hughes saw himself as a shaman of an ancient tribe. Like Geoffrey Hill's Mercia and Thomas Hardy's fictionalized version of Wessex, Elmet was one of thirty-five tribes included in the Tribal Hidage, a mysterious list of tribal kingdoms compiled in Anglo-Saxon England sometime between the 7th and 9th centuries CE. Hughes's *Remains of Elmet* resonates with Hardy's 1898 *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* and Hill's 1971 *Mercian Hymns*, suggesting a tendency of English poets to chronicle England's tribal past while superimposing it on the industrialization of the present. Moreover, Hughes believed that in assuming the role of Poet Laureate in 1984, he was fulfilling his destiny as the shaman of his tribe. Heaney discouraged Hughes from accepting the Laureateship because he

[109] Hart, "A Complex Friendship," 87.

[110] Heaney, "An Open Letter."

never saw his mentor figure as a traditional English patriot. Heaney later reflected on this heated encounter:

> I recall a fierce discussion I had with Ted Hughes in Listowel, County Kerry, before he accepted the laureateship. I maintained that no one could be a simple patriot anymore, and quoted his own poem, 'Out': 'Let England close / Let the great sea anemone close'. He suggested that I was misreading the poem, which was really about the abomination of war, and began to speak of the British crown as a symbol of the unity of the tribe, like some ancient British chieftain: *Arturus, Dux Britanorum* [...]. As [if] Ted Hughes was the Merlin of the lost kingdom of Elmet.[111]

Heaney's remark, though affectionate, has an almost satirical edginess. It was made in 1998, shortly after Hughes's death and the Good Friday Agreement. In 1998, the British and Irish media, as well as politicians from both within and outside of the conflict, were still employing language of tribal conflict to describe the importance of the peace process. A good sense of the international reach of this rhetoric comes in the September 5, 1998 issue of the *Guardian*, which covers a meeting between Bill Clinton and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern. Clinton remarked to Ahern, "If you are able to make this peace go, we can say to the Middle East, the Aegean, the Indian sub-continent, the tribal strife of Africa, look at this thing that happened in Northern Ireland...The potential impact of resolving this could wash over many more people than just those that live on this island."[112] Casting the Northern Ireland peace process as an exemplary model for

---

[111] Seamus Heaney and John Montague, "The Bag Apron, or, The Poet and His Community: the Inaugural Lecture of the Ireland Chair of Poetry" (Belfast: Lagan Press, 1998).

[112] John Mullin, "Clinton pledge on Ireland," *The Guardian*, September 5, 1998, 7.

other areas of "tribal strife" exemplifies the complexity of Northern Ireland as a place both complicit in and resistant to modernity. On the one hand, the Northern Irish are described with the pejorative rhetoric of tribal warfare, eclipsing the specificities of conflicts across the globe: Clinton suggests that the conflicts in Israel/Palestine, the Balkans, India, and Africa are all mutually intelligible because they are driven by ethnic, tribal, or racial motivations. On the other hand, Northern Ireland stands above these conflicts because its modernity makes its own "tribal war" resolvable, a European model for conflict-ridden zones beyond the pale. This duality—Northern Ireland as both tribal and modern—dominates the rhetoric of tribalism in the media from the 1960s-1990s.

Hughes's own poetry described Ireland as tribal rather than modern, while Heaney resisted the casting of his community in these terms. In an interview in 1977 that seems to channel Hughes, he said, "The Catholics in the North aren't the 'typical Irish'. Some noble wild-eyed figure with a great flow of eloquence and wit, with a kind of primitive energy about him, untrammeled in some way. My people were not like that at all. They were quiet, watchful, oblique, sly."[113] The "primitive energy" recalls Hughes's interest in the shamanic journey of the poet; the shaman would descend into the otherworld to access the primitive energies to restore order to an overly rational, spiritually dead outer world. Heaney's remarks repudiate the sense of Northern Catholics as a primitive people, as a tribal group in need of the poet-shaman's healing.

[113] Monie Begley, interview with Seamus Heaney, *Rambles in Ireland* (Old Greewich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1977), 164.

Myths of North

Hughes and Heaney would revise each other on the viability of the poet-shaman from the 1960s-1990s as they built collaborative myths of Northern Europe that positioned England and Ireland in wider European contexts. For Heaney, this was, of course, the myth of Iron Age sacrificial violence brought into the context of the Troubles in *North*. Heaney's vision of North was adapted from, and indeed later influenced, Hughes's myths of Northern Europe as a landscape infused with violence and mystery, the site of the Vikings who invaded his ancestral kingdom of Elmet. While Viking invaders threaten the populace of both Heaney's *North* and Hughes's *Remains of Elmet*, North is paradoxically the entry point to Europe for both of these poets, more recognizable for their pagan and primitive elements than the invaders from the European mainland.[114]

As Raphaël Ingelbien has demonstrated, Heaney came to his myth of Irish nationalism through Hughes's myth of Englishness. I would argue, though, that these revisions of the myth of North are career-long and mutual. Ingelbien argues that Heaney shrewdly misreads Hughes's myths of English nationhood for an Irish context. Hughes's myth of England is also his creation story for English poetry, in which the iambs of the Norman invaders mix with the "resurgent 'sprung rhythms' of the tribes," which for Hughes were the native Anglo-Saxons and Celts (*WP* 367-8). Hughes saw the Anglo-Saxon/Celtic/Norse influence as a feminine, indigenous continuum in the British Isles supporting an alliterative poetic tradition, with the Normans as a masculine, invading force that conquered the alliterative tradition with softer iambs. In a brilliant reading of

[114] Hughes's and Heaney's notions of Northern Europe as a site of paganism, violence, and ritual resonates with Peter Davidson's work on the idea of north as a site imagined in terms of extremity and danger. See Davidson, *The Idea of North*, 8-9.

Heaney's critical analysis of Hughes and his poetry of *Wintering Out* and *North*, Ingelbien demonstrates how Heaney disentangles Hughes's alignment of the Anglo-Saxons/Celts/Norsemen to call deeper attention to the conquered Celts. Along with the Normans, the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons become invading forces associated with harsh, violent consonants, in contrast to the soft, feminine vowels of the Celts. Heaney's misreading of Hughes becomes the dominant mode for him to represent both communities through place-names; the "black *O* // in *broagh*" and "that last / *gh* the strangers found / difficult to manage" represent the coexistence of the guttural tradition of the masculine conquerors (now imagined as Vikings, Normans, and Anglo-Saxons) and the and harmonious vowels of the indigenous, feminine population (now imagined solely as the Celts).[115]

As Heaney revised Hughes's images of the "tribal" makeup of Northern Europe, he also reconstructed Hughes's notion of the tribe itself. Prior to the appearance of the tribal warfare thesis in the media, Heaney's early volumes, particularly *Wintering Out*, are indebted to Hughes's depictions of tribally motivated violence. References to bloodlust, vengeance, and feuding are as resonant of Hughes as tensions in Northern Ireland in the years leading up to the Troubles. In the "obscene threats" of the toads "poised like mud grenades" and "gathered there for vengeance," British critics were quick to find the contemporary British pastoral poetry laden with the violence of nature popularized by Hughes.[116] In "The Last Mummer," the lines

> the long toils of blood

[115] Raphaël Ingelbien, "Seamus Heaney and England: A Map of Misreadings," *Contemporary Literature* 40, no. 4 (1999): 627-58.

[116] Morrison, *Seamus Heaney*, 17-18.

and feuding.

His tongue went whoring

among the civil tongues

resonate with the bloodlust and feuds of ancient tribal peoples that Hughes describes in two poems Heaney calls attention to in his essay "Englands of the Mind." Heaney pegs Hughes's poem "Thistles" as emblematic of Hughes's voice, "born of an original vigour, fighting back over the same ground":

Then they grow grey, like men.

Mown down, it is a feud. Their sons appear,

Still with weapons, fighting back over the same ground.[117]

These lines from "Thistles," and Heaney's description of them, recall the supposed intractable violence of inter-communal conflict. Heaney also analyzes "Warriors of the North," in which Hughes describes the Norsemen as vengeful invaders ultimately subsumed into the rationality of Protestantism:

A cash-down, beforehand revenge, with extra,

For the grueling relapse and prolongueur of their blood

Into the iron arteries of Calvin.

These intertextual echoes suggest that Heaney had Hughesian depictions of blood feuds in his ear prior to the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland.

But following the appearance of the tribal warfare thesis, Heaney's poems of *North* are engaged both with the media's rhetoric of tribalism and with Hughes's violent, vengeful landscape of Northern Europe. Ramazani argues that *North* self-consciously

[117] Heaney, *Finders Keepers*, 86-7.

resists journalism; "Whatever You Say Say Nothing," for instance, "journalistically incorporates journalism as an ambivalent other against which poetry defines itself" as Heaney recalls an encounter "With an English journalist in search of 'views / On the Irish thing.'"[118] The poem "Funeral Rites" brings the news in thematically, only to counter the tribal warfare thesis with poetic explication,

> Now as news comes in
> of each neighbourly murder
> we pine for ceremony,
> customary rhythms… (*N* 6-7)

As outside news impinges on the privacy of the familial wake, Catholic observances for "dead relations" turn to a contemplation of "neighbourly murder." This phrase recalls Appadurai's assertion that the "new" ethnic conflict of modernity takes its acute violence from the sense of betrayal in a small community, from "the horror at the neighbor turned killer/torturer/rapist."[119] To salve the horrors of neighborly murder, the poem draws on the "ceremony" and "customary rhythms" of Catholic funeral rites. But the poem brings Catholic culture dangerously into dialogue with the tribal and primitive as it imagines the Catholic funeral procession, like a serpent, entering "the megalithic doorway" (*N* 8). This is Hughes's Ireland, rather than Heaney's, the megalithic doorway reminiscent of what Heaney called Hughes's "primeval landscape where stones cry out."[120] But the third section of the poem revises Hughes's Northern European cult of feuds, vengeance, and

---

[118] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 95.

[119] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 154.

[120] Heaney, *Finders Keepers*, 80.

honor. At first, it seems the ritual of the burial has only delayed the intractable cycle of violence and sacrifice, as the ancient hero Gunnar

> lay beautiful
> inside his burial mound,
> though dead by violence
>
> and unavenged. (*N* 8-9)

But the poem concludes with Gunnar turning, "with a joyful face, / to look at the moon." The intractable cycles of violence in Hughes's poetry are challenged here; the poem suggests that Gunnar ought to rest unavenged, that for reconciliation to be possible murders must remain unreciprocated. The intrusion of the news into Heaney's *North*, always absent in Hughes's mythic verse, forces Heaney to contend with and resist the tribal warfare thesis.

Ingelbien allows that Heaney corrected Hughes on his conflation of Anglo-Saxons and Celts. After digesting Heaney's response to his myth of Northern Europe, Hughes conceded that it would take someone from an off-center place in the British archipelago to appreciate the full complexity of the violent relationships among the Celts, Anglo-Saxons, and Norsemen:

> To see the full irony of this Battle of Metrical Forms and this intertangled Battle of the Modes of Speech, in Britain, you have to be Welsh, Scots or Irish. You have to be one of those, that is, who failed, in successive defeats, to stop the Anglo-Saxon, the Scandinavian and finally the Norman invaders stealing the country from beneath them. (*WP* 368)

Ingelbien reads this passage as a nod to Heaney's sense that the Anglo-Saxon and Norse elements were, at least at one point, antagonistic to the Celtic, feminine element.

But Ingelbien stops short of tracing how Heaney's bog poems are registered in Hughes's most staunchly English volumes, *Remains of Elmet* (1979) and *Moortown Diary* (1979), as Hughes looks to Ireland as a way to describe how England might turn to its "tribal" past to make sense of its present relationship to Europe. Hughes so admired the bog poems that his sister, Olwyn Hughes, published them in a fine press edition through her Rainbow Press. The English moors now carry suggestions of the Irish landscape; the "bog-cotton" trembles in a landscape held together by kinship ties, as Hughes imagines "The big animal of rock…// In its homeland / Among a solemn kin" (*CP* 466). The poem "The Ancient Briton Lay under His Rock" conjures Heaney's bog bodies, as the poet imagines an archaeological search through layers of ground for English origins:

> We dug for him. We dug to be sure.
>
> As we dug it waddled and squirmed deeper.
> As we dug, slowly, a good half ton,
> It escaped us, taking its treasure down.
>
> And lay beyond us, look at up at us
>
> Labouring in the prison
> Of our eyes, our sun, our Sunday bells. (*CP* 482)

Several other poems published in 1979 reveal Heaney's Irish-inflected myths of Northern Europe. "Irish Elk," never collected, meditates on the elk pulled from the bog (*CP* 497), and the poem "Struggle" (from *Moortown Diaries*), describes calf birthing as "pulling somebody anyhow from a bog" (509). While we tend to think of the Hughes and Heaney continuum moving in one direction, with Hughes as mentor, in fact Heaney's myths of Northern Europe in *Wintering Out* and *North* make an appearance several years later in Hughes's poetic volumes most known for chronicling ancient tribal kingdoms of England. Newly attuned to the scars left on indigenous areas by invaders, Hughes invites themes of dispossession and resistance against European invasions into his poems of Englishness.

Hughes as Poet Laureate

Hughes admired Heaney's Ireland because he saw Ireland as a model for England's past, a time and place where he would have been best suited for the role of poet-shaman. While Hughes would have been delighted to function as the poet-shaman for a tribal region of England, he is on less sure footing when shamanizing for *Britain*. The Crown as unity of the tribe with the poet-shaman at the Queen's side was the backbone of the Laureateship for Hughes. He gives a pithy summary of the relationship in the epigraph to *Rain Charm for the Duchy and Other Laureate Poems* (1992):

> A soul is a wheel.
>
> A Nation's a Soul
>
> With a Crown at the hub
>
> To keep it whole (*CP* 802)

But "Great Britain" is not a single "tribe" or even nation, which created a problem in Hughes's shamanic system. Hughes's prose often hints at the problems of taking up shamanizing for a blended cluster of tribes; he believed shamans worked more successfully in unified, isolated cultures. In "Myth, Metres, Rhythm," he explains,

> When the shared group understanding of all members is complete then a mere touching of the tokens of their mythology is enough for complete communication….Perhaps in primitive groups, or in small nations that are still little more than tribal assemblies of ancient, inter-related families, where the blood-link can still be felt, the conditions for it are more likely. In those circumstances, language can be said to be full of meaning. Hence the answer of the old Hopi woman to the Anthropologist who asked why Hopi songs are so short. "Our songs are short" she said, "because we know so much." Meaning, because we all know so thoroughly the mythology of our system of shared understandings, which is the life of our people, nothing needs to be explained. She might have added: and because we have no quarrel with it. (*WP* 310-311)

Hughes understands Serbia, Hungary, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland to be among these "small nations that are still little more than tribal assemblies." In his introduction to the collected poems of the Serbian poet Vasko Popa, Hughes writes that Popa's volume *Earth Erect*

> is a poetic commentary on the historical folk-memory of the Serbs, a poem of pilgrimage through sacred national places and events, and revolving around St Sava, the patron saint of Serbia and mythical shepherd of the

> wolves. Applied to such material, Popa's methods produce…large, sudden openings through history and weird resonances of tribal feelings. (*WP* 227)

As a shaman with a connection to the Lame Wolf totem animal, Popa's vision is "a call to a whole people, in the profoundest kind of language. And a call to the Ancestral Spirit of a whole people"—a "whole people" Hughes himself does not have access to. As he puts it, "In our modern multi-cultural societies, obviously things tend to be different. Here, many groups and their mythologies, their systems of shared understandings, are jumbled together and forced to get on with each other" (*WP* 311).

This observation echoes Hughes's description of contemporary Great Britain in contrast to *England*—that "the British themselves [are] genetically the most mixed-up gallimaufry of mongrels on earth" (*CP* 1224). As John Fowles puts it in his essay "On Being English But Not British," "*We have to be British and we want to be English.* The reason our emotional attitudes towards matters such as the dissolution of the Empire and our engagement in Europe cut across both party and class lines is that our Englishness is still battling our Britishness. The same ambivalence has for long been apparent in our literature."[121] The English/British ambivalence is plain in Hughes's poetry: he felt some trepidation about assuming a "shaman" role for a cluster of tribes. Dubious rhymes like "Came Irish, English, Welsh, Moor, Spaniard, Scot / As missionaries to my humble pot" (*CP* 823) undercut Hughes's supposed comfort with and even celebration of the multiple groups living in contemporary Britain.

---

[121] John Fowles, "On Being English But Not British," in *Wormholes* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 82.

The anxiety of how to be a poet-shaman for what he called "the marriage blend of our island races" may be part of the difficulty with Hughes's Laureate poems, which most readers agree to be his weakest verse. Heaney's initial trepidation at Hughes accepting the Laureateship was well-founded. When Hughes spells out his role of shaman over the various tribes of Britain, he often falters. It is difficult to pin down his tone or intent in a Laureate poem like "A Masque for Three Voices," which vacillates between iambic pentameter and alexandrines with none of his usual Anglo-Saxon inflections, as though Hughes has placed himself as Laureate back into his own mythologized Court of the Norman conquerors. Many of his laureate lines come across as doggerel:

> When Britain wins, I feel that I have won.
> Whatever Britain does, I feel I have done.
> I know my life comes somehow from the sun.
>
> I hardly understand what I can mean
> When I say Britain's Queens and Kings are mine.
> How am I all these millions, yet alone? (*CP* 822)

Casting himself as a representative of the nation—"I all these millions, yet alone"—reflects the shamanizing tendency of so much of his work. Yet he simply does not sound comfortable with—or quite serious about—this manifestation of the poet-shaman.

Hughes's Eastern Europe

(Northern) Ireland and the Eastern bloc become Hughes's ideal zones for postwar poetic shamanizing, I argue, because he believed these places *do* have a common set of

myths and tropes shared by their tribes, and by extension, cleaner access to a single poetic tradition. He sounds not a little eugenic when he suggests that compared to modernized England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland are better off when it comes to the purity of a poetic heritage: "the older Celtic traditions survived more intact and resilient….For one thing, the actual nations survived, separate but attached, concentrated in isolation, like powerfully active glands, secreting the genetic remnants of a poetic caste selectively bred perhaps through millennia" (*WP* 368-9).[122] Thus, his poetic theory links Ireland and Eastern Europe in a way not yet seen in the British and Anglo-Irish literature that had aligned the places before him: he draws out their similarities as small nations that had maintained indigenous cultures, languages, and poetic traditions in spite of conquest.

Hughes's creation of a canon of poet-shamans is deeply tied to his notion of tribes within Europe, the "civil war" he identifies in English poetry, and the notion that poet-shamans emerge in times of civic crisis. Jonathan Bate has perceptively called Ted Hughes "one of the great literary *readers* of the twentieth century," a talent he has rarely gotten credit for in part due to his disdain for much of literary criticism.[123] Hughes's penetrating, creative analyses of literary figures from England, Ireland, and Eastern Europe are indispensable to our understanding both of his poetry and of the work of British and Irish poets after him. Hughes develops his sense of contemporary England's vexed relationship to both Great Britain and the continent by turning to other poet-

[122] Hughes's choice of phrase on this matter plays into the unfortunate conflation between eugenics in aesthetic theory and eugenics in politics, though certainly they were distinct in Hughes's mind. He took Adorno's "No poetry after Auschwitz" seriously (at least in the abstract), referencing it on several occasions as a moral compass for his own poetry and translations of Eastern European poets.

[123] Jonathan Bate, "Hughes on Shakespeare," *Cambridge Companion*, 135.

shamans in Europe from so-called tribes who have more visible difficulties than England in relating to European empires.

Hughes's analytical mode allows him to draw surprising connections between figures as distinct as Shakespeare and Vasko Popa (he calls both *The Tempest* and Popa's *Earth Erect* "tribal dreams"). In *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, which is as much a working out of Hughes's theory of English poetry as it is a commentary on Shakespeare, the bard epitomizes the Hughesian poet-shaman. Shakespeare emerged as a shaman at the precise moment of the definitive crisis in English identity: the Reformation. The split between Catholicism and Protestantism in England represented a larger split between old Europe (Catholicism) and new England (Protestantism). By writing one long Catholic poem and one long Protestant poem, and of course by employing both Anglo-Saxon words and continental meters, Shakespeare effectively handled the crisis of what Hughes terms, conveniently, "the Shakespearian moment."[124]

Yeats, too, is a shaman-poet who emerged at a time of political crisis masquerading in part as religious division—in his case, the Irish Civil War and War of Independence. As drawn to Irish history as legend, Hughes argues that the healing energy that Yeats's tribe required of him was necessitated by the scars of historical realities:

> The decisive event, imprinted on the face and voice of his every fellow-countryman as in the Irish landscape itself, would be that prolonged, genocidal humiliation where the Great Famine and the mass emigrations that resulted from it…were subjectively experienced by all who felt themselves to be Irish as the ultimate defeat, the bitter culmination of seven centuries of British policy in Ireland. (*WP* 271)

[124] Ted Hughes, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

In the same paragraph that Hughes discusses Yeats's response to Irish history, though, he shifts to a mythological take on the poet, writing that Yeats demonstrated "pure shamanic thinking of the most primitive brand" in his attempts "to restore the energy and defiance of the ancestral heroes and lost gods to the prostrated soul of Ireland." In a gesture in line with his propensity to separate the Celtic elements of the British archipelago from Europe, Hughes goes on to suggest that the flavor of Yeats's shamanism "was closer to the visions of the Sioux Shaman Black Elk than to anything in the political or even poetic traditions of Western Europe" (*WP* 271-2). As in many of his writings, Hughes holds Ireland's spiritual energies at bay from European rationality.

T.S. Eliot's mode of shamanizing, as Hughes understood it, challenged Hughes to think of the poet-shaman as an important figure in the postwar European landscape. Eliot admired the "mind of Europe" rather than Europe's so-called tribal provinces where Hughes was more apt to find poet-shamans. Hughes explains of Eliot, "The tribal disaster, in his case, was presumably just that convulsive desacralization of the spirit of the West. His tribe, perhaps, included all Western man, or perhaps, even, simply spiritual man" (*WP* 272). Eliot would have called this the unified sensibility, which was intimately bound up in his understanding of Europe and Dante, and opposed to his view of Shakespeare. Where Dante, for Eliot, represented the unified sensibility of Europe, Shakespeare represented the regionalism of England. In fact, Hughes's remarks on the "mixed-up mongrels" of the British Empire echo Eliot's distinction between English and European sensibility. More strongly than Hughes, Eliot's work, according to Randy Malamud, "enacts a recurrent dismissal of Englishness in favor of a European aesthetic

that is more likely to salve the battered soul."[125] Preferring Dante's European *depth* of feeling to Shakespeare's English *breadth* of feeling, Eliot argued that Dante "had one coherent system of thought behind him," and that in his "thought was orderly and strong and beautiful."[126] Building from this idea of a unified sensibility, Eliot believed "only out of Europe could a sense of world harmony proceed."[127] Malamud points out the irony in this thought process "considering the condition of Europe during Eliot's lifetime":

> the chaos of the trenches, the shell-shocked soldiers and civilians, the ruined landscape, the no man's land…and finally…the dark nightmare, the Holocaust of World War II. Perhaps it is precisely this irony that empowers Eliot's poetry and renders such exquisite tension and pathos—that is, the irony that Eliot clings to an idea of Europe as the source of harmony at the precise historical moment when it descends into the whirlpool of discord.[128]

The Movement poets inherited this "whirlpool of discord," resulting in what Hughes identified as a political weariness that he himself was ready to conquer.

Eliot worked out his idea of Europe in the *Criterion*, much as Hughes would work through his in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, the journal that he cofounded. As Jeroen Vanheste explains, "From its inception, the *Criterion* was European rather than British in

---

[125] Randy Malamud, "Dante as Guide to Eliot's Competing Traditions," in *T.S. Eliot, Dante, and the Idea of Europe*, ed. Paul Douglass (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 126.

[126] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1932), 116.

[127] Malamud, "Dante as Guide," 125.

[128] Ibid, 125-126.

scope."[129] He adds that we have "too often neglected Eliot as an exponent of the values of the unity of European culture. The *Criterion* was an integral part of a European network of cultural reviews that strengthened the literary and intellectual exchange, as well as the correspondence and friendships, between the countries of Western Europe."[130] But on the eve of the Second World War, this function of the *Criterion* would break down. In his final editorial of the *Criterion* in 1939 on the brink of war, Eliot wrote of the breakup of the unity of Europe:

> Gradually communications became more difficult, contributions more uncertain, and new and important foreign contributors more difficult to discover. The 'European mind', which one had mistakenly thought might be renewed and fortified, disappeared from view: there were fewer writers in any country who seemed to have anything to say to the intellectual public of another.[131]

Eliot's tribe—the unified idea of Europe—was in the process of a breakdown as Europe entered a new phase of crisis. Where Eliot responded powerfully to World War I (which Hughes often spoke of as the foundation myth of England), his role as a Hughesian "poet-shaman" stopped shy of World War II. In 1946, Eliot even wrote of a "gradual closing of the mental frontiers of Europe."[132] His role as shaman for a people with a unified

---

[129] Jeroen Vanheste, "The Idea of Europe," in *T.S. Eliot in Context*, ed. Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 52.

[130] Ibid., 58.

[131] T.S. Eliot, "Last Words," the *Criterion* (January 1939): 271-2.

[132] T.S. Eliot, "Notes towards the Definition of Culture," in *Christianity and Culture* (New York, Harcourt and Brace, 1949), 116.

sensibility was over, and Hughes saw himself as a figure who could repair the rift between Western and Eastern Europe through poetry.

When Hughes founded *Modern Poetry in Translation* with Daniel Weissbort in 1965, his goal was to open the frontiers of Europe, and especially Eastern Europe, to England. *MPT* focused on bringing Eastern European poetry to an English readership and literary scene. In fact, Hughes believed in the public mission of the journal so fully that he initially wanted to distribute a free copy of *MPT* to every poet in England.[133] The journal was home for a nexus of interests for Hughes: his idea of Europe and poetry's role in history, his practice of translation, and his role as a poet-shaman. His work on *MPT* led Hughes to introduce the first Poetry International Festival in London in 1967. His opening remarks propose poetry as the "ambassador" primed to repair Europe's breakdown in communication:

> However rootedly national in detail it may be, poetry is less and less the prisoner of its own language. It is beginning to represent, as an ambassador, something far greater than itself. Or perhaps it is only now being heard for what, among other things, it is—a universal language of understanding in which we can all hope to meet.[134]

Weissbort puts these remarks in the context of the many post-World War II poetry festivals that sprang up around Europe: "After the devastations of World War II, mutual understanding between nations, separated historically as well as linguistically, assumed a new urgency. Among the less obvious indications was an increase in the number of

---

[133] Daniel Weissbort, *Ted Hughes and Translation* (Nottingham: Richard Hollis, 2011), 9.

[134] Ted Hughes, "Programme: Poetry International, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1967," quoted in Weissbort, *Ted Hughes and Translation*, 1.

multinational festivals, bringing artists of diverse cultures together in the hope or expectation of their finding ways of responding to one another, and encouraging mutual understanding."[135]

Hughes also saw translation of Eastern European poetry, and the task of *MPT* as a whole, as a way to help England communicate again with Europe. Weissbort explains Hughes's cosmopolitan alternative to insularity of the tribe:

> It seems that Hughes was reaching out, much as his Renaissance predecessors had done….This is particularly important, after the First and Second World Wars and following a period in which England, in spite of its imperial pretensions and continuing worldwide responsibilities, was cut off even from its immediate European neighbours and had turned in on itself.[136]

Hughes hoped that *MPT* would invite communication across borders through both the process of translation and the reading of poetry in translation, and in doing so widen English readers' sense of themselves as Europeans.

Through international poetry festivals and *MPT*, Hughes became especially impressed with two poets of the first postwar generation: the Yugoslav Vasko Popa and the Hungarian János Pilinszky. In his introduction to the collected poems of Popa, Hughes writes of this generation, "The attempt these poets have made to record man's awareness of what is being done to him, by his own institutions and by history, and to record along with the suffering their inner creative transcendence of it, has brought their poetry down to such precisions, discriminations and humilities that it is a new thing" (*WP*

---

[135] Ibid., 7.

[136] Ibid., 11.

221). While Hughes was much more invested in the First World War in his own poetry, he looked to this generation of poets to understand the impact of the Second on both Europe and England. On the rare occasions Hughes does write directly of the Second World War, he tends to do so by recourse to the Eastern European poets who lived through it.

If the First World War is the impetus behind much of Hughes's poetry, the Second drives his translations, which Hughes thought were at least as effective and important as his own poetry. He also provides a historical analysis that posits World War II as a watershed moment in the creation and reception of translation. In his introduction to the 1982 issue of *Modern Poetry in Translation*, Hughes writes that the boom of translation sales in the 1960s and 1970s was a byproduct of "the real historical event—the shock-wave consequences of modern physics."[137] Speaking of a postwar fear that "there had been some sort of mutation in humanity," Hughes adds, in the genetic language that accompanies many of his discussions on "tribes" within Europe, "We were all taken unawares by a decade that became in many ways a poetic image simply for youth, which had behind it the magical power of sexual awakening, and the archaic biological imperative, to love and embrace everybody, especially those with foreign genes, before it is too late."[138] Then, upon the "re-awakening of the world's countries, to themselves and to each other, after such nightmare experiences," nations became desperate to repair the breakdown in communication across borders that Eliot had foreseen in his final editorial for the *Criterion*. In a remark that sounds more civically

[137] Ted Hughes, "Introduction" to *Modern Poetry in Translation* (1982), in Weissbort, *Selected Translations*, 201.
[138] Ibid., 202.

grounded than usual, Hughes suggests that in this climate, "the translation of poetry became important, almost political business."

Several critics have remarked on notable differences between Hughes's level of political engagement in England versus Eastern Europe. O'Brien sees a division between Hughes's poetry itself, so disengaged from contemporary English politics, and his translations of Eastern European poetry: "It is striking that Ted Hughes, though he has little to say of domestic politics, has long been interested in writing from the Eastern bloc, whose poets (such as Vasko Popa and János Pilinszky) knew that the least utterance, however carefully encoded, is political—and that equally, there is a kind of power in the encoding."[139] Neil Corcoran writes that Hughes "came to maturity during the immediately post-war period when Europeans were faced with two realities which have been most signally formative of the modern historical consciousness and conscience: the Nazi concentration camps and the atomic bomb."[140] Hughes and Geoffrey Hill were among the first English poets who were willing to look at the Second World War. Hughes discusses the climate of the Movement poets in an interview with Ekbert Faas:

> One of the things [the *New Lines*] poets had in common I think was the post-war mood of having had enough…enough rhetoric, enough overweening push of any kind, enough of the dark gods, enough of the id, enough of the Angelic powers and the heroic efforts to make new worlds. They'd seen it all turn back into death camps and atomic bombs….The second war after all was a colossal negative revelation. In a sense it meant

[139] O'Brien, *The Deregulated Muse*, 35.

[140] Neil Corcoran, *English Poetry Since 1940* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), 114-5.

> they recoiled to some essential English strengths. But it set them dead against negotiation with anything outside the cosiest arrangement of society….Now I came a bit later. I hadn't had enough. I was all for opening negotiations with whatever happened to be out there."[141]

Although many critics have pointed to the limitations of Hughes's mythic method to meet the actual demands of history, for his part Hughes saw himself as emerging and straying from a generation that had not wanted to look closely at the Second World War. Creating a canon of poet-shamans of various tribes in the English, Irish, and Eastern European traditions allowed Hughes to tell a largely ahistorical story about the history of poetry in a time that could not bear to be too historical after the horrors of two world wars. Hughes, as a poet who was ready, in his words, to "open negotiations with whatever happened to be out there," created a canon of poet-shamans in postwar Eastern Europe who could heal their tribes through the worst political and social crises of the century.

Though most significant studies of Hughes mention the influence of Eastern European poets on his work and thinking, few sustained studies exist. Of these, no one has considered how Eastern European poets influenced not merely Hughes's sense of Europe but also his idea of *Englishness*. The few in-depth studies that exist focus more on Hughes's personal life and the difficult question of influence on his own poetry than on the relationship in his work between England and the contemporary Eastern bloc. Antony Rowland traces the rise of Hughes's friendships with Popa and Pilinszky to the years immediately following Plath's death; he also suggests that Hughes uses Holocaust images drawn from Popa and Pilinszky to work through his personal grief "indirectly" through

---

[141] Ekbert Faas, *Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1980), 201.

an "apocalyptic narrative."[142] Similarly, Michael Parker argues that these poets gave Hughes a model of survival following Plath's suicide.[143] On the question of influence, Laura Webb urges us not to underestimate "the influence of the Eastern European poets Miroslav Holub, János Pilinszky, Zbigniew Herbert and Vasko Popa…in a consideration of what allowed Hughes…to reconstitute and reinvigorate his language."[144] Corcoran suggests that, although Hughes writes much more about the First World War, the Second is also on his horizon, and that "this European catastrophe might be behind Hughes's fascination with Pilinszky and Popa."[1145] Parker, like O'Brien, believes the cleanest interpretation of why Hughes looks to Eastern European poets in particular is because "they extended and intensified his already acute consciousness of war."[146] Parker takes his speculations regarding direct influence on Hughes's poetry further, suggesting that reading these poets made Hughes less self-centered, more objective, and more "modernist," separating him from confessional poets like Plath and Lowell.

But considering Hughes's prose on Popa and Pilinszky in tandem with his prose that develops a myth of English poetry reveals a less obvious layer of solidarity between Hughes and these poets: their status, in his imagination, as ideal poet-shamans of a tribal

---

[142] Antony Rowland, *Holocaust Poetry: Awkward Poetics in the Work of Sylvia Plath, Geoffrey Hill, Tony Harrison and Ted Hughes* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 163. Certainly, Hughes's relationships with Plath and Wevill made Holocaust metaphors in his poetry more viable: from Plath's "Daddy" to Wevill's escape from Nazi Germany and translations of Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai (who was Hughes's favorite contemporary poet), Holocaust metaphors were close to his personal life even before its tragedies.

[143] Michael Parker, "Hughes and the Poets of Eastern Europe," in Keith Sagar, *The Achievement of Ted Hughes* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 41.

[144] Laura Webb, "Mythology, Morality, and Memorialization: Animal and Human Endurance in Hughes' Poetry," in *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, eds. Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts, and Terry Gifford (London: Palgrave, 2013), 41.

[145] Corcoran, *English Poetry Since 1940*, 115.

[146] Parker, "Hughes and the Poets of Eastern Europe," 38.

pocket of Europe. I will focus on two factors that drew him to Popa and Pilinszky in particular: Popa's supreme ability to negotiate the inner and outer worlds that had been cut off from one another through the camps and nuclear anxiety, and Pilinszky's "primitive" poetry that leant itself beautifully to Hughes's shamanic method of minimalist translation.

Vasko Popa

Hughes greatly admired Popa as a poet-shaman of a small Eastern bloc state. He did not translate him, but he read him vociferously and wrote an introduction to his poems; he also promoted him in *Modern Poetry in Translation* and other venues. Popa's influence is strongest in *Crow* and *Gaudete*; both are based on the extended folktale cycles Popa is known for, and both make use of pared down images that Hughes associates with Popa's writing. As the first volume to come out after the turmoil in Hughes's personal life, *Crow* is often regarded as an amplified tale of personal suffering. But *Crow* also works out the relationship between England and Europe through its engagement with Popa. Hughes's critical writing on Popa, with its fascinating misreadings, reveals more about Hughes's own attempt to build a canon of tribal poet-shamans than it does about Popa. It also reveals a good deal about Hughes's own poetry. As Tara Bergin remarks, Hughes's introduction to Popa's collected poems "tells one as much, if not more, about Hughes as it does about Popa."[147] Most of all, the misreadings in this introduction demonstrate that *Crow* relates to Hughes's idea of tribal Europe through its refusal to accomplish what the better-positioned poet-shaman Popa can do:

[147] Tara Bergin, "Vasko Popa," *The Ted Hughes Society Journal* (2012), http://www.thetedhughessociety.org/vaskopopa.htm.

heal the rift between the inner world of the passions and the outer world of reason. In the context of postwar Europe, Hughes associated the outer world with apocalyptic threat. Hughes positions Popa, as a poet who lived in the Eastern bloc, as a poet better situated to temper Cold War anxieties through a shamanic journey into the depths of the self.

Hughes frequently writes of Popa in terms of modern physics, which for Hughes exemplified rationality. Postwar Europe, Hughes suggested, was thrown out of balance by the domination of modern physics and needed the inner world of the passions to restore order. The first generation of postwar Eastern Bloc poets was ideally situated to restore the balance between the inner and outer worlds. Hughes writes,

> their world reminds one of the world of modern physics. Only theirs is more useful to us, in that while it is the same gulf of unknowable laws and unknowable parcels, the centre of gravity is not within some postulate deep in space, or leaking away down the drill-shaft of mathematics, but inside man's sense of himself, inside his body and his essential human subjectivity. (*WP* 220)

The "world of modern physics," of course, was the world of the H bomb. His own work adamantly refuses to—or cannot—blend modern physics with humanism. In "Myth and Education," he pits scientific objectivity against inner psychic energies (arrived at through a mythic method), seeing the hyper-rational world of theorems as part of the "outer world" divorced from animal/spiritual consciousness. *Crow* holds these worlds in suspension; Hughes deliberately makes Crow into a shaman without a tribe, and moreover a shaman who fails to complete his healing journey due to his inability to blend scientific discourse and myth. Where Hughes claims that Popa makes the cold

mathematics of modern physics part of the *inner* world of psychic experience, Crow's inability to reconcile modern physics with psychic experience makes the volume both profound and alienating.

Crow's elemental world is bound up in nuclear threat through images that frequently derive from Hughes's readings of Popa. Indeed, the elemental language throughout Hughes's work inevitably evokes nuclear anxiety. "A Masque for Three Voices" (1992), Hughes's Laureate poem that takes the reader through English history, all but spells out the connection: "Einstein bent the Universe / To make war obsolete," and "An atom none could see / Opened its revolving doors / Into infinity" (*CP* 823). Even as far back as the *Crow* poems composed in the late 1960s, references to the universe, atoms, and infinity all conjure nuclear disaster. While Great Britain's reaction to the Second World War was muted in comparison to what Hughes thought of as the greater national disaster of the First, the ravaged borders and breakdown in communication between European states following the Second defined modern European experience. The poets of Eastern Europe—what Hughes called the "historically less fortunate parts of Europe"—were particularly effective shamans because their small nations were privy to this foundation myth of postwar Europe, and they were shaman-poets of nations who were in desperate need of healing in a way Britain was not in his lifetime.[148] They were poet-shaman models for Hughes, able to face an "unaccommodated universe" ungoverned by a being sympathetic to humanity while still "keep[ing] all their sympathies intact"—something Crow is unable to do as he wanders through a wasteland "Without guest or God" (*WP* 221; *CP* 212). The muted nuclear threat images in Hughes's introduction to Popa are staggering, but Hughes casts Popa as a shaman figure who can

[148] Faas, *The Unaccommodated Universe*, 201. Weissbort, *Ted Hughes and Translation*, 7.

teach his "tribe" to live under this threat by bringing them the inner, healing energies of poetry.

While Popa writes in a postwar tradition in which metaphors of cosmology and the infinite often emerge to resist social realism and the imperialism of the USSR, Hughes interprets these moments as part of the creation-in-destruction myth of postwar Europe: that the bomb will destroy everything but leave a new beginning in its wake. Hughes brings these readings of Popa into *Crow*. Yet Hughes's "borrowings" are not reminiscent less of Popa's actual atomic and elemental images than of how Hughes *describes* these moments in Popa. Hughes's introduction to Popa's poetry, in fact, would work better for *Crow* than it does for anything contained in the volume it prefaces.

Hughes's thesis about Popa's work describes *Crow* beautifully: "The sophisticated philosopher is also a primitive, gnomic spell-maker. The desolate view of the universe opens through eyes of childlike simplicity and moody oddness. The wide perspective of general elemental and biological law is spelled out with folklore hieroglyphs and magic monsters" (*WP* 227). Yet the "biological law" and mathematical theorems Hughes credits in Popa are missing from the poems. Discussing Popa's "Acquaintance" to arrive at his interpretation, Hughes could just as easily be commenting on his own "Black Beast" as these stanzas he quotes from Popa:

> Ribbon of space
> Don't wind round my legs
> Don't try to entrance me
>
> My ingenuous breathing

My breathless breathing

Don't try to intoxicate me

I sense the breath of the beast

I'm not playing (*WP* 225)

While the "gnomic spellmaker" comes through in the magic-laden images of the first stanza, as the speaker tries to charm the "ribbon of space" that threatens him into submission, the realms of biology and mathematics that Hughes ascribes to the poems are muted, if not absent. In contrast, Hughes's "Black Beast" suspends magic and modern physics in eerie relation. While Popa's speaker "sense[s] the breath of the beast" and refuses to engage ("I'm not playing"), Crow attempts to confront the beast directly through scientific dismemberment:

Crow split his enemy's skull to the pineal gland.

Where is the Black Beast?"

Crow crucified a frog under a microscope, he peered into the brain of a dogfish.

Where is the Black Beast?

Here we have what Hughes calls Popa's "wide perspective of general elemental and biological law…spelled out with…magical monsters." When Crow's scientific study of the Beast fails, he "charge[s] into space" after it, evoking the annihilation potential of the new physics more strongly than Popa ever does:

The silences of space decamped, space flitted in every direction—
Where is the Black Beast?

Crow flailed immensely through the vacuum, he screeched after the
disappearing stars—
Where is it? Where is the Black Beast? (*CP* 224)

Hughes also puts into practice his own remark that Popa's poetry resembles a "universe passing through a universe." In "Crow and Mama," Crow

peered out through the portholes at Creation

And saw the stars millions of miles away
And saw the future and the universe

Opening and opening. (*CP* 219).

Unlike Crow's expanding universe, Popa's is often closed in; perhaps his most famous line for English readers (from "Give Me Back My Rags") is "Get out of my walled infinity / Of the star circle round my heart."[149] As Heaney misreads Hughes's myths of Englishness to arrive at a myth of Irish nationalism, so Hughes selectively reads Popa to comment indirectly on the state of postwar Europe in his own verse.

János Pilinszky

János Pilinszy is the other key Eastern European poet behind *Crow*. Following his reading of Eliade's *Shamanism*, Hughes elected to abort the *Crow* sequence at the

[149] Vasko Popa, *Collected Poems* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1997), 97.

moment the protagonist faces death, foreclosing the possibility of renewal and healing. This decision puts Hughes in line not only with Eliade but also with Pilinszky. The moment asymptotically closest to death, both in Pilinszky's poetry and in Eliade's shamanism, is also the ultimate moment of creative possibility.[150] In "Crow's Song about God," the penultimate poem of the volume, Crow mutters, "My Savior is coming" (*CP* 272), but in the concluding poem ("Crow the Just"), this hope is undercut by the phrase "only his own death," repeated at the end of each line of the first stanza, recalling Hughes's notion that the primitive poetry of tribal peoples relies on repetition:

> Crow jeered at—only his own death.
>
> Crow spat at—only his own death.
>
> He spread rumors—only about his own death.
>
> He robbed—only his own death.
>
> He knocked down and kicked—only his own death.
>
> He tricked—only his own death.
>
> He murdered—only his own death.
>
> He ate—only his own death. (*CP* 272)

The concluding lines loop back to the beginning of the *Crow* sequence:

> This is how he kept his conscience so pure
>
> He was black
>
>
> (Blacker
>
> Than the eyepupils

[150] As Hughes writes of Pilinszky's poetry, "when all the powers of the soul are focused on what is final, and cannot be altered, even though it is horrible, the anguish, it seems, is indistinguishable from joy. The moment closest to extinction turns out to be *the* creative moment" (*WP* 235).

Of the gun barrels.)

This closing recalls the opening image of the volume, "the pistol muzzle oozing blue vapor" (*CP* 209). Crow is imprisoned in the dark, purgatorial recesses of the shamanic journey in an endless loop, unable to emerge into healing and wholeness. But, as in Hughes's essay on Popa, facing the reality of suffering leads to "an intensely bracing moral vigilance" (*WP* 221): as Hughes writes of Crow, "This is how he kept his conscience so pure" (*CP* 209).

This final moment of *Crow* also suggests the influence of Pilinszky, where the ultimate creative moment arises from the moment of near-extinction. Pilinszky's notion also resonates with the creation myth of contemporary Europe: the atom bomb if deployed would guarantee certain death, but facing the reality of it would make war obsolete and thus create the possibility for ongoing life. Crow watches this nuclear creation myth unfold in "Crow Alights":

He saw the stars, fuming away into the black, mushrooms of
the nothing forest, clouding their spores, the virus of God.

And he shivered with the horror of Creation. (*CP* 220)

Sagar, in recognizing the influence of Pilinszky as well as Popa on *Crow*, suggests that Pilinszky's poetry essentially finishes what Hughes starts; Hughes never got to the point of all cultural apparatuses being stripped away.[151] Pilinszky, in fact, found his greatest affinity with Hughes in *Crow*; he had hoped to translate the volume into Hungarian but

[151] Sagar, *Laughter of Foxes*, 129.

committed suicide before the project was complete.[152] Sagar's observation that Pilinszky descended further than Crow, then, is a little too apt: like Crow, Pilinszky failed to emerge from the lowest part of what Hughes identified as his shamanic journey.

Hughes's assessment of Pilinszky's poetry and vision seem to be more historically and biographically grounded than his take on Popa. Despite the language barrier (they could only communicate somewhat in French), Hughes was able to translate Pilinszky based on the cribs their mutual friend János Csokits made. Pilinszky wrote Hughes several times from mental institutions and indicated that their friendship made his breakdowns more bearable; from a hospital in Hungary he wrote that Hughes's friendship was the greatest consolation for him, the only domain where he felt at home. In turn, Hughes felt at home in his friend's poetry, so much so that Pilinszky told him that his preface to his work was the best analysis he had ever read of his "pouvre poesie" and complimented him on his intuition as a translator, noting his humane generosity, artistic dignity, and ability to capture the sense of a language he didn't speak.[153]

Indeed, Hughes reached the height of his own theory of translation through Pilinszky. Hughes was so literal that he often published the crib sheet—or the crib sheet with only the most minute changes. His correspondence with Csitkos on Pilinszky's work includes pages of debates about the merits of changing even a single word or tense from the original.[154] The result was to bring in the "foreignness and strangeness" that Hughes

---

[152] Letter from Pilinszky to Hughes, December 8, 1976, Ted Hughes papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[153] János Pilinszky to Ted Hughes, October 6, 1976; Pilinsky to Hughes, December 8, 1976; Pilinszky to Hughes, August 5, 1976; Pilinszky to Hughes, April 18, 1975, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[154] This process is documented in the collection of Letters to Janos Csitkos, 1960-2007, in the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

put forth as the principle for translations in *MPT*: "The very oddity and struggling dumbness of word for word versions is what makes our own imagination jump."[155] Pilinszky's poetry invites this approach, as it sounds odd and disjointed even in the original—an effect Pilinszky attributed to having learned his native language from an aunt with brain damage. Hughes also found his translation home in Pilinszky because he saw both Pilinszky and translation at their best as shamanic. Weissbort suggests that "the deconstruction of the poem and its reconstruction as a function of the search for equivalences in the target language, is perhaps reminiscent of the shamanic journey."[156] Hughes's insistence on the literal version in his translations is also a symptom of the shamanic journey, as the poet attempts to access a primal energy—indeed, to break down to the very skeleton of the poem in Eliade fashion, to present through the most literal version possible what Hughes described as an "X-ray" of the bones of the original.

Hughes's insistence on inviting in the "foreignness and strangeness" of the original resonates with postcolonial models of translation, particularly Gayatri Spivak's and Lawrence Venuti's an ethics of praxis based in postcolonial critiques of domesticating or westernizing a text. But his rationale for this method seems to have little or nothing to do with a concern with westernization or misrepresenting the other (at least the Other in grander terms; he did agonize about not misrepresenting the verse of friends or poems he admired). Instead, his method itself seems to derive from his understanding of primitive poetry, which he links both to the shaman-poet and to the qualities of Popa's and Pilinszky's verses.

---

[155] Ted Hughes, Editorial to *Modern Poetry in Translation* 3 (Spring 1967), in Ted Hughes, *Selected Translations*, ed. Daniel Weissbort (New York: Farar, Strauss & Giroux, 2007), 201.

[156] Weissbort, *Ted Hughes and Translation*, 106.

Hughes's translation method also has to do with his notion of the primitive and of healing energies—which, again, he associated (in a case of wishful thinking) with the work of Popa and Pilinszky. Hughes most admired the translations of ethnographer William Bleek's *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore*—in other words, highly literal translations of so-called tribal works.[157] In Hughes's understanding of primitive poetry, there is no distinction between the literal or the figurative. In his review of C.M. Bowra's book on primitive poetry (1962), Hughes calls it "ideal poetry," "full of zest, clairvoyantly sensitive, realistic, whole, natural, and passionate"; he particularly admires its "artful use of repetition and variation," its parallelism, and its couplets" (*WP* 34). As primitive poetry evolves, "repetitions are fewer and the variations more adventurous." Although these structures rarely appear in Popa or Pilinszky (they are much more descriptive of Hughes, who self-consciously adopted them in sequences like *Crow* and *Cave Birds*), to sustain his own theory of poetry from the tribal margins of Europe his critical work must suggest that these Serbian and Hungarian poets write "primitive" verse. His own translation method, for this reason, aims to bring in that sense of the primitive, both in process and product: his intense literality emphasizes the barebones, the skeleton, the unadorned and unanalyzed. This technique often mimics postcolonial and ethics-centered models of translation, but it would be too far to suggest that Hughes was thinking in this direction. He did not set out to create a theory of translation, but rather practiced a method of translation that attempted to bring primal energies into English from what he sees as more "primitive" poetry.

---

[157] In an editorial to *Modern Poetry in Translation*, Hughes wrote, "Ideally we would have liked to see at least some poems translated…as meticulously as Bleek's translation of Bushmen lore—though we understood the limited appeal of anything so raw and strange." From Weissbort, *Selected Translations*, ix.

Abdullah Sidran and Hughes's Eastern European Legacy

The last translation Hughes took on before his death was of the Bosnian poet Abdullah Sidran for Chris Agee's 1998 anthology *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia*. On 30 November 1997, Hughes wrote to Chris Agee to tell him—unsurprisingly—that he sought to produce versions as close to the literal as possible: "I have had a shot at six of the Sidran. I certainly do sense what they must be in the original, but the difficulty—from my point of view—is that his procedure is so focused and simple, almost plain, so precise, that any deviation from his literal words feels simultaneously like a violation (pointless and stupid) and a dilution."[158] The result is that Hughes reaches the height of literalness in the final translation he completed in his lifetime, enacting his shamanic translation method on a Bosnian poet. Antonela Glavinic's crib begins,

> This night is unreal, quiet like hell
> which does not exist. The world, houses and things
> submerged in oil.[159]

which Hughes renders as,

> The night is unreal, quiet, like hell—
> Which does not exist. The world,
> Its houses, its clutter, lies
> Deep in oil.[160]

---

[158] Quoted in Weissbort, *Selected Translations*, 221.

[159] Ibid.

Hughes's brilliance as a translator is evident here: while he makes remarkably few changes, the charged arrangement of commas and dashes and a slight liberty with the verb "submerged" creates a largely literal poem that is chilling, rather than mechanical, in English. Hughes's commitment to handling Eastern European translation in such a way to invite in the "foreignness and strangeness" is the approach that Agee encouraged for the entire volume of Bosnian poems, having included an essay on translation by Hughes in the material he sent to contributors. Hughes's process followed Agee's own sense of how to handle the postcolonial situation within Europe itself. While Hughes's translation method did not stem from postcolonial or overtly ethical concerns, its literalness spoke to the extra obligations translators face when handling poetry of profound historical witness. As Chris Agee writes in his introduction to *Scar on the Stone*:

> Good translation demands not only a degree of ego-sublimation and imaginative affinity with the Other; but very often, and no more so than with a poetry of witness, a sense of being placed under exacting obligations where—as Ted Hughes once said of his translations of the Hungarian János Pilinszky—"there is no question of introducing anything from the translator's own poetical medicine bag."[161]

Agee's volume containing Hughes's final translation project is just one of the many examples of how Hughes's idea of the British archipelago in relation to Eastern Europe has been passed down and ultimately reread and adapted in response to the rise of so-called tribal warfare within Ireland and Eastern Europe.

---

[160] Ibid., 173.

[161] Chris Agee, ed., *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1998), 18-19.

Heaney's Eastern European Inheritance

Heaney reworked Hughes's tribal metaphor to make it viable for his more historically and politically attuned poetry as he, too, looked east to respond to civic crisis. While it is tempting to read particular resonances between Irish and Eastern European poetry, Heaney in fact came to these poets first through "a chip off the Old English block," as he described Hughes in the context of discussing Eastern European poets with Dennis O'Driscoll. Heaney's introduction to and sustained engagement with the poetry of Eastern Europe came largely from Hughes through his work on *Modern Poetry in Translation*. They also read together at a Poetry International festival in the early 1970s, where Hughes introduced Heaney to several poets from the Eastern bloc.[162] And Hughes, a staunchly ahistorical poet, found the civic and historical dimension of Eastern European poetry alluring for many of the same reasons Heaney did. In fact, at a conference in 1979, Heaney quotes Hughes's remarks on Milosz from Hughes's essay on Popa: "I think it was Milosz, the Polish poet, who when he lay in a doorway and watched the bullets lifting the cobbles out of the street beside him realised that most poetry is not equipped for life in a world where people actually die. But some is" (*WP* 220).[163]

Yet critics tend to associate Hughes with the early Heaney and Milosz with the Troubles-era Heaney. In her landmark study of Heaney and Eastern European poetry, for instance, Magdalena Kay suggests that Heaney had worked through Hughes's influence

---

[162] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 115.

[163] Magdalena Kay, *In Gratitude for all the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 28. Kay situates some of Heaney's interest in Eastern European poetry as part of the "Slavic chic" trend of the 1970s. She quotes Heaney as having recalled Hughes's lines thus: "I think it was Milosz, the Polish poet, who when he lay in a doorway and watched the bullets lifting the cobbles out of the street behind him realized that poetry is not equipped for life in a world where people actually do die."

before moving onto Milosz in the 1970s.[164] I contend instead that Heaney drew from the combined resources of Hughes and Milosz from the late-1970s on.[165] Their dual and combined influence—one mythic, one historical—was so great that from Hughes's death in 1998 and Milosz's death in 2004, Heaney frequently brings them together in elegies. In *District and Circle*, Heaney places "Stern," in memory of Hughes, on the facing page of "Out of This World," in memory of Milosz. And Heaney's better-known elegy for Hughes, "On His Work in the English Tongue," concludes not with Hughes but with Milosz:

> Things for the aye of God
>
> And for poetry. Which is, as Milosz says,
>
> 'A dividend from ourselves', a tribute paid
>
> By what we have been true to. A thing allowed.

In this elegy, one of Heaney's most direct meditations on the nature of poetry and the value of writing it, Heaney arrives at his poetic vision through the combined forces Hughes and Milosz. Milosz may dominate Heaney's sensibilities in his later work, particularly regarding the public role of the poet, but Heaney may not have come to Milosz without Hughes.

No Heaney poem more powerfully and subtly combines the forces of Milosz and Hughes than the elegy "Casualty," from *Field Work* (1979). In it, Hughes's mythic notion of the tribe and Milosz's willingness to respond to contemporary public crises merge. Neil Corcoran has called "Casualty" Heaney's most public poem, in the vein of Yeats's

---

[164] Ibid., 23-4.

[165] Ingelbien suggests that in the late 1970s (the same period Heaney began to read Milosz) Heaney's investment in Hughes moved from imitation to genuine influence (Ingelbien, "Mapping the Misreadings," 628).

public verse for Ireland. Despite Heaney's resistance to assuming the role of shaman of his Catholic "tribe" during the Troubles, in "Casualty" he speaks about the death of Louis O'Neill, an eel fisherman who frequented Heaney's father-in-law's bar and was shot dead when he broke an IRA curfew in honor of the victims of Bloody Sunday to visit a pub. Of Heaney's willingness to elegize O'Neill, Corcoran writes,

> "Casualty" is preoccupied with watching, observing, seeing and being seen, and with how, in these processes of scrutiny, you might choose to turn, to turn your back, to turn back. It is a poem, that is to say, about how a poet, or a poem, might discover his, or its, own appropriate or "proper" audience—this dead fisherman—and might do so by resisting another audience's—the "tribe's"—expectations or assumptions. "Casualty" is a refusal of instrumentality, an insistence on the virtue of reflection. Far from being what he has sometimes been accused of being—a poet who, whatever he says, says nothing—Heaney is here, schooled by the Yeatsian example in self-protective intransigence, insisting on the poet's right to do otherwise.[166]

Heaney is known for turning to Eastern European poets, rather than Hughes, as he worked through proper poetic comportment in times of crisis.[167] But O'Neill's occupation as an eel fisherman recalls a conversation that Heaney had with Hughes in the early 1970s, when Hughes suggested, somewhat seriously, that Heaney ought to work in the

---

[166] Neil Corcoran, "Yeats and Heaney," in *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, ed. Bernard O'Donoghue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 174.

[167] See, for instance, Justin Quinn, "Heaney and Eastern Europe," in O'Donoghue, *The Cambridge Companion*, 92-105.

eel business.[168] Hughes's notion of the poet as shaman of the tribe is also present in the poem's central question about the culpability of O'Neill for his own death: "How guilty was he / that night he broke our tribe's complicity?"[169] This question, and Heaney's private way of meditating on it, inverts the relationship Hughes saw between confessional poetry and the poet-shaman of a tribe in crisis.

Hughes resisted confessional verse throughout his life, and in fact criticized Plath for this impulse. He reflected, "[Plath] died before she knew what *The Bell Jar* and the Ariel poems were going to do to her life, but she had to get them out. She had to tell everybody . . . like those Native American groups who periodically told everything that was wrong and painful in their lives in the presence of the whole tribe."[170] Yet at the end of his life, Hughes confessed to his daughter, Frieda Hughes, and Heaney that he felt great relief in publishing *Birthday Letters* and breaking his thirty-five year silence on Plath, feeling relief in "confessing to the tribe" at last. He wrote to Frieda, "Those letters do release the story that everything I have written since the early 1960s has been evading. . . . I just could not endure being blocked any longer. How strange that we have to make these public declarations of our secrets. But we do." He wrote a letter in the last months of his life expressing similar sentiments to Heaney.[171]

In "Casualty," Heaney inverts Hughes's notion of the confessional poet driven to confess private sufferings in public. As Henry Hart speculates, "Hughes's silence in the face of extreme suffering reminded Heaney of his own silence and of his struggles to

---

[168] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 94.

[169] Seamus Heaney, *Field Work* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 15.

[170] Drue Heinz, "Ted Hughes, The Art of Poetry No. 71," interview with Ted Hughes, *The Paris Review* 134 (Spring 1995), 77.

[171] Henry Hart, "A Complex Friendship," 83.

break free from personal and political silencers in the killing grounds of Northern Ireland."[172] But in "Casualty," rather than confessing his private sorrows to a listening public, as Hughes would eventually do in *Birthday Letters*, Heaney confesses *public* discord through a private idiom. He addresses the public sorrows of O'Neill having broken his "tribe's complicity" in the space of a seemingly private, intimate dialogue between himself and O'Neill. The elegy form largely accomplishes this reversal of the private and public poles, and more largely his tendency to express communal grief in the personal, intimate space of lyric—rather than Mill's notion of lyric, which is *private* pain overheard by external listeners. Heaney's mention of the "tribe" is resigned, no longer mythic or quite Hughesian in this iteration. But he has moved into a deeper engagement with Hughes, taking the emotional rather than mythic resonance of Hughes's metaphor of poet as healer of the tribe and reversing it to fit, in Milosz's terms, the demands history makes on a poet. Hughes, then, inflected not only Heaney's introduction to but also his use of Eastern European poets. As Hughes used an idea of Ireland to understand the state of postwar Europe and England's place in it, so Heaney used an English poet to help make sense of Ireland's relationship to Europe. I will take this topic up in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered complex interactions between British and Irish poetry, on the one hand, and notions of the tribe, on the other, that will ground discussions of the role of poetry in responding to ethnic conflict in ensuing chapters. Hughes offers, in essence, an early draft of how a poet after the Second World War might

[172] Ibid.

speak from or for a people in crisis. His model also invites comparisons between Irish and Eastern European literature that British literature of the *fin de siècle* and interwar period had offered only in the rudimentary form of depicting Ireland and Eastern Europe as interchangeable allegories for backwater pockets of Europe. Hughes's canon of tribal European poets—those from localized, or what he would call "tribal," groups—brings Irish, English, and Eastern European poetry and political crises into a network. These interrelations acknowledge the dissolution of European empires and the rupture of a stable idea of a unified European sensibility following the Second World War. Hughes's system suggests a reparative relationship between tribal England and its continental colonizers (that is, the Romans and the Normans) that he works out through pursuing the aesthetic, historical, and geographical interrelations of English, Irish, and Eastern bloc poetry. These networks were to have lasting ramifications for how English and Irish poets, from Seamus Heaney to Tony Harrison and Ciaran Carson, were to respond to crises in Northern Ireland and Eastern Europe from the 1970s through the new millennium.

Chapter Two

"Punishing the Lyric": Seamus Heaney and Poetry of the New Europe

In her 2001 poem "Tourism," Sinéad Morrissey ironically welcomes European visitors to come enjoy the once-dangerous neighborhoods of Belfast, "as though it's all over and safe behind bus glass / like a staked African wasp."[173] "So come," the poem continues, "keep coming here,"

> be carried here
>
> on a sea breeze from the European superstate
>
> we long to join.

These lines emphasize Northern Ireland's off-center position on the map of Europe; even with the Troubles nominally ended, the North remains a slightly exotic, primordial zone quarantined from the continent, with its "off-beat, headstrong, suicidal charm" packaged for the consumption of Dutch and Spanish guests before their return to the modern European superstate. This portrait suggests Northern Ireland's marginalized place in the idea of Europe at the turn of the twenty-first century. In contrast is a *Guardian* article from 2009 that asks in reference to another Northern Irish poet, "Will the future of Europe be decided by the voice of a poet?"[174] On the heels of the world recession that ravaged the European Union's economy, *Guardian* correspondent Timothy Garton Ash reflects on Seamus Heaney's endorsement of the Treaty of Lisbon, which proposed greater power and centralization for the European Parliament. Many organizations in

---

[173] Sinéad Morrissey, "Tourism," in *Between Here and There* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2002), 14.

[174] Timothy Garton Ash, "It takes an Irish poet to remind us of the grandeur of the European project," *The Guardian,* June 24, 2009, accessed March 3, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jun/24/republic-of-ireland-eu-vote.

Britain and Ireland resisted the treaty (including Sinn Féin and the British Conservative Party in rare accord), using arguments similar to those deployed for the case of Irish sovereignty. Supporters, though, argued that if Europe were to retain stature on the global stage, its nations would need more political and ideological unity. In the midst of these debates, the reporter concludes, "It takes an Irish poet to remind us of the grandeur of the European project." He refers to Heaney's little-known late poem "Beacons at Bealtaine," written for the happier occasion of a 2004 ceremony in which the European Union welcomed ten new member states. Heaney read this poem again in 2009 for the Ireland for Europe Campaign, voicing his endorsement of the Treaty of Lisbon. In an introduction to his reading, he explains his endorsement not in terms of national affiliation but rather in terms of European solidarity: "There are many reasons for ratifying the Lisbon treaty, reasons to do with our political and economic wellbeing, but the poem speaks mainly for our honour and identity as Europeans." In this moment, Heaney establishes himself definitively as a poet of "Europe," despite the longstanding geographical and cultural marginalization of Ireland from the continent.

What did it mean for Heaney to declare himself a "European" poet? Heaney and the idea of Europe have been broached from several angles, including analyses of Heaney's myth of Northern Europe in *North*, the burgeoning interest in Seamus Heaney and Eastern European poetry in the past five years, and Edna Longley's call to read Northern Irish history and poetry within wider European contexts.[175] This chapter moves beyond a merely thematic approach to Heaney and Europe, emphasizing how Heaney's poetic craft intersects with his ideas of Europe. I argue that from his most famous and

[175] See Quinn, "Heaney and Eastern Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*; Longley, "Introduction," in *The Living Stream*.

controversial volume *North* through his European Union poem "Beacons at Bealtaine," Heaney engages with narratives of Europe as he attempts to invite collectivity into his understanding of lyric as a genre without becoming a spokesperson for what the news and politicians branded as the "tribal violence" of Northern Irish sectarianism. By making narratives of Ireland contiguous with narratives of Europe, Heaney subtly inverts central tenets of Anglo-American expectations about the genre of lyric tied to myths of Europe that emphasize individuality, bringing an Irish-inflected sense of community into both the idea of lyric and the idea of Europe. In doing so, he reimagines both Ireland and the Irish poem as central to Europe and the lyric.

This chapter traces the development of what might be called the "lyric we" in Heaney's poetry. Beginning with an analysis of Heaney's theory of lyric, I will suggest how his notions of communally rooted identity conflict with his sense of lyric as a private genre. His early poems of *Door into the Dark* and *Wintering Out* put a personal and Irish-inflected spin on the lyric by introducing a "we" voice that was, as Heaney said, "still all me." But the Troubles called into question both his theory of lyric and his early adoption of a "we" voice, forcing him to reevaluate his ethics and aesthetics. I read his volume *North* as a staging of these contradictions as he attempted to work out a way to say "we" in a Troubles-era poem without being accused of propaganda or herd-speak. *North* left some of these issues unresolved, leading Heaney to turn increasingly to an Eastern European model for how a poet might develop a "lyric we" voice that can still capture the nuances of personal emotion. With the rise of the Celtic Tiger economy and its subsequent crash, as well as the Treaty of Lisbon, Heaney's sense of lyric again evolves to fit new political realities. His twenty-first century sense of the European lyric reworks

his sense of the Eastern European "we" to suggest a pan-European identity. I conclude with Milosz's poem "Child of Europe"—one of the poems from Eastern Europe that had the greatest effect on Heaney—alongside Heaney's own poem for Europe, "Beacons at Bealtaine." These works suggest how, in claiming a space for Ireland within Europe, Heaney also develops a lyric mode that can invite in the "we" of public experience while negotiating the anxieties of tribalism associated with the Troubles.

Heaney's Idea of Lyric

Heaney subscribes more or less to an idea of lyric poetry developed in the late eighteenth century, the genealogy of which I outline in my Introduction. As Gérard Genette explains, this idea of the lyric genre came about through eighteenth- and nineteenth-century misattributions of a theory of three "natural" generic modes to Plato and Aristotle: the dramatic, the epic, and the lyric.[176] Heaney's criticism and poetry suggest that he, too, saw the lyric as a relatively stable, natural category with its origins in classical Greece. In *Government of the Tongue*, he traces the public trust invested in a poet to "the Greek notion that when the lyric poet gives voice, 'it is a god that speaks'."[177] Moreover, his opening anecdote in *Government of the Tongue* evokes Plato's infamous banishment of the poet from the Republic, suggesting a division between poet and polis. Recalling his and David Hammond's decision not to perform an evening of song and poetry after hearing explosions in Belfast, Heaney reflects that doing so might

[176] Genette, "The Architext," 17-27. See the Introduction for more in-depth commentary on the notion of lyric as a genre.

[177] Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue: Selected Prose 1978-1987* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), 93.

have violated a seemingly inherent rift between what he calls Art and Life, or Song and Suffering:

> [I]f we had played and sung and said poems, we would have been following the example of the singer and player Nero, who notoriously fiddled while Rome burned. Nero's action has ever since been held up as an example of human irresponsibility, if not callousness; conventionally, it represents an abdication from the usual instinctive need which a human being feels in such situations to lament, if not to try to prevent, the fate of the stricken; proverbially, it has come to stand for actions which are frivolous to the point of effrontery, and useless to the point of insolence.[178]

Heaney suggests that the separation of life and art is a natural condition of the lyric. He adds that "lyric poetry, however responsible, always has an element of the untrammelled about it. There is a sensation of liberation and abundance which is the antithesis of every hampered and deprived condition. And it is for this reason that, psychologically, the lyric poet feels the need for justification in a world that is notably hampered and depraved."[179] Yet Heaney later doubted his decision to call off the performance. Throughout *Government of the Tongue*, he turns to examples of Eastern European poets as he tries to find a way for lyric poetry to respond to public and plural concerns. The tension he identifies comes from a collision between his personal understanding of lyric as a genre and the need to address the demands of history.

Heaney saw lyric as an organic category with identifiable conventions, a position made clear when he speaks of "punishing," or adapting, the lyric to stretch its potential.

---

[178] Ibid., xii.

[179] Ibid., xviii.

Around the time of *North*, for instance, he wanted "to take the English lyric and make it eat stuff that it has never eaten before…and make it still an English lyric."[180] Referring to this period, O'Driscoll asked Heaney provocatively, "Why would you have wanted to, as it were, punish the innocent party—the lyric—rather than stretch it to fit the changing demands?"[181] Heaney does not quite formulate an answer, saying only, "I didn't begin, as you know, by writing at the head of my page, 'Now I shall punish lyric.'" O'Driscoll's remark clearly struck a chord with Heaney. I contend that "punishing" the lyric was Heaney's reaction to what he saw as an ethical dilemma: how to negotiate public demands in a private genre. Heaney's definition of lyric, in other words, led him to read an *aesthetic*, or even genre-based, problem as an *ethical* one. "Punishing" becomes a critical move in Heaney's poetry as many of his Troubles poems evoke the suffering of art under the burden of history. The fittingly titled "Punishment," for instance, reverberates with the poet's discomfort over crafting a poem about a horrific event.

The idea of "punishing" the lyric as a critical gesture resonates both with what Gillian White calls "lyric shame," a driving force behind postwar American poetics as readers and writers fail to understand what lyric poetry is or achieve what it should do.[182] While she does not discuss Heaney, White identifies shame as a driving force of American poetics: specifically, poets' shame over their inability to adhere to a stable notion of what lyric means. Heaney builds impasses into his own work as he attempted to make the lyric absorb communal concerns without sacrificing his own definition of lyric.

---

[180] Quoted in Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 53.

[181] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 239-240.

[182] Gillian White, *Lyric Shame: The "Lyric" Subject of Contemporary American Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

The restrictions of his own conception often led Heaney to speak of "punishing" the form, as he had to force a genre that was never meant to do so to contend with violence that demanded a public response. By accepting lyric—and particularly the English lyric—as a natural category, Heaney builds certain ethical and aesthetic impasses into his work during the Troubles. These conflicts and contradictions are staged in moving ways throughout his poetry, from *North* through *Station Island*. This dilemma often plays out as a struggle between the idea of Europe, with its accompanying question of what it means to say "I," and Northern Ireland, with its private and public demands that the poet also say "we."

The crux of the impasse between Heaney's understanding of lyric as a private, "untrammelled" genre and his determination to write poetry capable of holding the weight of communal history can be felt in Heaney's remarks on the lyric "I." Heaney challenges this convention in myriad ways throughout his career, as his theory and craft shift to respond to crises from the Troubles to the collapse of the European economy in 2009. While developments in the reading of lyric have shaken the hold of the lyric "I," Heaney's idea of lyric accords with the version that Genette, René Wellek, and other genre theorists trace to the Romantic period. This is the lyric of the lyric "I", a genre that celebrates an individual's internal experience. Heaney, however, has repeatedly expressed discomfort with the lyric "I", even as he accepts many of the other principles that accompany the Romantic-era formulation of the lyric genre.[183] Heaney has spoken of the limitations of the lyric "I" in Anglo-American poetry and began in the early 1970s to find an antidote to it in his readings of Eastern European poetry. He mentions in this

[183] When I use the terms "Romantic poem" or "Romantic conception of lyric" in this chapter, I refer not to a nuanced understanding of Romantic poetics but rather to Genette's idea that the Romantic era gave full articulation to the idea of lyric as an inward-looking genre dominated by a lyric "I".

period "the irritation we feel at a self-regarding poetry, a poetry of the orphaned self, the enclosed psyche," which suggests to him a passage that has become one of the clichés of modernism: "[A]ll this implies an assumption that our poetry has failed to live up to E.M. Forster's imperative, 'Only connect,' … connect the literary action with an original justifying vision and with the political contingencies of the times."[184] Heaney's remark evokes another moment in *Howards End* as the idealistic Helen Schlegel insists on the importance of saying "I." She asks the impoverished Leonard Bask, a man with whom she is desperate to connect,

> "Had you thought it, then? That there are two kinds of people—our kind, who live straight from the middle of their heads, and the other kind who can't, because their heads have no middle? They can't say 'I'. They *aren't* in fact, and so they're supermen….No superman ever said 'I want', because 'I want' must lead to the question, 'Who am I?' and so to Pity and to Justice. He only says 'want'. 'Want Europe' if he's Napoleon; 'want wives' if he's Bluebeard; 'want Botticelli' if he's Pierpont Morgan. Never the 'I'; and if you could pierce through him you'd find panic and emptiness in the middle."[185]

Forster's depiction of Helen's earnestness in this passage is a bit tongue-in-cheek, satirizing a strain of upper-middle class English intellectualism that often makes the Schlegels fail to "only connect." Heaney's apprehension on this same subject is evident in "Casualty," as he fears he may be perceived as speaking down to the ghost of Louis

---

[184] Seamus Heaney, "Current Unstated Assumptions," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1981): 646.

[185] E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 1997), 206.

O'Neill, the eel fisherman killed the night he broke the IRA's Bloody Sunday curfew. But Forster suggests there is more to Helen's insistence on the importance of saying "I": the ability to maintain one's sense of self is a powerful stand against the obliteration of Pity and Justice under conquering regimes.

This was also Heaney's sense as he tried to maintain his individual artistic dignity in the face of the group demands placed on him by the Troubles. Forster's notion that the question "Who am I?" leads to "Pity and Justice" recalls the terms in which Heaney praises Czeslaw Milosz and other Eastern European poets. In "A Poet's Europe," Heaney writes,

> It seems to me that the ultimately powerful thing about the major poets of Russia and Eastern Europe in our time is not their courageous, necessary and fiercely local work of resistance to a totalitarian ideology but their verification of words which poets in the west have become almost too embarrassed to utter: words like faith, hope, justice, spirit, love, words which were abandoned as a precaution against falsity and inflation but whose abandonment has resulted in a kind of cultural and spiritual debilitation.[186]

These words are bound up in the poet's ability to move beyond the confines of the individual psyche, to retain some faith in public, universal concepts without falling into the groupthink of totalitarian ideology. In his reading of Milosz's "Child of Europe," Heaney gives reverent attention to the poem's turn away from "the domestic securities of the first-person singular" that he finds in Anglo-American poetry, admiring that the

[186] Heaney, Seamus, "A Poet's Europe," in *A Poet's Europe: European Poetry Festival* (Leuven: Europese Vereniging ter Bevordering van de Poëzie, 1991), 159-160.

poem's "reach in is as long as its reach out." Even as Milosz's poem uses plural pronouns to reflect on the collective horrors of his Europe in the twentieth century, he maintains his unique poetic voice.[187]

Heaney's sense of community often conflicts with his idea of lyric. He saw himself as part of a culture in which individual consciousness "grow[s] like a growth ring in the tree of community."[188] "Kinship" presents his maturation as inseparable from the cycles of his ancestral landscape:

> I grew out of all this
> Like a weeping willow
> Inclined to
> The appetites of gravity. (*N* 37)

This approach to Heaney's poetry might be seen as part of the collective turn in New Lyric Studies, proposed by Walt Hunter in his review essay "Lyric and Its Discontents." Hunter argues that recent studies of Anglo-American poetry suggest collective, rather than individualistic, ways in which lyric voice is constructed that are working parallel to "a well-established European discourse that relates the lyric to a collective self."[189] Of course, since the inception of Irish Studies in the early 1990s, poets and critics have focused on public poetry and lyric collectivity because of the inescapable ties between the Troubles and Northern Irish literature. But by bringing in the idea of collectivity, which fundamentally challenges Anglo-American approaches to the lyric, I hope to shed light on how Irish Studies is dominated by practices of historically grounded close

---

[187] Heaney, *Government of the Tongue*, 115-116.

[188] Rand Brandes, "Interview with Seamus Heaney," *Salmagundi* 80 (Fall 1988): 8.

[189] Hunter, "Lyric and Its Discontents," 81-82.

reading that tend to keep lyric poetry intact as a genre. European ideals of privacy and individuality, which underlie the history of how the lyric has been written and read since the late eighteenth century, do not sit comfortably within Heaney's idea of communally oriented selfhood. This conflict between Heaney's theory of lyric and his cultural orientation, I suggest, led him to read the intrusion of "we" into the lyric sphere as an ethical, rather than a generic, dilemma, one that he works through under the guidance of Eastern European poets.

A poet who imagines a sense of self in group terms will not have the same relationship with the lyric genre as a poet who operates through the notion of singular, unattached consciousness. This may be one reason that studies of postcolonial literatures have focused more heavily on prose than on poetry.[190] In postcolonial literatures, an individual's experience is often read as an allegory for the nation's history, as in Frederic Jameson's assertion that "all third world literatures are necessarily…allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as…*national allegories*."[191] Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that the Eurocentric focus on what it means to say "I" does not always translate to genres in Indian literature: even diaries and autobiographies "seldom yield pictures of an endlessly interiorized subject. Our autobiographies are remarkably 'public'."[192] As Chakrabarty points out, "the Anglo-Indian word 'communalism' refers to

[190] Ramazani suggests that the exclusion of poetry from transnational studies comes down to the seemingly greater mobility of other forms in contrast to poetry's association with the local and regional. Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 3.

[191] Frederic Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 69.

[192] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 35.

those who allegedly fail to measure up to the secular ideals of citizenship."[193] Of course, the celebration of a person as an ontologically unique subject does not hold across all cultures and times. In fact, English is the only language to capitalize the pronoun "I," as Geert Hofstede notes in his influential study of individually versus collectively oriented societies.[194] This observation resonates with Heaney's sense that the enclosed individual psyche of the lyric "I" is a particularly Anglo-American phenomenon. As he told an *Irish Times* reporter who asked him if he envied the situation of the American or British poet, he replied, "Well no, I actually don't" due to the "great difficulty in escaping from the arena of the first-person singular" in a climate of freedom and prosperity.[195]

In his analysis of the Partition verse of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Aamir Mufti offers an analysis of lyric that comes close to offering an account of how a group-oriented poet might disrupt Anglo-American models of lyric reading. But following Adorno, Mufti ultimately upholds the notion of the lyric as an "I"-oriented genre by describing how Faiz explores "collective selfhood" through "the suffering of the lyric subject." Mufti upholds the idea of the singular self to uphold the idea of lyric, writing that Faiz's poems "closest to being 'pure' lyric, that is, ones in which the inward turn is most complete" reveal "these social meanings in their fullest elaboration."[196] Where Mufti assumes that there is a "pure" lyric constituted on an inward turn, we might instead entertain the possibility that lyric subjectivity is a European rather than a universal model. While this view is in

---

[193] Ibid., 33.

[194] Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations,* 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2001), 233.

[195] Bernard O'Donoghue, "Heaney and the Public," in *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, 66-7.

[196] Aamir R. Mufti, "Towards a Lyric History of India," in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 604.

keeping with the study of lyric collectivities that Walt Hunter identifies, comparative studies of the lyric tend to keep the lyric intact as it moves across borders and cultures. Ramazani's "all-encompassing, cross-civilizational, lyric 'I'…forging new and surprising connections in its travel across the globe" does not take into account poets who observe their globe-trotting through a lyric "we." [197]

By the time Heaney began to read Eastern European poetry under the influence of Ted Hughes in the early 1970s, he had already adopted an early version of a lyric "we" in his poetry. His poem "Bogland" from *Door into the Dark* operates on the interplay of two plural pronouns: "we" and "they." Modifying the image of the American prairie, the poem declares, "We have no prairies / To slice a big sun at evening." Instead, "Our unfenced country / Is a bog that keeps crusting / Between the sights of the sun." The bog becomes a natural repository of the land's history, so that "Every layer they strip / Seems camped on before." Rather than Martin Buber's "I-Thou" interplay frequently upheld as a staple of the lyric genre, the poem revolves around a "we-they" relationship. The third person plural seems slightly at odds with the "we" group, disturbing the native landscape: "*They*'ve taken the skeleton of the Great Irish Elk / Out of the peat," and "*They*'ll never dig coal here" (my emphasis). A subtle drama between two parties unfolds not through a "you" and an "I" locked in psychological inwardness; instead, an underlying tension between belonging and not belonging is externalized and pluralized. Reflecting on "Bogland" forty years after it was written, Heaney reflects that a shift from "I" to "we" in his first two volumes was "a way of making the central tradition of English poetry, which we'd absorbed in college and university, absorb our own particular eccentric experience." His emphasis on school curricula underscores his inheritance of Anglo notions of the

[197] Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 69.

lyric genre, which he sensed he would need to adapt to fit his collective experience but without sacrificing the lyric conventions that seemed solid and universal. "Bogland" is an early example of this attempt. He told O'Drisoll, "[W]hat pleased me most about 'Bogland' wasn't its theme or its first-person plural, but the fact that it had been given, had come freely, had arrived out of old layers of lore and language and felt completely trustworthy as a poem. It may have said 'we' but it was still all me."[198] Heaney had developed, in effect, an Irish mode for the English lyric, a way to suggest the communal orientation of a fully felt self.

However, with the outbreak of the Troubles several years later, the development of Heaney's "lyric we" voice was threatened by strong group ideology, pushing Heaney to see the matter of "I" and "we" in the lyric not simply as an Irish variation on an English form but rather as a core ethical and aesthetic problem. As he sits "weighing and weighing / My responsible *tristia*" in "Exposure," he asks, "For what? For the ear? For the people?" These queries are a version of the debate between individual commitment to art and group demands. Fittingly, it was in this period—the early to mid-1970s, just as he began to absorb the poetry of Czeslaw Milosz, Osip Mandelstam, Zbigniew Herbert, and Miroslav Holub—that Heaney adopted and revised Hughes's metaphor of the poet as "shaman of the tribe," a healer of his community through the primitive, otherworldly energies contained in poetry. As both local and international media and some politicians began to use the terminology of "tribal warfare" as a literal descriptor of what was happening in the North—what they cast as a primitive, unrelenting cycle of conflict between vengeance-driven Catholic and Protestant tribes—Heaney no longer found Hughes's "shaman of the tribe" metaphor to be viable. He could not write as a healing

[198] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 89-90.

leader of his community without being accused of tribalism. In the period of the Troubles, then, Heaney became wary of "the tribe's complicity," worrying that the "we" he worked towards in "Bogland" would no longer reflect his own motives on his own terms.

He records this struggle in "Flight Path," which dramatizes an encounter with Sinn Féin spokesman Danny Morrison on a train at the beginning of the hunger strikes. Sinn Féin, usually translated as "ourselves alone," has been notoriously group-oriented, and Heaney's anecdote records a sense of group coercion. Entering Heaney's train car, Morrison asks, "'When, for fuck's sake, are you going to write / Something for us?'" to which Heaney replies, "'If I do write something, / Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself.'"[199] Morrison later denied that the encounter was nearly so dramatic.[200] Heaney likely reimagined and played up the event in order to make a statement about the solitariness of the poet's enterprise, of inviting the "we" in, if at all, on the poet's terms. The confrontation recalls one of Heaney's remarks on the trouble with tribal identity for the poet:

> Lyric poets always feel a bit on guard when the big crises arrive, a bit defensive when war is declared or disaster strikes, but even so, they usually hold out against herd-speak. They know that the integrity of the polis is guarded as much by the solitariness of their enterprise as by other

[199] Seamus Heaney, *The Spirit Level* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 25. All further references will be designated as *SL* in the body of the text.

[200] Danny Morrison, "Seamus Heaney Disputed," *Danny Morrison: Writer*, January 31, 2009, accessed August 5, 2014, http://www.dannymorrison.com/?p=758.

> people's solidarities, although it's hard to proclaim that truth when closed ranks and consensus are the things most in demand.[201]

Resisting this "herd-speak" is one of the challenges undertaken in *North*.

"The Ministry of Fear" literalizes the idea of "herd-speak" in the description of Royal Ulster Constabulary officers who stop Heaney at a checkpoint:

> The air
> All moonlight and a scent of hay, policemen
> Swung their crimson flashlamps, crowding round
> The car like black cattle, snuffing and pointing
> The muzzle of a sten-gun in my eye:
> 'What's your name, driver?'
> 'Seamus…'
> *Seamus?* (*N* 59)

The "we" of ancestral and kinship ties in *Door into the Dark* and *Wintering Out* is threatened by ominous herd mentality of sectarian identity. This passage also asks if the "we" of his childhood is the same "we" of sectarian loyalty, as it reverses an earlier encounter in school:

> 'What's your name, Heaney?'
> 'Heaney, Father.'
> 'Fair
> Enough.'

[201] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 382.

This contrast emphasizes the entanglement of group and personal identity, as he gives the wrong name in two separate situations, identifying himself by clan name when the priest asks for his given name and his personal name when the RUC officer asks for his family name. But of course, giving the Irish name "Seamus" is as much a giveaway of clan identification as his surname, suggesting the inevitable ties between his individual and group conceptions of self.

"Ministry of Fear" also suggests that the herd-speak climate of Northern Ireland jeopardizes the privacy of the writing process, central to Heaney's Hegelian-inflected notion of lyric. Heaney recalls:

> They once read my letters at a roadblock
> And shone their torches on your hieroglyphics,
> 'Svelte dictions' in a very florid hand.
>
> Ulster was British, but with no rights on
> The English lyric: all around us, though
> We hadn't named it, the ministry of fear. (*N* 60)

The RUC's flashlights over Heaney's private letters are an intimate invasion, rendered almost bodily through the "svelteness" of the "florid hand." Following this invasion of privacy with an assertion that Ulster has "no rights on / The English lyric" suggests that the "tribal" loyalties that invade individual privacy have complicated the Northern Irish poet's relationship to the idea of lyric. Where in pre-Troubles work the "we" reflects a

cultural preference in relating to the self and the world, here that communal orientation is clouded by fears of losing the self's autonomy.

Heaney emphasizes this struggle in the *Singing School* sequence in Part Two of *North* through direct confrontation with the Romantic lyric. The twin epigraphs for the *Singing School* sequence also point to these tensions: one from Wordsworth, the other from Yeats, "the last Romantic." In many ways, Wordsworth Europeanized Irish experience for Heaney, giving him an entrance into the tradition of English lyric through the common ground of 1798. Not only does 1798 mark the United Irish rebellion that drew much of its ideology from the French Revolution; 1798 is also a momentous year in Wordsworth's life, corresponding with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* and the beginning of his work on *The Prelude* in Germany. The epigraph to *Singing School* reflects Wordsworth's homesickness while in Germany, underscoring Heaney's own sense of alienation from his native place:

> *Fair seedtime had my soul, and I grew up*
> *Fostered alike by beauty and by fear;*
> *Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less*
> *In that beloved Vale to which, erelong,*
> *I was transplanted…* (*N* 57)

As Peter Mackay argues, the 1798 connection "makes English lyric and Irish history coincide, to offer the possibility that an art rooted in the natural landscape can redeem political violence."[202] While Mackay demonstrates that Heaney ultimately "find[s] his relationship with Wordsworth liberating, positive, and comforting," *North* shows a much

[202] Peter Mackay, "Contemporary Irish Poetry and Romanticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry*, eds. Fran Brearton and Alan A. Gillis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 304.

more tormented relationship. Many of its poems worry that art is ineffectual against political violence, that the poet may sometimes have little more to offer than the "artful voyeur" of "Punishment," doomed to aestheticize rather than console.

Heaney's decision to excise *Glanmore Sonnets* from *North* underscores his wariness of the lyric genre as he understood it in the 1970s. A complete typescript of *North* sent to Seamus Deane records Heaney's intention to open the volume with his *Glanmore Sonnets*, rather than with the two "Mossbawn" dedicatory poems.[203] His decision to delay their publication until *Field Work*, it seems, came down largely to his struggle with the lyric. He explains, "Back then I thought that that music, the melodious grace of the English iambic line, was some kind of affront, that it needed to be wrecked; and while I loved the poem ['Glanmore Sonnets III'], I felt at the time that its sweetness disabled it somehow."[204] Tellingly, Heaney includes an epigraph from the passage of Wordsworth's *Prelude* quoted above, infused with terror as much as "melodious grace"; *Glanmore Sonnets*, in contrast, are often Keatsian in their lyricism. Heaney's notion that poetry could be a kind of "affront" recalls the opening of *Government of the Tongue*, where he imagined that performing after the explosions in Belfast would have been "frivolous to the point of effrontery." In Heaney's mind, then, something innate to the genre of lyric excluded it from the public, plural realm, which was, inconveniently, exactly where historical circumstance had situated him. Also pointing to this interview, Mackay suggests that Heaney's focus on "the 'English' poetic tradition…associated variously here with the 'iambic line', 'sweetness', 'melody', 'art as reality', and

[203] *North* typescript, *Seamus* Deane papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[204] Seamus Heaney, Interview with Frank Kinahan, *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 411.

'artfulness as an affirmation'" refers specifically to English Romantic poetry.[205] Indeed, at least in this period Heaney's idea of lyric *was* embedded in his understanding of English Romanticism. *North* experiments with "wrecking" the English lyric, largely through a sustained dramatic confrontation between "I" and "we."

The narrative trajectory of *North* enacts a struggle between "I" and "we." The most personal poems, "Mossbawn: Two Poems in Dedication," come to replace *Glanmore Sonnets*. Unlike the *Glanmore* poems, which make dexterous use of a lyric "I" connected to the natural landscape, the "Mossbawn" poems express themselves though the third- and first-person plural. "Sunlight" opens with the passive voice, rejecting pronouns altogether: "There was a sunlit absence." The passive voice omits the pull between individual and collective experience that dominates *North*. The poem then turns to third-person descriptions of Heaney's aunt:

> So, her hands scuffled
> over the bakeboard,
> the reddening stove
>
> sent its plaque of heat
> against her where she stood
> in a floury apron
> by the window. (*N* ix)

The lyric "I" is absent from the most intensely intimate portrait in the volume. And, as it begins, the poem ends without an agent: "And here is love / like a tinsmith's scoop / sunk past its gleam / in the meal-bin" (x). The second "Mossbawn" poem, "The Seed Cutters,"

[205] Mackay, "Contemporary Irish Poetry and Romanticism," 299.

opens and closes on plural pronouns, using "I" only in the service of the individual artist attempting to summon his clan: "They seem hundreds of years away. Breughel, / You'll know them if I can get them true" (xi). By the end, the poem's "they"—the seed cutters—have collapsed into a "we" that includes the speaker: "Under the broom / Yellowing over them, compose the frieze / With all of us there, our anonymities."

From the dedicatory section, *North* opens into Part One, which is dominated by poems that, far from the realm of "Romantic sweetness," seem to imitate Victorian dramatic monologues. The effect is to distance the speaker from the poet's inner landscape. All of the bog poems use the technique of dramatizing a lyric "I". The speaker of "Bog Queen," for instance, is the bog body itself rather than the poet's meditation on the body; "Come to the Bower" assumes the voice of a character who finds "the dark-bowered queen" in a bog (*N* 24). In one of the volume's most overtly political poems, "Act of Union," the "I" is England, addressing an unresponsive Ireland. In "Punishment," the speaker is less clear, with the voice slipping between a persona and Heaney's own as it enacts an internal debate. While the reader certainly can conjure an image of the poet, Heaney, observing the bog body, with its "brain's exposed / and darkened combs," the poem heightens the psychological drama just past the point of biographical believability. The speaker is exactly chilling enough, and no more, that a one-to-one correspondence between "I" and poet is not viable. The effect is an "artful voyeur" who, though not as unnerving as Robert Browning's speakers, is nonetheless within the tradition of an unreliable poetic narrator who fails to conceal a tendency towards erotic violence. The poem's excruciatingly detailed descriptions of the body over nine quatrains present a psychological study of the speaker's erotic fascinations, concluding with what could be

read as a slightly unhinged declaration: “My poor scapegoat, // I almost love you.” The poem’s most transparent psychological moment comes at the end, when the poet identifies himself in terms of his tribe: the “I” has a believable emotional moment only when he says he would “understand the exact / and tribal, intimate revenge” that led to her death. It is perhaps surprising to see this inward-gazing “I” in the context of a discussion of highly politicized group identity; the assertions of a morally engaged and self-questioning voice of a trustworthy “I” resists a collapse into herd-speak, recalling Heaney’s “we” of “Bogland” that was “still all me.”

Following the domination of the lyric “I” as dramatic persona in Part One comes Part Two’s insistent alliance—indeed, over-alliance—of the “I” with the poet. “Whatever You Say, Say Nothing” and the *Singing School* sequence record autobiographical events, often from the vantage point of Heaney’s prominence in the public eye; he even calls himself twice by name in “The Ministry of Fear,” as he identifies himself first to the priest as “Heaney” and then to the RUC officers as “Seamus.” Thus, *North* moves from plural and third-person perspectives in its dedication section, to a sequence of poems that operate on a fictionalized “I,” to an “I” much more plainly identified as the poet than in most of Heaney’s other lyrics. By leaving what he saw as the Romantic lyric “I” of the *Glanmore Sonnets* for the follow-up volume *Field Work*, Heaney structures *North* around the feedback between “I” and “we,” experimenting with the boundaries of the singular and plural. The effect is a new type of poem for Heaney that pulls public experience into the privacy of lyric, often through a staged ethical debate between competing forces of private and public need. The inheritance of this technique is plain in later generations of

both Irish and British poets who attempt to account for violence throughout Europe, a topic explored in Chapters Three and Four.

An Eastern European "We"

North left the debate between private and public need unresolved. Having exhausted the possibilities of the traditional English lyric, frustrated at the limits imposed on Northern Irish poets by the Troubles, Heaney turned increasingly to Eastern European poets as examples of poets who had discovered how to make the lyric form hold the weight of communal history. Heaney's Eastern European turn has been discussed predominately in terms of translation and more pejoratively in terms of cross-cultural appropriation. Rather than focus on drawing one-to-one correspondences between Eastern European and Irish experience, I will examine how this turn inflected Heaney's broad understanding of lyric and of Europe as he continued to cultivate a "we" voice.

It is shortsighted to discuss Heaney's interest in the idea of Europe without recourse to Milosz. Heaney so associated Milosz with Europe that one of his memorial tributes to Milosz, published in Denmark in 1999, tells the poet's history *as* the history of Europe:

> Milosz lived through nine decades of the twentieth century, but culturally he is as old as the millennium. His childhood and youth in the forest lands of the Issa Valley can be seen to mirror the Dark Ages, when the European mind shifted from folk-belief and taboo to the shimmering systems of medieval scholasticism and Renaissance Neoplatonism. His experience of the ideological and military crises induced by Marxism and fascism could

> stand for the mid-millennial crisis of the Reformation and the Wars of Religion, just as his flight from ideological extremes into a more Voltairean cast of mind in the 1950s could represent the period of Enlightenment.[206]

Milosz would likely have objected to personal or European history being put forth in such teleological terms, but Heaney's reading says more about his own development of an idea of Europe than about Milosz. Milosz also gave Heaney a sense of the generic significance of lyric poetry in addressing weighty situations.

Despite its importance, the relationship between Heaney and Eastern Europe has been notoriously difficult to study. First, as Justin Quinn remarks, the topic presents a challenging mixture of the superficial and the profound. The topic is superficial because Heaney did not speak the languages of the poets he read in translation—which has rattled critics much more than it ever bothered Heaney, who believed that the logical structure of Milosz's poetry carried over into English.[207] But Quinn remarks that Heaney's engagement with Eastern European poets was also profound. They gave him a model for how to write about conflict in an ethical way during a time of violence in modern Europe: in Heaney's case, as Northern Ireland looked to him to be the province's conscience and a source of sanity during the Troubles.[208]

It can also be difficult to map Heaney's Eastern European interests because of cultural barriers, which often lead to overly precise attempts to align Polish, Russian,

---

[206] Seamus Heaney, *Finders Keepers*, 444. Milosz's prose collection *Native Realm*, moreover, is better translated as *Native Europe*. It seems Heaney's draw might have been not so much "doubling" as nations on the outskirts of Europe, but a sense that Milosz had nearer access to "Europe" than he did.

[207] For Heaney's skirting of the translation problem, see *Government of the Tongue*, 54.

[208] Quinn, "Heaney and Eastern Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, 92-93.

Czech, and Irish history. Gerald Dawe, for instance, wonders why Heaney does not find identification in more apt models for Northern Ireland like Italy and Scotland; the fact that Heaney *has*, in fact, found Northern Irish echoes in the political situations of both Italy and Scotland suggests how pervasive concern about Eastern European appropriation has become in Heaney studies. Perhaps this apprehension is a response to the western tendency to see nations of the "East" as primitive and unfathomable. Thomas Docherty, for example, fears that Heaney's investment in Eastern European poets turns "alterity" into "identity," collapsing cultural distinctions.[209] Docherty does not point out, though, that Milosz was more wont to make these comparisons than Heaney. Peggy O'Brien highlights Heaney's attraction to Milosz as someone "who on many occasions compared Ireland to Poland, seeing both as self-identified Catholic countries on the edges of Europe, and both as victims of serial conquests."[210] Magdalena Kay takes the middle ground in her assessment of Heaney's Eastern European interests:

> It is easy to raise questions about possible parallels between Irish and Eastern European literature because it is correspondingly easy to view Ireland as utterly separate, an anomalous state on the margin of Western Europe with a native culture tucked away behind centuries of linguistic and cultural domination. This is true, but it is also restrictive.[211]

Of course, this suggestion precludes the possibility that geographical happenstance could have led to genuine parallels in how these poets relate to the idea of Europe, as narratives

---

[209] Gerald Dawe, *The Proper Word: Collected Criticism—Ireland, Poetry and Politics*, edited by Nicholas Allen (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2007), 248.

[210] Peggy O'Brien, *Writing Lough Derg: from William Carleton to Seamus Heaney* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), xv.

[211] Kay, *In Gratitude for All the Gifts*, 49.

of European marginalization evoke real historical circumstances and responses. In particular, these narratives impact the supposed division between primitiveness and modernity, which in turn influences who writes lyric poetry and how it gets written. Quinn touches on this theme in his analysis of how Eastern European poets provided Heaney with an escape hatch from the problems that often befall postcolonial writers. Calling attention to the prominence of Rome in the works of Holub and Herbert (and noting Heaney's elucidation of such moments), Quinn writes, "Heaney was born as a subject of possibly the most important empire since that of Rome, and his study of the Slavic poets often suggested tones or imagistic turns for dealing with this theme. They helped him avoid some of the traps that lie in wait for the post-colonial writer."[212]

Most of these studies of Heaney and Eastern Europe begin from a place of Irish exceptionalism: that is, they suggest that there must be something unique about the Irish situation that draws Heaney to these poets. But this viewpoint ought to be tempered; as Heaney told O'Driscoll in response to prodding on Irish and Eastern European connections, "I'm no cold war hero, I'm afraid," and, in Quinn's words, Heaney was "more likely to be found with heads of state than in a prison compound."[213] In fact, Soviet Bloc poetry also spoke powerfully to British and American poets of the 1980s, and Heaney's fascination should be understood as part of a larger Western fascination with samizdat poetry from behind the iron curtain. Ted Hughes, in fact, seems to have introduced Heaney to Eastern European poetry and deepened his interest in it, both through *Modern Poetry in Translation* and at international poetry festivals where they both appeared. Hughes, like Heaney, looked to these poets as models of personal and

[212] Quinn, "Heaney and Eastern Europe," 93.

[213] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 299; Quinn, "Heaney and Eastern Europe," 99.

cultural survival, as explored in Chapter 1. Heaney's embracing of these poets to help him work through themes of oppression and violence was not a new or a particularly Irish thing to do.

Where Heaney's fascination seems to depart from Anglo-American trends was in his focus on what Milosz and Mandelstam in particular could tell him about the relationship between the individual and the communal. As Polish poet and scholar Jerzy Jarniewicz argues, Heaney saw in Milosz the potential for a "creative project that would encapsulate collective history in one's biography without transcending the individual."[214] This was precisely the impasse *North* had brought Heaney to: his own theory of lyric, which relies on a sense of the individual, seemed inadequate to deal with the challenges of collective history, and meanwhile he felt coerced to speak not from his own vantage point but as a member of a group. Heaney's remarks on the communal orientation of Mandelstam and Milosz recall Hughes's reviews of Polinsky and Popa a decade earlier, as he too had identified a quality of communal awareness in these poets lacking in English poetry. But where Hughes is drawn to the notion of an Eastern European poet as a shaman who can bring healing to his or her tribe, Heaney is just as invested in how the community is always part of the poet's subjectivity. This is a fine but important distinction. Where Hughes as Poet Laureate of Britain imagined himself as the leader of a mythologized, lost tribe, in Heaney's Northern Ireland the concept of a "tribe" was alive and well—something that Hughes enviously remarked on in his essays on Irish and Eastern European poets who had clearer poet-shamanic tasks than a modern "British" poet. Milosz gave Heaney a model for how to write lyric poetry, with all the historical

[214] Jerzy Jarniewicz, "Seamus Heaney and Post-War Polish Poets," in *Seamus Heaney: Poet, Critic, Translator*, eds. Ashby Bland Crowder and Jason David Hall (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 110.

weight given to the concept of the lyric "I", as a person who thought of himself as hailing from communal ways of thinking about the individual. Kay speaks of "the deep communal rootedness of the paradigmatic poet in both Ireland and Eastern Europe," in which "the individual psychology often appears to grow out of a communal psychology,"[215] which resonates with Heaney's own sense of his identity as growing "like a growth ring in the tree of community." This valuable observation could be pushed further, beyond theme and into the idea of the lyric genre itself. What effects did Heaney's sense of a "communal psychology" within an alien part of Europe have on his own faith in a "lyric we" voice?

To Heaney, at least, poets writing in communist states seemed group-oriented in the conception of the *self,* rather than in the conception of the *political*. This view resonated with his own sense that his propensity to identify himself as part of his larger ancestral inheritance might give the mistaken impression that he conformed to a top-down, heavy-handed formulation of an Irish nationalist community. Heaney calls attention to comments made by Osip Mandelstam's wife, Nadezhda Mandelstam, in which she dismisses the appropriateness of the pronoun "we" to describe a political context, affirming it instead for use in a personal and artistic one. Communist groups, Nadezhda Mandelstam said, "are not proof of the existence of a sense of fellowship, since they consist of individualists who are out to achieve only their own aims. They refer to themselves as 'we', but in this context the pronoun indicates only a plurality devoid of

[215] Kay, *In Gratitude for all the Gifts*, 52. This comment resonates with Heaney's remark to an *Irish Times* reporter, quoted in O'Donoghue, *The Cambridge Companion*, 66-7: "Heaney told an *Irish Times* reporter that he doesn't envy the situation of Brits or Americans: 'Well no, I actually don't. The Americans are at bay in prosperity and freedom…[;] the poet in America for a long time has had great difficulty in escaping from the arena of the first-person singular. In England, I think the poet has great difficult in escaping from the civility of the literary tradition itself.'"

any deeper sense or significance.'"[216] In contrast, Nadezhda Mandelstam discussed the importance of an intellectual community of "we" for the poet:

> "I am quite convinced that without such a 'we', there can be no proper fulfillment of even the most ordinary 'I', that is, of the personality. To find its fulfillment, the 'I' needs at least two complementary dimensions: 'we' and—if it is fortunate—'you'. I think M. was lucky to have had a moment in his life when he was linked by the pronoun 'we' with a group of others."

These remarks get at a fundamental problem for a poet writing during the Troubles: how to resist "herd-speak" without relinquishing a group-based identity central to a core conception of both one's self and one's art.

Heaney returns frequently to images of the plural in Milosz as well as Mandelstam. In addition to praising Milosz as operating far beyond "the domestic securities of the first-person singular," twice Heaney quotes from Milosz's "Ars Poetica?" in *Government of the Tongue*:

> The purpose of poetry is to remind us
> how difficult it is to remain just one person,
> for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors,
> and invisible guests come in and out at will.[217]

This passage suggests that poetry, by its nature, continually dwells on the problems of the lyric "I," bearing the marks of the difficulties of presenting a core perspective. The

---

[216] Heaney, *Government of the Tongue*, 76.

[217] Quoted in Seamus Heaney, "Secular and Millennial Milosz," in *Finders Keepers*, 448; "The Indefatigable Hoof-taps: Sylvia Plath," in *Government of the Tongue,* 166.

inharmonious multitudes within the poet's singular self, also an oblique commentary on the expectation that a poet from a Soviet bloc state will speak for his or her community in crisis, is at odds with the Romantic-era idea of lyric that Heaney admired and did not wish to do away with.

Eastern European poets, in fact, gave Heaney a way to reformulate his idea of the Romantic genre of lyric so that it could function in a public sphere. Patricia Horton sees some continuity between Eastern European and Romantic poets in Heaney's imagination, arguing that Romanticism offers "a powerful intersection between poetry and politics in which ideas about the role of the poet, the function of poetry, and the relationship of the poet to community, audience and authority, are particularly urgent."[218] Poets like Herbert, Holub, and Milosz helped Heaney to draw out these themes of the poet's relationship to community, as they, unlike the Romantics, had to find what remained of the lyric genre in light of Adorno's "no poetry after Auschwitz."[219] Eastern European poets would come to help him temper his concerns about the English Romantic lyric, which he felt needed to be scrutinized for its intense interiority.

It is fitting, then, that when Heaney writes of the Romantic poets in *Government of the Tongue*, Eastern European poets (and especially Milosz) almost invariably follow. Heaney expands his conception of "lyric" to include the communal without sacrificing his notion of a stable genre of lyric. After discussing the sometimes overwrought, Romantically inclined verse of Wilfred Owen, Heaney turns to Chekhov and then credits Miroslav Holub with working intellect and historical criticism into the lyric: "In spite of a

---

[218] Patricia Horton, "Romantic Intersections: Romanticism and Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry" (dissertation, Queen's University Belfast, 1996), 3.

[219] For Heaney's remarks on Milosz's "deployment of the full orchestra after Auschwitz," see *Stepping Stones*, 304.

period of castigation about the necessity for 'intelligence' and 'irony', poetry in English has not moved all that far from the shelter of the Romantic tradition. Even our self-mocking dandies pirouette to a narcotic music. The dream's the thing, not the diagnosis."[220] Similarly, Heaney credits Herbert's poem "The Knocker" with challenging the lyric and history to accept one another:

> The poem makes us feel that we should prefer moral utterance to palliative imagery, but it does exactly that, makes us *feel*, and by means of feeling carries truth alive into the heart—exactly as the Romantics said it should. We end up persuaded we are against lyric poetry's culpable absorption in its own process by an entirely successful instance of that very process in action: here is a lyric about a knocker which claims that lyric is inadmissible.[221]

There is satisfaction in Heaney's remark "exactly as the Romantics said it should," a sense of relief that the lyric does, after all, continue to function after Auschwitz. And, in Heaney's most remarkable statement on the hope of lyric in trying times, he blends the visions of Wordsworth and Milosz: "I do not in fact see how poetry can survive as a category of human consciousness if it does not put poetic considerations first—expressive considerations, that is, based upon its own genetic laws which spring into operation at the moment of lyric conception. Yet it is possible to feel all this and still concede the justice of Czeslaw Milosz's rebuke to the autocracy of such romantic

---

[220] Heaney, *Government of the Tongue*, 45.

[221] Ibid., 100.

presumption."[222] His final statement in *Government of the Tongue* blends Wordsworth's Romantic lyric with Milosz's challenge, the individual artist's inspiration in solitary moments with the demands of collective history:

> Essentially, Wordsworth declares that what counts is the quality, intensity and breadth of the poet's concerns between the moments of writing, the gravity and purity of the mind's appetites and applications between moments of inspiration. This is what determines the ultimate human value of the act of poetry. That act remains free, self-governing, self-seeking, but the worth of the booty it brings back from its raid upon the inarticulate will depend upon the emotional capacity, intellectual resource and general civilization which the articulate poet maintains between the raids.[223]

Government of the Tongue, from beginning to end, works out Heaney's theory of lyric as it stood in the 1980s, allowing him to keep faith in the Romantic-era genre of lyric through the communally oriented poetics of the Eastern Europeans.

Heaney's "Mind of Europe"

Heaney opens the possibility for this type of lyric by reimagining a T.S. Eliot-infused "mind of Europe" through a fringe tradition of Eastern European poets. By making his own personal centers central to a history of Europe and, indeed, poetry, Heaney gave authority to the "lyric we." In the process, he began to position Ireland as central, rather than marginal, to ideas of Europe. Eliot's sense of a European tradition, in which the English canon was marginal, is modified in Heaney. The message of Eliot's

[222] Ibid., 166.

[223] Ibid., 170.

Four Quartets reverberates and is subtly reworked in one of Heaney's favorite Milosz lines. As Heaney remarks of the early 1980s, "My own mantra in those days was the remark by Milosz that I quote in 'Away from it All': I was stretched between contemplation of a motionless point and the command to participate actively in history."[224] Milosz's "motionless point" recalls the "still point" of "Burnt Norton." But Heaney recasts Eliot's still point—an emblem of the absolute that we can only catch glimpses of in a world of continual flux—in Milosz's terms. Where for Eliot the "still point" represented an escape from time, Milosz maintained that the artist has a responsibility to live in and engage with dynamic events. For Heaney, Milosz's question, "What is poetry that does not save nations or people?" represented the public, plural responsibility of the poet. These plural demands also factor into Heaney's sense of Europe, which he associates foremost with Milosz rather than an Eliot-inflected ideal of transcendence and tradition. In fact, Heaney so associated Eastern European poets with the "mind of Europe" that his essay "A Poet's Europe" makes no reference to the original founding nations of the European community, emphasizing instead poets of Eastern Europe.[225]

Heaney also makes Europe's margins central through Mandelstam, who introduced him to a version of Dante that he could engage with. For Eliot, Dante was a universal figure, the savior of his soul; for Mandelstam, he was merely a great artist to be approached, if not as an equal, at least with some intimacy and an acknowledgement of his real situation in a particular time and place. As O'Brien says of the difference, "Whereas Eliot praises Dante for wielding a language of Latinate neutrality, Mandelstam

[224] Ibid., 260.

[225] Seamus Heaney, "A Poet's Europe," 159-160.

reads Dante as serving no master other than his utterly individual vision."[226] Mandelstam describes Dante's process in terms of community rather than an individual talent. In a passage that Heaney quotes from in several works of prose, Mandelstam likens the *Divine Comedy* to the intricate creation of a colony of bees:

> We must try to imagine, therefore, how bees might have worked at this thirteen-thousand-faceted form, bees endowed with the brilliant stereometric instinct, who attracted bees in greater and greater numbers as they were required. The work of these bees, constantly keeping their eye on the whole, is of varying difficulty at different stages of the process. Their cooperation expands and grows more complicated as they participate in the process of forming the combs, by means of which space virtually emerges out of itself.[227]

The image of a community building a single poem calls to mind Heaney's sense of the Northern Irish poet's communal rootedness, articulated in the communal voice he adopts in early poems like "Bogland." Heaney's analysis of this Mandelstam passage resituates Dante as a *lyric*, rather than *epic*, poet, bolstering his sense that a lyric poem can capture the experience of a community beyond the solitary "I":

> Mandelstam's Dante is more like Eliot's Shakespeare: he is not distinguished by his cultural representativeness, his conservative majesty or his intellectual orthodoxy. Rather, he is fastened upon and shaken into new and disconcerting life as an exemplar of the purely creative, intimate

[226] O'Brien, *Writing Lough Derg*, 210.

[227] Quoted in Heaney, "Envies and Indentifications: Dante and the Modern Poet," in *Finders Keepers*, 192.

> and experimental act of writing itself. This Dante is essentially lyric; he is stripped of the robes of commentary in which he began to vest himself with his epistle to Can Grande, reclaimed from the realm of epic and allegory and made to live as the epitome of a poet's creative excitement.[228]

To call Dante a "lyric" poet is astounding, as Heaney seems to have digested the generic division of epic, drama, and lyric falsely attributed to Aristotle by Romantic poetics. Reclaiming Dante's *Divine Comedy* from the realm of epic gives the lyric poem the authority to carry the weight of communal concerns. Through his interpretation of Mandelstam, then, Heaney expands his concept of what lyric could be.

The Mandelstam-inflected Dante guided Heaney through his response to the Hunger Strikes, a period when he felt most compelled into herd-speak. He had thought of dedicating *Ugolino* to the dirty protesters until his encounter with Danny Morrison on the train. Rather than provide a dedication, Heaney suggested empathic group sentiment obliquely, in the mode of Eastern European poets who could not comment on public issues directly without the threat of exile or imprisonment. To that end, Heaney brings the passage of *Ugolino* in which Ugolino and his sons are starving in "that jail / Which is called Hunger after me." The sons urge Ugolino to eat them to ease his pain:

> I bit on my two hands in desperation
> And they, since they thought hunger drove me to it,
> Rose up suddenly in agitation
> Saying, "Father, it will great ease our pain
> If you eat us instead, and you who dressed us
> In this sad flesh undress us here again."

[228] Ibid., 193.

Ugolino watches his sons die, declaring, "Then hunger killed where grief had only wounded" (*FW* 55). Maristella Gatto points to the liberties Heaney takes in other sections of *Ugolino*, such as his rendering of the Italian *fame* (hunger) as *famine* in his line "like a famine victim at a loaf of bread." She writes, "By this choice, the image of the Great Famine is grafted to the text, with the double effect of pulling the Dantesque episode into an Irish orbit and of casting the gloomy atmosphere of Hell upon a very dark period in Irish history."[229] In a fine press version of *Ugolino*, Heaney's dedication makes the comparison between Dante's Italy and his Northern Ireland explicit. But he comes to this medieval Italian comparison indirectly, by recourse to Eastern European poetry. Rather than access a central European text directly, in other words, Heaney accesses it from his own poetic center: through Eastern European poets. Mandelstam's, rather than Eliot's, reading of Dante gave Heaney an entrance into the lyric form that Dante used to address the "ferocity of emotion" in a "narrative about a divided city."[230]

Michael Parker has recently drawn another connection between the hunger strikes and Eastern European poetry, pointing out that Milosz's Nobel Lecture was published five days after the beginning of the second round of hunger strikes.[231] Parker sees Milosz, then, as a key figure in the hunger strikes passage of *Station Island*. Milosz, indeed, seems to offer an alternative to the Hughesian myth of tribal Northern Europe. The hunger strikes passage revisits *North*, with its Northern European myth of kinship between the tribes of Jutland and the tribes of Northern Ireland, using another Irish-

---

[229] Maristella Gatto, "'Through the Wall': Heaney's 'Impure' Translation in 'Ugolino' and *Sweeney Astray*," *BELLS: Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies* 11 (2000): 68-69.

[230] Heaney, "An Interview with Rand Brandes," 12.

[231] Michael Parker, "Czeslaw Milosz and his Impact on Seamus Heaney's Poetry," *Textual Practice* 5, no. 1 (2013): 839-849.

European connection in the fasting pilgrims who journeyed to Lough Derg: "'My brain dried like spread turf, my stomach / Shrank to a cinder and tightened and cracked" (*SI* 84). Here, the protective, womblike bog is replaced with a prison blanket: "'Under the prison blanket, an ambush / Stillness I felt safe in settled round me.'" This passage re-evaluates the tribal European myth of *North*, implicitly critiquing how the notion of the intractable cycles of tribal violence has contributed to the bleakness of the present situation, as the Hunger Strikes mode of protest relies on a narrative of uninterrupted Irish struggles and injustices. This particular cross-cultural European myth is vacated of abstraction, set in the unmistakably specific setting of a prison that recalls not only Long Kesh but also Mandelstam's imprisonment.

Station Island is a purgatorial vision that demands both Ireland and the lyric to justify themselves to modernity. The poems of the volume draw on Dante, Milosz, and Mandelstam. Like *North*, *Station Island* often stages a conflict between "I" and "we," figured as a conflict between Europe and its tribal outliers. The volume grapples with the problem of lyric *and* the problem of Europe. First, whether or not to call the title poem "lyrical" is debatable, as it is more obviously epic. But because Heaney draws on Mandelstam's version of Dante, and because by the time of writing he had decided through Mandelstam that Dante was a lyric poet, it is safe to say that "Station Island" is at least deeply preoccupied with what lyric is. Heaney's comment about deciding to remove *Glanmore Sonnets* from *North* is not the only occasion on which Heaney refers to "punishing the lyric" for its Romantic qualities: the issue also comes up in relation to "Station Island."

Where Wordsworth offered Heaney one link to the lyric through the continental associations of 1798, Milosz's influence presents a different model in "Station Island" by connecting Heaney to Europe—and an alternate lyric tradition—through its margins. St. Patrick's Pilgrimage on Station Island in Lough Derg has been famed as an entrance into Purgatory since the twelfth century. It was thus an important site for pilgrims from the European continent in the medieval period. Catholicism, of course, links Ireland to older, pre-Reformation ideas of Europe that Edna Longley also discusses, noting that Catholics in Europe tended to see the English, rather than the Irish, as uncivilized.[232] And, for O'Brien, "Station Island" shows the stirrings of a modern, "European Ireland" born in the 1980s.[233] But this was a hesitant development, as the hunger strikes in Northern Ireland, contemporaneous with Heaney's writing of "Station Island," undermined the entire island's claim to modernity. According to Padraig O'Malley, the rhetoric of the hunger strikes "fuses elements of the legal code of ancient Ireland, of the self-denial that is the central characteristic of Irish Catholicism, and of the propensity for endurance and sacrifice that is the hallmark of militant Irish nationalism"[234]—qualities associated with the atavism that led to the media's portrayal of the Northern Irish conflict as "tribal warfare."

O'Brien reads "Station Island" as an intensely Europe-oriented poem, seeing evidence of an emerging European sensibility as Heaney works to "dissolve the celebrated tribal certainties about nationalism and Catholicism, separately and together,

---

[232] Longley, "Introduction," *The Living Stream*, 30.

[233] O'Brien, *Writing Lough Derg*, 168.

[234] Padraig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1990), 25.

only to unearth certain solid imponderables about the self and the idea of God."[235] In O'Brien's work, Europe becomes the site of "certain solid imponderables" while Irish Catholicism is rendered as "tribal," suggesting that ultimately Heaney's European interests freed him from narrow Irish nationalist concerns, allowing him to become a more metaphysical poet. But this reading equates "Europe" with clarity of philosophic vision, suggesting a Eurocentric view that the continent has a stronghold on deep thought. This polarization lands on a potential stalemate in Heaney's own poetics, as he at times aligns Irish identity with tribalism and European identity with individuality while still allowing the lyric to speak from and to "Irish" concerns. He works through this problem by reimagining what the "tribe" could mean through the examples of Milosz and Mandelstam.

He reimagines the idea of the "tribe" in "Station Island" through stern self-questionings. Thematically in line with the settings of pilgrimage and Purgatory, these moments also resonate with many of Milosz's poems, particularly his elegies, that call the poet out for his faulty response to his community's violence. Nowhere is this debt to Milosz more obvious than in the elegiac section for Colum McCarthy, Heaney's second cousin killed in an act of sectarian violence. Heaney writes of the poem's desire to capture but move past the "quietist, fatalistic tribe" into which he and Colum were born. He recalls the murder not in terms of its impact on the community but rather personally, with Colum's ghost openly accusing the poet for aestheticizing his death, in essence for putting lyric before life: "You were there with poets when you got the word / and stayed there with them, while your own flesh and blood / was carted to Bellaghy from the Fews" (*SI* 82). The moment feels overwrought and not entirely natural. O'Driscoll also senses

[235] O'Brien, *Writing Lough Derg*, 153.

this, asking Heaney, "Did you really feel you had been guilty of over-aestheticizing his death, or was this a dramatic dialogue set up to explore the whole idea of public poetry?" to which Heaney replied, "It was set up, exactly as you say."[236] In this passage, Heaney exaggerates these emotions to test the divisions between song and suffering; this is a poetic tactic, even a convention of the poem that stages an ethical debate that Heaney had practiced since *North*; it is a test of the boundaries of the genre, rather than "a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion" in the Romantic formulation. Colum's shade continues to accuse his cousin:

> "You confused evasion and artistic tact.
> The Protestant who shot me through the head
> I accuse directly, but indirectly, you
> Who now atone perhaps upon this bed
> for the way you whitewashed ugliness and drew
> the lovely blinds of the *Purgatorio*
> and saccharined my death with morning dew." (*SI* 83)

The cloying sweetness of the final line implicitly calls the Romantic notion of lyric into question, suggesting its limits and even its affronts in the face of tragedy. But Heaney does not quite mean the accusation he directs at himself. The moment is not a mimetic representation of guilt but rather a convention of Heaney's public-oriented poetry. He stages this confrontation to bring a public event into his poem without sacrificing loyalty to the lyric self, setting up two speakers—the traditional "I" and "thou" of an elegy—who confront one another in privacy and intimacy rather than abstracting sectarian killings into collective historical experience.

---

[236] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones,* 220-222.

Milosz (and, to a lesser extent, Holub and Herbert), counter the intense interiority and isolation Heaney associates with the Romantic lyric without sacrificing the autonomous self. Heaney's poem for Milosz in *Station Island*, "The Master," shows this ideal balance of collective history and individual autonomy in an image that is at once of a reclusive poet and a war-ravaged Europe: "He dwelt in himself / like a rook in an unroofed tower" (*SI* 110). Heaney brings Milosz into an Irish poetic context with the Yeatsian image of the poet fortified in his tower, but suggests he cannot yet live up to the image himself: "How flimsy I felt climbing down / the unrailed stairs on the wall." Milosz, who came up against the same limitation in attempting to write poetry that could at once contain his subjectivity and the demands of his group, became a guide for Heaney to work through these contradictions between lyric expectation and his own cultural norms—a contrast he also puts in terms of the demands of history.

The Europe Poems

Heaney continues to work out the relationship between the "tribe" and "Europe" in his 1994 Ceasefire poem, "Tollund." This poem brings together two narratives of Europe: Hughes's tribal myth that Heaney works through in *Wintering Out* and *North* and Milosz's historically responsive, collective idea of Europe. The lyric "we," taking courage from Milosz's example, is "at home beyond the tribe" in Denmark:

> it was user-friendly outback
> Where we stood footloose, at home beyond the tribe,
>
> More scouts than strangers, ghosts who'd walked abroad

Unfazed by light, to make a new beginning

And make a go of it, alive and sinning,

Ourselves again, free-willed again, not bad. (*SL* 69)

The word "strangers" is key in Heaney's work, often used to reference European invaders (such as the "strangers," or invading English, in "Broagh" who could not manage the word's final "*gh*" of the place name). Significantly, the poem's speakers are not "invaders" of Europe but rather "ghosts who'd walked abroad," able to be "ourselves again" without the restrictions of tribal allegiance. "Tollund" is, in this sense, a moving revision of "The Tollund Man" in *Wintering Out*. "The Tollund Man" shows Heaney isolated from Europe; he had only, at that time, imagined going to Jutland: "Some day I will go to Aarhus / To see his peat-brown head, / The mild pods of his eye-lids, / His pointed skin cap." Yet even "Not knowing their tongue," he imagined kinship based on the allegiance of having experienced so-called tribal warfare: "Out here in Jutland / In the old man-killing parishes / I will feel lost, / Unhappy and at home." In the context of 1994, with the hope of a successful ceasefire, he is no longer at home in primordial cycles of violence; instead, he feels "footloose, at home beyond the tribe." The final line—"ourselves again"—evokes, of course, Sinn Fein. This ironic moment undercuts the tribal allegiance of Sinn Fein by suggesting that his community has become "ourselves again" by refusing to identify in terms of Sinn Fein "herd-speak"—at home enough, in fact, that "we" and "us" are used freely, rather than warily, in the poem.[237]

[237] An echo of a phrase returns again in "A Kite for Aibhin," the final poem of Heaney's final volume, *Human Chain*: "The kite takes off, itself alone, a windfall." This poem also has a European basis; it is a version of Giovanni Pascali's "L'Aquilone." As in "Tollund," bringing variants of "ourselves alone" into a European context also brings Northern Irish experience into an idea of Europe.

Heaney's most public statement on a European (Northern) Ireland comes in "Beacons at Bealtaine," a poem in conversation with Milosz. Before turning to Heaney's poem, I will spend some time with Milosz's "Child of Europe," a poem Heaney deeply admired and brought up frequently. In contrast to Heaney's remarkably uplifting "Beacons at Bealtaine," "Child of Europe" is about the fragmentation of Europe. It reflects, in O'Brien's terms, "the complete severance from an otherwise continuous link with European culture that the Nazi occupation and the Holocaust in Poland effected," disrupting the European progress narrative O'Brien finds a version of in "Station Island."[238] But, at least in Heaney's reading, the poem ends on a hopeful view of the European future based on the promise of collectivity; he brings this sense of progress through collectivity into his own poem for Europe. In his reading of Milosz's "Child of Europe," Heaney gives the Polish poet's turn from "the domestic securities of the first-person singular" almost reverent attention, admiring "that its reach in is as long as its reach out," even as Milosz's poem reflects on the collective horrors of his Europe in the twentieth century.[239]

Child of Europe" operates in plurals rather than singulars, dismissing the "I-thou" structure that Heaney critiques in Anglo-American verse. The poem works, instead, on three separate plural pronouns: "we" (the war's survivors), "they" (the war dead), and "you" (the figure of the "child of Europe," expressed as "you" singular but functioning as "you" plural as an allegory for the postwar generation): "We, whose lungs fill with the sweetness of day, / Who in May admire trees flowering, / Are better than those who

[238] O'Brien, *Writing Lough Derg*, 242.

[239] Heaney, *Government of the Tongue*, 116.

perished."[240] Sandra Beasley refers to the "we" of Milosz's poem as "anonymous," when in fact the poem makes it clear that the "we" encapsulates those who have survived the Second World War.[241] The critical tendency to treat a "we" as anonymous, even when it is inflected with personality and psychological depth, also occurs in Heaney criticism. Helen Vendler, for instance, terms Heaney's earliest poetry collections his volumes of "anonymity," because in them Heaney's poetic persona adopts an almost anonymous perspective when talking about his ancestors and childhood.[242] But the "we" of Heaney's early work (such as "Bogland") is not meant to be anonymous; instead, it situates the artistic persona in a communal understanding of a fully felt self. The tendency of critics to default to the term "anonymous" when confronted with a speaker other than the first-person singular shows that current models of the lyric as genre do not have a good critical idiom to deal with the plural.

Milosz's poem, though bleak, uses plural pronouns in part to suggest a community of thinkers who can create intellectual energy and passion. By the final couplet, the "we," "they," and "you" have become a united force brought together in "us": "Tight-lipped, guided by reasons only, / Cautiously let us step into the era of the unchained fire."[243] The fire image can be read as a cautious endorsement of hope for Europe, drawing on Greco-Roman notions of fire as renewal and creativity.

---

[240] Czesław Miłosz, "Child of Europe," in *Czesław Miłosz: New and Collected Poems (1931-2001)*, trans. Robert Hass (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 83.

[241] Sandra Beasley, "Child of Europe," in R. Victoria Arana, *The Facts on File Companion to World Poetry, 1900 to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 2008), 101.

[242] Helen Vendler, *Seamus Heaney* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 16-22.

[243] Miłosz, *Collected Poems*, 87.

In a remarkably optimistic reading of Milosz, Heaney transports Milosz's image of fire as renewal for Europe into "Beacons at Bealtaine," another poem that operates on plural pronouns. Heaney first read this poem publically at the European Union Enlargement Ceremony in Phoenix Park, Dublin, on May Day 2004. Known as "Bealtaine" in the Irish language, "May Day" was the feast of bright fire held to mark the first day of summer. A ninth century Irish text claims that the first magical inhabitants of Ireland arrived on the feast of Bealtaine. Heaney notes that "there is something auspicious about the fact that a new flocking together of the old European nations happens on this day of mythic arrival in Ireland; and it is even more auspicious that we celebrate it in a park named after the mythic bird that represents the possibility of ongoing renewal." Adding to the welcoming of foreigners into Europe, Heaney notes that the etymology of Phoenix Park combines Greek and Irish experience, as the Greek "phoenix" may hail from the Irish words *fionn uisce*, meaning "place of clear water." This etymology situates the poem in a pan-European context, linking two of Europe's excluded places: Ireland, with its minority language, and Greece, with its clannish energies that relegate it, as Dainotto argues, to the status of "not-quite-Europe."[244]

The poem draws on three frequently recycled myths of Europe: Europe as Christendom, Europe as classical civilization, and Europe as Enlightenment. Heaney, though, offers a fourth myth of Europe modeled on Irish experience: Europe as a community that draws resources for survival in times of crisis from its excluded regions, a reading supported by the form of the villanelle. This form marks the poem as a European—and more specifically, a provincial European—text. The villanelle, from the Italian word *villenella* (a pastoral song), is both a classic European form and one that

[244] Dainotto, *Europe (In Theory)*, 4.

connects Heaney to his rural Irish roots, as it means "farmhand."[245] The form of the villanelle performs the coming together of nations, as the interlocking rhymes ultimately bring together the poems' and nations' different elements in the final four lines:

> Uisce: water. And fionn: the water's clear.
> But dip and find this Gaelic water Greek:
> A phoenix flames upon fionn uisce here.
>
> Strangers were barbaroi to the Greek ear.
> Now let the heirs of all who could not speak
> The language, whose ba-babbling was unclear,
>
> Come with their gift of tongues past each frontier
> And find the answering voices that they seek
> As fionn and uisce answer phoenix here.
>
> The May Day hills were burning, far and near,
> When our land's first footers beached boats in the creek
> In uisce, fionn, strange words that soon grew clear;

[245] Heaney reflects, "The poet as ploughman….'Verse' comes from the Latin *versus* which could mean a line of poetry but could also mean the turn that a ploughman made at the head of the field as he finished on furrow and faced back into another." Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 65. Heaney was careful to maintain this form in print; when a proof copy erroneously represented the poem as a single stanza, Heaney wrote Pat Boran, "Glad that the old beacons are getting a chance to burn again. But they need a draught or two between the lines…" Alison Flood, "Little-seen Seamus Heaney poems published in literary 'map of Dublin'," the *Guardian*, April 2, 2014, accessed June 5, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/apr/02/seamus-heaney-poems-anthology-if-ever-you-go.

So on a day when newcomers appear
Let it be a homecoming and let us speak
The unstrange word, as it behoves us here,
Move lips, move minds and make new meanings flare
Like ancient beacons signalling, peak to peak,
From middle sea to north sea, shining clear
As phoenix flame upon fionn uisce here.[246]

The villanelle form gives a sense of unity and cohesion; it is a manifesto of a new, communally oriented Europe.

It is not surprising, then, that this poem has had its richest life in Europe's fringe regions. Irish President Mary McAleese frequently uses "Beacons at Bealtaine" in speeches and diplomatic events in historically disadvantaged parts of Europe—for instance, at functions in Latvia, Romania, and Bulgaria—but she has never quoted from the poem in Ireland. And the only substantial criticism on it so far is by Italian scholar Roberta Baldi, who published a roughly fifty-page study of the short poem that is available only in Milan. Baldi hears the EU motto "United in Diversity" in the poem, particularly its phrase "gift of tongues."[247]

The poem creates a new narrative of Europe drawn from its perimeters of Europe, even casting the Greco-Roman traditions of the continent as "outsiders" in order to claim them for a notion of Europe that hinges on the possibility of community. The European Enlargement Ceremony in 2004 marked the introduction of new member states that did

[246] Seamus Heaney, "Beacons at Bealtaine," the *Independent*, February 5, 2004, accessed March 3, 2014, http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/beacons-at-bealtaine-26220316.html.

[247] Roberta Baldi, Traduzioni culturali: poesia e Unione Europea: 'Beacons at Bealtaine' (Seamus Heaney): cultura e civiltà anglofona attraverso la traduzione ragionata (Milan: EDUCatt, 2010), 50.

not quite seem to fit the bill for "Europe": Milosz's own Poland, for one, as well as other members of the former Soviet bloc.[248] The absence of codified European nations from Heaney's poem, then, is telling: if we were to trace a trajectory geographically, he moves between Ireland and southern Europe, depicting clans, tribes, and barbarians rather than modern nation-states. The way Europe constructs its own internal other using language related to "clannishness" to describe its southern reaches recalls the similar casting of (Northern) Ireland as "tribal." Heaney takes these two demeaning depictions of communal-oriented outliers of Europe (Europe's clannish South and Europe's tribal North) and makes them central, rather than peripheral, to European survival in the new millennium.

Heaney brings an Irish-inflected idea of Europe, worked out in his own experimentation with the lyric "we" in poetry, to bear on a model for a new Europe. Heaney's vision of a European place for Ireland in 2004 is much more secure than it was at the height of the Troubles, as the poem exudes comfort with the first-person plural. His poetry of the Troubles is anxious that the "we" will identify him as spokesman of Irish nationalism. Yet "Beacons at Bealtaine" has no qualms about using the first-person plural to discuss Irish identification, as Heaney speaks for the Irish people, once not accepted into Europe but now in the position to welcome newcomers into the European Union. He appropriates the concept of "we" for contemporary Europe. As in Milosz's "Child of Europe," where the "we" applies surprisingly not to the totalitarian communist regime but rather to a united sensibility that may suggest hope for the future of Europe, Heaney's poem suggests how a lyric "we" evoking a collection of communities might be viable for

[248] The other countries were Cyprus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, and Slovenia; Turkey was denied entrance, which many detractors saw as evidence of the enduring "Europe as Christendom" myth.

Europe. He stages an Irish-inflected sense of community, not only as a viable way to discuss Europe, but also as a way that Europe faced with its latest crisis might survive.

Conclusion

Eastern European poetry helped Heaney work out a way to write lyric poetry from the vantage of a communally-oriented culture at the margins of a continent associated with hyper-individualism that has shaped how the lyric is written and read. Heaney builds a central place for Ireland in an idea of a modern Europe through the Irish cultural affinity with the idea of saying "we" instead of "I." The "we" he agonizes over during the troubles becomes the "we" that provides a way forward for the European Union, bringing the idea of the "tribe" into modernity. These processes reflect Heaney's larger poetic project of bringing the central figures and places of his own life, which have existed on the mainstream periphery, to center stage; as Ireland becomes a perfect microcosm for Europe, the Irish poem becomes a model for the lyric.

But Heaney's "Beacons at Bealtaine" is more complex than an affirmation of a "new Europe." It did, after all, come to light again after the crash of the European economy. It became a poem of solace in a period that cast new doubt on the notion of progress. The struggling Europe of post-2008 could not very well define itself based on progress and prosperity; if the idea of Europe is to survive, Heaney suggests, it will survive as Ireland did: through a recognition of community and a shared history. It is a remarkably optimistic view, particularly given that the rhetoric of a shared history in Ireland often contributed to violence in Heaney's lifetime.

When Heaney died last year, his final words to his wife in a text message were in Latin: for him, the "language of Europe" but also the personal language of his Irish Catholic upbringing: *noli temere*. Overnight, these words appeared on a gable wall in Dublin, mimicking the political peace murals that appeared overnight in Derry during the Troubles. The public appropriation of private words speaks to Heaney's legacy as a European lyric poet who kept faith in a "we" voice despite the history he lived through. Heaney recognized the naiveté and even madness of this position. Adapting the words of Sophocles' messenger, Heaney's elegy for Milosz concludes on words that he once approved, in jest, for his own epitaph:

> Call me mad, if you like,
> Or gullible, but that man surely went
> In step with a guide he trusted down to where
> Light has gone out but the door stands open.[249]

[249] Seamus Heaney, "The Door Stands Open: Czeslaw Milosz 1911-2004" (Dublin: Irish Writers Center, 2005).

Chapter Three

"Vistas of Simultaneity": Northern Irish Elegies for the Yugoslav Wars

In 2011, the Healing Through Remembering (HTR) initiative of Northern Ireland organized a documentary project in which two Northern Irish filmmakers, Declan Keeney and Cahal McLaughlin, interviewed Bosnians who had been children during the 1992-1996 Siege of Sarajevo, the longest siege of a capital city in modern warfare. The HTR's Heaneyesque motto—"Whatever you say, say something"—reflects the importance of narrative and the arts in helping citizens of Northern Ireland work through the legacy of the Troubles. The documentary came out of the Belfast-Sarajevo Initiative, run at Queen's University Belfast from 2007-2010, which brought artists together from both cities as part of a dialogue about peace, reconciliation, and healing through the arts.[250] This outreach effort from Northern Ireland to former Yugoslavia speaks to a history of identification between the regions that goes back to the 1950s but reached its height in the 1990s, as Northern Ireland began peace talks while Yugoslavia faced a series of ethnically motivated conflicts widely referred to as the Yugoslav Wars. In this period of artistic collaboration, the mainstream media and some scholars have explained the Northern Ireland Troubles and the Yugoslav Wars in strikingly similar terms: as tribal conflicts rooted in the blood feuds of primordial, savage Europe.[251]

Indeed, the comparison between (Northern) Ireland and Yugoslavia may be read as part of a much older history. Since the nineteenth century, the Balkans and Ireland

---

[250] "Bosnians: 'We Are Not Afraid to Say Never Again," *The Northern Ireland Foundation*, April 11, 2011, accessed April 2, 2014, http://nifoundation.net/2011/04/11/bosnians-we-are-not-afraid-to-say-never-again/.

[251] See, for instance, Robert D. Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993), which discusses the Balkans in tribalist terms.

have frequently appeared as distorted doubles in British and Anglo-Irish literature, imagined as primitive backwaters in the margins of Europe. Count Hermann Keyserling's immortal remark in his 1928 book *Europe*— "If the Balkans hadn't existed, they would have been invented"—now resonates with the opening of Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*: "If Ireland had never existed, the English would have invented it."[252] Although balkanization is most apparent in English literature through the fin de siècle, Andrew Hammond's *British Literature and the Balkans* (2010) places the Yugoslav Wars on a continuum with earlier balkanist discourse.[253] For that matter, it is striking that Irish Gothic readings of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, which find the plight of colonial Ireland in Dracula's Romanian landscape, became trendy just as war in the Balkans broke out and peace talks in Northern Ireland began.[254] The branding of the Troubles and the Yugoslav Wars as tribal warfare no doubt has roots in *fin de siècle* balkanization. But we have yet to consider the intersections between Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia, despite the richness of the texts—particularly in poetry, a genre generally neglected in most literary studies of the Balkans.[255]

---

[252] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996), 9.

[253] Andrew Hammond, *British Literature and the Balkans: Themes and Contexts* (New York: Rodopi, 2010), 9.

[254] For variations in this argument and discussions of Irish and Balkan doubling, see Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 4 (July, 1990): 621–45; Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 89–94; and Declan Kiberd, "Undead in the Nineties," in *Irish Classics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 379–98.

[255] See, for instance, Vesna Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) and Richard Robinson, *Narratives of the European Border* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), which focus on genres other than poetry. In recent years, Magdalena Kay and Justin Quinn have produced excellent studies of Heaney's poetry and Eastern Europe, but these texts do not engage with the specific case of the Balkans, nor do they consider the relationship between poetry and politics in terms of

Yet the genre of poetry in general, and Irish-themed elegy in particular, has responded powerfully to the superficial paralleling of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia. The 1990s saw multiple individual poems and volumes of poetry dedicated to victims of former Yugoslavia that implicitly or explicitly bring in Irish, and especially Northern Irish, themes. These volumes include *Klaonica: Poems for Bosnia* (1993); *In the Heart of Europe: Poems for Bosnia* (1998); and *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia*, edited by Chris Agee (1998).[256] Not all of these poems come from Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. But all of the poems considered here are transnational elegies that mourn the dead of Yugoslavia through Northern Irish contexts.[257]

In the rhetoric of tribalism in postwar Europe, the tribe is imagined as a base unit of human groups, an almost oppressively intimate collectivity. Intimacy is also an underlying concern in the theory of lyric. Intimacy takes on additional force when brought to bear on the lyric "I" and addressed or implied "you" of the elegy. Experiments with intimacy between poet and addressee—particularly the circumstances in which these overtures break down—allow lyric poetry, especially elegy, to examine the intimacy that supposedly drove the "ethnic violence" of Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia. The poems are linked through an analogical gesture: the physical intimacy of so-called tribal groups living in the same space with the psychological intimacy between a poet and

---

lyric theory, leaving the generic relationship between poetry and conflict largely unexplored. Kay, *In Gratitude for All the Gifts*; Quinn, "Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe."

[256] *Klaonica: Poems for Bosnia*, ed. Ken Smith (London: Bloodaxe Books, 1993); *In the Heart of Europe: Poems for Bosnia*, ed. Chris Agee (London: Rushlight, 1998); *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia*, ed. Chris Agee (London: Bloodaxe, 1998), 8.

[257] Many more Irish-themed elegies for Yugoslavia exist than the ones I am able to cover here, including works by Medbh McGuckian, Paula Meehan, Bernard O'Donoghue, David Wheatley, and additional poems by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Chris Agee.

addressee, both of whom live in volatile communities. The deliberate play with the definitions of intimacy—tribal intimacy, elegiac intimacy, and intimacy connecting people across borders who understand what it is to live with sectarian violence— is a cornerstone of Irish-themed elegy for Yugoslavia. Even more salient is the refusal to settle into this intimacy: these elegies tirelessly critique the ethical implications of attempting to empathize across borders and cultures.

Outwardly, Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia appear in some ways similar. They are imagined geographically as the margins of Europe and have both faced conquest and disputed colonization by various European empires: the British in the West, the Ottomans and the Austro-Hungarians in the East. Edna Longley has observed that "Northern Irish people now see themselves in the cracked looking-glass of Yugoslavia" because both places have experienced "internal European colonialism."[258] The comparison also operates in Yugoslavia: in 1956, the Irish essayist Hubert Butler, who had lived in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Dubrovnik, remarked, "The Croats used to call themselves 'the Ulster of Yugoslavia' because they considered the Six Counties as progressive as themselves and in equal danger of being absorbed into the peasant economy of a more primitive people."[259] Despite their apparent allegiances, these places have distinct cultures, values, and histories. Though it is tempting to read affinities into the ethno-religious conflicts between British Protestants and Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland and Muslim Bosnians, Orthodox Serbs, and Catholic Croats in Yugoslavia, but it is also essential to remember the difference in scale: Yugoslavia was, after all, the center of some of the worst genocides of the twentieth century. Despite the differences in cause

[258] Longley, *The Living Stream*, 30.

[259] Hubert Butler, "Mr. Pfeffer of Sarajevo," in *Scar on the Stone*, 80.

and scale, both conflicts have been explained in strikingly similar primordialist terms. In mainstream media and even some academic studies, both the Troubles and Yugoslav Wars are frequently written off as incomprehensible to rational Western society. The primordialist reading construes Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, and Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks in Yugoslavia, as tribes motivated to fight one another to the death as a result of hatreds reaching back into the mists of time.[260]

When war erupted in the Balkans in the 1990s, the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland were both in the process of shifting places in the popular imagination. In Yugoslavia, a period of understanding the nation as a happy representation of successful multiculturalism had devolved into tribal depictions in the media; in Northern Ireland, the media's descriptions of the violent "tribes" of Protestants and Catholics were being replaced with hopeful rhetoric of peaceful multiculturalism. As Andrew Hammond explains of the Balkans, "ethnic discord was reconstituted as harmonious multiculturalism" between the First World War and the breakup of Yugoslavia.[261] However, this cooperative multiculturalism gave way to depictions in the mainstream media such as this simplistic explanation in the American paper *Newsday*: "Take the tribal upheavals in Yugoslavia (intertribal warfare with roots buried deep in antiquity). Serbs and Croatians are fighting the same battles they have fought before, venting the same hatreds they have always vented against each other."[262] Prior to the Good Friday Agreement, mainstream media portrayed Northern Ireland quite similarly, operating

---

[260] For more on this topic, including Arjun Appadurai's description of the primordialist bug, see the Introduction.

[261] Hammond, *British Literature and the Balkans*, 9.

[262] Lorraine Stone, "Tribal Warfare," *Newsday*, December 8, 1991, 43.

under the assumption that "the (northern) Irish are essentially tribal, driven to blood-sacrifice in order to appease the dark gods of their ancestors."[263] For instance, in a *Guardian* piece with the suspect title "The White Tribes of Europe," Rian Malan writes of Northern Ireland's Protestants and Catholics that

> "They're all white, they all speak English, they're all Christians of some kind or another, and yet there they are, locked in a cycle of violence that rivals Bosnia or the West Bank or even our own Boers-vs-Blacks shindig in terms of sheer bloody-mindedness and absolute intractability."[264]

Like many depictions of Yugoslavia, Malan's piece appeals to the repetitive, intractable cycle of violence among these "tribal" Europeans.

But as peace talks in Northern Ireland gained momentum over the course of the 1990s, Northern Ireland began to be discussed in terms of multicultural cooperation rather than tribalism—in much the same way as Yugoslavia had been understood prior to its breakup. In an extremely leftist reading, Slavoj Žižek identifies how the seemingly paradoxical images of "multicultural" and "tribal" function together in the case of Yugoslavia:

> First, there is the old-fashioned, unabashed rejection of the Balkan Other (despotic, barbarian, Orthodox, Muslim, corrupt, Oriental) in favor of true values (Western, civilised, democratic, Christian). But there is also a "reflexive," politically correct racism: the liberal, multiculturalist perception of the Balkans as a site of ethnic horrors and intolerance, of

---

[263] McBride, *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, 5.

[264] Rian Malan, "The White Tribes of Europe," the *Guardian*, April 3, 1993.

> primitive, tribal, irrational passions, as opposed to the reasonableness of post-nation-state conflict resolution by negotiation and compromise.[265]

Žižek's analysis of "politically correct racism" based on multiculturalism also describes the multicultural and tribalist accounts of the Northern Irish situation that are seemingly at odds with each other. For example, the shifting meanings of the 1798 Rebellion reflect the liberal and tribalist analyses that have been employed to make sense of the Troubles. The 1798 centenary remembered the uprising in motifs of blood sacrifice and revenge—motifs that also characterized some of the tribal rhetoric surrounding the Troubles. In contrast, the bicentenary in 1998—occurring as it did contemporaneously with the Good Friday Agreement—reimagined the 1798 Rebellion not in terms of tribalism but rather as a cooperative, multicultural uprising that revealed the potential for Protestants and Catholics to live and work productively together.[266] Yet, as Žižek argues, and as continuing tribalist accounts of the Northern Ireland conflict in the media suggest, multiculturalism and tribalism are often part of the same continuum.

Appadurai's work on what he terms the "new" ethnic conflict offers an affective, rather than multiculturalist, approach to critiquing the tribal warfare thesis. Arguing that intimacy is a crucial part of postwar ethnic conflict, he identifies the central problem of modern ethnic warfare as betrayal by people once thought to be friends, family, or benevolent neighbors. This sense of betrayal comes from disconnect between local, lived experience and the large-scale group identities perpetuated at the "macro-" level. Appadurai identifies this macro-construction of group identity as a condition of

---

[265] Slavoj Žižek "You May!," *London Review of Books* 21.6, March 18, 1999.

[266] See Roy Foster, "Remembering 1798," in *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 211–34.

modernity: group identity in the modern world is negotiated through large, unpredictable systems of diaspora and media. Thus, an explanation of ethnic violence that takes into account its modernity stems from this tension between local feeling and mass-mediated perspectives of group identity. When large-scale group identity becomes incompatible with what people thought they knew about their neighbors—for example, when the neighborhood barber is revealed to be an enemy Bosniak, or when the Belfast neighbor is revealed to be a member of the IRA—a sense of betrayal causes the violence to take a degraded and personal turn. Appadurai writes,

> More exactly, the most horrible fact about the rape, degradation, torture, and murder of the new ethnic wars is that they happen in many cases between actors who know, or thought they knew, one another. Our horror is sparked by the sheer intimacy that frequently frames the new ethnic violence. It is the horror at the neighbor turned killer/torturer/rapist.[267]

The "intimacy" Appadurai points to frequently appeared in political speeches, articles, news reports, and even some scholarship of the 1990s. In the same decade, a group of British social scientists founded the Forum Against Ethnic Violence in response to primordialist explanations for the Yugoslav conflicts, with the concern that "primordialism was both a dangerously misleading interpretation in itself and also a way of cynically distancing events for political purposes."[268] The Forum believed that the prevailing rhetoric—that the violence propagated by primitive people with tribal hatreds among themselves that the civilized world could not hope to understand, much less

---

[267] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 154.

[268] *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence,* ed. Tim Allen and Jean Seaton (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), 2.

prevent—was aimed to absolve Europe of responsibility in Yugoslavia. To a lesser extent, the same was true of Northern Ireland. These conflicts were widely perceived to be "intimate," understandable only to the groups involved.

Where does lyric poetry fit into anthropological discourses of tribal warfare? Lyric, in fact, is a natural way to address the limits of intimacy—both the intimacy that supposedly drives tribal warfare and the intimacy assumed between poet and addressee. Broadly speaking, both political and lyric intimacy rely on a contract of trust that the two parties can reach one another and be understood. Both contracts also involve an "ethics of relation," to borrow Helen Vendler's phrase. Vendler describes the ethical work a lyric poem can do through imagining a relationship with an invisible listener. Her examples of the invisible listeners include God, a person who exists in the future, or a person who is dead; to these we can also imagine a host of other invisible listeners—including perpetrators of violent conflicts, victims of massacres, and other poets writing in times of conflict whom the poet does not know personally. Vendler writes of the ethical potential in these imagined relationships:

> Insofar as every human relation-of-two entails an ethical dimension (of justice, estimation, reciprocity, sympathy), so, too, does every lyric representation of the linkage of two persons. This ethical dimension, though self-evident in novelists or dramatists or even lyric poets addressing other human beings, is even more provocative in the poetry of the invisible listener.

Vendler argues that this imagined intimate situation is "a form of ethically serious activity" in that it is based on the hope of "conceiving a better intimacy . . . than we have

hitherto known." By "better intimacy," Vendler seems to mean a more ethical relation between two people—an attempt that many Troubles-themed poems on Yugoslavia self-consciously explore.[269]

The genre of elegy tests the limits of intimacy and the power of lyric address. In addressing a foreign and ultimately unknowable conflict, Troubles–themed poems for Yugoslavia often foster and critique an illusion of intimacy by capitalizing on the historical link between the elegy's "I" and "you." Elegists can heighten this sense of intimacy through dedications, either the dedication of the full volume or of an individual poem, or a dedication that is implied. Many elegies for Yugoslavia address not simply one victim, nor even known specific persons, but instead, imply an invisible and not-quite-known listener. The lyric "I" often assumes the weight, if not the voice, of the poet's community behind it, and the stated or implied "you" often—though not always—applies to collective dead rather than an individual. Peter Sacks suggests that the difficulty of writing a modern elegy lies in precisely this problem: widespread warfare makes death seem impersonal, emptying out some of the power of the elegy.[270] As many critics, notably Jahan Ramazani, have remarked, the impersonality of mass death led to a postwar skepticism about the power of elegy. Ramazani responds to Sacks by proposing an idea of the modern "anti-elegy," writing, "modern elegist tends not to achieve but to resist consolation, not to override but to sustain anger, not to heal but to reopen the wounds of loss."[271] The modern elegy builds "a vocabulary for grief in our time—elegies

---

[269] Vendler, *Invisible Listeners*, 7–8.

[270] Peter M. Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spender to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 299.

[271] Jahan Ramazani, *The Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), xi.

that erupt with all the violence and irresolution, all the guilt and ambivalence of modern mourning."[272] It seems, when considering the range of Irish-themed poems about Yugoslavia, that this tension magnifies as elegies move across borders to address foreign communities of which the elegist has little to no direct knowledge.

The transnational bent of this group of poems is apparent in the earliest Irish-themed elegy for Yugoslavia, Joseph Brodsky's "Bosnia Tune," first published in 1992 at the outbreak of the Bosnian War that erupted when Orthodox Serbs established their own republic in response to a referendum that would have granted independence to a Muslim-majority, multi-ethnic state. "Bosnia Tune" operates on an ambitiously plural address to the international community, severing the traditional close lyric intimacy between speaker and listener. The poem opens by indicting the international community's early response to reports of ethnic targeting in Yugoslavia:

> As you sip your brand of scotch,
> crush a roach or scratch your crotch,
> as your hand adjusts your tie,
> people die.[273]

Brodsky holds two types of proximity in ironic suspension throughout the poem: the hyper-closeness of ethnic groups within Bosnia and the distance the international community attempted to uphold between European rationality and the "tribal war" in the Balkans. The play with intimacy within and between groups suggests that the conflict is

[272] Ibid., ix.

[273] Joseph Brodsky, "Bosnia Tune" in *Klaonica*, 46.

fueled by a lack of neighborly intimacy as much as by an excess of it, as the tribal warfare thesis holds.[274]

"Bosnia Tune" creates this effect by re-appropriating tribal rhetoric to describe not the "neighborly war" in the Balkans, but rather, the international community's response. The lines "Too far off to practise love / for thy neighbor / brother Slav" capitalize on the media depictions of the Yugoslavs as tribal peoples. Brodsky turns this rhetoric from the Yugoslavs onto the international community, using the language of neighborliness and brotherliness to criticize one human group's refusal to come to the aid of a fellow human group. In other words, these lines undo the distinction between the objective, rational Western world as observer of tribal conflicts and the primitive groups who fight their tribal wars. Here, it is not neighborly intimacy horrifically distorted but, rather, neighborly neglect by the international community that perpetuates suffering. The final stanza is especially damning:

> Time, whose sharp, blood-thirsty quill
> parts the killed from those who kill,
> will pronounce the latter tribe
> as your type.

This passage turns the accusation of "tribalism" back onto its perpetrators. The closing lines predict that time will reveal the impassive international community, rather than any of the kin groups of Yugoslavia, to be the tribe of "those who kill."

Although "Bosnia Tune" never directly mentions Ireland, two intertexts establish the connection. "Bosnia Tune" follows almost exactly the meter of Auden's "In Memory

[274] Brodsky often thought of poetry, in fact, as a stronghold against facile uses of language in the mainstream media. As Heaney said of him, "Joseph was right to contend that a person sensitized to language by poetry is less likely to sway in the mass-media breeze" (O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 380).

of W.B. Yeats," another transnational elegy written on the brink of war. This intertext forges a relationship between Irish communal violence, the elegiac form, and ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia. By calling on the signature elegy for an Irish poet to strengthen the elegiac impact of "Bosnia Tune," Brodsky writes connections between Ireland and the Balkans into the metrical fabric of the poem. The specifically Northern Irish dimension of the poem comes through Heaney's "Punishment." "Bosnia Tune" can be seen as a companion piece to Brodsky's 1986 "Belfast Tune," both of which contrast the nearly oppressive intimacy of a community in conflict with the larger world's inability (or refusal) to make sense of these conflicts.

Brodsky's "Belfast Tune" does not address a "you," but his collaborative and personal friendship with Heaney adds an intimate dimension to the poem. Few Troubles poems have been written by poets outside of Ireland, Northern Ireland, or occasionally England, and of these almost all of the poets have a direct connection with the conflict; the American Robert Lowell, for instance, wrote poetry on the Troubles but was married to a Northern Irish woman. Authority to write about such an isolated, internally heated conflict, it seems, comes from a personal connection. It is unsurprising that Brodsky's poem for Belfast channels Heaney, consciously or unconsciously drawing on their friendship as a sort of permission slip for the poem. Images from Heaney's "Punishment" reverberate in "Belfast Tune":

> Here's a girl from a dangerous town.
> She crops her dark hair short
> so that less of her has to frown

when someone gets hurt.[275]

With her cropped dark hair, Brodsky's girl recalls Heaney's "little adulteress," with "her shaved head / Like a stubble of black corn" as punishment for betrayal (*N* 31). The intimate undercurrents of tribal conflict intensify as "Belfast Tune" continues: "they shoot / here where they eat" and "I dream of her either loved or killed / because the town's too small" recall Yeats's assessment of Ireland as a place of "great hatred, little room."[276] The ending of "Punishment" seems to corroborate Yeats's sentiment, offering a proposition about so-called tribal warfare that hovers in Brodsky's poems. "Punishment" suggests that a person who has lived through sectarian violence can "understand the exact / and tribal, intimate revenge" of another people's suffering, a position that Heaney revises but that Brodsky seems to adopt in pairing the political situations in "Bosnia Tune" and "Belfast Tune." Brodsky's engagements with Auden's elegy for Yeats and Heaney's "Punishment" link "Bosnia Tune" and "Belfast Tune" (already brought together in their similar names) even further, underscoring the "tribal" connection Brodsky finds—and dismantles—between Northern Ireland and Bosnia.

The hallmark of these Irish-themed elegies, in fact, is their refusal to give consolation through solidarity—either consolation for the Troubles or for the Yugoslav Wars. Yet a sense of the necessity and urgency of the work underlies these poems: elegizing the dead from a destroyed nation can, by definition, only be a transnational act. Ramazani argues that when an elegy moves beyond the constraints of a nation, where the commemoration of death is often used to build a national community, we find new ways

---

[275] Joseph Brodsky, "Belfast Tune," in *Collected Poems in English* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 330.

[276] Yeats, "Remorse for Intemperate Speech," in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, 266.

to mourn the dead. In a destroyed national space like Yugoslavia, this is not theory but fact. Many of the former nation's dead were massacred by nationalist groups in the name of the state; thus, any form of national mourning is rendered either impossible—for the state no longer exists in its old form—or morally suspect. Moreover, these mass deaths are not the deaths of the traditional war dead who fell in defending their national community, and so are not commemorated with the valor and honor apparent in many traditional elegies. Perhaps in recognition of a lost national sensibility, many of the elegies for Yugoslavia emphasize Irish identity, almost as though one nation is taking over the mourning for another.

Yet Irish-themed elegies for Yugoslavia stop short of exporting the Yugoslav case into another national context, resisting consolation for both Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia. These elegies do not pretend that full empathy is possible. As Ramazani has it, a poet can wish "to elegize across their vastly discrepant experiences, while recognizing the impossibility of ever closing the gap and the intractable self-referentiality of poetic mourning."[277] These poems are all attentive—sometimes agonizingly so—to the impossibility of closing this gap. They resist speaking on behalf of the "you," folding the experience into a common frame of Northern Irish reference, or consoling the dead or the living. They even neglect a consolatory device central to the elegy: prosopopeia, the device of speaking as another person. In experimenting with levels of distance between speaker and listener, the poems never re-animate or speak for the dead, and they almost never speak *to* the dead. The intimate potential of the lyric "you," is frequently absent.[278]

---

[277] Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 86.

[278] See William Waters, *Poetry's Touch: On Lyric Address* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

The elegists' complex relationship to the "you" of these poems reflects the ethical challenges of writing such a piece. Though founded on the hope of establishing a meaningful intimate connection between poet and invisible listener, none of the poems approach this possibility naively; each is burdened by the possibility of overstepping the bounds of intimacy or creating a disingenuous, unbalanced relation with an invisible listener who cannot reply. All of the poems written for Yugoslavia from the perspective of the Troubles invoke, debate, and dramatize through building—or failing in—an intimate connection with a singular or plural invisible listener. Many of them are aware of the irony of a poet writing from an insular conflict attempting to comment on another's insular ethnic conflict, but also hope for the possibility of empathy across people who have experienced the similar isolation and feelings of betrayal wrought by ethnic conflict, even if they have not shared comparable events.

Like Brodsky's "Bosnia Tune," Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poem in Irish, "Dubh" ("Black") also confronts the tribal dimensions of both the Northern Irish and Yugoslav conflicts through an address to a plural "you." But unlike the consistent address to the international community in "Bosnia Tune," "Dubh" alternates between implied, indirectly evoked listeners and a separate group of directly addressed listeners. The implied listeners are the victims of the Srebrenica Massacre, the slaughter of approximately 7,500 Bosniaks by the Bosnian Serbian Army in July of 1995; the directly addressed "you," whom Ní Dhomhnaill calls out in the final stanza, are the perpetrators of the genocide. With the poetic speaker as mediator, the poem suggests a dialogue between the dead and the living, the victims and the killers.

The address is unusual in another way as well: where traditional elegies typically address the dead, "Dubh" addresses the perpetrators of genocide as "you," asserting, "There's a black mark against all your names." The elegiac address from "I" to "you" is accusatory, undermining a potential moment of intimacy between speaker and listener. The dedication note to the poem heightens this distance; it reads not "in memoriam" but instead, in parentheses that further dislocate it from the title, "*(On the fall of Srebrenica, July 11th 1995)*."[279] Thus, Ní Dhomhnaill presents the poem as occasional verse rather than dedicatory verse—a complex gesture in an elegy. The effect strips away intimate camaraderie with the victims themselves, instead depersonalizing the multiple deaths into a single event as the genre of elegy strains to commemorate the many rather than the one.

Even in its direct comparison of the Troubles and the Yugoslav Wars, the poem repudiates intimacy and empathy between "Irish tribes" and "Yugoslav tribes." Ní Dhomhnaill draws the comparison in one of the frankest statements about the similarities between the Troubles and Yugoslav Wars, capitalizing on the notion of tribal warfare:

> Ta na Caitlicigh dubh.
>
> Ta na Protastunaigh dubh.
>
> Ta na Seirbigh is na Croataigh dubh.
>
> Ta gach uile chine a shiulann ar dhromchla na cruinne
>
> an mhaidin dhubh seo samhraidh dubh.

Paul Muldoon's translation heightens the suggestion of tribalism in the stanza:

> The Catholics are black.
>
> The Protestants are black.
>
> The Serbs and the Croatians are black.

[279] Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, "Dubh," in *In the Heart of Europe,* 1.

Every tribe on the face of the earth this blackest of black mornings black. Muldoon had several options for translating the Irish word *chine*, and "race" would have been the more obvious decision. But he chose "tribe," heightening the "tribal warfare" dimension of the poem. The stanza denies an operative metaphor of Irish elegy for Bosnia: the intimacy within the tribal community itself played out against the intimacy between residents of two marginalized zones of Europe. Comparative gestures, and the notion of the tribe, break down. None of the players in these "tribal wars" is distinct: Catholics, Protestants, Serbs, and Croats are rendered identically, eclipsed into blackness. The effect also suggests a pun on "black and white" thinking. If we are too determined to make comparisons across historically specific conflicts, the stanza suggests, all suffering becomes indistinguishable.

The insistent, grating repetition of "black" also rejects the power of figurative language, a device that helps to distinguish poetry from other kinds of writing. The objects are not metaphorically black, or compared to black; the sentence construction claims that they are black, and the poet seeks no more subtle or creative way to represent them. This technique calls into question the very occasion of the poem, its reason for existing if not its right to exist: why create a poem on an event that figurative language cannot reach or make sense of? Ní Dhomhnaill thus builds an ethical dilemma into the form of the poem: does an Irish poet have a right to dedicate verse to a massacre in Bosnia, or will the poet always flatten the experience into literal depictions, a parody of the universalizing gesture of poetry in which events become not merely comparable but literally the same—all black, indistinguishable from one another? But, at the level of sound, the repetition of "black" carries a hopeful undercurrent. Ní Dhomhnaill's poem

puns on the word "dubh," as the pronunciation of the Irish word "dubh" corresponds to the English "dove," a symbol of peace used with poignancy in the peace murals of Derry. A grating iteration of the word "black" becomes a repeated call for peace—an expression possible only in an Irish-language elegy for Bosnia.

Chris Agee, who collected "Dubh" in both of the Bosnian anthologies he edited, also includes Irish-language puns in his elegies for Bosnia. Agee, who was born in the United States but lives in Ireland (and at times in Croatia), has written widely on Northern Irish and Yugoslav intersections. His introduction to *The New North: Contemporary Poetry from Northern Ireland* offers a pan-European model for understanding Northern Ireland that brings in the context of the Balkans.[280] He has also written many elegies for both Yugoslavia and for his daughter who died as a child, often interweaving the themes. His "Fleur-de-Lis," an elegy for Bosnia, contains a direct address to the city of Sarajevo that experiments with, but largely rejects, cultural identifications between Northern Ireland and Bosnia. In contrast, the elegy for Agee's daughter, "Sebald," resonates with so much grief that it cannot bear to address anyone. "Fleur-de-Lis" takes its title from the coat of arms of the medieval kingdom of Bosnia. It attempts to capture the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in Irish-language phrases, implicitly allying Northern Irish Catholic and Bosniak, that is, Bosnian Muslim, experience. But the comparison is hesitant and second-guessing runs throughout the poem. Agee opens with the admission that the Northern Irish have no frame of reference for the events in former Yugoslavia, as the Irish language, and Hiberno-English, lack the words necessary to discuss the experience:

---

[280] *The New North: Contemporary Poetry from Northern Ireland*, ed. Chris Agee (Wake Forest: Wake Forest University Press, 2012); *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia*; and *In the Heart of Europe: Poems for Bosnia*.

"Talk of Bosnia; a table loaded with bottles. / The Irish for *minaret, solar plexus*?"[281] Irish words and English localisms, inserted disjointedly, show continuing attempts to feel a connection to the violence in the Balkans, as in "Burnt lime-wash and *sugan*, a tidal wave of killings?" and "Hale fellows make a *teach-an- asail* of cabbage beds."[282] The cemetery imagery in the first section's concluding line suggests a common experience for those touched by the Troubles and the Srebrenica Massacre: "Old Sarajevo! Tomorrow, the Shell-pump's sunny vista. / Past *cre na cille* the living debate the dead."[283] The apostrophe to Old Sarajevo calls the city momentarily into the world of the Troubles—*cre na cille* is one term that the Irish language does have to describe the deaths at Srebrenica.

The second section of the poem suggests, contradictorily, that tribalism— a mentality that depends on the conviction that one's group is singular—is a universal phenomenon, always "the same old story, males on the rampage." Agee continues,

> it is Bethlehem
>
> It is Bosnia all over. The Nez Perce
>
> Run to a last creek in the badlands, the pantaloons
>
> Of country women in the woods of Srebrenica.

The Nez Perce of the Pacific Northwest were forcefully relocated to a reservation in the mid-nineteenth century. But the poem does not conclude that all "tribes" have always

---

[281] Chris Agee, "Fleur-de-Lis" in *In the Heart of Europe*, 2.

[282] "Teach-an-asail," or "donkey's house," is an Irish idiom for toilet.

[283] *Cre-na-cille* is Irish for "graveyard clay" and the title of Máirtín Ó Cadhain's celebrated 1947 novel in which the dead carry on a conversation with one another.

experienced the same kinds of horrors. The final stanza is composed almost entirely of one long question that casts doubt on the appropriateness of comparing different cultural situations:

> Why,
>
> When I think of us then, the covenant of linens,
>
> Intimate strangers, do I see in the same breath
>
> The sad towerblocks of Sarajevo,
>
> The siege-gardens, the trenches, the call
>
> Of the muezzin, leaving the pillow's warmth
>
> For the melancholy of a dawn's dark window
>
> Jambed with gold like an O'Malley plane?

In this final, arresting image, the poet imagines the muezzin leaving his bed to stand at the cold window of the minaret for the first call to prayer of the day. The intimacy of this moment, which imagines the perceptions of a single person, is at odds with the direct address to the entire city of "Old Sarajevo" and the alienating effect of the first stanza, in which the household's "talk of Bosnia" cannot even produce an Irish word for "minaret." "Fleur-de-Lis" ends in the suspended space between the speaker's ability to image the muezzin's morning ritual and his awareness that he will never fully comprehend the tragedies in Bosnia: Northern Irish Catholics and Muslim Bosniaks are, paradoxically, "intimate strangers."

Unlike"Fleur-de-Lis," which addresses an entire city and imagines the transnational dimensions of the Yugoslav conflict, Agee's later elegies for his daughter

Miriam bring the large-scale suffering in Yugoslavia to bear on the loss of one person. Nearly all of these elegies avoid a dyadic intimacy: they are not addressed to a "you," but rather, speak of Miriam in the third person to emphasize her unreclaimability. Agee's elegies defy expectation, with the Yugoslav poems evoking a clear "you" and the personal elegies refusing to address a listener. These experiments with the depths of intimacy contribute to the poignancy of the Miriam elegies: on the one hand, the third-person recollection of Miriam undercuts the close bond between "I" and "you," but on the other hand, the grief trapped within the elegy makes the poem feel almost oppressively intimate, beyond the ability of an external listener to comprehend.

Agee's "Sebald" is ostensibly an elegy for the German writer and academic W. G. Sebald, told through multiple tragedies spanning time and place. But the elegy gradually reveals itself to be for Miriam, who died in 2001, the same year as Sebald. The poem moves from general to specific, beginning with an abstract reflection on the concept of "vistas of simultaneity": seemingly unrelated events, occurring in different places, simultaneous in time or coherent in theme. These vistas of simultaneity move from Afghanistan and the Marianas Trench, Bosnia and Ireland, and finally, to Sebald and Miriam. The opening section resists an elegiac tone, even as it mentions the war in Afghanistan and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. The interplay between the casual, almost chatty tone and the elevated musing on the continuum of time and space keeps those elegized at an almost cosmic distance:

> On and off, I had been musing about vistas
>
> Of simultaneity: the continuum between, say,

In a natural sense, fresh graves in Afghanistan
And the abysmal plain on the Marianas Trench

Lit by the spectral traceries of bioluminescence; or,
In the social, sipping coffee as Srebrenica happened

In waves of twenty-plus.[284]

There is a strongly present lyric "I," but not even a hint of the answering "you" we expect from an elegy. This is obviously an atypical elegy, however, as its dedicatee is virtually absent from the poem. Sebald appears in the themes of the opening couplets, which seem to draw from his work on mass death and the decay of collective memory. By composing an elegy that calls at least obliquely on these themes in Sebald's writing, Agee brings in an underlying tension between the processes of mourning mass deaths, and that of mourning individual deaths.

As in "Fleur-de-Lis," Agee reflects on the mass destruction of the Srebrenica Massacre through the "vista of simultaneity" of Ireland. A sequence of couplets, mimicking the doubling of Ireland and Bosnia, brings Ireland's colonial history into conversation with Srebrenica. As he sits "over coffee"—recalling an earlier image of "sipping coffee as Srebrenica happened"—the speaker reads "of *seiceamoir* and *cuileann* in *Trees of Ireland*." The *Trees* volume details the eighteenth-century deforestation of Ireland as a consequence of British imperialism. As the speaker peruses the book, he suddenly thinks of Sebald and Miriam, neither of whom he calls by name. The ultimate,

[284] Chris Agee, "Sebald," in *Next to Nothing* (London: Salt Publishing, 2009), 4.

unspoken vistas of simultaneity—the deaths of Sebald and Miriam—finally materialize as the speaker hopes that "His noble German span and hers in miniature / Are travelling forever into the dark land of eternal light." Through the poem's intimate remembrance of Miriam, the larger events referenced in the beginning of the poem come into focus and are humanized. The poem's strongest attempt at consolation is to draw connections between seemingly unrelated events, to imagine "vistas of simultaneity" that can place tragedy in a larger cosmic order. Yet the unlikely, jarring comparisons, from the bioluminescence of the Marianas Trench to the deforestation of Ireland, cast doubt on the viability of cosmic organization.

More obscure than Agee's "vistas of simultaneity" is Medbh McGuckian's mysterious poem "The Mickey-Mouse Gas Mask." First published in Ken Smith's *Klaonica: Poems for Bosnia* anthology and later reprinted in McGuckian's volume *Drawing Ballerinas* (2001), "Mickey-Mouse" needs the context of its publication record to make sense of its full political involvement. In early August 1993, poet Ken Smith sent a letter to hundreds of poets requesting contributions. The letter stresses urgency, as the anthology aimed to address the needs of the present: "I am putting together as quickly as possible an anthology of Poems for Bosnia….My copy date is the end of this month."[285] He mentions that all proceeds will go to relief organizations, and suggests the need for solidarity by requesting that the letter recipients spread the word to other poets. Thus, there is a strange feeling of ephemerality about the volume: it was produced as quickly as possible and aimed to raise money. In fact, it is now a difficult volume to obtain and has not been mentioned in any criticism that I am aware of. Yet it is an important volume for

[285] Letter from Ken Smith to Medbh McGuckian, August 5, 1993, box 5, folder 11, from the Medbh McGuckian papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

understanding contemporary international responses to the Yugoslav Wars and more broadly between poetry and politics. It is also an ideal volume for considering transnational elegy on the macro level—not elegies written across borders by poets for those of different nationalities, as Ramazani explores in depth—but for how transnational elegy responds to mass death.

"The Mickey-Mouse Gas Mask" is surprisingly private and insular given its public themes. It holds the reader at bay through enigmatic language and obscure autobiographical references. But beyond its inward reflections, this poem is a statement not only on the genocide in Bosnia but also an elegy for Europe itself. The title refers to a model of gas mask designed for children in 1942 following the Pearl Harbor attack. The inventors hoped that a gas mask in the form of Mickey Mouse would quell children's fears and encourage them to keep their masks on in the event of a chemical warfare attack. The Second World War context, juxtaposed with the sporadic, disorganized war in the Balkans, creates tension between old and new forms of European warfare: the poem seems almost nostalgic for war that was a known quantity, allowing for the preemptive mass production of items like the Mickey-Mouse gas mask. In contrast, the disorganized spurts and flares that characterize much of postwar ethnic conflict prevent preparedness in the same way. The first stanza recalls this loss of the old European order through an oblique comparison of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and the Balkans:

> In the country of comparative peace,
> conscious of trees, I taste my far-from-clear
> citizenship: like continental mourning kept
> in an Italian hurtwood marriage-chest. (21)

"The country of comparative peace" refers most directly to McGuckian's Northern Ireland, her "far-from-clear / citizenship" divided at the line break to emphasize the political and personal disjunctures in Irish, Northern Irish, and British identities. The "continental mourning" evokes Irish isolation from continental Europe. Keeping this mourning "in an Italian hurtwood marriage-chest" expands the metaphor to include lamentation not only for identification with the continent but also for Old Europe, as the *cassone* (Italian marriage chest) was a luxurious furnishing associated with Italian nobility from the Late Middle Ages through the Renaissance. In depicting Northern Ireland as cut off from the continent and Old Europe, McGuckian suggests the longing to read the conflict in Northern Ireland as part of a European pattern. Isolationist notions of Ireland and Britain lead to Northern Ireland's being understood as an identity-confused region rife with ethnic conflict. The understanding of Ireland and Great Britain as "not-quite-Europe" also characterizes the Balkans, bringing Bosnia into McGuckian's notion of "continental mourning."

Yet while recognizing the similarities between ethnically and religiously torn Northern Ireland and Bosnia, those not-European regions of Europe, McGuckian refutes a one-to-one correspondence. The opening line sets the ethical terms of the poem by insisting on the "comparative peace" in Belfast when contrasted with Sarajevo. Yet "the country of comparative peace" could also refer to England, as the second stanza depicts the 25 June 1990 Provisional IRA bombing of the Carlton Club in London:

> I have never been out in so black a night,
> people stood in the roped-off streets
> watching the sky.

> The Clubhouse's pretty double-drawing room
> had gone completely flat, its back
> as if a giant knife had cut it through.
> Huge blocks of stone were thrown up in the air
> like cricket balls, furnishings were flung
> fifty yards on to the course. Every window
> missing, the church had only its spire left.

The description of the Carlton Club bombing sets up a hierarchy of "peace," as there are at least three referents for the "country of comparative peace." As McGuckian discloses in an interview, it may be Northern Ireland itself, experiencing "comparative" peace (compared to the 1980s) even as killings continued into the 90s. But it may also refer to the Northern Irish speaker's dislocation in a not entirely peaceful England after a Provisional IRA attack in London. Finally, due to the poem's first publication in an anthology for Bosnia, it evokes Northern Ireland's "peaceful" status when compared to that of Bosnia.

Mircea Cartarescu chose "The Mickey-Mouse Gas Mask" as one of ten poems to translate into Romanian in a collaborative pairing with McGuckian for John Fairleigh's 1996 volume *When the Tunnels Meet*. Cartarescu's decision choice of this poem is unusual; "The Mickey-Mouse Gas Mask" is not one of McGuckian's better-known poems, and in fact she did not collect it until her 2001 volume *Drawing Ballerinas*, and so Cartarescu could only have encountered it through personal correspondence or Ken Smith's *Klaonica* anthology. Cartarescu is Romanian, not Bosnian, but a Romanian

poet's decision to translate an obscure Northern Irish poem collected in a volume of elegies for genocide victims of a Balkan neighbor is telling.

Harry Clifton's "The Literal Version" also treats a collaborative translation project. Its invisible listener is the Bosnian poet Ranko Sladojevic, whose work Clifton has translated. The publication history of the poem reveals a double dedication: "The Literal Version" appears in the volume *In the Heart of Europe: Poems for Bosnia*, which is dedicated to the orphans of the Srebrenica Massacre. Clifton qualifies this macro-dedication by dedicating his verse to a fellow poet. Clifton declines to dedicate this piece solely to the unknown dead, a decision that resonates with his conclusion—that attempts to connect the experience of one country to another will fail. The poem reflects Clifton's own experiences of translating Sladojevic. The "literal vision" of the title refers to a crib sheet, but it also captures the core theme of the poem, the difficulty of translating another peoples' history not only into one's native language, but also into one's native culture.

Clifton begins with the challenge of attempting to imagine the poet behind the lines he is translating. Sladojevic is twice removed from Clifton, with the crib sheet eclipsing the original Bosnian version that Clifton cannot read: "Behind it, I can just make out / The original. And further back / Something resembling a man—."[286] The poem does not apostrophize Sladojevic, but only hazily describes him. The end of the poem emphasizes the poetic, and the human, desire to make universal connections across distinct situations, a tendency the poem itself has great empathy for but refuses to fall into itself: "A bridge is mentioned more than once. / There is a sense of solitude, / And a longing to connect." With the line "a bridge is mentioned," Clifton brings in a concrete

[286] Harry Clifton, "The Literal Version," in *In the Heart of Europe*, 4.

image from a Sladojevic poem he has translated while simultaneously suggesting a metaphorical bridge between his own work and the Bosnian poet's. Yet the passive "is mentioned" undercuts the possibility of such a connection. The ending sensitively appraises the project of *In the Heart of Europe* as a whole: the attempt to translate a foreign experience into terms that another culture can understand. Clifton contends that it is natural to long to connect to another's tragedy, to relieve their suffering while perhaps also making sense of one's own. But in the end, one culture has no access to "the literal version" of another's suffering.

Heaney's "Known World" from *Electric Light* (2001) arrives at the same conclusion, complicating the notion put forth in "Punishment" that a poet who has lived through the Troubles can "understand the exact / and tribal, intimate revenge" of a foreign society. "Known World" operates on the most insular, private address of any of the Irish-themed elegies for Yugoslavia: the invisible listener seems to be Heaney himself. In the poem, Heaney scrutinizes his own decision to write it in the first place, particularly his tendency to want to find his "known world" of Derry in the landscape of Yugoslavia. Structured as a frame narrative, the poem opens and closes with Heaney's recollection of his first booze-laden trip to Yugoslavia for the Struga Poetry Festival in 1978. Early on, "The Known World" introduces loaded cross-cultural comparisons in a cab ride with a "soothsaying Dane." While proudly contrasting Denmark's bogs with Ireland's, the Dane suggests, somewhat inconsistently, that Heaney ought to recognize his own familiar world in the Macedonian landscape: "'Is this not you, these mosaics and madonnas? / You are a south. Your bogs were summer bogs.'"[287] The Dane's words loom

[287] Seamus Heaney, "Known World," in *Electric Light* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 19.

like an augury over the poem, burdening Heaney as the vantage point of the poem switches from 1978 to 1998.

The central section unfolds into an elegy for Kosovar Albanian victims in the 1990s, standing apart from the narrative of festivities in Struga twenty years earlier. The Kosovo passage is dated May 1998; only one month after the Good Friday Agreement, as the Western world watched one "tribal war" come to an end, NATO was seeking tactics to respond to the Serbian military campaign that left 1,500 Kosovar Albanians dead and forcibly removed another 400,000 from their homes.

This central section of "Known World" also exists independently as a draft titled "Kosovo Summer," suggesting that Heaney at one time conceived of it as a separate entity from the larger poem. The title of this separate lyric plays on "Prague Spring"—an ironic gesture that further underscores the theme of superficial cross-cultural comparison, as the circumstances of the Prague Spring and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo share few commonalities aside from an imagined geography of belonging vaguely to "Eastern Europe." The other dominant geographical comparison is, of course, Northern Ireland. The section opens with scenes of Heaney's Derry childhood in the 1950s, a time with "iron stoves and kin groups still in place, / Congregations blackening the length / And breadth of summer roads."[288] The memory morphs into the visualization of another "kin group" blackening the landscape, as Albanian Kosovar refugees flood across the Yugoslav countryside "like a syrup of Styx." The image is so enmeshed with Heaney's recollection of Irish Catholics going to Mass that the refugee section begins by picking up and completing the poetic line on which the memory ends. The bucolic imagery

[288] Ibid., 21.

accompanying the refugees' flight also recalls the Derry farm of Heaney's known world. But the query of the sooth-saying Dane—"Is this not you?"—is answered in the introduction of pain and fatigue into the stanza:

> And now the refugees
> Come loaded on tractor mudguards and farm carts,
> On trailers, ruck-shifters, box-barrows, prams,
> On sticks, on crutches, on each other's shoulders . . .

The labored rhythm and heavy consonance, underscoring the refugees' devastation, negates the Dane's remark from 1978: no, this is not Ireland. In fact, Heaney goes on to call himself out for finding his familiar landscape in Kosovo.

The next passage contains one of the most poignant moments of self-doubt in Heaney's poetry; it questions not only the ability of poetry to console but also the elegy's right to exist. The stanza opens with Hygo Simberg's allegory of Finland, "the one where the wounded angel's being carried / By two farm youngsters across an open field." Heaney imagines the wounded angel of the story as a wounded refugee child fleeing Kosovo:

> A first communion angel with big white wings,
> White bandage round her brow, white flowers in hand,
> Holds herself in place on a makeshift stretcher
> Between manchild number one in round soft hat
> And what could be his father's wellingtons.

The allegory of the Finnish angel invites a universalization of sorrow. But Heaney challenges this assumption immediately, interrupting his story with a question that runs

unspoken through much of his poetry: "Allegory, I say, but who's to know / How to read sorrow rightly, or at all?" With this question, he casts doubt on his own ability to "read" an experience like the events in Kosovo. Despite Heaney's natural attempt to make sense of the tragedy through the vantage point of what he knows, he concludes that Northern Ireland and Kosovo have not experienced the same sorrow. "Known World," and particularly its central elegy "Kosovo Summer," suggest that the poet must always remain cognizant of the unknowable space between private observation and public tragedy. To that end, Heaney's elegy never addresses the victims mourned: it addresses only the "I" who attempts to elegize the dead, asking it with frank intimacy how to portray another's suffering, and further, asking if such a portrayal is possible or legitimate.

The attraction and resistance to cross-cultural comparison takes many forms in Irish-themed elegies for Yugoslavia, including personal and communal grief; elegy for the one versus elegy for the many; and intimacy within a nearby community as opposed to intimacy across borders. Dedicatory verse is an ideal way in which to address the conflict and its victims. Dedications imply formality and a respect that oversees the intimate encounter between the speaker and the dead. Irish-themed elegies for Yugoslavia evaluate the possibility of intimacy across borders, at times analogically exploring the "intimacy" of neighborly violence that has supposedly fueled the ethnic conflicts in Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia. But in the end, these poems do not promote genuine understanding between the Northern Irish and Yugoslav situations. Instead, they highlight unbridgeable differences, resisting the primordialist readings of the Troubles and Yugoslav Wars that suggest universal explanations for particular conflicts.

Through experiments with the boundaries of elegy and intimacy, the poems come to a consensus that Agee reaches in the poem "Depths"—not through elegizing mass death, but rather, through experiencing the private loss of his daughter:

> I learnt
>
> the limits of empathy:
>
> to be there, truly,
>
> was to *be* there.[289]

These elegies, then, do not record moments of authentic recognition or cross-communal mourning, even as they powerfully imagine intimate connections with foreign experiences. Rather, they evince the struggle to accept that people who have lived through outwardly similar conflicts are best understood not as doubles, but as "intimate strangers."

[289] Agee, "Depths," in *Next to Nothing*, 7.

Chapter Four

Lyric Times: Poetry of War Correspondence from England and Northern Ireland

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
-T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"[290]

"Be careful with another's tragedy," cautions Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko in "Pushkin in Belfast" as his poetic persona roams carelessly through 1970s Belfast with a camera.[291] His other poem on the Troubles, "Ulster Safari," draws an even more macabre portrait of a poet touring a foreign people's conflict, presenting the natives as captive animals on display. The trope of "conflict tourism" runs throughout postwar European poetry, often to test the potential of empathic engagement with conflicts that occur elsewhere on the continent. The impulse to document another's conflict without exploiting or appropriating it often leads to innovations in lyric poetry. Issues of how to respond ethically and empathically, what such an engagement would look like, and what poetry might uniquely offer in this attempt remain vexed subjects for both poets and critics. I approach these matters here in terms of genre, suggesting how poets' experimentations—particularly with form and time—situate lyric poetry as particularly well suited to treat foreign conflicts as coeval rather than distant and unknowable.

To that end, this chapter investigates a subgenre that rose to prominence in England and Northern Ireland in the 1990s-2000s: sequences of lyric poems that assume

---

[290] T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems of T.S. Eliot 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963), 175.

[291] Yevgeny Yevtushenko, "Pushkin in Belfast," in *A Rage For Order: Poetry of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, edited by Frank Orsmby (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), 221.

the voice of a war correspondent as they report atrocities in Eastern Europe home to England and Ireland. I will suggest how poetry of war correspondence, particularly from the 1990s-early 2000s, reflects shifts in English and Irish identifications with the "new Europe" as poets map the histories and cultures of Europe's excluded places. Sequences like Tony Harrison's "Three Poems for Bosnia," David Harsent's *Legion*, and Ciaran Carson's "The War Correspondent" test the generic boundaries between news and lyric poetry in an increasingly complex postwar Europe. Poems confront the meanings of contemporary Europe through the blending of time, both thematically and structurally. Poets of the post-Hughes and post-Heaney generations rarely revert to metaphors of the tribe to confront the "other" Europe, instead employing tactics that compress times and places to break down distinctions between primordial and modern, East and West. Blurring journalistic and lyric modes calls into relief lyric poetry's ability to record and report without positioning conflicts in Eastern Europe as irrational, unknowable, and thus beyond the responsibility of the developed world. The Yugoslav Wars, the Troubles, the Iraq Wars, and the War on Terror all feature in these poems, dispelling the myth of a postwar Europe that has abolished conflict. The popularity of the subgenre of war correspondence poetry at the turn of the millennium in the British Isles, then, is no historical accident: it arises as English and Northern Irish poets attempt to make sense of their positions in an idea of Europe that is multiethnic, complex, and far from stable.

Poetry and the News

Poetry and the news have long had a precarious relationship. As Ramazani persuasively argues in *Poetry and Its Others*, "Under modernity the news is one of the

major discursive others with and against which [poetry] defines itself."[292] But where Ramazani is broadly interested in border crossings between poetry and the news, I focus on what happens when poets concretize this generic blend by assuming the voice of a war correspondent. The poetry of war correspondence is most recognizably an American phenomenon, made famous by Carolyn Forché's controversial volume *The Country Between Us* (1981). Written during and immediately following her Guggenheim-sponsored work with Amnesty International during the civil war in El Salvador, the volume borders, to some readers, on trauma tourism. Forché herself seemed cognizant of this possibility. Her most infamous poem, "The Colonel," recalls an elaborate dinner during the Salvadorian Civil War. After the food is cleared, the colonel dumps a bag of severed human ears onto the dinner table, remarking, "Something for your poetry, no?"[293] The line between exploitation and testimony is called into question by poetry of war correspondence. Forché's blending of genres arises alongside her theoretical response to the problem: her "poetry of witness."[294] Drawing from Holocaust poetics, Forché examines poems that "bear the trace of extremity within them," poems that are often "the sole trace of an occurrence."[295] The self-conscious trauma studies approach in the poetry of war correspondence has less currency in the British and Irish contexts.

---

[292] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, 81.

[293] Carolyn Forché, "The Colonel," in *The Country Between Us* (New York: Harper Collins, 1982), 16.

[294] Forché develops and enacts her idea of "the poetry of witness" most famously in her edited volume *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness* (New York: Norton, 1993). Her new anthology, edited with Duncan Wu, reads the poetry of witness as part of a long tradition: *The Poetry of Witness: The English Tradition, 1500-2001* (New York: Norton, 2014).

[295] Carolyn Forché, "The Poetry of Witness," in *The Writer in Politcs*, ed. William H. Gass and Lorin Cuoco (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 139.

While it would be short-sighted to discuss the poetry of war correspondence without acknowledging Forché's example, I would suggest that poems in the English, Northern Irish, and Irish contexts ask questions at the edge of trauma theory, but their chief interest does not tend to lie in poststructuralist concerns of near-linguistic extinction and radical breaks in form that record processes of traumatic witness. Unlike in the American context, poets like Carol Ann Duffy, James Fenton, Gillian Clarke, Tony Harrison, David Harsent, and Ciaran Carson are particularly interested in what violent conflicts in Europe communicate about the state of the European imaginary and their place within it, and it turn grapple with writing poetry in forms and genres that can broach this question. In this chapter, I will touch on the most exemplary English and Irish practitioners of the genre: Fenton, Harrison, Harsent, and Carson.

Even before Forché's *The Country Between Us*, the relationship between news and poetry had an American inflection, in part through William Carlos Williams's immortal take on the issue:

It is difficult

to get the news from poems

yet men die miserably every day

for lack

of what is found there.[296]

By coincidence or influence, the situation in Europe has often seemed in line with Williams's implication that poetry nourishes while the news merely informs. Czeslaw Milosz, for instance, looked unfavorably on his political poem "Campo dei Fiori" on the

[296] William Carlos Williams, "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," in *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, ed. Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1986), 2:318.

grounds that it was "too journalistic."[297] Poetry, then, is often positioned as aesthetically, ethically, and formally superior to the news. Yet poetry often seems to envy the claim news has on the present, with its built-in usefulness in informing the public of events that shape private and public life. Unsurprisingly, many poems written in times of violence emulate the news to justify their own existence. Paralleling Milosz's fear that journalism makes for bad poetry, Dennis O'Driscoll complained at the height of the Troubles in 1987, "bad poems may be elevated into good ones on the grounds of their newsworthy subject-matter, their susceptibility to journalistic paraphrase."[298] Readers need to look no further than the mishmash of poems and breaking news stories in British and Irish journals from the 1960s-1990s to see the inextricability of these links. One of the most telling examples is Michael Longley's Homeric sonnet "Ceasefire," published in *The Irish Times* on September 3, 1994, several days after the 31 August IRA Ceasefire. The concluding couplet, written in alexandrines, enters an emotional register that news reports of the ceasefire could not approach: "I get down on my knees and do what must be done / And kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son."[299] Reflecting on the timely publication, Longley does not draw cause-and-effect relationships between poetry and history, but he does express appreciation for the outlet of the news in making his poetry more visible, giving it at least a small impact on public opinion:

> Normally the poems I write make their occasion in private; this poem had some public impact. That was a refreshment for me and it pleases me that

---

[297] S. Lillian Kreme, *Holocaust Literature: Lerner to Zychlinsky* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 847.

[298] Dennis O'Driscoll, "The News that stays Poetry," *Poetry Review* 77, no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 14.

[299] Michael Longley, "Ceasefire," *The Irish Times* (3 September 1994), 8.

> I have made a very tiny contribution to things being better in Ireland. I do believe that poetry makes things happen, I sent it to the *Irish Times* in the hope that they would print it, in the hope that if they did print it somebody might read it and it might change the mind of one ditherer on the IRA Council. And by coincidence the IRA did declare a ceasefire.[300]

Echoing the publication history of his poem, Longley has also remarked on the generic relationship between news and poetry. In an introduction to his reading of "Ceasefire" in 1995 at Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Longley tellingly misquotes Ezra Pound's declaration, "literature is news that STAYS news."[301] Instead, Longley tweaks the quote to apply specifically to poetry, claiming, "Ezra Pound said that poetry is news that remains news. And Homer is still news."[302]

The time lag between the declaration of the Ceasefire and the publication of "Ceasefire," as well as the liberty Longley takes with Pound's line, point to the importance of time in distinguishing poetry and the news. A wider preoccupation with time, rather than the particular types of ruptured time central in trauma studies, characterizes English and Northern Irish poems of war correspondence. Strikingly, in summarizing generic distinctions between poetry and the news, Ramazani returns repeatedly to the language of time:

> The news is quickly read; poems are slow, difficult, and repeatable. Poems luxuriate in their verbal surfaces and sounds, making their linguistic

---

[300] Sarah Broom, "Interview with Michael Longley by Sarah Broom," in *Metre: A Magazine of International Poetry* 4 (1998): 21.

[301] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1934, 1960), 29.

[302] "Michael Longley—Ceasefire," poetry reading at Royal Hospital Kilmainham, 1995. YouTube video, 2:41. Posted by sacroom91, November 5, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qy XSLGADB0.

> texture inescapably complicit in their co-creation of reality; the news media aim the bulk of their representational energy beyond their linguistic surfaces to public events. Newswriting is focused on the now; poems are long memoried, built out of vast transnational storehouses of figure, rhythm, and sound.[303]

News is "quick"; poetry is "slow." It is also "repeatable," another word marked with temporality. The verb "luxuriate" also suggests the slowing down of time, and the "now" of newswriting is contrasted with the almost eternal "storehouse" of poetic tradition. Even the generic distinctions Ramazani enumerates that seem divorced from questions of time are implicated. For him, poems often "announce themselves as poems," frequently doing so by the speeding up or slowing down of language, the asymmetric use of time in metaphor, even the linguistic textures that "luxuriate" in their own processes—all examples of dilated time through poetic conventions. Ramazani treats what he refers to as modernity and the temporality of poetry as distinct, if often parallel, threads. In contrast, in poems of war correspondence, I treat the issue of time in modernity and poetry's complex play with time as part of the same spectrum. In doing so, I suggest that this subgenre of poetry offers an ethical intervention, treating conflicts that journalism deems primordial as *coeval*, rather than either knowable or directly culturally equivalent, with their own time and place.

We might, then, understand the relationship of the news to modernity most broadly as a function of journalism's relationship to time. Because news celebrates the immediate and the fleeting, Benedict Anderson sees it as the dominant mode of modernity. The ephemerality of newspapers, he argues, creates a "mass ceremony"

[303] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, 103.

around reading in which individuals in private imagine themselves as part of a community.[304] Examining the Irish context specifically, Christopher Morash notes that journalism played a key role in propelling Ireland into modernity in the nineteenth century, as the Famine era led to "a tear in the fabric as the Irish experience of space and time underwent a prolonged and radical transformation born of a culture that was, in some respects, premodern colliding with modernity."[305] This relationship between time and space—modernity as contingent upon transcending an off-centered geography—recalls Fabian's critique of the secularization of sacred time, a process he traces to the Renaissance that reached its peak with the development of modern anthropology in the Enlightenment. In this period, argues Fabian, Western anthropologists "*spatialized* Time," a process apparent in the travel literature of the era. Where once travelogues celebrated pilgrimages of the individual, now they became processes of going back into time by going further East, with remote places on the globe corresponding to remote periods of human development. In this way, the anthropologist can create an object of study, distancing the other from his own time to construct a stagnant, unchanging object.[306] This spatialization of time is still apparent in Western journalism that covers conflicts abroad, from the Troubles to the Yugoslav Wars, as journalists create objects of study from the vantage point of the now, the immediate, the modern. The news is the genre of modernity because it is constituted on the now, the new; foreign correspondents

---

[304] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 33-36.

[305] Christopher Morash, "Ghosts and Wires: The Telegraph and Irish Space," in *Ireland and the New Journalism*, ed. Karen Steele and Michael de Nie (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 21-22.

[306] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 15.

often emphasize their own claim to modernity through a denial of coevalness to the journalistic object.

It is tempting but too facile to describe the newspaper as the representative genre of modernity while assigning poetry to the long memoried time of tradition. If, as John Hartley remarks, "journalism is *the* textual system of modernity," does this make poetry the textual system of the primordial?[307] Such a distinction is hardly tenable, as poetry often speaks to and from the moment. Yet poetry does seem to have unique recourse to manipulation of time. Because of its flexibility in depicting interplays of time at both the thematic and formal level, poetry, more than journalism, collapses the tired division between tradition and modernity. If modernity is defined by its exclusions, it is not an adequate lens for dealing with the crises of the moment. Poetry, with its ability to mix times, has a greater potential to suggest cross-temporal relationships without relegating conflict to a stagnant, primitive time. Journalism, like poetry, can obviously make comparisons between epoch, blend diegetic and narrative time, perform repetition, and speed up or slow down the reading through figurative language and sonic devices. But because of the reading expectations brought to these genres, a poem that interweaves these temporalities would be read on its own terms, while newswriting that did too much of these would appear avant-garde at best, pretentious and easily dismissed at worst. Ramazani notes the more flexible relationship poetry has with time: "[P]oems often bespeak a newslike consciousness of the historical now, even when…they embed themselves within a slow-germinating aesthetic with wider time horizons than those of

[307] John Hartley, *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture* (London: Arnold, 1996), 3.

the news."[308] Poetry seems to have more dexterity with time than other literary or cultural forms, largely because of what readers expect and accept from the genre.

James Fenton: Reluctant Correspondent

While many of them are concerned with relationships between genres, few poets of war correspondence have been journalists themselves. One exception is James Fenton, who worked for *The New Statesman* in what was then referred to as Indochina in the early 1970s. He went on to become the foreign correspondent for the *Guardian* in Germany for a year, a venture he recollects as a failure.[309] Still, his time as a reporter led to his celebrated volume of poems presented as objective reportage, *Memory of War and Children in Exile* (1983), based on his observations as a journalist abroad. His experiences as a foreign correspondent lead him astray from Carolyn Forché's. Forché wrote her experiences into poetry almost as they happened, but Fenton found he could only write his experiences as a war correspondent after the fact—as Marc Poreé puts it, like Wordsworth, as "emotion recollected in tranquility."[310] Dana Gioia reflects on Fenton's inability to write poetry about Germany and Indochina at the time, recalling that Fenton once commented that it would have been different if it had been "one's own war…but to find a war just to write about it struck him as not only artificial but

[308] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, 103.

[309] For his account of his uninspired time in Germany, see James Fenton, *You Were Marvellous: Theatre Reviews from the "Sunday Times"* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983).

[310] Marc Poreé, "Poetry as 'Open Diagnosis'," in *Intimate Exposure: Essays on the Public-Private Divide in British Poetry since 1950*, ed. Adrian Grafe (Jefferson, NC: McFarland; 2010), 22.

disgusting."[311] When he eventually comes to write poems of war correspondence, they are not told from the perspective of Forché's investigative, plainly present "I." Instead, Fenton seems to take the idea of pseudo-objective reportage to the extreme, emptying most poems of any identifiable subject. As Douglass Kerr remarks, Fenton "tends to be found, if at all, somewhere near the edge of his composition, a detached or at least reserved onlooker: his only action is observation."[312]

While Fenton's Indochina poems are obviously not set in Europe, they set up many of his concerns about the relationship between poetry and journalism that he brings forth in his celebrated sequence "German Requiem." His poem "Dead Soldiers," recounting a decadent lunch on the battlefield with the military governor of Cambodia in 1973, recalls Forché's "The Colonel," though Fenton's poem suggests the unfathomability of a foreign conflict rather than a duty to record the trace of a trauma he witnessed. One of the most poignant and strange poems of the Indochina sequence, "Lines for Translation into Any Language," begins with a first-person speaker who promptly disappears into the anonymous landscape of an unnamed war zone. Told in thirteen lines that imply easy, orderly consumability, the poem's emotional effect comes from the blurring of news discourse and lyric, largely through thematic and formal attention to time. In line 1, the speaker, assuming the identity of a war correspondent, announces his act of witnessing before reporting a series of coolly documented facts. The poem then unfolds in numbered units:

---

[311] Dana Gioia, "The Rise of James Fenton," *The Dark Horse* 8 (Autumn 1999), http://www.danagioia.net/essays/ efenton.htm.

[312] Douglas Kerr, *Eastern Figures: Orient and Empire in British Writing* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 184.

1. I saw that the shanty town had grown over the graves and that the crowd lived among the memorials.

2. It was never very cold—a parachute slung between an angel and an urn afforded shelter for newcomers.

3. Wooden beds were essential.

4. These people kept their supplies of gasoline in litre bottles, which their children sold at the cemetery gates.

5. That night the city was attacked with rockets.

6. The firebrigade bided its time.

7. The people dug for money beneath their beds, to pay the firemen.

8. The shanty town was destroyed, the cemetery restored.

9. Seeing a plane shot down, not far from the airport, many of the foreign community took fright.

10. The next day, they joined the queues at the gymnasium, asking to leave.

11. When the victorious army arrived, they were welcomed by the firebrigade.

12. This was the only spontaneous demonstration in their favour.

13. Other spontaneous demonstrations in their favour were organised by the victors. [313]

This poem hesitates to be one, even as it flirts with the fourteen-line sonnet form. It could not easily be formulated as an example of Forché's poetry of witness, which emphasizes the traces of trauma on both speaker and poem, implying almost an eager act of witnessing as though the job of the poem is *to* witness. Instead, this is a poem of reluctant reportage, as though a poem about a foreign war should resist its own writing.

"Lines for Translation into Any Language" is only recognizable as a poem because, as Ramazani would have it, it asserts itself as a poem through near "self-annihilation" into another genre.[314] In this case, the nearest neighboring genres are a translation exercise and a news report. I am more concerned, obviously, with the latter. Journalistic language vies for primacy through a distant, factual tone; the predominance of literal statements over figurative devices; casual punctuation (the em dash in line 2);

[313] James Fenton, "Lines for Translation into Any Language," in *Children in Exile: Poems 1968-1984* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1994), 29.

[314] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, 13.

syntax divided into clean, digestible clauses (line 4's relative clause and line 11's subordinate clause); and the frequent use of the "to be" verb and passive voice, which contribute to a detached feel (lines 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13). The poem resists becoming "mere" journalism largely through its manipulation of time.

The poem's form—a numbered list—is itself an issue of time. It follows a cataloguing technique evident not only here but in all of the war correspondence poems I will consider. Umberto Eco's *The Infinity of Lists* explores how certain types of lists in literature, from ancient epics to postmodern novels, evoke infinity because they suggest a collection of items or ideas that are not, and perhaps cannot be, fully enumerated.[315] Fenton's list of thirteen lines for translation is what Eco would call a list of conjunctive enumeration, as the items cohere "insofar as they are seen by the same person or considered in the same context."[316] The lines, however, tell only part of a story that could stretch infinitely back and forward, a sense underscored by the expansive and loose time of memory. The list form is in ironic juxtaposition to the crowd living "among the memorials," a notion that thematically evokes long memoried time in a narrative that purports to follow a linear sequence of events unfolding in time. The list, though, destabilizes a sense of not only where but also when we are, as the poem seems to offer a report that is not quite legible, one that has no clear beginning or end. One effect of this technique is to destabilize reader, speaker, and characters, dropping all human players present or implied into a setting with no clear place or time. Objectifying journalistic phrases like "These people kept…" would seem to relegate the "natives" to a place

[315] Umberto Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*, Translated by Alastair McEwen (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), 17.

[316] Ibid., 321-323.

beyond the foreign correspondent (as well as the "foreign community" who "took fright" at the war). But the unbounded, unknowable parameters of the setting break down the temporal divide between subject and object.

Fenton brings many of these techniques into his elegy for a conflict closer to home in postwar Europe, "A German Requiem." The lyric sequence has no declared speaker, nor does it need one, as what must be reported and understood is untellable. The impossibility of recording an unnamable "it" quietly argues for the necessity of the poet's obliqueness over the reporter's directness. Like "Lines for Translation," "A German Requiem" makes use of what Eco calls congeries, "a sequence of words or phrases that all mean the same thing, where the same thought is reproduced under different aspects."[317] The anaphora revolves around a central missing idea, as though hoping to isolate it by surrounding it from all possible angles:

> It is not what they built. It is what they knocked down.
>
> It is not the houses. It is the spaces in between the houses.
>
> It is not the streets that exist. It is the streets that no longer exist.
>
> It is not your memories which haunt you.
>
> It is not what you have written down.
>
> It is what you have forgotten, what you must forget.
>
> What you must go on forgetting all your life.[318]

The paratactic lines evoke the quick turnaround time of journalistic prose, but the insistent anaphora, juxtaposed with the attention to memory and forgetting, is the material

[317] Ibid., 134.

[318] Fenton, "A German Requiem," in *Children in Exile*, 11.

of poetry. Fenton manipulates the time it takes to read the line through repetition, performing the work of memory in the mantra-like lines. If the survivors of World War II in Berlin must forget in order to go on with their lives in a divided city, the memorability of the lines, ingrained through determined repetition and symmetry, rejects the possibility of doing so.

Fenton's grappling with the fallout of World War II with the specific gaze of a foreign correspondent contrasts with Ted Hughes's mythologizing of the same war. But World War II is largely absent from other English and Irish poems of war correspondence. In fact, no postwar conflict has so permeated poetry of war correspondence in the English context as the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. While Tony Harrison was not a foreign correspondent in the direct mode of Fenton, he did become the official war poet of *The Guardian* when Features Editor Alan Rusbridger sent him into besieged Sarajevo to write poetry about what he saw. This role uncomfortably recalls Fenton's criticism of the urge "to find a war just to write about it." Several years after Harrison's Bosnia poems, Ted Hughes wrote a powerful poem for child casualties of Bosnia in 1998 and also contributed translations from Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian under the editorship of Chris Agee. And even in the new millennium, the former Yugoslavia continues to haunt the English poetic imagination, with David Harsent's volume *Legion* published in 2005.

My third chapter explores why the Yugoslav Wars had such an impact in the Irish and especially Northern Irish contexts; here, I am concerned with understanding why English poets chose to write about Bosnia in the voices of war correspondents, a technique never employed by their Irish, Russian, Polish, or American poetic

counterparts. Barbara Korte has done suggestive work on the importance of the Yugoslav Wars for British (if not specifically English) identity. Investigating films and documentaries, Korte suggests that even though the Yugoslav conflict demanded British intervention as part of an international effort, the British presence in Bosnia nonetheless challenged and spoke to core concerns of national identity, particularly fears of violence in an increasingly multi-ethnic Britain—factors often used to explain the origin of the Yugoslav Wars. Korte concludes, "Narrating Bosnia means narrating a war which offered the British no potential for the positive identification of war and the nation, but which had a considerable potential for inquiring into what it means to be British."[319] Narrating Bosnia also seems to have a lot to do with being *English*, as the poetic sequences I examine show. The poems' deep concern with time is intermixed with awareness, sometimes bordering on nostalgia, for the most commemorated era in which English poets became embroiled in conflicts on the European continent: the First World War. The poems' play with time breaks down the distinctions between primordial and modern, West and East, insisting on poetry as a domain for understanding conflicts in terms other than the media's.

Tony Harrison: Poet Laureate of the *Guardian*

If the poetry of witness fundamentally challenges the divide between the personal and political, public and private, as Forché suggests, then Tony Harrison is the quintessential poet to look to for poetry of witness. The negotiation between public and private is one of the core questions, if not *the* core question, in Harrison criticism.

---

[319] Barbara Korte, "War and Britishness after 1945: Narrating Bosnia," *Erfurt Electronic Studies in English* 6 (2005), http://webdoc.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic25/korte/6_2005.html.

Insisting on the inseparability of these poles, he has remarked, "It seems to me that what you call the psychological issues are as historical as the historical issues are psychological. I see them as part of the same scale, the same historical spectrum."[320] Harrison is known for his outspoken treatment of English working class experiences as challenging to the official culture of mainstream Englishness and monarchy. This publicly oriented concern has extended beyond England, most famously to Iraq.

The public orientation of many of his poems is perhaps most apparent in his role that Alan Rusbridger termed "Poet Laureate" of the *Guardian*. As Features Editor of the *Guardian*, Rusbridger recalls "struggling to think of novel ways of covering this long-drawn-out, distant, anaestheticized war….It was, frankly, difficult to think of new things to say about this war, or ways of saying them."[321] The idea of the "new" and the "novel" seems to apply more to newswriting than poetry, as Ramazani and other have remarked, yet here it seems that reporting itself needs revitalization at the fundamental level of genre, an intervention to make the war seem less "anaesthetized." Rusbridger enlisted Harrison for the job, recalling that he had admired *Trackers* for "its ability to find vigorous and accessible contemporary resonances in classical legend." Harrison's first commissioned works, "Initial Illumination" and *A Cold Coming*, both came out of the Gulf War. Rusbridger had them printed on the main editorial page of the *Guardian*, rather than in the Arts and Features sections, so they would not be seen "as a piece of contemporary Eng. Lit." but rather as "a commentary upon current events." This remark casually denigrates "Eng. Lit.," implying its inability to comment seriously on current

---

[320] John Haffenden, "Tony Harrison: An Interview," *Poetry Review* 73.4 (January 1984), 20.

[321] Alan Rusbridger, "Tony Harrison and the *Guardian*," in *Tony Harrison: Loiner*, ed. Sandie Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 134.

events. Harrison's *Guardian* poems would seem, then, to be a new mode of writing, not "Eng. Lit." but also not quite "journalism." For Rusbridger, the difference between Harrison's poetry and journalism seems to lie in poetic devices that he does not name: "You know the moment a new Tony Harrison poem arrives that it will have a depth and texture quite apart from the work of any journalist or commentator."[322]

Following the success of *A Cold Coming*, the *Guardian* "asked Tony Harrison to accept a regular retainer in return for a few poems a year on contemporary themes; in effect, to be the *Guardian*'s Poet Laureate."[323] In 1995, Harrison was sent to cover the war in Bosnia, where he witnessed the sieges of both Donji Vakuf and Sarajevo. He faxed "Three Poems from Bosnia" to the *Guardian* directly from the war zone so that they could appear on the front page.[324] The Bosnia poems were later collected in the volume *Laureate's Block and Other Poems*, suggesting that the title may refer to two types of Laureateships: that of Britain and that of the *Guardian*. *Laureate's Block* is infamous for poems that preemptively (and disdainfully) refused the Laureateship following the death of Ted Hughes; as he puts it in the title poem, written for Queen Elizabeth, "It's not for the Laureate poems we'll miss Ted Hughes." In the same poem, he expresses irritation at the *Guardian* for contributing to rumors that he might be pegged for the Laureateship:

I'm appalled to see newspapers use my name

as 'widely tipped' for a job I'd never seek.

---

[322] Ibid., 135.

[323] Ibid., 135.

[324] Harrison wrote about Bosnia in multiple genres; in addition to poetry, one of his dramatic works parallels Miletos in 494 BCE and Bosnia in the 1990s. Harrison also wrote the appendix "Genocide in Our Lifetime" for Ed Vuilliamy's *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (London: St. Martin's, 1994).

Swans come in Domestic, Mute, and Tame

and no swan-upper's going to nick my beak

I'm particularly vexed that it occurred

in those same Guardian *pages where I'd written*

on the abdication of King Charles III

in the hope of a republic in Great Britain.

I wrote the above last night but what comes next

I wrote the day that Ted Hughes, sadly, died

and to exit from the lists I've faxed the text

for inclusion in the Guardian *(op.ed side?)*[325]

The *Guardian* is a shadow presence throughout *Laureate's Block*, a forum for public poetry but also a potential threat to the poet's autonomy. Interestingly, "Three Poems for Bosnia"—his work as the *Guardian's* Laureate—directly follows the five anti-monarchy poems that open the volume. The two types of Laureate roles seem pitted against one another. What was the difference for Harrison? What made him disavow the Laureateship of Great Britain but accept the Laureateship of the *Guardian*?

I would venture that the Bosnia poems (and Harrison's role of *Guardian* Laureate more broadly) function as alternatives to a monarch-sanctioned version of Englishness by positioning issues of English governance and social justice in an international context. Harrison imports his concerns with the English working class into Bosnia, using the

[325] Tony Harrison, "Poet Laureate," in *Laureate's Block and Other Poems* (London: Penguin, 2000), 16, 12. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

poems to comment not only on the Yugoslav Wars but also on British domestic politics. Harrison gives each of the Yugoslav groups involved in the war equal airtime, with each of the three poems taking on the point of view of one of the factions: Serbian ("The Cycles of Donji Vakut") Bosnian ("The Bright Lights of Sarajevo"), and Croat ("Conversation with a Croat"). This structural decision is unavailable to a journalist, and, while some international journalists were tireless in trying to capture multiple points of view, Harrison is highly unusual in attempting to inhabit and communicate three competing perspectives in the space of a single document. Sequentially, the three poems move from glimmers of Englishness (the farmer waiting to cut his hay in the unending cold rain in "Donji Vakut"; references to Milton, Thomas Hardy, and World War I poetry in both "Donji Vakut" and "Sarajevo") to ideas of Europe. This gesture culminates in the list of European works that conclude "Conversation with a Croat": Sartes, Céline, Marx. Harrison's poems from Bosnia situate his public views on English working class identity in a wider European context.

The first two are written in heroic couplets, a form that could easily be read as ironic in an anti-heroic poem, perhaps, but must be taken in the context of Harrison's other work. What could easily fall into doggerel in the hands of another poet become searing, memorable lines in Harrison; the off-rhymes and iambic pentameter make much of the poem stick in the memory:

> We take *Emerald* to Bugojno, then the *Opal* route
> to Donji Vakuf where Kalashnikovs still shoot
> at retreating Serbs or at the sky
> to drum up the leaden beat of victory. (20)

Where the news gets tossed away every day, this poem, which both mimics and resists "the leaden beat of victory" in its form, demands that we remember it. The form ensures that entire sections become stuck in the head.

"The Cycles of Donji Vakut" intermingles newspaper and poetic language to heighten our awareness that we are reading a poem. For instance, in a seemingly straightforward report in that marks events in clock time, Harrison employs a typographical pun that delays awareness of the rhyme in order to call attention to it through the element of surprise when the sonic effects catch up with the eye: "Donji Vakuf fell last night at 11. / Victory's signalled by firing rounds to Heaven." The oblique echoes of World War I poets—here, Rupert Brooke and perhaps Thomas Hardy—signal Harrison as a self-appointed English war poet in continental Europe.

The poem is able to make many parallels that a news piece could not by virtue of what is expected and accepted in various genres. The poem's evocation of the grim reaper in the figure of "a solitary reaper" with a "scythe on his shoulder" (21) would seem tasteless in a war report. The cycle metaphor, which captures the painfully farcical state of victory in war, also seems to be unique territory for a poem. "The *Cycles* of Donji Vakuf" evoke the supposedly inevitable cycles of violence and ethnic strife in the region, but the word also has a more literal referent: the abandoned children's bicycles that the Bosniak victors attempt to ride after "cleansing" the city of the Serbian children who left their belongings behind:

They feel so tall

as victors, all conveyances seem small,

but one, whose knees keep bumping on his chin,
rides a kid's cycle, with a mandolin,
also childish size, strapped to the saddle,
jogging against him as he tries to pedal… (20)

The full force of this metaphor is delayed until the end of the poem, when the vantage point shifts to the displaced Serbian boy whose bike the soldier rides:

among the thousands feeling north, another,
with all his gladness gutted, with his mother,
knowing the nightmare they are cycling in,
will miss the music of his mandolin. (22)

If not handled with the utmost precision, this withholding of knowledge in a journalism piece would risk seeming overly artful and overwrought. The manipulation of diegetic time for emotional effect is a function of "literature" more frequently than breaking news. Most poetry readers, meanwhile, accept manipulation of time, both in the order of telling and in the slow unfolding of a metaphor, as an indigenous feature of the genre.

Turning the focus to the Bosniaks, "The Bright Lights of Sarajevo" again goes where journalism cannot reach, through the interweaving of the private and public, immediate time and eternal time. The poem follows a young couple who hides out in the mortar crater made by artillery fire several years before; they are "black shapes impossible to mark / as Muslim, Serb or Croat in such dark." Even as their ethnicity is indeterminate, their private lives are plain; exposed on the street, they share an intimate moment that the poet-reporter captures for the pages of the *Guardian*:

Then the tender radar of the tone of voice

shows by its signals she approves his choice.

Then match or lighter to a cigarette

to check in her eyes if he's made progress yet. (23-24)

This moment recalls Harrison's lovely line in "Durham" on the public and private negotiation in the English context: "Bad weather and the public mess / drive us to private tenderness."[326] The "public mess" of Bosnia and England are hardly equivalent, but through his recording of a specific moment of personal connection—difficult to imagine in a news piece—Harrison plants a potential resonance between the two situations without directly comparing them.

In another highly descriptive moment that would be difficult to imagine in a breaking news report, the poem indulges in a lyrical moment while casting itself as part of a tradition of English war poetry. Lyrical qualities and war imagery intermingle, unembarrassed, as the couple looks up into the "Sarajevo star-filled evening sky, / ideally bright and clear for bomber's eye":

in those two rain-full shell-holes the boy sees

fragments of the splintered Pleiades,

sprinkled on those death-deep, death-dark wells

splashed on the pavement by Serb mortar shells. (24)

Some critics hear Milton in the Pleiades reference; I hear Thomas Hardy, specifically the poem "Drummer Hodge," in memoriam of an English soldier killed in the Boer War. Dislocated from his rural English home, Hodge's "homely Northern breast and brain / Grow to some Southern tree, / And strange-eyed constellations reign / His stars eternally." The "boy" in Harrison's poem at once evokes the Bosnian boy and the English

[326] Tony Harrison, "Durham," in *Tony Harrison: Collected Poems* (New York: Viking, 2007), 70.

poet's entry into a foreign and dangerous place. The Pleiades are a particularly interesting reference, as the name comes from the Greek *pleiades* ("flock of doves"), fragmented and splintered emblems of peace reflected in the standing water of a mortar shell crater. This eternal cosmic time collides with the immediacy of the present moment, on which the poem ultimately insists and concludes:

> The dark boy shape leads dark girl shape away
> to share one coffee in a candlelit café
> until the curfew, and he holds her hand
> behind AID flour sacks refilled with sand. (24-25)

While this scene is hardly a newsworthy event, it is told in the immediate, live time of the news. Yet this image of filling and refilling, which reverberates throughout the Bosnia poems, also suggests continuity and cycles even in moments that capture time as it unfolds.

"Essentials (Conversation with a Croat)" presents itself as an uninterrupted quotation from a Croat man unfolding in narrative time, adopting the journalistic trope of the exclusive interview. It eschews the heroic couplets of the first two poems as part of its claim to veracity, though Harrison still stylizes it into two quatrains. Yet if the form acts as journalism, the content is literary:

> "I looked at my Shakespeares and said NO!
> I looked at my Sartres, which I often read
> by candelight, and couldn't let them go
> even at this time of direst need.

Because he was a Fascist like our *Chetnik* foes
I lingered for a while at my Celines…
but he's such a serious stylist, so I chose
Das Kapital to cook my AID canned beans!"

Harrison claims poetry as a viable venue for protest, situating his English class-consciousness in the more dramatic, visible experience of a Croat living through the Siege of Sarajevo. The poem undercuts the efficacy of more conventional means of protest, as the man chooses to cook his beans with Marx. The gesture suggests the sustaining power of literature during times of fear and violence, putting this value even above basic needs while simultaneously suggesting the inability of Marxist theory to prevent violence.

By faxing these poems to the *Guardian* at their moment of composition, Harrison puts Bosnia and England in the same epoch while simultaneously appealing to the long memoried time of poetry. Poetry's dexterity with time gives it access to responsible reverberations of situations across eras and geographies that the news risks oversimplifying and relegating to the realm of the unknowable. The poem insists that two places excluded from the center of either Britain or Europe—Northern England and war-torn Yugoslavia—are essential parts of the contemporary moment.

David Harsent: Detective, Reporter, Poet

David Harsent's *Legion*, published a decade after Harrison's "Three Poems from Bosnia," does not have the immediacy of Harrison's sequence; it thus negotiates time in ways more familiar to poetry. In doing so, Harsent self-consciously explores the

boundaries of what lyric means. Harsent has long been interested in notions of genre, and from multiple angles. He is an accomplished crime writer, published under the pseudoynms Jack Curtis and David Lawrence. Crime fiction and poetry may seem to make a strange pair. But G.K. Chesteron once said that crime fiction is one of the rare forms that offers "some sense of the poetry of modern life" and C. Day Lewis's detective Nigel Strangeways, from his Nicholas Blake detective series, is modeled on W.H. Auden.[327] *Legion* draws from temporal conventions of detective stories, news reports, and lyric poetry, manipulating story and plot in ways that Peter Brooks identifies as fundamental to detective fiction, mimicking the immediate time of the news in series of poems Harsent calls "Despatches," and all the while drawing on poetry's reserves of long memory, memorialization, and elegy.[328]

Legion has received little critical attention, despite winning the Forward Prize and being shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize and Whitbread Award.[329] Part of the problem may lie in its timeliness; while Harsent never names the war, the backdrop is clearly former Yugoslavia. But in 2005, the eyes of America and Britain were on Afghanistan and Iraq; a new volume on Bosnia likely seemed out of place, even excessive. Ezra Pound may be right that literature is news that stays news, but with the Yugoslav Wars dimming in the Anglo-American consciousness soon after Slobodan Milošević's

---

[327] Ian Sansom makes these connections between poetry and crime in his review of *Legion*, "The devil's wine," the *Guardian*, October 15, 2005, accessed January 5, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/oct/15/ featuresreviews.guardianreview25.

[328] See Peter Brooks, "Reading for the Plot," in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3-36.

[329] After making the shortlist four times for the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry, Harsent won the prize for his volume *Fire Songs* in January 2015.

indictment in 1999, Harsent's publication of *Legion* seemed outmoded. Why, then, publish in 2005?

Tom Vickers demonstrates that *Legion* actually had a prior life that dates to 1997, when Harsent published extremely loose, misconstrued translations of Bosnian poet Goran Simić's *Sprinting from the Graveyard* (later republished by Simić under the more faithful title *From Sarajevo with Sorrow*), which recounts Simić's lived experiences of the Siege of Sarajevo. The translations were a flop, even resulting in Simić retranslating them into English himself to repair Harsent's attempts.[330] Vickers suggests that Harsent's translations not only lack the immediacy of Simić's originals but also perform aestheticized distance, attempting to craft good art out of violence. If this is so, Harsent checks this tendency when he reworks his translations into the original pieces of *Legion* in part by staging a less antagonist relationship between lyric poetry and the news than that put forth in his translations. Harsent's 1997 translations fundamentally reshape Simić's attitude towards the news in ways that suggest a misreading of Simić's entire purpose in writing poems of direct witness. For instance, Simić's short poem "Beginning After Everything" records the poet's aim to craft "poems like newspaper reports."[331] Vickers notices that Harsent's version describes "poems like newspaper reports" as "heartless and cold," while Simić chooses the much more neutral word "bare" in the retranslation he undertook to revise Harsent's attempts. In other words, Harsent deliberately adapts Simić to insist on an idea of poetry as "not-news." Still, the distinction

---

[330] Tom Vickers, "'*Poems like newspaper reports*': The influence of versioning Goran Simić's *From Sarajevo with Sorrow* on David Harsent and his poetic sequence *Legion*." *Academia.edu*, accessed December 4, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/9716354/_Poems_like_newspaper_reports_The_ influence_of_versioning_Goran_Simi%C4%87_s_From_Sarajevo_with_Sorrow_on_David_Harsent_and_his_poetic_sequence_Legion.

[331] David Harsent, *Sprinting From the Graveyard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20.

Vickers draws between Simić's originals and Harsent's versions needs some qualification, as Simić did not necessarily set newspapers as the model for lyric. The simile "poems *like*" newspapers is telling. In Simić's forward to *Sorrow*, for instance, he wrote: "'The lines I wrote were written in the belief that, when compared with the cold newspaper reports, which would be forgotten with the start of a new war elsewhere, only poetry could be a true and decent witness to war."[332]

Harsent adopts this attitude in reworking his translations into the volume *Legion* in 2005. While one review of *Legion* praised it as "the kind of thing you don't see in your newspapers," these poems *do* engage with news, adopting journalism's techniques where appropriate to heighten lyric's own resources to record events. [333] In doing so, *Legion* attempts to represent another's conflict without relegating the conflict or the people who experience it to a primeval time and place, as his Simić translations did. By blending types of time, Harsent brings a conflict the media cast as atavistic into an eternally present moment.

The volume, divided into three sections, alternates between war despatches straight from the scene of battle (often given in broken sonnet form) and lyric poems that assume the perspective of eyewitness accounts. From its title to its contents, *Legion* is obsessed with plurality even as it adopts voices of individual speakers from an unknown warzone. This obsession creates a heteroglossia of voices in the volume's third and final section. This is the only untitled section, suggesting the inability to contain these teeming perspectives under a single idea. The many voices of the living and the dead evoke

---

[332] Goran Simić, *From Sarajevo with Sorrow*, trans. with Amela Simić (Windsor, Canada: Biblioasis, 2005), 12.

[333] Sansom, "The devil's wine," 2005.

Harsent's crime novels, as the multiple narratives tangle into an unsolvable riddle: where are we? When? Critics like John McAuliffe and David Wheatley have criticized the lack of specific place.

I see this, however, as the byproduct not of a lack of historical specificity but rather of a generic experiment with the boundaries of detective fiction, news, and lyric. Harsent means to destabilize the telling through polyphonic voices and complex plotting; some poems seem to happen in the live time of the war, some before, and some after. But for McAuliffe, the war depicted "seems motiveless, generic and irredeemably foreign," a criticism that Wheatley compares to some critics' response to Heaney's *North* as a volume that elides historical specificity to mythologize bloodshed. Wheatley admires the volume's refusal "to succumb…to blandishments of moral righteousness"—unlike, in his opinion, Tony Harrison and Harold Pinter—but wonders, "Why set the book in Central and Eastern Europe if not to trade on that region's stereotypical associations with primitivism and never ending ethnic strife?"[334]

The critique is, in part, fair. The volume's recurring references to T.S. Eliot's "Hollow Men," with its epigraph taken from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, obliquely associates Yugoslavia with the unknowable, impenetrable African continent depicted in Conrad's novel. The recurring references to places at the edge of the known world add to this effect. The eyewitness speaker of "Finisterre" meditates on atrocities in the region of the poem's namesake, the Spanish peninsula that the Ancient Romans believed to be the end of the world; the speaker of "At the Quayside" reflects, "as you set sail for the outer

[334] David Wheatley, "'Dichtung und Wahrheit': Contemporary War and the Non-combatant Poet," in *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, ed. Tim Kendall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 665.

edge of the world, / a nation changes hands."[335] In places, indeed, *Legion* seems to position its Bosnian landscape at the fringe of the known world (recalling Tony Blair's description of the region as "the doorstep of Europe"). Wheatley suggests that the poem may have avoided some of the pitfalls of conflict tourism if it had "stayed closer to home" by exploring the Northern Ireland Troubles instead. This remark is odd, given how similarly the media (and some poets from both within and beyond Northern Ireland) portrayed these two conflicts, as I explore in Chapter Three. But it underscores the ethical concerns of appropriating foreign conflicts, be it in the service of poetry or for making sense of one's own poetic or national tradition.

Legion seems to do both. The opening poem is an irregular English sonnet that masquerades as a military despatch. The disconnection between the two forms brings multiple types of time into suspension. The first line, "*shape of a man*," evokes Yeats's "The Second Coming" and Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (the most insistent intertext of *Legion*). *Legion* thus begins in the realm of poetic legacy as well as the types of times both of those poems evoke: history as recurrence in Yeats, and history as cosmic meaninglessness in Eliot's pre-conversion poetry. Yet this abstract time is immediately undercut by the despatch's live-time report of an unsettling scene:

shape of a man

broken legs, sit-dragging himself, knuckling the clay,

iron gates, beyond the

[335] David Harsent, *Legion* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 75. All further citations will be given in the body of the text.

not quite the broad bright light of day

no, but well past the dead of night. (3)

As the report follows the man's motions, it stalls and interrupts itself, patterning its own rhythmic timing after the wounded man's movements. The sonnet-despatch places the reporter and the man in the same time, as the syntax and rhythm merge into the man's motions rather than making him simply an object of an edited, refined report back to England. It ends in the same timelessness and placelessness where it began, following the man

until finally

not gates, no, in fact

proved a play

of the light; more a place where things just fell away

The metaphor of this warzone as the edge of the world closes the despatch, which itself falls away without closing punctuation. Yet the poem's use of immediate time makes the scene central and unforgettable, bringing it back from the edge of dreamlike forgettability.

The fifth and final of the despatches is another irregular sonnet, with clusters of its fourteen lines partitioned by official military timestamps:

[6:00hrs]

as per, and just at daybreak pulled

out, sun and moon both high, the dawn wind cold,

our long silhouette unfolding as we rolled

downhill towards the final

[8:00hrs]

ever-present danger of friendly

[9:00hrs]

Songs, the Street of Locks, everything under a law

ceiling of smoke, but no sign of life, no sound except a radio

we couldn't get a fix on, but coming from somewhere below

ground it seemed, as if the entire

[9:45hrs]

picked up the broadcast. We heard

the news and the news was us, then music, classical, weird

getting that stuff out here

toccata

[11:00hrs]

or Bach or (38-39)

We cannot know what happens in the lacuna between the timestamps, but the systematic recording of time (along with the broken, but extant, familiar form of the sonnet, and the references to the exact rhythms and structures of both a toccata and Bach's work) suggests artificial order amid chaos, the clock time of the English despatch trying and failing to control the disorder of the war. This chaos is underscored by a dizzying sense of the infinite, as all five despatches lack a clear beginning and end, evoking infinite time before and after.

This effect is furthered in the poems' reliance on lists, recalling, like Fenton, Eco's infinity of lists. The table of contents is itself a list that suggests the potential for endless repetition, with five "Despatches" and the two "Snapshots" that seem to hint at the presence of a logarithm if we could ever discover the mystery of the code. The first "Snapshots" not only contains listed objects; its form is constituted as a list:

> Troopers dead in a trench and a river of rats
> Topers dead in a bar and a flood of reflections
> Lovers dead in bed and a shift of maggots (15)

and so on for nine lines. It is both elegiac and anti-elegiac, recalling burial lists of the dead but interspersing them with lists of parasitic creatures, always themselves in the plural. The poem "Filofax" seems to perform the function of a Filofax, collecting details into rambling lists to make sense of at a later time that may never come:

> The entire township, heading north in cars, in trucks, on bikes, on foot,
> some with next to nothing, some choosing to cart
> (as it might be) armchair, armoire, samovar, black and white
> TV, toaster, Filofax, Magimix, ladle, spindle, spinet,

bed and bedding, basin and bassinette…(24)

This list recalls a journalist's unkempt notes rather than the carefully crafted poem Harsent leaves us. The list performs the inability of the reporter to make sense of the scene and the refusal to craft the scene into a digestible narrative after the fact; the poem keeps the "report" in the same disordered time and space as the scene it depicts. Reader, reporter, and events are all drawn into the same time.

The untitled section three, which brings polyphonic voices of the war dead and survivors into a symphonic narrative, curtails plurality within the space of each individual poem. "Tristichs" begins by evoking a labyrinthine setting that unfolds into a thematic treatment of time:

A hallway of doors. A grandfather clock.

The woman came out naked, her hair wrapped in a towel.

She didn't look at the clock. It wasn't that. (69)

Unlike in the fifth "Despatch," time here is evoked through the symbol of the clock rather than an intrusion into the form. Clock time collides with the long memoried time of the heirloom that depicts it; the woman, portrayed for a fleeting moment in narrative time, ignores both. The plurality of types of time, along with the "hallways of doors," suggests a temporal-spatial setting that is uncontainable, infinite. It is a microcosm of the epochs and experiences that jumble together in the volume; although the setting sometimes seems sidelined to the edge of the world, types of time themselves become coeval, discernable to one another.

Legion's closing poem, "Baby Blue," leaves off in narrative time mixed with the rhythmic time of a meter associated with Siegfried Sassoon's faux-cheerful World War I poem "The General":

> 'Good-morning; good-morning!' the General said
> When we met him last week on our way to the line….
> 'He's a cheery old card,' grunted Harry to Jack
> As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.
>
> . . .
>
> But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

"Baby Blue" also ends on a terrible turn of events at odds with the breezy anapests. Its two rhyming couplets conclude with a mother's horrific discovery, brought closer to home because the song sounds recognizably English:

> She might be singing "My buttie, my lolly, my blue-eyed boy"
> as she stoops to take him up in joy,
>
> then stops on a broken note, her own eyes full
> as she catches a glimpse of the sky through the skull. (82)

The volume concludes its report of war on a highly metrical moment that draws its authority from earlier English poets who wrote of war in Europe. Both the meter and the appeal to the past suggest that the poem is at once trying to make sense of an inconceivable war in modern Europe and to resist the desire to pretend to understand a foreign conflict. While Harsent has been accused of mythologizing the Balkans by setting

Legion in an unnamed warzone at an apparent edge of Europe, in doing so he contests the suggestion that another's war is quantifiable or knowable.

Ciaran Carson: *Breaking News*

The (Northern) Irish context for poems of war correspondence has its own inflection. As Ramazani argues, "[n]ews discourse has been for Irish poetry a shadow self, a shaping counterforce."[336] Adding to the Irish relationship to this subgenre, the reporter widely regarded as the first modern war correspondent, William Howard Russell (1820-1907), was born in Dublin. Ciaran Carson uses this conncetion to lend authority to his 2003 volume *Breaking News*, dedicated to Russell's memory. The final sequence of *Breaking News*, "The War Correspondent," lifts passages from Russell's reports during his twenty two-month coverage of the Crimean War from 1854-1855, presenting seven lyric poems in Russell's voice.

If Harsent's volume on the Yugoslav Wars seemed too late in 2005, Carson's Crimean War material might seem to miss the mark by 150 years. He solves this problem by bringing Russell's reports from the Crimea directly into dialogue with both the Troubles and the War on Terror. Carson's collaboration with American poet Tess Gallagher underscores this context, with Gallagher giving him feedback on how his work would likely be received in the American context in both correspondence and draft comments. She wrote next to "Spin Cycle": "Great political poem! Works in U.S. too," apparently transplanting the helicopter imagery to Afghanistan and Iraq:

thug-thug

[336] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, 103.

helicopter overhead

I put in

the ear-plugs

everything went

centrifugal. [337]

Gallagher wrote to Carson in March 2002 that she felt *Breaking News* was too spare and needed to be put in a drawer and revisited in a few months, but she also understood the urgency of publication: "There is a timeliness factor that may be urging toward publishing quickly re. the War on Terrorism…that we see every night on our TVs here."[338] Her comment suggests that sometimes the time of poetry *must* be the time of the news: it has to respond to events as they happen, whether for marketing or ethical reasons.

But Carson does not use the Crimean War merely as a convenient avatar for the contemporary moment. News and lyric (and genre more broadly) have a complex relationship in both the (Northern) Irish and the Crimean War contexts. Carson's volume interlaces both contexts to mark its intense engagement with issues of genre, clear from the outset in the title's pun on the tired phrase "breaking news" that also suggests that poetry somehow "breaks" the news. In Russell's time, the emerging genre of foreign

[337] Typescript of *Breaking News*, with manuscript comments by Tess Gallagher and responses from Ciaran Carson, February 2002, box 16, folder 16, Ciaran Carson papers, The Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

[338] Letter from Tess Gallagher to Ciaran Carson, March 5, 2002, box 16, folder 17, Ciaran Carson papers.

correspondence had a profound effect on neighboring genres. Stefanie Markovits has characterized the Crimean War as a media war, meaning "a war that was experienced through cultural documentation not only after the fact but as events were transpiring." Markovits demonstrates through readings of Russell's journalism and novel, as well as poems like Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade," that

> [t]he ascendency of journalism…had consequences for practitioners of artistic representation in other modes…what might be called the pressure of the press changed the shape of novels, poems, and paintings about the war, either through oppositional reaction to the dominant form, or by an attempt to accommodate its forces.[339]

The effect the news coverage of the Crimean War had on genre speaks to current scholarly interest in the generic tensions between poetry and the news. *Breaking News*, and especially "The War Correspondent" sequence, seems to capitalize on this historic crisis of genre by drawing a corollary with the Troubles and the media's coverage of it as profoundly shaping lyric, forcing it to contend with both the public and private spheres, plural and individual.

It seems significant that Carson debuts his new thin, poetic line in *Breaking News*, replacing his famous long lines (which often take the form of seventeen syllables in his 1980s volumes) in a volume about the news. But reading too much into this correlation risks setting up a binary between the spareness of journalism and the repleteness of lyric. David Wheatley, for instance, seems to exaggerate the generic lines between news and lyric in *Breaking News*, arguing that

---

[339] Stefanie Markovits, *The Crimean War in the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

> the abandonment of lyric plenitude in these poems puts in question not just the role of the artist in a time of violence, but the physical existence of his poems too, just as the sustained ventriloquism of Russell's journalism threatens to junk the concept of lyric 'voice'. How far in this direction can a lyric poem go before it ceases to be a lyric poem, and what takes its place when it does?[340]

Certainly Carson is interested in stretching the lyric poem to its limits, and yet in my reading this aim has little to do with his adoption of Russell's prose. In fact, the structure of *Breaking News* challenges the notion that this is the generic connection (or competition) according to which the volume operates: in fact, "The War Correspondence" sequence offers by far the densest and richest passages of the volume. It is hard to describe a passage like this one, from "Dvno," as sparse, much less anti-lyric:

> Once I gazed on these meadows
> with poppies,
> buttercups and cornflowers
> surrounded by verdant hills
>
> in which lay deep shady dells,
> dripping ferns shower-dappled
> under the green canopy

[340] David Wheatley, "'Pushed next to nothing': Ciaran Carson's *Breaking news*," in *Ciaran Carson: Critical Essays*, ed. Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (Dublin: Four Courts, 2009), 51.

of live oaks and wild apples…[341]

This is just the sort of Keatsian passage that Seamus Heaney spoke of wanting to "punish" during the Troubles, as he felt it could not adequately capture the experience of the Troubles.[342] Yet the dense lyricism of it is in keeping with Russell's own often-florid prose. Carson is not, then, offering these stanzas as a poetic alternative to the news: he is imitating Russell. Something besides "lyric plenitude" is at stake in Carson's poetic recasting of Russell.

Admittedly, the poems engaged with news reports taken from contemporary sources rather than Russell are much more spare. Draft manuscript comments between Tess Gallagher and Ciaran Carson on the poem "Fragment" reveal that Carson adapted this piece from a news report on the Omagh bombing. Carson's remarks on his typescript demonstrate that he was intent on preserving the integrity of the original journalism. Gallagher objected to the generality of the word "piece" in the first line and his use of an article in the second:

from a piece of

the Tupperware

lunchbox that held

the wiring

they could tell

[341] Ciaran Carson, "Dvno," in *Breaking News* (Wake Forest, NC: Wake Forest UP, 2003), 48. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

[342] O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones*, 239-240.

the bombmaker wore

Marigold rubber gloves (31)

In response to Gallagher's objections, Caron's note explains, "it has to be the—it's a specific piece of evidence, and was referred to as such by the forensic team who investigated this particular atrocity (Omagh)." Carson seems to have considered replacing the objectionable "piece" with "shard," but then adds that it would not work because the word "is maybe too much removed from the ordinary speech in which this news item is couched." [343] Where poetry is often thought of as aesthetically and perhaps ethically superior to the news, Carson honors the provenance of his sources rather than supplanting them with more recognizably poetic language.

The news-like consciousness of these poems led Neal Alexander to remark on Carson's "disturbing documentary candour."[344] For Carson, the documentary impulse to "register" itself indicates ethical involvement. He says in an interview, "I can't as a writer take any kind of moral stance on the 'Troubles', beyond registering what happens. And then, as soon as I say that, I realise that 'registering' is a kind of morality. Nor can one, even if one wanted to, escape politics."[345] But this documentary registering is frequently interrupted with the intrusion of a hyper-lyrical register, as though poetry must temper the news. The poem "Last Effect" is a striking example of this interplay:

take

the watch

---

[343] Typescript of *Breaking News*, with manuscript comments by Tess Gallagher and responses from Ciaran Carson, March 2002, box 16, folder 17, Ciaran Carson papers.

[344] Neal Alexander, *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 7.

[345] John Brown, *In the Chair: Interviews with Poets from the North of Ireland* (Cliffs of Moher: Salmon Publishing, 2002), 148.

feel

the weight

of its bullet-

dented case

the Braille

of its

glassless dial

hands

arrested

at the minute

and the hour

of his salvation

death

postponed

for years

until that

yesterday

he failed

to see

O what is time

my friend

when faced with

eternity (40)

The obsessive enjambment, typical of all poems in *Breaking News* prior to "The War Correspondent," suggest the fearful breathlessness that underlies many of the poems. The sparseness of the lines is undercut thematically by the lyrical register that closes the poem, its apostrophe putting the "clock time" of war and history (symbolized through the watch) against the eternal time of poetry. The poem intentionally folds the immediacy of clock time into the long memoried time of poetry.

Within the poems themselves, Carson uses lyric's manipulation of time to suggest coevalness among many times and places. "Breath" and "Spin Cycle" at once evoke the Troubles and the War on Terror alongside each other; the incorporation of Russell despatches brings older conflicts to bear on the contemporary moment; the frequent references to poppies throughout "The War Correspondent" even evoke World War I. A

draft typescript of "Siege" gives a sense of how many places and times Carson brings vertiginously to bear on each other; in the right-hand column of the brief poem, he lists simply,

Palestine

Crimea

Inkerman

Odessa

Balkan

Lucknow

Belfast[346]

Eco writes of this particular kind of list, "Just as individuals and things are ineffable, the same holds for places, and yet again the writer relies on the *etcetera* of the list."[347] By suggesting the infinity attendant in the "*etcetera* of the list," Carson underscores the complex interplay of time and space. Neal Alexander draws from theories of literary space and geography to remark that the contemporaneity of Carson's Belfast is "informed by a dense layering of spatial and temporal inter-relations."[348] Yet the effect seems less related to layering than to Carson's suggestion that time and space are infinite and thus illusive, allowing him to fold multiple times and places into the same poem without overwriting or equating any of them. For Wheatley, Carson's process of entangling distinct times and places has a profound effect on the function of lyric, preventing it from claiming exemption from the chaos of violence. The poem cannot escape from the

[346] Typescript of "Siege," 2002, box 16, folder 15, Ciaran Carson papers.

[347] Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*, 81.

[348] Alexander, *Ciaran Carson*, 10.

confusion of time and place that it sets up, leading not to what Wheatley calls "lyric transcendence" but rather to "an interiorization of the violence of history, an embrace of broken and incomplete signifying strategies…over the delusions of aesthetic repletion."[349] Wheatley's remarks on the lyric suggest he conceives of lyric as an essentially organic genre, or at least an identifiable poetic quality associated with high aestheticism. Carson pushes against this idea of lyric by keeping the brisk lines of *Breaking News* enmeshed with the action of the news reports they imitate.

Carson brings at least four types of time into play to suggest coeval relations between the people and events he depicts. First, the time-space entanglement that Alexander and Eco's infinity of lists suggest. Second, the interplay of narrative and diegetic time: as Wheatley argues, throughout *Breaking News* narrative and diegetic time "brush up against each other" as "many poems' narratives find themselves overtaken by their own events."[350] Wheatley's observation speaks, tellingly, to Markovits's work on the role of the media in the Crimean War: "To an unprecedented degree, the experience of this war was filtered through print—not just, as with past wars, after the facts, as poets, novelists, and historians memorialized the conflict—but in what clearly struck those caught up in its events as "real time."[351] Poetry rarely has to be concerned with "real time" (or "narrative time"), which makes it all the more interesting that Carson blends narrative and diegesis. Third is the temporal distance from the events that Carson recounts; Wheatley notes that Carson lacks "the eye-witness immediacy" of Russell's original reports, "complicating the reader's response and forcing an interrogation of what

[349] Wheatley, "Ciaran Carson's *Breaking news*," 64.

[350] Ibid., 57, 55.

[351] Markovits, *The Crimean War in the British Imagination,* 13.

might constitute an authentic or personal response to a war fought a century and a half ago."[352] Yet Wheatley perhaps accidentally speaks to poetry's unusual capacity to evoke emotional response even for events distanced in the past through the contrast of his own prose. He quips that Carson's "found poetry" technique "seems to dissolve Carson's text away in an intertextual haze, leaving the author dead on the battlefield alongside the unfortunates of Inkerman and Sedan."[353] It is hard to imagine Wheatley making a similar witticism about the dead of the Troubles or Iraq; "The War Correspondent," meanwhile, does what it can to evoke the suffering and sustain the memory of the dead in the Crimea. In "Dvno," Carson draws on the tradition of elegiac poetry as he attempts to remember Wheatley's "unfortunates of Inkerman and Sedan":

> As for the choleric dead,
> their names have been unravelled
> like their bones, whose whereabouts
> remain unknown. (49)

Even though "the catalogue has been lost" for the names of the dead, as Carson writes in a draft version of this section, the poem itself remembers the process of elegizing.[354] Wheatley's remark, then, lands on "what separates the postmodern antics of *Breaking news* from an outright abdication of the lyric poem altogether": its blending of times. Finally, the fourth kind of time with which the poem grapples is the primordial time of the other. Desmond Fitzgibbon calls Carson out for the exoticizing dangers present in what he calls "a double-edged imperial dinnseanchas" of Carson naming faraway places

---

[352] Wheatley, "Ciaran Carson's *Breaking News*," 54-55.

[353] Ibid., 63.

[354] Typescript, "Dvno," Ciaran Carson papers.

like Balaclava, Kashmir, and Odessa, all street names in Belfast that mark political and cultural barriers in that city.[355] In actuality, Carson's work resists the Orientalizing gaze of Russell's source text. Carson contests Russell depiction of the primordial time of the other through the manipulation of lyric time.

Russell's writings relegate the Turks he encounters in Gallipoli to the time of the other, a tendency that Carson subtly shifts. To demonstrate this process, I will compare segments of Russell's writings from Gallipoli to Carson's poetic adaptation in "Gallipoli."[356] Russell and Carson both begin with a long list of objects and places that the reader must imaginatively gather together in their minds to get a sense of the state of Gallipoli during the Crimean War:

> Take the most dilapidated outhouses of farmers' yards in England—remove rickety old wooden tenements of the Borough—catch up any seedy, cracked, shutterless structures of planks and tiles that have escaped the ravages of time in our cathedral towns—carry off sheds and stalls from Billingsgate, bring them all to the European side of the Dardenelles, and having tree or shrub, tumble them higgledy piggledy on its declivity….steal some Irish round towers—surround them with a light gallery about twelve feet from the top, put on a large extinguisher-shaped roof, paint

[355] Desmond Fitzgibbon, "Delfas, Dorqk, Nublid, Dalways: The Irish City after Joyce," in *Critical Ireland: New Essays in Irish Literature and Culture*, eds. Aaron Kelly and Alan A. Gillis (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 67.

[356] Gallipoli was the first Ottoman post in Europe, taken in 1354 and used as an outpost for Ottoman conquering of the Balkans. Because of its prime location in Turkish Thrace (the small strip of Turkey considered to be part of the European continent), it was an important outpost for the British and French in 1854 as well as the site of a devastating battle in World War I that led to the formation of the modern Turkish Republic out of the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

> them all white, and having thus make them into minarets, clap
> them down into the maze of buildings…[357]

Carson's "Gallipoli" mimics this opening but infuses it with more Irish and imperial images:

> Take sheds and stalls from Billingsgate,
> glittering with scaling-knives and fish,
> the tumbledown outhouses of English farmers' yards
> that reek of dung and straw, and horses
> cantering the mewsy lanes of Dublin;
>
> take an Irish landlord's ruinous estate,
> elaborate pagodas from a Chinese Delftware dish
> where fishes fly through shrouds and sails and yards
> of leaking ballast-laden junks bound for Benares
> in search of bucket-loads of tea as black as tin. (45)

In an earlier draft, Carson used Russell's Celtic-Orientalist comparison of Irish round towers with minarets: "and minarets as tall as Irish round towers."[358] While it is impossible to say why Carson excised these lines, they would have relegated the practice of Islam into the same ancient time as the use of Irish round towers. In contrast, he goes on to cast the soldiers of Gallipoli as coeval with one another and the reader. Once the

[357] William Howard Russell, "The Crimean War," in *William Russell: Special Correspondent of The Times* (London: The Folio Society, 1995), 3.

[358] Typescript, "Gallipoli," Box 50, folder 30, Ciaran Carson papers.

reader has imagined all of the items and places Carson has suggested in order to evoke Gallipoli, he continues with his instructions:

> then populate this slum with Cypriot and Turk,
> Armenians and Arabs, British riflemen
> and French Zouaves, camel-drivers, officers, and sailors,
> sappers, miners, Nubian slaves, Greek money-changers…[359]

Carson follows Russell's listing of the people who populate the encampment at Gallipoli with a notable exception. Russell's passage had begun, "To fill [Gallipoli] up you must, however, catch a number of the biggest breeched, longest bearded, dirtiest, and stateliest old Turks."[360] Later, he describes "a typical Bulgar" he encounters near Varna in terms that recall nineteenth-century anthropology:

> But where are the natives all this time?—come, here is one driving an araba—let us stop and look at him. He is a stout, well-made and handsome man, with finely-shaped features and large dark eyes; but for all that there is a dull, dejected look about him which rivets attention….His head is covered with a cap of black sheepskin with the wool on, beneath which falls a mass of tangled hair which unites with beard and whisker and moustache in forming a rugged mat about the lower part of the face….If you could speak with this poor Bulgarian, you would find his mind as waste as the land around you.[361]

---

[359] His introduction of the term "Cypriot," which Russell does not use, may suggest a brief echo of the Turkish-Cypriot ethnic conflict in Cyprus, also indirectly evoking the inter-communal violence of the Troubles.

[360] Russell, "The Crimean War," 5.

[361] Russell, "The Crimean War," 9.

Carson, meanwhile, creates description-eschewing poetic catalogues of the people Russell encounters, as well as British, Irish, and French soldiers, avoiding a subject and object. By the end of the poem, the people he lists are indistinguishable from one another; the cholera-stricken "soldiers lie dead or drunk among the crushed flowers" (46). Carson also changes the ending of the Gallipoli section to break down distinctions between the different classes and nations of soldiers that Russell depicts. After instructing the reader to conjure images of his vivid descriptions, Russell concludes, "when you have done this, you have to all appearance imitated the process by which Gallipoli was created."[362] In contrast, Carson ends, "I have not even begun to describe Gallipoli" (46). Carson reverses Russell's assertion that he *has* more or less described Gallipoli, suggesting the impossibility—and indeed, inadvisability—of framing and thus pinning down a place.

At stake for Carson in generic blending, then, is not only the so-called spare lines that seem anti-lyric to Tess Gallagher and David Wheatley. He is also interested in creating a lyric poem that resists imagining the time of the other as primordial through manipulation of different categories of time. This technique entails manipulating categories of space, as time itself is spatialized: in *Breaking News*, the border regions of Europe, from Belfast to the nineteenth-century outposts of the Ottoman and Russian Empires.

The compression of far Eastern Europe and Belfast meet in the volume's first word: "east." In a volume on the Crimean War, this locative adjective conjures the far reaches of the declining Ottoman Empire. But in the Belfast context, "east" and "west" map sectarian divisions in the city itself, the borders between factions echoing the orientalist temporal and geographic divisions between "east" and "west." Carson flips the

[362] Ibid., 5.

expected associations with these geographies, as East Belfast is the Loyalist (and thus more "British") part of the city. This geographical blurring comes together in "Dvno," when Carson imagines Russell on a brief leave from his war correspondence duties. Carson's Russell recalls walking through a meadow in Carson's contemporary Bosnia and Herzogovina:

> and I thought I was in Eden,
> happily stumbling about
> in a green Irish garden
> knee-deep in potato flowers. (48)

Russell's dreamlike conflation of Dvno and Ireland into "Eden" suggests the mythologizing of both of these places, often cast in the British and Anglo-Irish imaginations as outside of time. The reality of the Crimean War interrupts Russell's reflection, propelling the poem back into the immediate and threatening time of the war:

> But at night a fog descends,
> as these woods breed miasmas,
> and slithering through the brush
> are snakes thick as a man's arm.

In folding together places and times, Carson's poetry resists the familiar typecasting of Europe's geographical edges as primordial by refusing the linearity and separateness of time and space.

Beyond the doubling of Ireland and the Balkans, Carson was also thinking about another part of Europe as he worked on the poems of "The War Correspondent." He was simultaneously involved in his translation of Dante's *Inferno* and hoped the projects

would be published at the same time, telling Tess Gallagher, "it's starting to look like BN is a mirror image of [the Dante], so the two would sit well together."[363] It is beyond my scope to comment much on Carson's masterful rendition of the sectarian divides in Dante's medieval Florence, except to say that the Dante relationship also illuminates an Italo Calvino intertext that ends with an evocation of the *Inferno*, a moment that helps to illuminate the ending of "The War Correspondent." While he was busy imagining Belfast alongside towns and cities of the Crimean War, Carson was at the same time formulating how Dante's Florence might speak to his contemporary moment as he crafted what he called his "mirror project" to *Breaking News*.

Neal Alexander mentions Calvino's influence on Carson's prose, but I hear it also in the poetry. Alexander suggests that Borges, Calvino, and Eco reverberate in Carson's novels in four ways: "their scholarly fascination with obscure knowledge and lists of often esoteric sources;…their pronounced metafictional concern with the processes of writing and reading and the properties of narrative; and…their compilation of diverse materials and tendency to problematise generic distinctions." Finally, Alexander adds, "They are also preoccupied with the temporal mechanism by which narrative can carry its readers along."[364] I have been particularly interested throughout this chapter in how Eco's theories of lists complicate time, narrative, and genre, as Alexander emphasizes. But in *Breaking News*, Calvino's influence is prime. Carson has stated that he deeply admires Calvino's imaginative landscapes.[365] Nowhere is Calvino's imagining of a city more

---

[363] Letter from Ciaran Carson to Tess Gallagher, March 16, 2002, Ciaran Carson papers. Box 4, folder 14.

[364] Alexander, *Ciaran Carson,* 168.

[365] Jon Michaud, "The Exchange: Ciaran Carson," in *The New Yorker*, May 18, 2009, accessed January 10, 2015, http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-exchange-ciaran-carson.

evocative of *Breaking News* than in his lyrical, genre-bending work *Invisible Cities* (1972). To distract Kubla Khan from his dying empire, Marco Polo narrates his travels to infinitely detailed and diverse cities—all of which are his home of Venice. Carson likewise finds Belfast again and again as *Breaking News* follows Russell through the edges of nineteenth-century declining empires, including the Ottoman (the "sick man of Europe") and the British, the empire's ineffectualness made painfully obvious during the Crimean War by disasters such as the Charge of the Light Brigade.

The time-space interplay in a poem like "Gallipoli" recalls Marco Polo's final description of Venice, here masquerading as the imagined Berenice:

> From my words you will have reached the conclusion that the real Berenice is a temporal succession of different cities, alternately just and unjust But what I wanted to warn you about is something else: all the future Berenices are already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable.[366]

Carson's Crimean cities are similarly described, and his revision of the end of Russell's Gallipoli report ("I have not even begun to describe Gallipoli") evokes Marco Polo's conclusions to many of his visits after giving exhaustive catalogs and vivid descriptions of ultimately unfathomable cities.

The Dante-infused ending of *Invisible Cities* evokes the conclusion of "The War Correspondent." The final poem of the sequence, "Sedan," is a perplexing choice. In an earlier draft, Carson named the poem "Alma," a location that Russell visited during the Crimean War. This title makes sense, as it would conclude Carson's pattern of trailing of

[366] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt, 1974), 163.

Russell in chronological order through the places he visited during the Crimean War.[367] Renaming the city "Sedan" (in northern France) is a strange choice, as it leaves behind the context of the Crimean War for the Franco-Prussian War (which Russell also covered later in his life). This renaming makes "Sedan" the only poem of "The War Correspondent" not set in the Crimean War. Many arguments about why Carson would have ended in a later war could be made; more interesting is that "Sedan" lifts lines, most notably its ending, directly from Russell's report on The Great Redan, near Alma in the Crimea, *not* lines from Russell's coverage of the Franco-Prussian War. In the earlier "Sedan" draft titled "Alma," Carson's ending is nearly identical to a passage Russell penned at Redan: "The bomb-proofs were the same as in the Malakoff, and in one of them a music-book was found with a woman's name in it, and a canary bird and vase of flowers were outside the entrance."[368] Carson's "Alma" draft positions Russell as the lyric speaker but otherwise follows the lines exactly:

> I found a music-book
>
> with a woman's name
> in it, and a canary bird,
> and a vase of flowers.[369]

On this typescript, Carson penned in the word "wild" before flowers. Over several more drafts, he goes on to experiment with this final line more than any other in "The War Correspondent." When Carson published the final version under the name "Sedan," it

---

[367] Typescript of "Alma," July 2, 1999, box 50, folder 30, Ciaran Carson papers.

[368] Russell, *The Crimean War*, 80.

[369] Typescript of "Alma," Ciaran Carson papers.

ultimately concludes with the line "and a vase of wild flowers" (*BN* 57), diverging only slightly from Russell's report at Redan. Carson's title is not likely a misprint of Redan; instead, he brings the Redan and Sedan, and thus the Crimean and Franco-Prussian Wars, into associative relationship. Both wars marked declines of major empires in Europe, again recalling *Invisible Cities*. Moreover, Carson's final stanza echoes with the ending of *Invisible Cities*: "*seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space.*"[370] Like Calvino, Carson's work is invested in the power of lyrical work to find the "not inferno" in chaotic violence, in simple catalogued items like "a music book," "a canary bird," and "a vase of wild flowers." If Carson records these objects as a demonstration of lyric poetry's ability to seek out and record whatever goodness might survive the chaos of violence, the Calvino and Dante infusions might offer an alternative to Wheatley's casting of this concluding stanza as "gleefully insouciant."[371] "The War Correspondent" manipulates time and narrative so that Russell's discovery of these items, buried in a descriptive passage about Redan, have breathing room and staying power. The ending is not playful, or not only that; rather, it suggests the potential for poetry, over the news, to make small details from the past relevant to the present.

Conclusion

English and Irish poems of war correspondence manipulate time to seek out an ethical way to document, understand, and empathize with violence in parts of Europe cast as primordial that indirectly evoke their own situations. By compressing genres, times,

[370] Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 165.

[371] Wheatley, "Ciaran Carson's *Breaking news*," 65.

and places, poets like Harrison, Harsent, and Carson suggest the potential for conflicts to resonate with others across cultures and centuries without appealing to intractable, mythic cycles of violence. Ted Hughes's Hughes's formulation of the poet as shaman of a tribe in crisis, adapted by Heaney into a more civically grounded model, finds its latest iteration in the poet-reporters of the 1980s through the new millennium.

In concluding with poetry and the news, this dissertation has come full circle from where it began: with Seamus Heaney resisting a facile alignment of Northern Ireland, Beowulf's England, and Bosnia in a *PBS NewsHour* interview. I began with how Hughes's metaphor of poet as shaman of the tribe collided with the rhetoric of tribal warfare in the British press in the 1960s, moved to Heaney's public endorsement of the Treaty of Lisbon, considered poets' responses to the media's branding of the Yugoslav Wars as tribal warfare, and ended with poetry in direct generic relationship with the news. Yet the news, while central to this project, is not the dominant theme. Most significantly, this dissertation has traced trends in how British and Irish poetry has responded—or been expected to respond—to violence in a time and place that has supposedly abolished organized conflict: Europe after the Second World War. As poets work through the apparent paradox of new ethnic warfare in contemporary Europe, their own ideas about what poetry is, does, or should be often shift in response. The idea of lyric has long been embedded in notions of privacy and individuality, qualities that also underlie the European imaginary. When poets write lyric poetry to address tragedies in Europe that take place in the realm of the public and the plural, they create innovations in their theories and practices of poetry.

These considerations bring up many sets of terms that the poems themselves dismantle: modernity and tradition, Europe and tribe, civic and mythic, individual and collective, private and public, news and poetry. While "no lyric has ever stopped a tank," as Heaney said, postwar British and Irish poetry that contends with violent conflict in Europe offers, in Nick Laird's estimation, "a place where second thoughts are possible."[372]

[372] Seamus Heaney, *Government of the Tongue*, 107; Nick Laird, remarks at "A Tribute to Seamus Heaney: An Evening of Poetry and Song," October 2, 2014, Emory University.

Bibliography

Agee, Chris. *Next to Nothing*. London: Salt Publishing, 2009.

Agee, Chris, ed. *In the Heart of Europe: Poems for Bosnia*. London: Rushlight, 1998.

——. *The New North: Contemporary Poetry from Northern Ireland*. Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University Press, 2008

——. *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1998.

Alexander, Neal. *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010.

Allen, Tim and Jean Seaton, eds. *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Arata, Stephen D. "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 4 (July, 1990): 621–45.

Armitage, Andy. "Poetry in the Making." *The Ted Hughes Society Journal* (2012). http://www.thetedhughes-society.org/poetryinthemaking.htm.

Aughey, Arthur. *Politics of Englishness*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

Bahri, Deepika. *Native Intelligence: Aeshtetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Baldi, Roberta. "Traduzioni culturali: poesia e Unione Europea: 'Beacons at Bealtaine' (Seamus Heaney): cultura e civiltà anglofona attraverso la traduzione ragionata." Milan: EDUCatt, 2010.

Barfoot, C.C. *Black and Gold: Contiguous Traditions in Post-War British and Irish Poetry*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.

Barrios, Danielle. "Ciaran Caron's Belfast: Dedrafting the Destroyed Native Space." *Nordic Irish Studies* 10 (2011): 15-33.

Bate, Jonathan. "Hughes on Shakespeare." In Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted*

Hughes, 135-49.

Beasley, Sandra. "Child of Europe." In *The Facts on File Companion to World Poetry, 1900 to the Present*,
edited by R. Victoria Arana, 101. New York: Facts on File, 2008.

Begley, Monie. *Rambles in Ireland*. Old Greewich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1977.

Bergin, Tara. "Vasko Popa." *The Ted Hughes Society Journal* (2012).
http://www.thetedhughessociety.org/vaskopopa.htm.

Bernstein, Michael André. *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Bland, Lucy and Lesley Hall. "Eugenics in Britain: The View from the Metropole." In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, edited by Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, 213-221. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society*. Translated by L.A. Manyon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Bottici, Chiara and Benoit Challand. *Europe: Myth, Memory, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Brandes, Rand. "The Anthropologist's Uses of Myth." In Gifford, *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*, 67-80.

Brodsky, Joseph. *Collected Poems in English*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Byrne, Sandie. *H., v., & O: The Poetry of Tony Harrison*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

Byrne, Sandie, ed. *Tony Harrison: Loiner.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. New York: Harcourt, 1974.

Campbell, Matthew. *Irish Poetry under the Union, 1801-1924*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Carson, Ciaran. *Breaking News*. Wake Forest, NC: Wake Forest University Press, 2003.

——. "Escaped from the Massacre?" *The Honest Ulsterman* 50 (Winter 1975): 183-86.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Cleary, Joe. "Amongst Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context." *Éire-Ireland* 42, no. 1 (2007): 11–57.

Cohen, Ralph. "History and Genre." *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 203-218.

Collins, Floyd. *Seamus Heaney: The Crisis of Identity*. Cranbury, NJ, Rosemont Publishing, 2003.

Cooper, Frederick. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Corcoran, Neil. *English Poetry Since 1940*. London and New York: Longman, 1993.

——. *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney: A Critical Study*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.

——. "Yeats and Heaney." In O'Donoghue, *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, 165-77.

Crawford, Robert. *Devolving English Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Culler, Jonathan. "Lyric, History, Genre." In Jackson and Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 63-77.

Dainotto, Roberto M. *Europe (In Theory)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Davidson, Peter. *The Idea of North*. London: Reaktion, 2005.

Davies, Norman. *Europe: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Dawe, Gerald. *The Proper Word: Collected Criticism—Ireland, Poetry and Politics*, Edited by Nicholas Allen. Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2007.

Deane, Seamus. *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Delattre, Elisabeth. "'Between That World and This': A Reading of *Breaking News* by Ciaran Carson." *Estudios Irlandeses* 3 (2008): 84-91.

Douglass, Paul, ed. *T.S. Eliot, Dante, and the Idea of Europe*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011.

Dowson, Jane. *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Eco, Umberto. *The Infinity of Lists*. Translated by Alastair McEwen. New York: Rizzoli, 2009.

Eliade, Mircea. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.

——. *Zalmoxis: The Vanishing God*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Eliot, T.S. *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950*. New York: Harcourt, 1952.

——. "Notes towards the Definition of Culture." In *Christianity and Culture.* New York, Harcourt and Brace, 1949.

——. *Selected Essays*. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1932.

Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Faas, Ekbert. *Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe*. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1980.

Fenton, James. *Children in Exile: Poems 1968-1984*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1994

——. *Memory of War and Children in Exile: Poems 1968-1983*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.

——. *You Were Marvellous: Theatre Reviews from the "Sunday Times."* London: Jonathan Cape, 1983.

Fitzgibbon, Desmond. "Delfas, Dorqk, Nublid, Dalways: The Irish City after Joyce." In *Critical Ireland: New Essays in Irish Literature and Culture*, edited by Aaron Kelly and Alan A. Gillis. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001.

Forché, Carolyn. *The Country Between Us*. New York: Harper Collins, 1982.

——. "The Poetry of Witness." In *The Writer in Politics*, edited by William H. Gass and Lorin Cuoco, 135-161. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.

Foster, Roy. *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Fowles, John. *Wormholes*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964.

Gatto, Maristella. "'Through the Wall': Heaney's 'Impure' Translation in 'Ugolino' and *Sweeney Astray*." *BELLS: Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies* 11 (2000): 65-78.

Genette, Gérard, "The Architext." Translated by Jane E. Lewin. In Jackson and Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 17-27.

Gifford, Terry, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Gifford, Terry. *Ted Hughes*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009.

Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*. New York: Penguin, 1999.

Gioia, Dana. "The Rise of James Fenton." *The Dark Horse* 8 (Autumn 1999). http://www.danagioia.net/essays/ efenton.htm.

Goldberg, Elizabeth Swanson and Alexandra Schultheis Moore, eds. *Theoretical Perspectives on Human Rights and Literature.* New York: Routi, 2012.

Goldsworthy, Vesna. *Inventing Ruritania*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Hammond, Andrew. *British Literature and the Balkans: Themes and Contexts*. New York: Rodopi, 2010.

Harrison, Tony. *Collected Poems*. New York: Viking, 2007.

——. "Flicks and this Fleeting Life." *Collected Film Poetry*. London: Faber and Faber, 2007.

——. *Laureate's Block and Other Poems*. London: Penguin, 2000.

——. *Selected Poems*. London: Penguin, 2006.

Harsent, David. *Legion*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005.

——. *Sprinting From the Graveyard*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hart, Henry. "Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes: A Complex Friendship." *Sewanee Review* 120, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 76-90.

Hartley, John. *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture.* London:

Arnold, 1996.

Heaney, Seamus. “The Door Stands Open: Czesław Miłosz 1911-2004.” Dublin: Irish Writers Center, 2005.

——. *Electric Light*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001.

——. *Field Work*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

——. *Finders Keepers*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.

——. *The Government of the Tongue: Selected Prose 1978-1987*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990.

——. *The Haw Lantern*. London: Faber and Faber, 1987.

——. *North*. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.

——. “An Open Letter.” Derry: Field Day, 1983.

——. “A Poet’s Europe.” In *A Poet’s Europe: European Poetry Festival*, 159-160. Leuven: Europese Vereniging ter Bevordering van de Poëzie, 1991.

——. *The Redress of Poetry*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995.

——. *The Spirit Level*. London: Faber and Faber, 1996.

Heaney, Seamus and John Montague. “The Bag Apron, or, The Poet and His Community: the Inaugural Lecture of the Ireland Chair of Poetry.” Belfast: Lagan Press, 1998.

Hegel, G.W. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Translated by T.M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Hessell, Nikki. “The Opposite of News: Rethinking the 1800 Lyrical Ballads and the Mass Media.” *Studies in Romanticism* 45, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 331-53.

Hofstede, Geert. *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. 2nd ed. London: Sage, 2001.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

Horton, Patricia. “Romantic Intersections: Romanticism and Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry.” Dissertation, Queen's University Belfast, 1996.

Hughes, Ted. *Collected Poems*, Edited by Paul Keegan. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

——. *Gaudete*. London: Faber and Faber, 1977.

——. *The Letters of Ted Hughes*, Edited by Christopher Reid. London: Faber and Faber, 2007.

——. *Selected Translations*, Edited by Daniel Weissbort. New York: Farar, Strauss & Giroux, 2007.

——. *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993.

——. *Winter Pollen*. London: Faber and Faber, 1995.

Hunter, Walt. "Lyric and Its Discontents." *The Minnesota Review* 79 (2012): 78-90.

Ingelbien, Raphaël. "Seamus Heaney and England: A Map of Misreadings." *Contemporary Literature* 40, no. 4 (1999): 627-58.

Jackson, Virginia. *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Jackson, Virginia and Yopie Prins, eds. *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

Jameson, Frederic. *The Political Unconscious*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

——. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65-88.

Jarniewicz, Jerzy. "Seamus Heaney and Post-War Polish Poets." In *Seamus Heaney: Poet, Critic, Translator*, edited by Ashby Bland Crowder and Jason David Hall. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007.

Kaplan, Robert D. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Kay, Magdalena. *In Gratitude for all the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Kendall, Tim, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Kerr, Douglas. *Eastern Figures: Orient and Empire in British Writing*. Hong Kong:

Hong Kong University Press, 2008.

Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation*. London: Vintage, 1996.

——. "Undead in the Nineties." In *Irish Classics*, 379-98. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Korte, Barbara, Eva Ulrike Pirker, and Sissy Helff, eds. *Facing the East in the West: Images of Eastern Europe in British Literature, Film and Culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010.

——. "Wars and 'British' Identities: From Norman Conquerors to Bosnian Warriors. An Overview of Cultural Representations." In *War and the Cultural Construction of Identities in Britain*, edited by Barbara Korte and Ralf Schneider, 9-24. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002).

——. "War and Britishness after 1945: Narrating Bosnia." *Erfurt Electronic Studies in English* 6 (2005), http://webdoc.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic25/korte/6_2005.html.

Kreme, S. Lillian. *Holocaust Literature: Lerner to Zychlinsky*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Lazarus, Neil. "Spectres Haunting: Postcommunism and Postcolonialism." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 2 (May 2012): 117–129.

Lennon, Joseph. *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004.

Longley, Edna. *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994.

Ludwig, Hans-Werner and Lothar Fietz, eds. *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995.

Mackay, Peter. "Contemporary Irish Poetry and Romanticism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry*, edited by Fran Brearton and Alan A. Gillis, 297-307. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Malamud, Randy. "Dante as Guide to Eliot's Competing Traditions." In Douglass, *T.S. Eliot, Dante, and the Idea of Europe*, 123-132.

Markovits, Stefanie. *The Crimean War in the British Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Marshall, Cécile. "'Inwardness' and the 'quest for a public poetry' in the works of Tony

Harrison." In Merriman and Grafe, *Intimate Exposure*, 147-159.

McBride, Ian. *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Merriman, Emily Taylor and Adrian Grafe, eds. *Intimate Exposure: Essays on the Public-Private Divide in British Poetry since 1950*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010.

Miłosz, Czesław. *New and Collected Poems (1931-2001)*. Translated by Robert Hass. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.

——. *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*. Translated by Catherine S. Leach. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Moore, David Chioni. "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique." In *Baltic Postcolonialism: On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom and Moral Imagination in the Baltics*, edited by Violeta Kelertas, 11-43. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006.

Morash, Christopher. "Ghosts and Wires: The Telegraph and Irish Space." In *Ireland and the New Journalism*, edited by Karen Steele and Michael de Nie. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.

Morris, Adalaide. "Signaling: Feminism, Politics, and Mysticism in H.D.'s War Trilogy." *Sagatrieb* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1990): 121-33.

Morrison, Blake. *Seamus Heaney*. London and New York: Methuen, 1982.

Morrissey, Sinéad. *Between Here and There*. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2002.

Motion, Andrew. "Afterword." *101 Poems against War.* Edited by Michael Hollins and Paul Keegan. London: Faber & Faber, 2003: 135-7.

Mozatto, Cinzia. "Looking Eastwards: Borders and Border-Crossing in the Work of Ken Smith." In Korte, *Facing the East in the West*, 145-159.

Mufti, Aamir R. "Towards a Lyric History of India." In Jackson and Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader*, 603-617.

Novosel, Tony. *Northern Ireland's Lost Opportunity: The Frustrated Promise of Political Loyalism*. London: Pluto Press, 2013.

Obert, Julia C. "Sounding the City: Ciaran Carson and the Perceptual Politics of War." *Textual Practice* 26, no. 6 (December 2012): 1081-1110.

O'Brien, Peggy. *Writing Lough Derg: from William Carleton to Seamus Heaney*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006.

O'Brien, Sean. *The Deregulated Muse*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1998.

O'Donoghue, Bernard, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

O'Driscoll, Dennis, "The News that stays Poetry," in *Poetry Review* 77, no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 14-16.

——.*Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

O'Malley, Padraig. *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair*. Belfast: Blackstaff, 1990.

Pagden, Anthony. *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Paulin, Tom. *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Parker, Michael. "Hughes and the Poets of Eastern Europe." In *The Achievement of Ted Hughes*, edited by Keith Sagar, 37-51. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983.

——. "Czesław Miłosz and his Impact on Seamus Heaney's Poetry." *Textual Practice* 5, no. 1 (2013): 839-849.

Popa, Vasko. *Collected Poems*. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1997.

Poreé, Marc. "Poetry as 'Open Diagnosis'." In Merriman and Grafe, *Intimate Exposure*.

Pound, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. New York: New Directions, 1934, 1960.

——. *The Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907-1941*, Edited by D.D. Paige. London: Faber and Faber, 1951.

Quinn, Justin. "Heaney and Eastern Europe." In O'Donoghue, *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, 92-105.

Ramazani, Jahan. *A Transnational Poetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

——. *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

——. *The Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Robinson, Richard. *Narratives of the European Border*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Rowland, Antony. *Holocaust Poetry: Awkward Poetics in the Work of Sylvia Plath, Geoffrey Hill, Tony Harrison and Ted Hughes*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.

Rusbridger, Alan. "Tony Harrison and the Guardian." In Byrne, *Tony Harrison*, 133-136.

Russell, William. *William Russell Special Correspondent of* The Times, Edited by Roger Hudson. London: The Folio Society, 1995.

Rylance, Rick, "Doomsongs: Tony Harrison and War." In Byrne, *Tony Harrison*, 137-160.

Sagar, Keith M. *Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000.

Sacks, Peter M. *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spender to Yeats.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Shiach, Morag. "'To Purify the dialect of the tribe': Modernism and Language Reform." *Modernism/modernity* 14, no 1 (2007): 21-34.

Simić, Goran. *From Sarajevo with Sorrow*. Translated with Amela Simić. Windsor, Canada: Biblioasis, 2005.

Smith, Ken. *Shed: Poems 1980-2001*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 2002.

Smith, Ken and Judi Benson, eds. *Klaonica: Poems for Bosnia*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1993.

Smith, Stan. *Poetry and Displacement*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007.

Thomspon, N.S., "Book Ends: Public and Private in Tony Harrison's Poetry." In Byrne, *Tony Harrison*, 115-132.

Todorova, Marina. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Valis, Noël. "Fear and Torment in El Salvador." *Massachusetts Review: A Quarterly of Literature, the Arts and Public Affairs* 48, no 1 (Spring 2007): 117-131.

Vanheste, Jeroen. "The Idea of Europe." In *T.S. Eliot in Context*, edited by Jason

Harding, 52-59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Vendler, Helen. *Invisible Listeners*: *Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

——. *Seamus Heaney*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Vickers, Tom. "'*Poems like newspaper reports*': The influence of versioning Goran Simić's *From Sarajevo with Sorrow* on David Harsent and his poetic sequence *Legion.*" *Academia.edu*, accessed December 4, 2014. https://www.academia.edu/9716354/_Poems_like_newspaper_reports_The_ influence_of_versioning_Goran_Simi%C4%87_s_From_Sarajevo_with_Sorrow_on_David_Harsent_and_his_poetic_sequence_Legion.

Volsik, Paul. "Ted Hughes & the Folk Tale." In *Ted Hughes: Alternative Horizons*, edited by Joanny Moulin, 115-124. London: Taylor and Francis, 2005.

Waters, William. *Poetry's Touch: On Lyric Address*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Webb, Laura. "Mythology, Morality, and Memorialization: Animal and Human Endurance in Hughes' Poetry." In *Ted Hughes: From Cambridge to Collected*, edited by Mark Wormald, Neil Roberts, and Terry Gifford. London: Palgrave, 2013.

Weissbort, Daniel. *Ted Hughes and Translation*. Nottingham: Richard Hollis, 2011.

Wheatley, David. "'Dichtung und Wahrheit': Contemporary War and the Non-combatant Poet." In Kendall, *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, 653-666.

——. "Pushed Next to Nothing: Ciaran Carson's *Breaking News*." *Ciaran Carson: Critical Essays*, Edited by Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, 45-62. Dublin: Four Courts, 2009.

White, Gillian. *Lyric Shame: The "Lyric" Subject of Contemporary American Poetry*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Williams, William Carlos. "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower." In *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, edited by Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1986.

Woolf, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Yeats, W.B. *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, Edited by Richard J. Finneran New

York: Macmillan, 2008.

Yevtushenko, Yevgeny. “Pushkin in Belfast.” In *A Rage For Order: Poetry of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, edited by Frank Orsmby. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992.