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***VERSIONS OF IRISH PASTORAL POETRY:
W.B. YEATS AND SEAMUS HEANEY***

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Abstract: *The paper aims at presenting Yeats and Heaney as poets that inherited and continued the Irish pastoral literary tradition. Irish literature has shown its preoccupation with place and nature since its creation of the ancient *dinshenchas*, i.e. place-name poetry, expressing the lore of the place. The Irish pastoral tradition has been fruitfully interwoven with the classical and the English one. Moreover, a nostalgic mood/mode, typical of the pastoral tradition, has been a prominent characteristic of a people who has always sought the means to bridge the past and the present, to recover the past and heal the traumas of disruptions and emigration. Yeats's pastoral verse may have grown out of the need to create a self-consciously nationalist literature, as an attempt to continue previous models, in a context of the occult. Heaney's pastoral poetry has emerged in post-colonial Ireland, during a period of violence and chaos, in an "in-between" space. His early metaphors (the bog, the digger) and his representations of the Irish landscape, as feminine or as "the other", endeavor to establish or, at least, question, spatial, historical and cultural continuity.*

The article aims at presenting Yeats and Heaney as poets that inherited and continued the Irish pastoral literary tradition. What early elements of the Irish pastoral could be traced in Yeats and Heaney's works? How has the idealized version of Yeats's peasant been transformed into Heaney's digger or water-diviner? The article will attempt to show that there is much continuity and little discrepancy between the two poets, one representative of early-twentieth-century Irish culture and, the other, a spokesman of contemporary Ireland. If studies on Yeats tend to focus on his relying on the European and Romantic tradition to recreate a self-consciously national literature, or on the occult and the visionary in his poetry, it would be worth analyzing these elements, together with his immersion in folklore, myth, as a political tool and the manner in which he was offered responses in the Irish poetic tradition.

On the other hand, Heaney has been widely discussed as an inheritor of the Irish pastoral mode. The point is not to demonstrate the mere endurance of the Irish pastoral into contemporary poetry, from Yeats to Heaney, but to discuss the questioning and re-visitations of this mode (traditionally associated a poetry of the landscape seen as feminine, and in terms of (dis)continuity and suffering) in Seamus Heaney's "frontier

pastoral” (Frawley 146). Yeats had a double purpose, according to Heaney: “to restore a body of old legends and folk beliefs that would bind the people of the Irish place to the body of their world” and “to supplement this restored sense of historical place with a new set of associations that would accrue when a modern Irish literature, rooted in its own region and using its own speech, would enter the imagination of his countrymen” (*Preoccupations* 135).

Irish literature has shown its preoccupation with place and nature since its creation of the ancient *dinshenchas*, i.e. place-name poetry, expressing the lore of the place, the beauties of nature and local narratives. A nostalgic mood/mode, typical of the pastoral tradition, has been a prominent characteristic of a people who has always sought means to bridge the past and present and heal the traumas of disruptions and emigration, such as the Irish. Thus, the theoretical approach of the essay will resort to the conceptual framework of post-colonialism, nationalism and cultural identity. The pastoral, expressing in general the longing for a lost culture/ order, features the connection nature - nostalgia. “Nostalgia” comes from *nostos* (Gr. = home) and *algos* (Gr. = pain) and was originally used as a term in 1688 by a doctor to describe a condition of “homesickness” (Frawley 3). According to Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space* (qtd. in Frawley 3), memories represent the theoretically unrecoverable past and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are. This idea points to the connection between the localized place and nature in Irish literature and the theme of nostalgia.

The Irish pastoral tradition has been fruitfully interwoven with the classical and the English one. The term “pastoral” (in Latin - “pertaining to shepherd”) emerged as a minor but important mode which, by convention, was concerned with the lives of the shepherds. Its origins and many of the conventions are associated with Theocritus’s bucolic poems (316-260 BC), in which the shepherds were involved in contests of piping. The tradition has been taken over by Virgil in his *Eclogues* on the “golden age” in which innocent shepherds lived in primitive bliss. Christianity further developed the symbolism of the pastoral depicting Christ as the Shepherd and the world as His flock and the life of the shepherd as a model of tranquility and harmonious love.

For the classics, such as Theocritus or Virgil, who were known to the Irish people through seventh century translations by scribes, the pastoral mode meant an idealization of country life. As far as the Irish tradition is concerned, in the beginning, there was the “hermit poetry”, dating seventh to tenth century, which was believed to be the result of life in simple nature not pastoral conceit and which praised nature and did not mourn its loss. Early medieval Fenian literature presented conventional descriptions of nature as setting for the exploits of the *fián*, the travelling hunting warriors, whose primitive life was actually sophisticate, consciously chosen and a blending of culture and nature. With the twelfth – thirteenth centuries, nature poetry in Ireland is doubled by the nostalgic mode, in the sense that the pastoral is associated with figures of marginality, such as Sweeney, the cursed mad king forced into the desire for the outdoor beauties; thus, it is displacement that brings the natural world into focus.

If Christianity grieved over the loss of the Garden of Eden as man's natural state, the Vergilian pastoral bemoaned the spoiling of nature through urbanization, Irish bardic poetry (1200-1700) – under the Norman influence – worried about the link between patrons and the natural world; this relationship emphasizes the representation of the lord as married to the personified land, which in time, led to the feminized Irish landscape, defeated by colonialism. With the Tudors' colonization (late sixteenth – early seventeenth century) and the increase in land ownership by English and Scottish planters and decrease in land ownership by the native Irish, place became more closely connected with nostalgia; the role of the bard and of poetry are questioned while the bardic order is under threat. In the Elizabethan era, with the deforestation of Ireland and the first cartographic attempts by the English in the country, the pastorals by Elizabethan writers, such as Spenser, tried to justify the colonial approach.

Interestingly, patterned on the Renaissance cabinet of curiosities, the museum, in the early eighteenth century, could be perceived as a signifier of European attitudes towards the natural and cultural world of the other, implying issues of ownership and colonization. The advent of the Irish museum implied an internal colonialism by admitting the passing of certain Irish cultural forms. Similarly, the Irish landscape may be seen as a natural museum of ancient Irish history, a bearer of the past. Therefore, the Irish Romanticism is different from the English one, with the emphasis on culture not nature and far from an aestheticist approach. It is easy to conceive of the difference if we bear in mind the fact that land in Ireland was a signifier of power and authority, the only way of surviving, an object of dispute, a sign of English colonialism. The eighteenth century also associated the pastoral with descriptions of particular places, being thus a topographical genre. In the 1830s, the Ordnance Survey, the mapping, chartering and recording and often altering of Ireland meant an assertion of colonial control over Ireland. In the 1840s and 1850s, the post-Famine Ireland looked like a war zone, the violent relationship with the land signifying to an extent the failure of the pastoral. The landscape of Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was Irish, in the sense that it was physically attached to the country, and not-Irish, in the sense that Ireland was not independent. Thus, landscape is equal to culture rather than nature.

Initially rooted in Irish mythology and in the European Romantic tradition, Yeats's pastoral verse may have grown out of the need to create a self-consciously nationalist literature, as an attempt to continue models from the previous ages. For the Revivalists, the Irish nation meant rurality; the landscape was the site of real Ireland. Yeats's writings develop a representation of nature infused with a pastoral nostalgia for an Ireland of the imagination; they partake of the Irish tradition of writing about place as a way of memorializing lost culture. Ireland was, for Yeats, an imaginary homeland "the sort of place endlessly invented and reinvented by exiles who fear that, if they do not give it a local habitation in words, it may entirely disappear" (Kiberd 99). By imaginatively "mapping" his Ireland of the mind, Yeats proposed to contribute to the creation of a modern Irish national literature through his retrieval of Irish place and to forge the

consciousness of his fellow citizens, to use Joyce's words, just as he would try to achieve by founding the Abbey Theatre and through his activity as a public figure and senator in The Irish Free State. Yeats genuinely loved the west of Ireland for its beauty and its associations with folklore, legend and myth. He also saw "in the celebration of place a useful corrective to the abstractness of conscious patriotism" (Watson 99). Today, Yeats's name has come to be associated with Co. Sligo, Innisfree, Ben Bulbin, Coole Park, Thoor Ballylee, which are known as "Yeats Country"

Yeats turned to the Irish past and literature; the holiness of the Irish landscape was found again in the tradition of the *dinshenchas/ dinnsheanchas* (=place-name poems/knowledge of the lore of the place). Correspondences between the world of old Ireland and the Ireland that Yeats sought to revive in the present aimed to create a nationalist literature by bridging past and present. Yeats was attracted to poets who considered nature, mysticism, the esoteric and vision as fundamental. Yeats was also influenced, in his endeavour, by an American writer, Henry David Thoreau, whose texts epitomized the idea of writing itself as a political act and as the blending of the literary, cultural and political. On Thoreau's influence regarding the idealization of landscape, Yeats wrote *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade. (31)

I still had the ambition, formed in Sligo in my teens, of living, in imitation of Thoreau on Innisfree, a little island in Lough Gill, and when walking through Fleet Street very homesick I heard a little tinkle of water and saw a fountain in a shop-window which balanced a little ball upon its jet, and began to remember lake water. From the sudden remembrance came my poem Innisfree, my first lyric with anything in its rhythm of my own music. (qtd. in Frawley 67)

Interestingly, according to his own confession, this was the first poem in which he felt that he managed to strike the right note to express his ideas and feelings. Heaney makes the same statement about "Digging" (*Death of a Naturalist*), the title of which points at a pastoral loaded with heavier meanings than mere yearning for innocent existence in nature.

Another American influencing Yeats was Whitman ("the proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it," in Frawley 67), with his admiration for the word Mississippi (which to his ear flowed and unwound like the river). Whitman's admiration for the American river is paralleled by Yeats's ritual invocation of places known and esteemed. The sense of place will become Yeats's touchstone and his art theories will depend upon rooting mythology in the earth. Coole Park, Lady Augusta Gregory's estate, became a special place engendering visions, which are crucial to Yeats's poetics:

I was crossing a little stream near Inchy wood and actually in the middle of a stride from bank to bank, when an emotion never experienced before swept down upon me. I said, 'That is what the devout Christian feels, that is how he surrenders his will to the will of God'. I felt an extreme surprise, for my whole imagination was preoccupied with the pagan mythology of ancient Ireland, I was marking in red ink; upon a large map, every sacred mountain. (qtd. in Frawley 73)

Having immersed himself in the space of prophecy, the poet reaches the visionary. The power of nostalgia takes place in people's imagination, leading them to the projections of identities in the present, with the Irish nation as the ultimate projection. Yeats's pastoral depicts a romantic and nationalist Ireland, the country of "saints and scholars", to quote popular historians. The Revival magus is to be found in Ireland, fathered by and closely attached to this landscape:

The Celtic adept whom I am inclined to regard as the genius of the renaissance in its literary and intellectual aspects lives in a little whitewashed cottage. I feel convinced it is in Donegal or Sligo. There is a great log of a tree with the bark still on it a few feet before the door. It is on a gentle slope. He is middle-aged, has a grey golden beard and hair, (more golden than grey) face very delicate and absorbed. Eyes have a curious fire in them, broad forehead. (Denson qtd. in Graft 37)

Yeats's pastoral may be described as anti-colonial: in its celebration of ties to the landscape, it goes against London and city life, the English attempts to "civilize" Irish culture and criticizes Ireland's colonial situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The poet emphasizes the contrast between modern English urban life (scientific, industrial, anti-colonial and skeptical) and the simplicities of traditional Irish peasant life. Ireland as a pastoral retreat remained one of the major themes of many of his early poems. For example, in the text discussed earlier, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, the themes include exile, the spirit's journey from life to death, an idealized pastoral life, the symbols of the lake/island as isolation, perfection in nature, musicality, places and states of mind described as 'in between': shores, lakes and islands, twilight and dawn, dreams and visions. The Irish countryman could never fall victim to materialism because the very landscape of his country and his racial memory (the "bog", in Heaney's poems) are infused with the ethos of an ancient spiritual world.

Among the other sources of Yeats's poem, we may mention the tradition of the Irish "hermit poems" and mythology (islands as in-between places related to the otherworld), with the marginalized of Irish legendary figures, such as Sweeney, Finn and Oisín, which may be likened to Yeats's own sense of Anglo-Irish solitude. Tales of ghosts, haunting and fairies provided the Anglo-Irish with an imaginary that reflected their own sense of insecurity and unease. Thus, Yeats discovered a broader context for his personal sense of exile (his Anglo-Irish solitude) and the need to identify himself and his writing as Irish in the powerful nationalist movement in Ireland (which sought to define

Ireland as rural, traditional, mystical and its politics as a drama of charismatic figures such as Ch. St. Parnell). The nationalist movement was inventing its Irish nature, culture and mythology as distinct from those imposed during the history of the English as Ireland. And Yeats was inventing his own Ascendancy idealism. The energizing principle for Yeats in his confection of these Romantic visions may have come from the belief that “Ireland was the only place in Europe in which the aristocratic and peasant element had a fair chance of winning” (Deane 39) in the confrontation with the industrial and utilitarian ethic.

After projecting the image of Ireland, Yeats himself begins deconstructing the image of which he was the final key architect. In later poems, such as “The Second Coming”, what remains of the previous nostalgic view is the longing for Byzantium, seen as an ahistorical Eden, the apocalyptic vision of landscape and the visionary abilities of the poet-bard. In “Sailing to Byzantium” too, Byzantium becomes a universal pastoral place, not merely Irish and the last part of the poem deals with the role of art and the poet in general. Thus, Yeats’s pastoral has been extended beyond the Irish tradition, regaining its broader classical dimension and employing the cyclical approach he explained in his *Vision*. Yeats’s last poems mark this shift towards a more realistic and critical approach regarding an idealized vision of Ireland. The pastoral with Yeats seems to have started rather romantic drawing on folk-tales, such as the ones gathered in his *Celtic Twilight*, continued more rooted in Irish places, depicting a romantic and nationalist Ireland, and ended with the feeling of loss of a pastoral age doubled by the possibility of regaining the pastoral age integrated in an occult dimension. Yeats, as the twentieth-century magus” (Graft xvi), ultimately treasured his beliefs in a sort of *Anima Mundi*, reincarnation, esoteric systems, the constant interlocking of the natural and the supernatural, which left hope for revelations, and poetry writing as a magical act, with the desire to promote Ireland imaginatively through occult learning.

The contemporary poet, similar to the early modern one, speaks, in his pastoral poetry, as a topologist about a localized “geography of the imagination”. Both stand in an interpretative relationship to place and become a voice of the spirit of the region. The artist’s writing becomes infused, to use Seamus Heaney’s words, with the physical and emotional atmosphere of that landscape. Discussing Yeats in relation to writers and place, Heaney states an idea that perfectly describes himself as a poet, “one whose poems have created a country of the mind rather than the other way round (and the more usual way), where the country has created the mind which in turns creates the poems” (“Place of Writing”, *Finders Keepers* 232-245). Heaney, like other Northern Irish predecessors, living during tumultuous times, has envisaged place and nature as stability, continuity and identity in moments when these elements were under severe pressure. According to him, “we are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers, we make homes and search for our histories. And when we look for the history of our sensibilities I am convinced ... that it is to ... the stable element, the land itself, that we must look for continuity” (*Preoccupations* 148-9).

Heaney's vision comprises the landscape as "sacramental, instinct with signs, implying a system of reality beyond the visible realities" ("The Sense of Place", *Preoccupations* 132). Religion and myth are tightly linked to Heaney's concept of place. With Heaney the topologist, the self and the other are defined in terms of spatial oscillation. In the poet's own words, his poetry becomes an attempt to achieve the marriage between the "geographical country" and the "country of the mind" ("The Sense of Place", *Preoccupations* 131-149) in a country troubled by fractures of history, north and south, and of land (re)possession. Religion recovers its etymological dimension, "religare", meaning to fasten or to bind. Due to his attachment to the place, the poet performs an act of healing of the audience through the beneficial powers of the Irish landscape revealed in his pastoral verse. The tight relationship between literature and the locale and the nourishment born out of the feeling of belonging to a certain place are not an Irish prerogative but seem stronger with Irish poets.

Heaney, in response to Yeats, imagines an Irish landscape infused with pagan and Christian elements. Yeats, in an introduction to his work, makes a statement of his aesthetic convictions in terms of the intertwining of the heathen and the Christian:

Oisín, new come from his three hundred years of fairyland, and of the love that is in fairyland, bids St. Patrick cease his prayers a while and listen to the blackbird, because it is the blackbird of Darrycarn that Fionn brought from Norway, three hundred years before, and set its nest upon the oak tree with his own hands. (qtd. in Welch xxv)

The reader is equally invited to take part in a visionary act of imagination in religious terms in Heaney's poem "St. Kevin and the Blackbird":

Imagine being Kevin. Which is he?
Self-forgetful or in agony all the time
(*"St. Kevin and the Blackbird"* *The Spirit Level* 20)

St. Kevin represents the ideal of equilibrium and self-sacrifice, with his arm stretched for the birds to nest in for months until the young are able to fly. Body in the cell, earth-bound and arm "stiff/As a crossbeam", palm up, toward the sky "linked/Into the network of eternal life", St. Kevin stands transfigured, enraptured, suspended between spirit and flesh during the miraculous nesting, hatching, fledgling in his palm. Old saints, according to legends, prayed with their arms outstretched. The saint's entire body in Heaney's text makes a prayer in this land of saints (Stanca 233). Many other place poems by Heaney display a sort of backward look, typical of an alienated mood and of the Irish ancient hermit poetry. Out of the quarrel with his self, Heaney emerges as an "inner émigré" as he calls himself in the poem "Exposure" (North).

Heaney is a creator of “a country of the mind”, similar to Yeats, in the sense that he has brought “the bogland” to the English literary canon (Stanca 76). To Heaney the young boy, the bogland was a bottomless place of initiation, a mystery:

It is as if I am betrothed to them, and I believe my betrothal happened one summer evening, thirty years ago, when another boy and myself stripped to the white country skin and bathed in a moss-hole, treading the liver-thick mud, unsettling a smoky muck off the bottom and coming out smeared and weedy and darkened. We dressed again and went home in our wet clothes, smelling of the ground and the standing pool, somehow initiated. (“Mossbawn”, *Preoccupations* 18-19).

Yeats also seeks the beyond, when going to the countryside, and visits the Tír na nÓg or Tír Tairngire (The Land of Youth, The Land of Promise). For Heaney, the bogland may be considered the “objective correlative” for the memory of the landscape, “a landscape that remembered everything that happened in and to it” (“Feeling into Words”, *Preoccupations* 54). Digging into the bogland, the poet brings to the surface the hidden (and real, in essentialist terms) Ireland.

Heaney also focuses on tensions between different ways of knowing a place. In his essay “The Sense of Place” (*Preoccupations* 131), he discusses a lived, illiterate, unconscious way, through the ancient Irish poetic tradition of dinnseanchas, forming a kind of “mythological etymology”. This approach is illustrated by Heaney’s place-name poems in the volumes *Wintering Out* and *North*. Secondly, there are the legends associated with the place names, (“The whole of the Irish landscape is a manuscript which we have lost the skill to read”, according to J. Montague quoted by Heaney in “The Sense of Place”, *Preoccupations* 132). Thirdly, the poet mentions a learned, literate, conscious way, through literary filter: certain places have become famous thanks to writers that have rendered them familiar to readers, e.g. Yeats and Innisfree or Heaney and the bogland. Heaney undertakes a dual vision, a negotiating approach between two senses of place, in response to Yeats, among other goals: the marriage of the mind with nature and the release of the powers of previous generations of ancestors and writers. Yet, the dangers must be taken into account – the space may be creative, a real source for the poet (such as in the case of the bottomless bog inviting imagination, in the poem “Bogland”), but it can equally act as the earth goddess, who demands sacrifices (such as with the earth goddess requiring the sacrifice of the Tollund man, in the poem “The Tollund Man”).

The primacy of the geographical element to Heaney’s vision is beyond question. Volumes such as *Wintering Out* and *North* have been interpreted as possible geographical inquiries into historical experiences. This process engenders a two-way reading, i.e. these poems are born out of profound attachment to the native place and of a powerful tradition of place-name poetry; on the other hand, what they may lead to is the same essentialist nativist mythology that eventually triggers violence.

To locate the roots of one's identity in the ethnic and liturgical habits of one's group might be all very well, but for the group to confine the range of one's growth, to have one's sympathies determined and one's responses programmed by it was patently another form of entrapment. ("Place and Displacement: Recent Poetry from Northern Ireland". *Finders Keepers* 117-118)

The critic Stan Smith ends his study on Irish Poetry and the Construction of Modern Identity with a statement of relevance for Heaney's approach to landscape, namely that "an ambilocated space, the place of the hyphen" is, paradoxically, the "true location" (Smith 219) of the Irish poets after Yeats. Smith defines "ambilocation" in the following terms: "a matter of being always in one place which may be Belfast, but also at the same time in many other places, dis-located, relocated, mis-placed, displaced, everywhere and anywhere" (203).

Heaney's may be called a "frontier pastoral" (Frawley 146), in two senses, as it deals with border issues (separating the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland) and as a hybrid type of pastoral that draws its sources from other types. Geographically, politically, historically, linguistically and culturally, Heaney stands on the border between different places, cultures, traditions and languages. Critics have referred to a coextensivity between the self and this multicultural space. So, Heaney must have been affected by all these competing (his)stories, cultural forces and dialects.

I grew up between the predominantly Protestant and loyalist village of Castledawson and the generally Catholic and nationalist district of Bellaghy. In a house situated between the railway and a road. Between the old sounds of a trotting horse and the newer sounds of a shunting engine. (*Finders Keepers* 50)

The excerpt quoted above, from the essay "Something to Write Home About" (*Finders Keepers* 48-58), show that the manner in which Heaney describes his liminal condition as a child undermines any simple relationship between the poet and his place. Boundaries have shaped the Northern Irish poet's identity in a profound manner. Heaney dwells on the boundaries within his native place in many of his essays as well. The impression is one of community and division side by side, with the child living on a borderland between towns, languages, accents, religions. In the same essay, Heaney equally ponders on the significance of the god of boundaries and borders, Terminus. The mythical figure stands in the Temple of Jupiter on Capitol Hill with an opening above his head, as if the god of borders on earth needed access to the boundless sky to compensate for the limitations down there. Both the image in the essay and the poem entitled "Terminus" (Haw Lantern), which was written before the essay, draw a parallel between the god's function and the representation of young Heaney standing in the middle of Moyola River in Co. Derry, in a posture and experiencing a feeling similar to that of Terminus.

The poem “Terminus” foregrounds the verb “to hoke”, which in the Northern Irish dialect means “to dig around, to delve into and forage for”, this being the action attributed to a poem by Heaney starting with his first volume. Heaney explains, in his essay “Something to Write Home About”, that this is the term that started the poem “Terminus”. Then, it connected it to the kind of liminal experience one has to put up with when living in Northern Ireland. If we dig into the poem we become aware of the fact that growing there triggers encountering boundaries everywhere, which, paradoxically, forces the individual into “second thoughts”, into accepting opposing claims and being tolerant. Any experience can be ascribed several interpretations, only that in Northern Ireland such contradictions seem to arise more passion than anywhere else (Stanca 86-87).

Another key verb that Heaney uses in the poem “Terminus” and explains in the same essay is “to march”; the context here is not that of protest marches or Orange marches but that of the land, the verb meaning “to be bordered by, to be marched up to and yet marked off from, one farm marched another farm”. It is a verb suggesting division and solidarity at the same time: “If my land marched your land, we were bound by that boundary as well as separated by it” (“Something to Write Home About” *Finders Keepers* 52).

I was the march drain and the march drain’s banks
Suffering the limit of each claim.
(“Terminus” *Haw Lantern* 4)

The poem ends “in stasis”, as Heaney himself claims, in the context of the mid-1980s in Ireland, when there seems to be no solution:

I wrote the ‘Terminus’ poem in the mid-1980 when the political situation in northern Ireland was totally locked and blocked; in the post-hunger-strike world, when the IRA’s campaign showed no sign of abating and the Thatcher government was prepared to live with what was termed an acceptable level of violence. (“Something to Write Home About”, *Finders Keepers* 526)

The title of another poem, “The Other Side”, seems to suggest that the lines of division sometimes follow the lines of the land and are difficult to erase. The “other side” is the place where a Protestant farmer’s “lea sloped” to meet the Catholic Heaneys’ ground. The two sides of the march drain dividing the Heaneys’ field from that of the neighbour’s are parceled by the two sides of the divided community in Northern Ireland.

When he would stand like that
on the other side, white-haired, swinging his blackthorn
at the marsh weeds,
he prophesied above our scraggy acres,
Your side of the house, I believe,
hardly ruled by the book at all.
(“The Other Side” *Wintering Out* 24)

The ending of this poem is, however, more optimistic than that of “Terminus” in the sense that the final suggestion is that of a crossing being attempted by those who care about finding common ground and narratives.

In terms of the masculine and feminine modes of representation of the landscape (Ireland/ nature/other, or as colonized subject revealed to a male/English/colonizing gaze), the poem “Act of Union” features an allegorical story; there are violent scenes of rape seen as counterparts of the English invasion of Ireland. The violent act of impregnation can be thought as having produced the present situation in Northern Ireland. The poems envision no ultimate solutions to this conflict; the wound is left open.

I am still imperially
Male, leaving you with the pain,
The rending process in the colony,
The battering ram, the boom burst from within.
..... No treaty
I foresee will save completely your tracked
And stretchmarked body, the big pain
That leaves you raw, like opened ground again.
(“Act of Union” North 43)

Interestingly, the poem is a sonnet, in Heaney’s manner, in a reverse mode, as if Heaney’s pastoral poem sought to invade the English sonnet tradition.

The poem “From the Frontier of Writing” testifies of a vision that is vital for the understanding of the issues discussed throughout this paper regarding the manner in which Heaney presents the changing of the physical frontier into one of writing. The poem seems to have been prompted by routine patrol check-ups during “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland. There is the physical frontier, a place where the Irish were stopped and had their cars and belongings inspected; this frontier is guarded by the troops and they together with the sergeant are seen as huge and angry birds of prey.

Once through the physical barrier, the speaker is free to re-imagine the experience and represent it through writing. This is how the physical frontier and the frontier of writing are connected until they are destroyed altogether, the function of poetry being that of barrier breaker:

And suddenly you’re through, arraigned yet freed
as if you’d passed from behind a waterfall
on the black current of a tarmac road.
(“From the Frontier of Writing” *Haw Lantern* 6)

What one experiences consists of overcoming an invisible roadblock of consciousness and conscience with writing becoming an agent of personal release; it is a

moving across a frontier towards freedom, a movement from an inferno of political subjection to a paradise of imaginative enablement.

Heaney's pastoral poetry has emerged in post-colonial Ireland, during a period of violence and chaos, the landscape being an advertizing strategy and the boundaries between the natural and the cultural blurred (i.e. a visit to a natural 'site' in Ireland represented as a visit to the museum). At present, natural sites, such as the vales of Glendalough or the lakes of Killarney, have become "cultural centres"; visiting them is similar to a trip to a museum, drawing on the notion of rural Ireland as more genuine than the urban world (Frawley 137). Thus, Heaney's early metaphors (the bog, digging) and his representations of Irish landscape as feminine or as the self or 'the other' endeavor to establish spatial continuity, triggering a self-reflexive nostalgia. At times, violence impregnates the poems so that they have the appearance of militarized pastorals. According to Oona Frawley, in *Irish Pastoral: Nostalgia and Twentieth-Century Irish Literature*, Heaney's pastoral tensions have been national and indicative of a permanent struggle to establish continuity of identity within a contested space.

In conclusion, the Irish pastoral mode, as represented by Yeats and Heaney, reflects not only other pastoral traditions (i.e. the classical, the English) but also the historical circumstances that have shaped such poetry in Ireland. Heaney's place-name poetry takes precedence in Yeats's early Romantic approach, in which

.... local-colour writing celebrated the individualities of particular places, and gloried in whatever dialectical speech or surviving antiquities of custom or belief could be offered to prove the uniqueness of life in a given locality. Such a course, while risking quaintness, could put into a writer's hands ancient traditions as yet untouched by the mechanical forces of change since the Industrial Revolution. But in Ireland, the impetus towards the literary uses of such material was not only from Romantic nostalgia. From the beginnings, the local-color movement had an overt political significance. (Paul Hoffman qtd. in Dawe 33)

This attitude must come from the way in which the Irish saw life for decades and from the political nature of Irish life; the constant emphasis on representations of the Irish landscape may have several sources: the Great Famine inscribed deeply in the landscape and collective psyche, the long-lasting idealization of de Valera's age and the post-colonial heritage in which land's ownership becomes more problematic.

An interesting point may be the fact that Yeats's imagined Ireland should not be perceived as merely engendered by the post-colonial experience, which seeks to assert the continuity of the racial layer of the colony in mystical terms. By singing Ireland in his pastoral verse, Yeats must have sought liberating responses, such as the ones coming from later poets, such as Heaney. Another widely held Irish perception, shared by Yeats and Heaney regards the duty of the poet, who has to voice the spiritual and cultural values of its people. Both poets (have) lived and created with a sense of duality, a disquieting

“Anglo-Irish solitude” (Watson 87) for Yeats, and a comforting in-betweenness for Heaney. Also, the poet-seer, still in touch with “Druidic methods and practices” and reciting the heroic life of Cuchulain (Welch xxvi), features prominently in Yeats and Heaney’s pastorals. Both Yeats and Heaney must have been aware of the nostalgic idealization of the Irish landscape in their pastoral poetry.

On the other hand, if Yeats set out to recover the Irish past and then realized with nostalgia the impossibility of an absolute retrieval, the circumstances in Northern Ireland since the late 1960s demanded Heaney an attention to the land as an element of stability continuing in the medieval and Revival pastoral mode. While Yeats considered that he had “to build” a genuine Irish literary tradition, Heaney had nothing to prove in this respect; his role may have been to question the Irish naturalizing and romanticizing the traditional. Whereas Yeats focused on opposing elements – Irish/ English, past/ present, spiritual/ material, Heaney is interested in the “marriage” of Irish and English, past and present, country and city, woman and man. The Irish pastoral continues to function as a way of expressing cultural tensions: nostalgia for a lost culture, celebration of the Irish landscape, construction of the Irish identity, the rendering of the Irish landscape through English language in a classical poetic form.

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