

MUSTAFA BAL
Sarajevo

A GENERIC ANALYSIS OF SEAMUS HEANEY'S *NORTH AS A POETRY BOOK*

Being writings of a relatively short genre, poems generally require to be published in collections rather than as individual pieces. Only after writing poems in sufficient numbers to compose a book can a poet have his poems published. The publication that emerges may be a *collection* of separate poems composed within the same time period by the same poet, brought together within the same bindings, but unconnected to each other in any other way. In such a case, the ordering of the poems would not be very significant and would probably be organised in relation to their date of composition. The overall outcome of the collection would be a *group* of poems brought together by time (the period of composition) and place (the confines of the book). On the other hand, if the poet writes his poems on a certain theme, or with a certain style, or a design in mind, setting them in relation with each other, the publication that appears will be more than a collection: it will be a book of poems, brought together by a common aim, a certain design, and a unifying theme. In this case, the ordering and the organisation of the poems would be greatly significant in portraying the thematic or stylistic design of the poet. The overall outcome of the book would be a team of poems, each related to the other and to the whole, constituting parts of a greater scheme, bringing their individual meanings and styles together to form a greater meaning and style as a whole.

Other than collections of poetry, another style in publishing poems is possible through an anthology, which brings together the significant or outstanding poems of a selected group of writers, or a certain period, or a common style or a theme. In an anthology, poems become indi-

vidual entities reflecting their own particular features as well as contributing to the general design of the compilation, which help it represent a general movement, a period, a style or a theme of poetry. Thus, individual poems selected from poetry collections or books may lose some of their original meanings and gain some new meanings when inserted into an anthology. Especially in the case of a poetry book, with regard to the distinction made above, the individual poem may lose a considerable amount of meaning, or some of its meanings may be modified, when it is separated from its fellow poems and placed within foreign poems that do not carry the design of the book it comes from. In this sense, anthologising poems can reduce, obscure or modify the meaning of poems while, on the other hand, can give them wider perspectives by putting them into schemes of more general contexts. The exact effect anthologising will have on a poem is largely connected to the type of poetry collection or book the poem comes from and the part-whole relation involved in that collection or book. Under the lights of what has been mentioned, this study will endeavour to make a generic analysis of Seamus Heaney's *North* as a poetry book in terms of this part-whole relation, taking into consideration the poet's aims in writing (the poems in) the book as well as considering the thematic and stylistic structure of the book. The point will then be further analysed through two significantly illustrative poems from *North* to show how their meanings are related to the book as a whole and how they are modified when separated from their whole and placed in an anthology.

Published in 1975, when the Northern Ireland problem, or the 'Troubles', was at its height and violence and fear dominated the streets of Belfast, *North*, as the name suggests, primarily deals with the Northern Ireland crisis after 1969. Seamus Heaney had moved to the Republic of Ireland a few years before and this 'move from war-torn Belfast to the rural peace of Co. Wicklow' was regarded by some as a rejection and a betrayal². Thus, although he previously wrote 'nature poetry of the kind written by Ted Hughes'³, Heaney felt pressure on him,

¹ Neil Corcoran, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 56.

² Elmer Andrews, ed, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000), p. 80.

³ Ian Ousby, *The Wordsworth Companion to Literature in English* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Reference, 1994), p. 418.

both externally and internally, to deal with the social and political problems of his people in his poetry. This pressure also brought about the second major issue or theme of *North*, that is, the nature of poetry, the two types of poetry and the relationship between poetry and politics.

North is a book of conflicts: of external conflicts between the Irish and the English, the Catholics and the Protestants, victims and oppressors, crime and punishment; of internal conflicts between individual desire and communal responsibility, instinct and reason, guilt and justification, humanism and tribal revenge, poetry and politics. These conflicts are reflected not only through individual poems but also thematically, stylistically and structurally in the book itself. This is what makes *North* so important as a book of poems with a specific aim and design, rather than just a collection. Thus, a true understanding of *North* can only be achieved through an analysis of the thematic and stylistic structure alongside the analysis of the poems themselves.

After two prefatory poems dedicated to Heaney's aunt, which describe scenes from the Irish countryside with the implied themes of love, peacefulness and timelessness, *North* is divided into two parts. The first of these parts deals with the ancient civilisations of the north, their rituals, their sacrifices, their violence, and their language. The poems use ancient Viking and Celt artefacts, tombs, rituals and words to create a myth of the north, a description of the 'feuding, brutal yet joyous society'⁴ that has inhabited Ireland. The persona of the poems is like a bard of those ancient times, singing about the features of his society by using their language. In relation, Dillon Johnston remarks that 'in Part I a bardic persona enlarges the Ulster violence to include the state of mind called *north*, the sinister side of man, inhabited by Norsemen, *Njal's* Icelandic heroes, and Jutland Celts. Current inhumanity is displaced by ancient inhumations, the victims sacrificed to the Earth Mother, Nerthus'⁵. The poems also use the archaeological find of the "bog people"⁶ to portray the violent and sacrificial nature of the society and to

⁴ Ronald Tamplin, *Seamus Heaney* (Philadelphia: Open UP, 1989), p. 51.

⁵ Dillon Johnston, 'Irish Poetry After Joyce (Heaney and Kavanagh)', in *Critical Essays on Seamus Heaney*, ed. by Robert F. Garratt (New York: G. K. Hall and Co, 1995), p. 202.

⁶ «Bog people» are the murdered or sacrificed people of the Iron Age in Denmark whose bodies have been preserved by the bog in which they were buried (Stephen Greenblatt, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 2 vols, (London: Norton, 2006), p. 2823.

form an analogy between that society and the modern society of Ireland dealing with the Ulster problem. As O'Donoghue points 'Part I is a mythopoeic presentation of events and issues in the *North*, relying for its principle metaphorical device on the parallel of the exhumations from the bogs in Jutland described in P. V. Glob's *The Bog People*'.⁷ Thus, Part I of *North* forms a link between the past and the present, showing them to be parallel and indicating the collective unconscious of the people of Ireland; the violence and bloodshed, sacrifice and martyrdom, invasion and colonisation that has always existed on the land.

Blake Morrison, who makes an in-depth analysis of the overall structure and meaning of *North* in his book *Seamus Heaney*, subdivides this first part of the book into three subparts, which are bound together by the first poem ('Antaeus') and the last poem ('Hercules and Antaeus') of Part I. The first poem 'Antaeus' is about the Greek mythological figure who received his strength from the earth. The poem is allegorical of the two major issues of *North*: politics and poetry. With regard to politics, Antaeus stands for Ireland, a culture bound to its land and to the earth, which has sacrificed bridegrooms to its Earth Mother, and a nation that has to hold on to its roots if it is to survive colonisation. With regard to poetry, Antaeus allegorises the first of the two types of poetry: an instinctual, inspirational, symbolic poetry. This is the type of poetry that dominates Part I of *North*, in contrast to the second type of poetry, which is rational, calculated and explicit and which dominates *Part II of North*. As Morrison indicates in his book called *Seamus Heaney*, Heaney himself explains the structure of the division of his book by saying that 'the two halves of the book constitute two different types of utterance, each of which arose out of a necessity to shape and give palpable linguistic form to two kinds of urgency - one symbolic, one explicit'.⁸ Likewise, Morrison comments on Heaney's view of the two types of poetry with the following words:

[Heaney's] essays, reviews and interviews repeatedly advance the idea that there are two kinds of poetry and two kinds of poet: *les vers donn's* as against *les vers calcul's*; the poetry of chance and trance as

⁷ Bernard O'Donoghue, *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 70.

⁸ Heaney's words are quoted in Blake Morrison, *Seamus Heaney*, (New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 54.

against the poetry of resistance and perseverance; the poetry of 'sinking in' or the poetry of 'coming up against'; the instinctual or the rational; the feminine or the masculine; the 'artesian' or the 'architectonic'; the epiphanic or the crafted; the 'ooze' of poetry or its 'spur of flame'; the 'lived, illiterate and unconscious' or the 'learned, literate and conscious', the takers (Wordsworth, D. H. Lawrence, Keats, Patrick Kavanagh) and the makers (Yeats, Hopkins, Jonson, Lowell, John Montague, John Hewitt); poets who sense, surrender, dive, divine, receive and coax, or poets who command, plot, assert, strike, labour and force⁹.

After this summarising poem, the next six poems of Part I ('Bel-derg', 'Funeral Rites', 'North', 'Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces', 'The Digging Skeleton' and 'Bone Dreams') are related to Viking and Celtic rituals, language and artefacts. Following these are six «bog poems» ('Come to the Bower', 'Bog Queen', 'The Graubelle Man', 'Punishment', 'Strange Fruit' and 'Kinship'), which show a deep 'impure, sexual, necrophiliac' fascination¹⁰ with the excavations of the bog people and relating them to issues in modern Ireland. The last four poems before the final poem 'Hercules and Antaeus' ('Ocean's Love to Ireland', 'Aisling', 'Act of Union' and 'The Betrothal of Cavehill') deal with the relationship of England and Ireland in sexual metaphors, in which England is always the male and Ireland the female. Morrison observes this sexual implication between the two countries and points out that 'Congress is violent in all cases: one a rape, one presided over by a gun, one resulting in an aggressive offspring, and the other bringing about the man's destruction'¹¹.

In the final poem of Part I, 'Hercules and Antaeus', Hercules defeats Antaeus in the only way possible, by lifting him off the ground. As in the first of these twin poems, an allegorical reading can be made, in terms of both politics and poetry. Politically, England has triumphed over Ireland by lifting it off the ground, which could apply to both the invasion of the land and the assimilation of the culture. Poetically, the victory of Hercules allegorises the victory of the rational, disciplined, outright poet in Heaney over the instinctual, inspirational, symbolic one. This is an indication that Part II of the volume will be written in this

⁹ Morrison, p. 54.

¹⁰ Morrison, p. 62.

¹¹ Morrison, p. 64.

latter style. As Morrison also states, 'Hercules' victory over [Antaeus] is a necessary prelude to the «declarative» mode of Part II'¹².

All in all, Part I of Seamus Heaney's *North* deals with the northern identity and state of being by using myths, rites, archaeology and language to portray this identity. In the meantime, each of the poems not only deals with the past, but also links the past to the present, showing the parallelisms between the state of being then and now, implying that what always was, still is, and always will be. Morrison explains this by directly referring to Heaney who shows the parallel in his following words:

You have a society in the Iron Age where there was ritual blood-letting. You have a society where girls' heads were shaved for adultery, you have a religion centering on the territory, on a goddess of the ground and of the land, and associated with sacrifice. Now in many ways the fury of Irish Republicanism is associated with a religion like this, with a female goddess who had appeared in various guises. She appears as Cathleen ni Houlihan in Yeats's plays; she appears as Mother Ireland. I think that the Republican ethos is a feminine religion, in a way. It seems to me that there are satisfactory imaginative parallels between this religion and time and our own time. They are observed with amazement and a kind of civilised tut-tut by Tacitus in the first century AD and by leader-writers in the Daily Telegraph in the 20th century¹³.

In forming such a straight parallel, Heaney not only introduces a historical determinism, which explains the present condition of Northern Ireland in terms of the past, and is not very optimistic about the future, but also beautifies and universalises violence through the description of the beautiful victims of violence in the bog poems.

Many critics have found this historical determinism, and the mythologizing and aesthetisation of violence in general, very disturbing. C. Conor O'Brien - whose 'A Slow North-east Wind: Review of *North*' appears in Michael Allen's *Seamus Heaney* - in his review of *North*, states that he has 'read many pessimistic analyses of 'Northern Ireland', but none that has the bleak conclusiveness of these poems'¹⁴. Ciaran Carson,

¹² Morrison, p. 58.

¹³ Heaney's words are quoted in Morrison, p. 63.

¹⁴ C. Conor O'Brien, 'A Slow North-east Wind: Review of *North*', in *Seamus Heaney*, ed. by Michael Allen (New York: St. Martin's, 1997) p. 26.

whose views are stated in Elmer Andrews' *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, similarly puts forth his indignation, claiming that 'it is as if he is saying, 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'¹⁵. Additionally, Cairns and Richards feel that: 'an historical determinism seems to result from too deep a digging in which the modern desire to engage actively in the historical process is rendered impotent by the very completeness of intellectual understanding'¹⁶. Some critics such as Denis Donoghue and Blake Morrison, on the other hand, find the same attitude strangely comforting:

Myth...provides the poet with an aesthetic distance that enables him to express more than mere outrage, and to 'release the reader's mind from the immediacy of his experience' so that he can be restored to a sense of 'the universality of human life'. Far from being a falsification or evasion of history...this 'turning away from the terminology of time' may be 'a prudent as well as consoling thing to do'¹⁷.

Yet *North* is more in the end than a book of darkness and gloom: for reasons difficult to explain, there is something comforting about it. Some would argue that it is precisely the feeling of tragic inevitability that makes it comforting, that contemporary events in Ulster become more bearable, perhaps even seem smaller in significance, when placed in the context of 2000 years' northern European experience¹⁸.

Yet other critics, especially Irish Nationalist ones, like Robert McLiam Wilson, found these poems too abstract and distanced to accurately portray the situation of Northern Ireland, with which they felt Heaney should have dealt:

Can there be any real doubt that he has largely avoided writing a great deal about political violence in Northern Ireland?... "Bog Queen" doesn't really pass muster as an investigation of modern Northern Ireland—Anyone who's actually read Seamus Heaney's work

¹⁵ Ciaran Carson's words are quoted in Elmer Andrews, ed, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000), p. 85.

¹⁶ Cairns and Richards's words are quoted in Andrews, (2000), p. 88.

¹⁷ Denis Donoghue's words are quoted in Andrews, (2000), p. 88.

¹⁸ Morrison, p. 69.

can only conclude that, in the main, he has left out that unpoetic stuff, that very actual mess¹⁹.

The style of Part I of *North* is in accordance with the content. As Morrison explains 'In Part I the 'North' explored is northern Europe over the last 2000 years; the dominant verse-form is the compressed, "artesian" quatrain—the tone is reverential, formal, serious; and the language is deeply rooted in the past, to the extent of reviving defunct and archaic words'²⁰. As the Antaeus poems suggest, the allusions to modern issues are implicit and symbolic and the voice of the persona is more communal than individual: it represents the collective unconscious (in other words, the earth that Antaeus derives his power from) of the Irish people. In Andrews' work, Maurice Harmon observes this through the following words:

The metaphor of ceremony permeates *North*, a collection deeply concerned with the violence of Northern Ireland. The poems do not confront that violence. They do not speak of individual pain or individual outrage. Instead Heaney adopts a communal response. Whatever personal feelings he has about death and suffering are deflected into large, ceremonial gestures²¹.

The persona tries to give a clear picture of their cultural and historical background without much interference. O'Brien touches on this feature, remarking that 'he had the uncanny feeling, reading these poems, of listening to the thing itself, the actual substance of historical agony and dissolution, the tragedy of a people in a place: the Catholics of Northern Ireland'²². O'Donoghue sees this as an 'attempt to show "the music of what happens" playing itself without the intermediacy of the musician/poet' and as the 'distancing of utterance, or abdication of responsibility'²³.

¹⁹ Robert McLiam Wilson's words are quoted in Andrews, (2000), p. 80.

²⁰ Morrison, p. 53.

²¹ Maurice Harmon's words are quoted in Andrews, (2000), p. 87.

²² O'Brien, p. 25.

²³ O'Donoghue, p. 69.

After Hercules' victory over Antaeus, Part II of *North* begins. Much shorter than Part I, Part II deals with the present condition of the north rather than its past. Johnston remarks that 'in Part II the scope yields to the Ulster poet commenting on carnage in Northern Ireland'²⁴. It is more personal, explicit and colloquial. It begins with 'The Unacknowledged Legislator's Dream', a nightmare vision containing elements of the violence and injustice in Ulster. The next poem, 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing' satirises the hollow, hypocritical, cliché language of journalists writing about Northern Ireland, implying that they do not understand the problem nor wish to, but make cliché statements about it instead. After another poem dealing with colonisation and the civilising of backward races, a series of six poems under the title 'Singing School' ('The Ministry of Fear', 'A Constable Calls', 'Orange Drums, Tyrone, 1966', 'Summer 1969', 'Fosterage' and 'Exposure') describe the influences on the growth of Seamus Heaney's poetry. The series begins with two epigraphs, one from Wordsworth's *Prelude*, and the other from Yeats' *Autobiographies*. These epigraphs not only indicate the topic of poetic growth dealt with in the following poems, but also seem to imply that both English and Irish influences were at work in forming Heaney's poetic career.

In this second part of *North*, the experience is personal and direct, the style is colloquial and familiar, the voice is individual and recognisable, and the tone is more honest and bitter. As Morrison observes, 'in Part II «North» means contemporary Northern Ireland; the dominant verse-form is the rhyming quatrain in iambic pentameters; the tone is conversational, irreverent, humorous; and the language is contemporary and at times journalistic'²⁵. In addition, for this second part, O'Brien states that 'Heaney's writing is modest, often conversational, apparently easy, low-pitched, companionably ironic, ominous, alert, accurate and surprising'²⁶. In this sense, some critics like Edna Longley whose article called "'Inner Émigré" or "Artful Voyeur"? Seamus Heaney's *North*' appears in Michael Allen's work, find 'Heaney's personal and documentary explicitness more to their taste than the mythic approach of Part I'²⁷.

²⁴ Johnston, p. 202.

²⁵ Morrison, p. 53.

²⁶ O'Brien, p. 28.

²⁷ Longley, Edna. 'Inner Émigré' or 'Artful Voyeur'? Seamus Heaney's *North* in *Seamus Heaney*, ed. by Michael Allen, (New York: St. Martin's, 1997) p. 39.

More, still others like Elmer Andrews claim that 'there is more humanity and honesty in this section than in the acres of bogland in Part I: one gets the impression of someone involved in writing, of trying to come to terms with himself'²⁸. Therefore, it is obvious that Part II, in its tone, approach, and style differs from the preceding part of *North*.

A full view of the whole structure of *North* displays that it is indeed much more than a poetry collection; it is a complete book, containing a complete meaning. As Tamplin suggests '*North* itself is less a collection of separate poems, than a carefully planned and unified book, with nothing out of place or diversionary'²⁹. It is a book about the conflict between England and Ireland and the conflict between two types of poetry. These thematic conflicts, which Johnston calls "calculated schizophrenia", are reflected in the structure of the book with its two conflicting (yet complementary) parts, its Hercules and Antaeus, and even in its cover:

This calculated schizophrenia is reflected in...the book's structure, and even the cover...The book's cover sustains the question by giving equal space to the poet's binary modes: the front cover is a 'frieze' of stylized round-bottomed Vikings, sailing under the crane-bills of their swords: anonymities in the northern ritual of murder. The back cover presents a pop-portrait of Heaney³⁰.

Besides, as in Morrison's words, 'concerning itself with a divided culture, *North* is at odds with itself - but fruitfully so' since it becomes 'a creative interplay between opposed but complementary modes of utterance'³¹. Thus, as the structure is so essential to the meaning, and as each individual poem has a role in portraying the book's meaning, a full understanding of *North*, and any poem in *North*, requires a full reading of the book. Quoting Morrison, 'in *North*, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, the structure of the book is its meaning: the placing and interlocking of the poems amount to the creation of a historical myth'³². This is new to Seamus Heaney, since his previous poetry collections did not have this unity of meaning, as Morrison observes:

²⁸ Andrews, (2000), p. 87.

²⁹ Tamplin, p. 51.

³⁰ Johnston, p. 202.

³¹ Morrison, p. 53, 57.

³² Morrison, p. 53.

Up until *North* (1975) Seamus Heaney had been content to publish books that were little more than a string of individual lyrics, collections that had 'meanings' but no overall 'meaning'. His interest in the structure of his collections had been at best perfunctory: aside from dividing *Wintering Out* into two parts, and from allowing the last poems of one book to point forward to the concerns of the next, he had not exploited the possibilities of strategic arrangement. By the mid-1970s, however, Heaney had begun to look towards the more ambitious design and larger sweep of epic poetry, and in particular to long Irish poems which addressed themselves to nothing less than the history of the nation³³.

In view of this design, Heaney revised some already written poems to suit the plan of *North*, and wrote some poems particularly 'for the sake of the sequence, and to fill in a poetic curriculum vitae'³⁴. Morrison also realizes this conscious design and comments that 'Heaney took great pains over the book's arrangement, revising a number of pieces after their original magazine publication and treating poems less as independent wholes than as contributions to an unfolding argument'³⁵. Of course, this is not to say that the poems in *North* do not have individual meanings or significance, or that they only make sense when read together. It is only to say that they mean *more* and perhaps somewhat *differently* in relation to their whole than they would if read separately. For example, the two prefatory poems 'Sunlight' and 'The Seed Cutters' would be read as beautiful poems portraying the Irish countryside and discussing themes of love, peacefulness and companionship whether in an anthology or in *North*. However, in *North*, being outside the actual frame of the book with its themes of violence, sectarianism, hatred and fear, they have the additional function of serving as a kind of commentary on this condition. In relation to this, Corcoran points out that 'these painterly images of beneficent tranquility, of home-keeping and community, remain, as it were, outside the frame of *North*, implicitly commenting on the images of barbarism within the frame'³⁶. Furthermore, the two Antaeus poems framing Part I of *North* would still be

³³ Morrison, p. 52.

³⁴ Longley, p. 38.

³⁵ Morrison, p. 53.

³⁶ Corcoran, p. 56.

read as political allegories outside of the work, but would lose their meaning as poetical allegories of the two conflicting poetic tendencies in Heaney, which the book stylistically and structurally exposes. Moreover, some of the poems in the book lead on to each other. For instance, 'Belderg' ends with the image of 'A world-tree of balanced stones,- / Querns piled like vertebrae, / The marrow crushed to grounds' (43-45). And the next poem 'Funeral Rites' begins with a related line 'I shouldered a kind of manhood' (1), both images meanwhile relating to the mythical figure Atlas who was mentioned in the first poem. All of these inter-relations are lost when the poems are anthologised separately.

In view of all of the above-mentioned qualities of the book, it is evident that the poems in *North* should be treated as parts of a whole as well as individual poems, as a form of 'multity in unity' as Coleridge would have termed it³⁷, where each part is significant both as itself and in relation to the whole. This feature of *North* can be better understood by analysing two poems from the book, 'Punishment' from Part I and 'Exposure' from Part II. These example analyses aim at displaying briefly the difference of interpretation between how these poems would be interpreted separately, in a poetry anthology for example, and how within the book.

'Punishment' is perhaps the most well-known, the most frequently quoted, and therefore the most commonly anthologised poem of *North*. Being one of the bog poems, it is the description of the body of an adultress, punished by the shaving of her head and by death for her crime which leads to a parallelism with the Irish girls tarred and feathered by the IRA for going out with British soldiers. The description of the adultress is sexually charged and the acts of violence evident on her body are described in beautiful terms:

I can feel the tug
of the halter at the nape
of her neck, the wind
on her naked front.

³⁷ Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Biographia Literaria*, 2 vols. ed. by J. Shawcross, (London: Oxford UP, 1965), p. 230.

It blows her nipples
to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs (1-8).

her shaved head, like a stubble of black corn,
her blindfold a soiled bandage,
her noose a ring

to store
the memories of love (17-21).

The feelings of the persona as he views the body turn gradually into those of love and pity, only to suddenly change into an alliance with the punishers:

My poor scapegoat

I almost love you
But would have cast, I know,
The stones of silence.
I am an artful voyeur

of your brain's exposed
and darkened combs,
your muscles' webbing
and all your numbered bones:

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 (28-44).

Within the context of *North*, 'Punishment' is another poem displaying the conflicts at the heart of the book. Should the poet be an 'artful voyeur', artistically recording what he sees and experiences, as Heaney does in Part I of the book with his Antaeus side, or should he

be a man of action, like Hercules, who uses poetry as a means of political assertion and action, as he does in Part II? The conflict between instinct (Antaeus) and reason (Hercules) is also evident in the last stanza of the poem: the latter part of the persona 'connive[s] in civilized outrage' at the cruelty shown to the female victims while the former, instinctive part 'understand[s] the exact/and tribal, intimate revenge'. Morrison comments that 'Heaney's pity is offset and finally outweighed by his understanding of the motives for judicial punishment'³⁸. This dilemma in 'Punishment' seems natural since the persona of Part I of *North* represents the collective unconscious of the race, and as this part of the book demonstrates the inherent tribal violence which obviously clashes with the humane reason developed through education. Andrews touches upon the issue when he claims that 'the atavisms of Heaney's own community are at this stage in conflict with any rational or enlightened humanism'³⁹. The poem implies that such things happened then because nobody opposed them in the community, even if they pitied or loved the victims and that they continue to happen now for the same reason. It is, in fact, an explanation for the fact that such atrocities continue to happen: it is part of the genetic make-up of the society; it is how the society has always functioned and continues to function. This explanation fits in with the general deterministic attitude of Part I of *North* and becomes understandable within that context.

Taken out of the context of *North*, 'Punishment' would firstly require an attached explanation of the bog poems in order to be understood; otherwise the description of the adultress and the relation between past and present would be completely missed by someone unfamiliar to Heaney's poems. After such an explanation, the main logic of the poem, the parallel between past and present, the implication of recurring history and the dilemma of the persona could easily be interpreted. However, without the historical and mythological context of Part I of *North*, the determinism, the explanation of the continuity of such cruelties, the conflict between two types of poet would be lost to the reader. Furthermore, the persona's sudden support of the victimisers at the end of the poem might seem appalling and astonishing, and this acceptance of violence might be attributed to the poet himself rather than to the voice of the community. This interpretation has indeed taken

³⁸ Morrison, p. 63-64.

³⁹ Andrews, (2000), p. III.

place, causing such accusations to Heaney as a poet of violence⁴⁰. In allusion to such interpretations, in the writing of his next book, Heaney 'expresses a yearning to be able to use the first person to refer to himself again'⁴¹. To sum up, out of the context of *North*, 'Punishment' would read as a poem begun aesthetically and humanely in which violence and nationalism triumph over beauty and humanism in the end rather than a poem explaining the unconscious urges behind the violence taking place in Ireland. Also, the reader would not be able to find out that Hercules defeats Antaeus at the end.

Being the last poem of *North*, 'Exposure' serves as a commentary on and 'function[s] as an apologia for' the whole book⁴². The volume ends where it began (with 'Sunlight'), in the Irish countryside. This time, however, the persona is alone, musing on the dilemmas and conflicts that have formed the book, and are still unresolved. Corcoran points out that 'guilty, anxious and uncertain, the poem is an entirely appropriate conclusion to a volume in which the poet's own art of composition has itself been the focus of so much attention'⁴³. 'Exposure' is also the last poem of the series of 'Singing School' in Part II, which, as mentioned above, deals with the poet's growth. In this sense, 'Exposure' exposes the state that the poet finds himself in after the experiences and counseling he has received in the previous poems. He does not seem very happy about this state, asking himself 'How did I end up like this? (17)'. By 'this' he means the sensations embodied in the following lines:

If I could come on meteorite!
 Instead I walk through damp leaves,
 Husks, the spent flukes of autumn,
 Imagining a hero
 On some muddy compound,
 His gift like a slingstone
 Whirled for the desperate (10-16).

When read at the end of *North*, the hero on some muddy compound, besides being an allusion to David⁴⁴, directly reminds one of the

⁴⁰ O'Donoghue, p. 69.

⁴¹ O'Donoghue, p. 77.

⁴² O'Donoghue, p. 76.

⁴³ Corcoran, p. 61.

bog poems in which the poet searches for the meaning of the past and the present of Ireland in the bog people. 'His gift like a slingstone/ Whirled for the desperate' refers in this context to the inadequacy the poet feels in his attempt to participate in and improve the situation in Northern Ireland (his book is like a slingstone amidst bombs and guns, whirled for the desperate situation of his people).

How did I end up like this?
 I often think of my friends's
 Beautiful prismatic counselling
 And the anvil brains of some who hate me
 As I sit weighing and weighing
 My responsible tristia.
 For what? For the ear? For the people?
 For what is said behind-backs? (17-24)

As mentioned earlier in this study, Heaney was pressured by both his friends and critics to deal with the Ulster problem in his poems and this pressure was very influential in the emergence of *North*. The conflict throughout the book, reflected on the covers, in the two parts, through the allegories of Hercules and Antaeus, and in the poems themselves is explicitly stated here: what should poetry be written for, what is its responsibility, for the ear, or for the people? Thus this conflict at the heart of *North* is not resolved at the end; it remains ambivalent, a dilemma and a contradiction. This ambivalence and impressionability of the poet is further emphasised in the line '...feeling/Every wind that blows (35-36)'. Heaney finally closes the dilemma by refusing to choose either side, stating that he is:

...neither internee nor informer;
 An inner 'migr', grown long-haired
 And thoughtful; a wood-kerne

Escaped from the massacre,
 Taking protective colouring
 From bole and bark,... (30-35)

⁴⁴ Elmer Andrews, *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, (London: MacMillan, 1988), p. 113.

After an attempt to understand and explain Northern Ireland, he has given up and returned to the peacefulness of the countryside of 'Sunlight' and 'The Seed Cutters', migrated south - which he indeed did - away from the violence and massacre. Finally, the desire expressed for images of light in the second and third stanzas lead the way from the last poem of *North* to Heaney's next poetry book called *Field Work* in which he states, as quoted in O'Donoghue's book: 'I no longer wanted a door into the dark, but a door into the light'⁴⁵. Instead of poems about bog people and ancient burial rites, Heaney, in his next work *Field Work*, desires to return to the lighter, brighter poems of his earlier works such as *Wintering Out*. Thus, in these stanzas of 'Exposure' he uses the symbol of a lost comet for the poetic style he has lost and wishes to regain:

A comet that was lost
Should be visible at sunset,
Those million tons of light
Like a glimmer of haws and rose-hips,

And I sometimes see a falling star.
If I could come on meteorite! (5-10)

Read outside the context of *North*, 'Exposure' appears still as a poem about a poet's dilemmas. However, the associations to the poems Heaney has just written and the conflict presented in them, and the counseling of his friends that he mentions in the previous 'Singing School' poems all disappear. Moreover, the allusion to David in the 'hero on some muddy compound (13-14)' and the 'slingstone whirled for the desperate (15-16)' might be discerned, but the accompanying allusion to the bog poems would be lost. The refusal to take sides and the statement that he is 'neither internee nor informer (30)' also lose some of their impact when separated from the context of the book. Finally, the direction that the poet wishes to pursue in his next work, significantly given in the last poem of the *North*, would not be understood if the poem were to be read separately.

⁴⁵ Heaney's words are quoted in O'Donoghue, p. 77.

In conclusion, the generic analysis of the general thematic, stylistic and structural features of *North*, and of two example poems, 'Punishment' and 'Exposure', from *North* clearly reveals that in poetry books which are written with a certain aim and scheme in mind, the poems exist both as separate entities and as parts of the whole. In such poetry books, of which Seamus Heaney's *North* is an example, the works of the genre are better and more fully represented in the book itself, some of their meaning being lost or modified when separately published in an anthology. Coleridge's definition of a legitimate poem is 'one the parts of which mutually support and explain each other'⁴⁶, and this definition also seems to fit the kind of poetry book of which Heaney's *North* stands as an example.

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⁴⁶ Coleridge, p. 10.

RODZAJOWA ANALIZA *NORTH* SEAMUSA HEANEYA
JAKO TOMIKU POEZJI

Streszczenie

Autor artykułu zajmuje się nade wszystko genologiczną dynamiką ucieleśnioną w tomiku poezji. We wprowadzeniu do artykułu autor stwierdza, że wiersze publikowane w antologiach poetyckich i w autorskich tomikach poezji różnią się hermeneutycznie: wiersze opublikowane w towarzystwie innych wierszy zjednoczonych ze sobą tematem oraz intencją pisarza są zazwyczaj bogatsze w znaczenia, kiedy się je porówna z wierszami publikowanymi osobno. Artykuł analizuje zatem relację „część – całość” tworzoną przez wiersze w ramie kompozycyjnej, w której się ukazują. Autor do prezentacji swoich tez wybiera tomik poetycki Seamusa Heaneya *North* z 1975 r., analizując w szczególności tematyczną i stylistyczną strukturę książki. Szczególną rolę w argumentacji autora pełni dokładna analiza poematów *Punishment* oraz *Exposure* zawartych we wspomnianym tomiku. Publikacja ich w antologiach zubaża ich ładunek stylistyczny i znaczenie.