

**“With an Ear to the Line”:
An Auditory Reading of Seamus Heaney’s
Wintering Out (1972)**

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Abstract

The Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) is arguably one of the most widely read, studied and translated poets of our time. Sound – in all its manifestations, literal and metaphorical, including silence – is referenced throughout his poetry and prose. From the rasping sound of his father’s spade to the shunting of trains; from the gurgling of the local river to the silence of bogs and bog-bodies; from the noise of tractors and airplanes to the quietude of lakes and canals, moments of sound and silence inspire and define not only Heaney’s poems but also our experience of them. As Heaney himself indicates, listening was a way for him not only of perceiving the surrounding world but also reaching out and staying in touch with the wideness of the world. In his Nobel Lecture (1995), Heaney recalls how as a child he would take in “everything that was going on” beyond the walls, from “the sounds of the horse in the stable at night, the voices of adults conversation from the kitchen”, “a steam train rumbling along the railway line one field back from his house” to the “bursts of foreign languages” coming from the radio.

This study combines the linguistic and literary practice of close reading with ecological theories of auditory perception and soundscape interpretation to map and analyse references to sounds – and their absence – in *Wintering Out* (1972). This collection has been chosen because it was published at a transitional stage in the poet’s personal and professional life. Heaney’s third collection is born out of everyday childhood memories and his concerns about identity, territory, language, religion and history. It documents the poet’s standpoint in relation to the Troubles, his anxieties as a young parent, his hopes for the appreciation of the common ground and his confidence about his vocation as a poet. *Wintering Out* echoes the poet’s thoughts and concerns through moments of sound and silence.

Historically, studies of sounds and audition have been informed by a concern with the understanding of music and the physical attributes of sound waves – e.g. amplitude,

frequency, timbre. Studies of sounds in poetry have focused primarily on understanding prosody and the relationship between poetry and music. This acoustic study of Heaney's *Wintering Out* sets out to demonstrate that references to sounds in poetry are not only guided by a feel for the sounds of words but also by a strong sense of places and times they evoke, and thus, can be socially, culturally, and personally charged and meaningful.

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Table of Abbreviations

Titles of books frequently referred to in this thesis, especially Seamus Heaney's volumes of poetry and prose.

DN	<i>Death of a Naturalist</i>
DD	<i>Door into the Dark</i>
WO	<i>Wintering Out</i>
N	<i>North</i>
FW	<i>Field Work</i>
S	<i>Stations</i>
SI	<i>Station Island</i>
HL	<i>The Haw Lantern</i>
ST	<i>Seeing Things</i>
SL	<i>The Spirit Level</i>
EL	<i>Electric Light</i>
DC	<i>District and Circle</i>
HC	<i>Human Chain</i>
SS	<i>Stepping Stones</i>
OG	<i>Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996</i>
PO	<i>Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978</i>
GT	<i>The Government of the Tongue: Selected Prose 1978-1987</i>
RP	<i>The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures</i>
FK	<i>Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001</i>
PW	<i>The Place of Writing</i>
CT	<i>The Cure at Troy</i>
SA	<i>Sweeney Astray</i>

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Stand Still You Can Hear:

Introduction¹

Summary of the Thesis

This thesis is interested in listening as an important medium of experiencing, understanding, communicating and remembering using the poetry of Seamus Heaney as a particularly illuminating case study. I propose that poetic worlds have the potential to be impregnated with references to sounds and silence and that the identification and interpretation of such references can enhance our experience and understanding not only of the poems we read, but also the world experienced by their author.

The Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) – arguably one of the most widely read, studied and translated poets of our time – was not one to neglect this very important aspect of life. Listening for Heaney was a way not only of perceiving the surrounding world but also of reaching out and staying in touch with the world beyond his sight and reach. Heaney’s poetry is his record of making sense of diverse local, national and international experiences. Sound – in all its manifestations, literal and metaphorical, including silence – is referenced throughout his poetry and prose.

More specifically, this thesis aims to map and analyse references to sounds in Heaney’s third collection of poetry, *Wintering Out* (1972), in particular, and more broadly to Heaney’s other collections. This collection has been chosen because it was published at a transitional stage in the poet’s personal and professional life and because it presents a complex and nuanced engagement with his acoustic experiences. The collection is placed at the brink of his poetic and personal maturity. It came out a year after his academic experience at Berkeley and right before he resigned from the Queen’s University of Belfast to retire to a

¹ The title of this chapter is inspired by Heaney’s ‘The Loaning’ (SI 51-52).

cottage in Glanmore, Co. Wicklow, in order to dedicate his time and energy just to writing only. In 1972, the year of the publication of his third collection, Heaney witnessed the Bloody Sunday shootings in Co. Derry and Bloody Friday bombings in Belfast. The collection is born out of the poet's everyday childhood memories, his concerns about identity, territory, language, religion and politics, as well as human history in a more global sense. It documents the poet's standpoint in relation to the Troubles, his anxieties as a husband and a young parent, his hopes for the appreciation of the common ground, as well as his confidence about his vocation as a poet. *Wintering Out* captures and echoes the poet's thoughts and concerns through moments of sound and silence.

Throughout the thesis I wish to answer the following research questions: What sounds have been evoked in the poems? What are the socio-political norms governing the presence and interpretation of sounds and what is the poet's attitude towards them? How does Heaney use sounds – or their absence – to re-imagine places and his relationship with them?

Historically, studies of sounds and audition have been informed by a concern with the understanding of music and the basic attributes of soundwaves – e.g. amplitude, frequency, timbre. Traditionally, the studies of sounds in poetry have also focused primarily on understanding the relationship between poetry and music, exploring the prosodic features of the language and other aural effects, such as rhyme, half-rhyme, consonance, assonance, alliteration. More recently, however, literary scholars have begun to treat literary texts as an archive of soundscapes – including everyday sounds, musical sounds, vocal sounds, noises and silence. These studies offer interdisciplinary approaches to the study of sounds and listening in literature and place literary texts at the intersection of science, sense-making, remembrance, and the surrounding environment.

This auditory study of Heaney's *Wintering Out* combines the linguistic and literary practice of close reading with ecological theories of auditory perception and soundscape

interpretation, as well as with historical and anthropological discussions on hearing, sound and silence. While close reading is an important element of the reading of individual poems, the theoretical framework applied in the thesis – based primarily on the ecological approach to auditory perception (Gaver 1992), acoustic ecology (Schafer 1977) and soundscape ecology (Pijanowski et. al. 2011) – offers an approach that has not been attempted before with regard to Heaney. This approach – while it is not intended to suggest a radical re-interpretation of Heaney’s work – nevertheless provides a number of new readings. In the first place, the descriptive framework offered by the ecological approach to aural perception provides a suitable lens for identifying auditory references in the poems and thus makes clear just how pervasive the references to sound and silence are in his poetry – both as subjects he writes about directly or indirectly and as materials with which he writes. Secondly, this approach offers a way in which that pervasiveness can be appreciated as part of a whole. Thirdly, the taxonomy offered by acoustic ecology and soundscape ecology provides an effective lens for a more complete appreciation of Heaney’s poetic soundscapes – one that includes all aspects of sound, including its associate, silence – and can give us the resources for improving our understanding of his world and poetry. In summary, this study makes sound centre-stage and centre-poetry, in a holistic way, whereas other approaches get to sounds more peripherally: as one of the aspects to meaning and interpretation rather than as independent poetic agent that has shaped the poet’s life as well as his imagination.

The identification and decoding of auditory references in Heaney’s poetry can be advantageous in many ways. To begin with, by exploring this sensory aspect of the poems, we become able to experience them more readily and thoroughly. As the sensory historian Peter Hoffer suggests, an auditory reading of poetry stimulates our sensory imagination to the fullest, encouraging us to “live” the poems (253). This experience, in turn, lifts the references to now-rare auditory properties of the past – e.g. the grating sound of the spade, the strike of

the blacksmith's hammer, and the rumbling of a steam train, as well as the silence of bogs and bog-bodies in Heaney's poetry – from the pages of the printed evidence and rescues them from being forgotten or treated as merely literary metaphors. Secondly and more importantly, studying the poet's references to the auditory events and his stance towards them enriches our interpretation of the poems. This approach enables us to add to our understanding of the poems, the poet himself and his surrounding world. Heaney's poetry and commentary enlighten us about the way contemporary listeners and the poet himself perceived their acoustic environment. Moreover, as I explain in the literature review of his work, Heaney's concerns are also globally oriented. His poetic soundscapes are a testimony to the direct relationship between the social, cultural, and political dynamics, and the changes not only in the Irish soundscape but also in the world soundscape. To use Mark M. Smith's words, an auditory approach to Heaney's poetry would ultimately enable us to also "make sense" of the world we inhabit (847). Lastly, an auditory approach to interpreting poetry will challenge what is sometimes referred to as the hierarchy of the senses, placing confidence in the ear as a way of experiencing and meaning-making. This approach is not only beneficial to literary critics and students of literature, but also to literary translators and writers, as well as to readers of poetry in general.

To conclude, this study is based on the proposition that the experience of everyday sounds and listening is fundamentally a perceptual experience as well as the fact that listening, as a way of perceiving the world and remembering, occupies a central position for Heaney, the author of the poems, and for prospective readers, scholars and translators. It provides a different lens through which the poetry may be viewed. It aims to demonstrate that references to sound in poetry are not only guided by a feel for the sound of words but also by a strong sense of places and times they evoke, and thus can be politically, socially, culturally, and personally charged and meaningful.

From the Landscape I Was Born into: Seamus Heaney's Biography²

Heaney has been known as the “laureate of Mossbawn” (Allen 173). The northern Irish countryside that often nourished or troubled his imagination is almost inseparable from his poetry. He argues “poetry’s existence as a form of art relates to our existence as citizens of society” (RP 1). But poetry, for him, was also “a journey into the wideness of the world” (OG 449). His poetic soundscapes open the space for a more universal sense of place than merely Northern Ireland. His poetic imagination was also profoundly affected by his extensive readings, translations, travels and life experiences. Heaney’s intellectual response to his acoustic experiences is reflected in his poetry, literary translation, critical prose and interviews as well as in the artistic and critical reception of his work. He writes of life in Northern Ireland, of a livelihood earned through manual labour and agriculture, of the way in which the political concerns of the Troubles were embedded in the very archaeology and topography of his place, and of his more global perspectives. The following pages provide an introduction to Heaney’s life, education and career. The purpose of this section is to offer an overview of the soundscape Heaney was exposed to during his early life and as he travelled. I also provide a review of his education and literary influences. I elaborate on these topics in the third chapter of the thesis.

Seamus Justin Heaney was born on 13 April 1939 into a Catholic family and, until 1953, lived “a kind of den-life” in a traditional Irish thatched house on Mossbawn – the family farm near the village of Castledawson located in the mainly Protestant Co. Derry in Northern Ireland (OG 447). Heaney describes his home place as “a small, ordinary, nose-to-the-grindstone place” and as “a subsistence-level life” (SS 8). The intimate and private household Heaney grew up in was “emotionally and intellectually proofed against” (OG 447) the ever-growing bustle of the outside world, but, instead, granted “the writer-in-waiting” (SS

² The title of this section is inspired by one of Heaney’s early essays, ‘Belfast’ (PO 37).

35) the chance to grow closer to his “physical” and “creaturely” existence, and, as such, to grow as “susceptible” and “impressionable” to everyday sounds as the delicate but silent surface of water in a bucket can be to every movement of the earth beneath it (OG 447).

In Mossbawn, Heaney was exposed to a range of sensory experiences. In the foreground of the soundscape, he could hear discrete geophonic and biophonic sounds:³ the howling of wind in young alder trees by the river bank or in beech trees on either side of the lane across the front garden, neighing of horses from the stable behind the bedroom, the sound of rain hitting the byre’s iron roof and on the dwelling house’s thatch, the pumping of an old hand-operated water pump immediately outside the back door, and the crackling of the turf fire inside the house. But he could also catch a trace of wood, zinc, fertiliser and old meal from inside the shed or recognise beast smells, manure smells, and a whiff of hay, straw and fodder in the farmyard (SS 3-10). The quiet ambience of the countryside also allowed the poet to hear far beyond the boundaries of home into the distance. He explains that if you “stand still” for a minute in the front yard of the house, every now and then, you may hear “the factory horn” of Clarke’s Mill or “a train shunting” at the station in Castledawson about “a hundred yards away at the end of the field behind the byre” (SS 8). One of the most heart-wrenching sounds he vividly remembers is the Tuesday morning pig cries coming from “a quarter of a mile away” in the Gribbin slaughterhouse in Anahorish, or the occasional “thud of explosion from a quarry somewhere or other on the horizon, maybe at Lavey, maybe farther away at Glenshane Pass” (SS 8). Therefore, while city life could have abbreviated this chance for “distant hearing” (Schafer 43), the hi-fi soundscape Heaney grew up in broadened his “auditory horizon” (Ihde 49) and added “perspective” – i.e. foreground and background – to his perception of the environment (Schafer 43).

³ I explain the terminology applied in this thesis in the first chapter.

The quietude of farm life amplifies the slightest disturbance in the regular soundscape, encouraging the listener to decode its message. In a hi-fi soundscape a so-called noise has the potential to be a signal communicating “vital or interesting information” about the sound-producing source (Schafer 43). From among the sound of cars, buses, lorries, vans, regular pedallers, occasional travellers, horses and carts frequenting the road in front of their Mossbawn house during the forties, Heaney recalls the spectacular “pelting” of a special cyclist, Master Pollock, for creating “a bit of a stir”. Another sound that strikes him as “special” is the “rat-a-tat of a pony and a cart”, which has been carved in his memory ever since for bringing “a kind of storybook glamour to the place” (SS 4-8). His attentive ears take in and reflect on such sounds, their sources and their implications. Next, what would render as noise to one, triggers the imagination of the poet-in-the making. Referring to Cushley’s driving manner, Heaney explains, “every other horse and cart lumbered and lock-stepped along, but Bob seemed to have some kind of Phaethon complex and to be always trying for lift-off” (SS 8).

Mossbawn was only half a mile from the river Moyola and had a field that ran right to the riverbank. Therefore, Heaney familiarised himself with fishing and the sense experiences of the fishermen – “[t]he nibble on the worm, the tugs, the arc and strum of the line in the water, the moods of the water and the moods of the weather”, many of which reappear in his poetry (SS 94). The depth of those sensory experiences and memories is so profound that after decades the sixty-eight-year-old Heaney is able to relive his twelve-year-old feelings and senses. Heaney refers to the moments near the riverbank as his Wordsworthian “[s]pots of time”, as the memories that would be “enough for a lifetime of poems”: “Fleetness of water, stillness of air, and stealthiness of action” (SS 95). Later in 1954, when the family moves to The Wood, another family farmhouse just on the other side of the parish, Heaney leaves behind what he later identifies as “an ingredient of at-homeness” (SS 25). With the

new life on a more landlocked place and then the boarding school, habits of fishing at the riverside slip away. Instead, the silence of The Wood farm and its surrounding bogs and moss captures the poet's ears to eventually find their voice in many of his poems.⁴ The centrality of home and the issue of rootedness in the Irish soil is known to be one of the major characteristics of Heaney's poetry and prose, as well as the topic of much Heaney criticism.

Although Heaney grounded much of his poetry and identity in Ireland, his poetics transcends the political borders of his country as well as of his time. Heaney's cosmopolitan disposition, in part, originates from his education, career, travels and extensive reading of poetry of the Irish and non-Irish poets and critics. It was during his school days at Anahorish School (1945-51) that he learnt to read. Later, as a boarder at St Columb's College (1951-57) he was exposed to Gaelic literature of Ireland, Latin and English literature (SS 19). He recalls the first day at St Columb's College as a touchstone of his life marking his separation from the known world of the home. The Catholic education had structured his way of thinking and feeling in such a way as to see the outside reality as "a triad of danger that involved 'the world, the flesh and the devil'" (SS 39). Instead, going to Queen's University (1957-61), marked the entry to the world putting "life" in touch with "literature" (SS 39). Heaney completed an Honours degree in English Language and Literature at Queen's, where he published his first poems in student magazines and where he continued his education as a postgraduate student. He began his teaching career at St Thomas's Intermediate School, where he was introduced to the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh, who became one of his major literary influences.

In 1966, the year of the publication of his first full-length collection of poems, *Death of a Naturalist*, he was appointed as lecturer in Modern English Literature at Queen's. Yet, after returning from his sabbatical year (1970-71) and experiencing the "freer" and "opener"

⁴ As in 'Digging' (DN 1), 'The Other Side' (WO 24) and 'The Ash Plant' (ST 19).

atmosphere at Berkeley, Heaney felt the need for a move from the restricting taboos and reticence of life at Queen's. He commented: "You narrowed and tightened yourself a bit in the Queen's [...] I didn't realise just how much this was the case until I came back from my year in Berkeley" (SS 103). Heaney resigned from Queen's to begin his work as a full-time writer in Co. Wicklow, in the Republic of Ireland (SS 162-163). Later in 1975, the year of the publication of *North*, Heaney took up a teaching position at Carysfort College of Education in Dublin, where he settled permanently (SS XXVI). Heaney left the sectarian violence of Northern Ireland to safeguard the independence of his writing, culminating in the individual triumph of the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Heaney's life is full of incidents that reveal his sensitivity towards known and unknown soundscapes. The sabbatical year in Berkeley was the first time Heaney lived outside Northern Ireland. For him the main distinction between Queen's and Berkeley was the liberal and vivid environment of the university resonating in "Californian students' chorus of 'Hi-i-s' and 'Wow-w-w-s' and 'He-e-ys!'" (SS 138). But "[t]he empty amphitheatre / Of the west" (WO 67) only directed the poet back to his Irish memory banks. Conversely, in his 1973 visit to Denmark, it is the silence of Tollund man and the bogs that strikes familiar and grants him a new point in history from which he can look at the soundscape of violence in Ireland. As early as 1944, he experienced the acoustics of war and the presence of American forces near his home. The death of his younger brother, Christopher, in a road accident in 1953, left an indelible impact on his psyche. Life in Northern Ireland inevitably introduced him to the violence of the Troubles that erupted in the late 1960s.

Heaney settled permanently in Dublin in 1976 and resumed his teaching career three years later at Harvard University, where he organised poetry workshops. He divided his time between Dublin and America and continued to publish his poetry, prose and translations. He was appointed as Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1989-94) and awarded the Nobel Prize for

Literature in 1995. He continued to write poetry for almost two decades until his death in 2013, in Dublin.

Heaney's intellectual and literary world also expanded through his wide-ranging readings, ranging from ancient Greece and Rome to twentieth-century Eastern Europe, continental Europe and to medieval England and Ireland. These intellectual experiences expanded his knowledge of literary genres and canons. Heaney believed rhymes learnt early in life and their strong imaginative stimuli can "stay with you for a lifetime" and "end up being sounding lines out to the world and into yourself" (SS 35). As such, one of the very first literary influences on him came from his mother rhyming off Latin prefixes and suffixes and reciting verses of Longfellow, Keats, and anonymous nursery rhymes, which "animated and instigated" something in the depth of his spirit (SS 35). The "down-to-earthness" of her attitude too shaped much of his literary taste. Years later, Frost's "blunt" treatment of the tragic incident in 'Out, Out' (1916) fascinated him, providing an important input for the writing of 'Mid-Term Break'. Through them, Heaney realised reality and actuality can be far more intriguing and unforgettable and, in his own writing, he remains devoted to "what happened" (SS 36).

Heaney's interest in "the concrete" and "the condensed" was reinforced and guided by the poetry of Hopkins and the prose of Hemingway. He was especially attracted to the evocation of regional speech in Hopkins' alliterating music and found a connection between his "heavily accented consonantal noise" and the Northern Irish accent (SS 40). His early *Incertus* poems were written in conscious homage to Hopkins and reflected Hemingway's "clean" and "quick diction" (SS 38).⁵ In fact, Heaney owes much of his popularity to his ability to evoke a sense of "immediacy" and "intimacy" in his readers (Crotty 44-45). In one

⁵ An example of such poems is 'October Thought'. For a while, before he gained the "writerly self-confidence" he desired, Heaney wrote under the pseudonym *Incertus* (SS 37).

of his most quoted essays, 'Feeling into Words', he quotes his early poem 'Line to myself' as a reminder:

Without forcing, without violence.
Whose music is strong and clear and good
Like a saw zooming in seasoned wood.
You should attempt concrete compression
half guessing, half expression. (PO 46)

During his years at Queen's, Heaney also developed an interest in Old English poetry. Through his readings of 'The Wanderer', 'The Seafarer' and 'The Battle of Maldon', the diction of Anglo-Saxon poetry established some sort of a register for him (SS 40). The degree in English Literature also grounded him in iambic pentameter, free verse and Hopkins' sprung rhythm. In 'The Bookcase', he refers to MacDiarmid, Bishop, Macmillan, Hardy, Stevens, Caedmon and Thomas as his early English-speaking influences (EL 51-52). Later, his readings of Lawrence's and Eliot's poetry and literary criticism further establish in him the orthodox idea that "the age demanded a roughening up of the utterance, an avoidance of smooth numbers – you were meant to hit the stride of living speech" (SS 40).

Heaney situated himself in the lyric tradition of Wordsworth and referred to Yeats and Kavanagh as his major Irish influences. He was particularly fascinated by "the spoken force" in Kavanagh's *Great Hunger* (1944) and Hughes's 'View of a Pig' (1959), influences of which can be traced in his early poems (Crotty 44-45). Despite the limited access to resources of Gaelic literature in libraries during the 1950s and 60s, he maintained a strong sense of preserving his Irish heritage and used every opportunity to look for books about Irish poetry, among which are Farren's *The Course of Irish Verse* (1947). Heaney attempted to apply and adjust his knowledge of English language and literature with the cultural and political pieties he grew up with so that his poetry captures his "whole" experience of living and reading:

Certainly the secret of being a poet, Irish or otherwise, lies in the summoning of the energies of words. But my quest for definition, while it may lead backward, is conducted in the living speech of the landscape I was born into. If you like, I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with my reading. I think of the personal and Irish

pieties as vowels, and the literary awarenesses nourished on English as consonants. My hope is that the poems will be vocables adequate to my whole experience. (PO 36-37)

Feeling into Words: Review of the Works⁶

One only needs to read the opening of Heaney's Nobel Lecture to discover that hearing is a way of "feeling", "knowing" and remembering the world around him. The poet recalls how his childhood environment allowed him to cultivate and practise his aural perception and imagination freely. As a child, he attuned his ears to and "took in" the sound of everything that was going on around, from neighing of horses from beyond the walls, scampering of mice on old ceilings, howling of wind in beech trees, rumbling of the train, and to the English accent of a BBC newsreader and familiar voices of adults in the kitchen, many of which appear in his poetry, prose and literary translations (OG 447). During his life, Heaney published thirteen poetry collections,⁷ several translations⁸ and critical essays.⁹ His first poems were published in student magazines during his undergraduate years.¹⁰ There is a thematic thread connecting his poetry, prose and translation with their real-life context embodied in his references to sound, silence and listening. In the following pages, I shall provide a brief chronological overview of his poetry and highlight the connections outlined above giving examples from acoustic references.

⁶ The title of this section is inspired by Heaney's article 'Feelings into Word' (PO 41).

⁷ The poetry collections: *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1969), *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975), *Stations* (1975), *Field Work* (1979), *Station Island* (1984), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), *Seeing Things* (1991), *The Spirit Level* (1996), *Electric light* (2001), *District and Circle* (2006) and *Human Chain* (2010). The selected editions: *Selected Poems 1965–1975* (1980), *New Selected Poems 1966–1987* (1990), *Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996* (1998), and the posthumously published *New Selected Poems 1988–2013* (2014), *100 Poems* (2018), and a spoken-word recording of Heaney reading his poems produced to mark his 70th birthday.

⁸ The translations include: *Sweeney Astray* (1983), *The Cure at Troy* (1990), *The Midnight Verdict* (1993), *Laments* (1995), *Beowulf* (1999), *Diary of One Who Vanished* (1999), *Arion* (2002), *The Burial at Thebes* (2004), *The Testament of Cresseid & Seven Fables* (2009), and two posthumously published works: *The Last Walk* (2013) and *Aeneid Book VI* (2016).

⁹ The essays are collected in three volumes: *Preoccupations* (1980), *The Government of the Tongue* (1988), and *The Redress of Poetry* (1995), as well as the selected essays *Finders, Keepers* (2002), *Stepping Stones* (2008) and the more recent official bibliography.

¹⁰ The Incertus poems appeared in the student magazines of *Q* and *Gorgon* at Queen's in 1959 (SS XXIII). His first article 'Shall We Jive This Jig' was published in the *Irish Digest*, in 1961 (XXIV).

From the publication of his first poetry collection, Heaney established his reputation as a major new talent of brilliant linguistic “fidelity”, “precision” and “evocativeness” (O’Donoghue 2). *Death of a Naturalist* reflects Heaney’s skilful application of onomatopoeic language, vivid descriptions and metonymies to re-create rural images from his childhood landscape. It displays multiple references to sounds and silences the poet experienced early in life: his father’s familiar silence and the “clean rasping sound” of his spade (DN 1), “the squelch and slap” in soggy peats (DN 2), the “heavy rain” of August (DN 8), the “rhythms” his mother sets up on churning days, her silence and the “plash and gargle” of the milk (DN 9-10), the wordless diviner (DN 23), the “helter-skelter” of the waterfall (DN 27), and the echo of the poet’s “own call” in the well (DN 44).

The publication of his second poetry collection enhanced Heaney’s poetic reputation and confirmed the revelatory feature of his descriptions. In *Door into the Dark*, he deliberately turns his back on the brightness of the familiar to open a door into the dark corners of the earth and the “buried life” of his inner self (Corcoran 54). Therefore, the guttural grunts of Old Kelly, the shunting of the steam engine (DD 6), the “short-pitched ring” of the hammer in the anvil or the hissing sound of a hot shoe toughening in water, the blacksmith’s serene pose (DD 9), the voices of the fishermen at Lough Neagh (DD 28), “the hush and the mush / Of its whispering treadmill” or “the hum of the traffic” (DD 38-39), and the kind, deep and noiseless presence of “the waterlogged trunks” (DD 44) arise from the most hidden corners of his memory.

In contrast to the private setting of the previous collections, *Wintering Out* is set in a wider public context. Hereafter, Heaney’s characteristic strengths – precision and evocation of description – are accompanied by more political consciousness (O’Donoghue 3). Heaney gestures towards the political context from which his inner distress resulted. In ‘Fodder’, ‘Anahorish’, ‘Toome’ and ‘Broagh’ and ‘Traditions’, he demonstrates his concerns for Irish

language and culture, while in ‘Land’, ‘Bog Oak’, ‘Gifts of Rain’, ‘Oracle’, ‘Carin-maker’, he pitches our ears to the keynote sounds of his places, and in ‘Navvy’, ‘The Servant Boy’, ‘The Backward Look’, ‘Mother of the Groom’, ‘The Shore Woman’, he addresses various types of silences. These complexities of the socio-political context and the inner world of the poet are also embodied through the juxtaposition of various places and time periods and through the transposition of their soundscapes to the landscape of his poems.

Published about three years after Heaney had left Ulster for Wicklow, *North* became at once his most admired and controversial book of poems (O’Donoghue 4). A sense of urgency to respond to the crisis in Northern Ireland dominates the entire collection and its title (Corcoran 71). Heaney himself does not deny the role of the socio-political context in shaping his sub-consciousness but refuses any direct interaction (SS 66). His dilemma is readily evident in the “space” between “the tick of two clocks” (N x). He attempts to capture the violence and its influence on individuals through various references to sounds and silence, from the heavy silence hovering over coffins, and “customary rhythms” of the funeral ceremony (N 7), to “ocean-deafened voices” (N 10), Jimmy Farrell’s monologue about the various “skulls they have / in the city of Dublin” (N 15), the silence and indifference of the man to unjust punishments and the “gargling” of blood (N 38), and to Heaney’s own silence and doubt about “void”, “death” and “eternal” rest in peace (N 18).

Compared to his previous collection, *Field Work* demonstrates a renewed trust in artfulness. The volume warmly weaves varying styles and subjects. Elegies for the violence in Northern Ireland are juxtaposed with pastoral poems, love lyrics and translations. Early in the volume there are references to the movement of “tongue” and the willingness to enquire about the future. Heaney encourages his fellow country people to keep their “ear” to the ground for a long time in order to pick up all the “comfortless noises” (FW 5). He recalls the pumping of the “omphalos” (FW 7), “the bucket’s clatter” and its “slow diminuendo as it

filled” (FW 8). He speaks of “old decency”, the “[l]eading” voice at the pulpit and its “melody” (FW 12). He remembers the “thick and comforting” voices of his guttural muse (FW 22) and looks for “echo”, “music”, “song”, “singing” and reminds us “[w]e still believe in what we hear” (FW 20-21). If up to *North* the poems grow together, scrutinising the self and the cultural context that nourished it, *Field Work* demonstrates a desire to look outward. He says: “I no longer wanted a door into the dark, I wanted a door into the light” (Corcoran 127-128).¹¹

Heaney’s poetic career takes a distinctively different course from 1980. With the hunger strikes, Northern Ireland experienced one of the most difficult periods of the Troubles. A strong sense of social awareness and poetic vocation is reflected through his first published translation, *Sweeney Astray* and its twin volume, *Station Island*. Heaney’s continued awareness of the conflict between the pull of the free imagination and the claims of social responsibility is one of the things that prompted a special interest in the story of Sweeney, who appears in both volumes.¹² The character of Sweeney provides the poet with an epic framework and a liberating force for his own psychic material (Corcoran 108; Andrews 146). In *Station Island*, the poet-narrator encounters literary figures and people from his past in Lough Derg, Co. Donegal. He writes of the dying “echoes” (SI 13), the haunting sounds of “‘convicts’ chains” (SI 18), the “creaks and the click / of stones” (SI 23), the loud neighing of the wind and sea (SI 30). There are also references to the silence during writing when you can imagine all the sounds (SI 24), silence of “the empty city” (SI 37), and finally, the silence that enhances hearing: “Stand Still. You can hear / everything going on” (SI 52).

¹¹ In a 1979 interview with James Randall, Heaney said:

I very deliberately set out to lengthen the line again because the narrow line was becoming habit [...] I wanted to turn out, to go out, and I wanted to pitch the voice out [...] a return to an opener voice and to a more – I don’t want to say public – but a more social voice. (Heaney 182)

¹² In an interview with Dennis O’Driscoll in the Irish periodical *Hibernia* in 1983, Heaney said that he immediately felt “there was something here for me” (8).

His shortest poetry collection, *The Haw Lantern*, was published three years after Heaney enjoyed a wider literary community in Harvard. Compared to the previous poetry collections, the volume reflects a more deliberate sense of bringing the literary and the public imperatives together.¹³ The poems are in the form of parables and often transcend time and place. The main concern of the book is to display, as Heaney puts it, “loss of faith – or rather loss of faiths, of all kinds” (SS 287). Among other references to voice and listening, the book refers to absence in a great many ways: the “noiseless” landscape of “the republic of conscience” (HL 14), his father’s “speechlessness” (HL 17), the “disappeared people” and “unspoken assumptions” (HL 18), and “loss” and “death” (HL 20).

Heaney’s next translation, *The Cure at Troy*, is the verse adaptation of Sophocles’ tragedy *Philoctetes* about the Trojan War whose narrative attracted Heaney’s attention for the resonance with the protracted sectarian conflicts in Northern Ireland, as well as with the end of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. In the choral prologue of the play, Heaney expresses his opinion about the key role of poetry as “the voice of reality and justice” (Corcoran 700); thus, his well-known lines:

History says, Don’t hope
On this side of the grave
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme. (CT 2)

In *Seeing Things*, Heaney draws inspiration from the visions of the afterlife in Virgil and Dante, bringing together persons and objects from a visionary realm. The poet’s declaration of artistic metamorphosis can be found in ‘Fosterling’ where he admits to having waited until he was “nearly fifty / To credit marvels” (ST 50). The references to sounds and voice are scattered in the volume: the chanting of “equivocal words” and their “echo” in the

¹³ His contemporary critical prose, *The Government of the Tongue*, reflects a similar, but politically concentrated attitude. The book “offered a sustained exploration of the rights and obligations of the writer, whether in the East or the West” (O’Donoghue 10).

cave (ST 1), the plucking of the “Thracian lyre” and the peach of the “prophetess” (ST 2), the call of “fate” (ST 3), and the “whispering through the air, saying *hush* / And *lush* [emphasis in the original]” (ST 13).

Compared to the previous collections, *The Spirit Level* reflects more freedom for expressing pessimism and resentment towards politics. This tone and attitude are also present in *Electric Light* and *District and Circle*. Heaney opens *The Spirit Level* by inviting us to “listen for” the music in the “downpour”, “spillage” and “flowing” of rain water (SL 1), and to beware of the “*Chooka-chook*” of the sofa leg or the *Yippee-i-ay* in the age of “wireless” and “ignorance” [emphasis in the original] (SL 7-8), and “polluted” words flowing with “the dirt / Of blurbs and the front pages” (SL 38), and, instead, to take nourishment from “what the birds and the grass and the stones drink” (SL 38).

District and Circle encapsulates Heaney’s powerful descriptive techniques and astonishing themes. It is possible to relate the poems to such political events as the period of the Troubles in the early 1970s, the ceasefire in Northern Ireland in 1994, and the New York attacks of 9/11. In this collection, the matter of the public wins over the matter of the private and tragedy keeps haunting the poet – a tension that is central to *The Burial at Thebes*. Much of the collection takes place in the ‘Underworld’ or afterlife, as well as by recalling visionary and dead figures from the ancient Classic or the Northern Past (O’Donoghue 13-15). This poignancy increases as Heaney reflects on the gloom of the world in the early twenty-first century, as reinforced by the rudderless dominance of the imperial West.

In his last collection, *Human Chain*, he celebrates the beginning of life – the birth of the first two granddaughters, but the memories of the past and ghosts of the dead keep haunting the elegies and translations. In the opening poem, he reminds us of the transient existence of sounds and that if we are not “awake” and alert we might miss them and their

message (HC 3) and then explains that sounds are more “[t]han any allegory” (HC 33), they delight and inform the ear and the spirit.

Summary of the Chapters

Following this introduction, the first chapter describes how I use primary and secondary sources in order to answer my research questions. This chapter is divided into four sections. I first provide a brief overview of the approaches to sound in poetry. I then offer a historical overview showing the persistent role of sound and listening in human experiences. In the third section, I review the ecological approaches to auditory perception and soundscape interpretation as the main theoretical frameworks applied in the analysis of the poems. The final section provides details about the research methodology, the conceptual frameworks and the scope of this thesis. In this section, I define the key terms I refer to and use throughout the thesis and provide a more detailed rationale for my choice of *Wintering Out* as the main focus of my analysis.

Heaney’s talent and popularity has generated a large volume of critical responses from literary scholars. The second chapter of the thesis provides a review of the relevant body of academic literature on Heaney’s work starting with studies on the literary influences – from the classics to modern European literatures – on the poet’s conceptualisation of place and his relationship with it in his poetry. The second section is dedicated to the studies that examine Heaney’s position in relation to various places and landscapes. This section prepares the ground for the analytical chapters of the thesis in which I examine sound and silence as the mediator between the poet and the places he re-creates in his poems. In the third and last section of this chapter, I explore the studies that examine the concepts of listening, music, sounds, voice and silences in Heaney’s work.

In the third chapter of the thesis, I examine the concept of sound in Heaney's work in great detail. This chapter is my main analytical chapter. This chapter is divided into the four categories of geophonic sounds, biophonic sounds, anthrophonic sounds and human vocal sounds and aims at identifying and interpreting such references in *Wintering Out*. In the first section, I focus on Heaney's representation of non-sentient ambient sounds of the natural phenomena. I argue that the manifestation of the sounds of natural phenomena has, on the one hand, allowed the poet to evoke the underlying political, cultural, social and historical associations, and on the other hand, it has enabled him to evolve and enrich the world of his poetry. In the second section of this chapter, I examine the references to the sounds produced by non-human living organisms. I first identify Heaney's manifestation of the human/non-human animal and then examine how Heaney makes effective use of animals and their sounds to tell us about himself and the world around him. In the third section of this chapter, I focus on the representation of the sounds produced by human-made objects – e.g. tools, crafts and vehicles. My purpose is to identify and interpret the poet's attitude towards such sounds and how he uses them to tell us not only about his own society but also about human civilisation in general. In the final section of this chapter, I focus on the representation of human vocal sounds. Through this analysis, I stress the importance of voice as not only the medium but also the material and topic of his poetry.

In the fourth and last chapter of the thesis, I examine silence in *Wintering Out*. This chapter is divided into four sections: silent places, silent people, silence as a pause and silence as absence. After providing a definition of a silent place, in the first section, I examine the way in which silence can be perceived differently in various places. The purpose of this section is to show how the structural or topographical features of a place can influence the perception of silence in that place and how Heaney uses these differences to develop his themes. In the second section, I focus on Heaney's representation of silence among people. I

show how identifying this type of silence can uncode the social, cultural, political and personal implications involved. The third section is based on the relationship between silence and time. I trace and interpret the instances in which the poet represents silence as a short pause or stoppage as well as what his purposes are. The chapter ends by pointing out silence as indicative of absence and nothingness. At the same time, it argues that, even as absence, silence in Heaney's poetry is filled by various hints and connotations.

Just like his contemporary Northern Irish poets, much of Heaney's poetry hinges on the predicaments of colonisation and conflict on the soundscape of his homeland (Obert 2-3).¹⁴ The troubled North constantly posed unique challenges to Heaney's deep-seated senses of rootedness, place-consciousness and belonging. Heaney was not a silent bystander of the Troubles. For him there was "[n]o such thing / as innocent / bystanding" (SL 30). As this thesis shows, Heaney's auditory engagement with the politics of his country is represented through his attention to the transformation of the local soundscapes, to the loss of local keynotes and soundmarks, and to their replacement with the acoustics of violence, conflict and sectarianism. Throughout this thesis, I benefit from tools, observations and insights drawn from sound studies to identify and interpret the ways in which Heaney gives rise to his not only political, but also social, cultural, environmental and personal concerns about his surroundings through particular moments of sound and silence. The contextual information provided in the analytical chapters is intended to link real and poetic soundscapes. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, I aim at adding an original contribution to academic debates on Heaney's work in particular and to literary studies in general.

¹⁴ In a 2010 interview with Tiago Moura, Heaney refers to the inseparability of his poetry and the political circumstances of Ireland, saying:

Chronologically, I grew up in the 20th century that had roots really in the medieval. I was in countryside where we still ploughed with horses, lit the fire in the morning, you know, carried water from wells and so on, so in a very quick time all that changed in common life in Northern Ireland and in my own personal life. So what the poetry is trying to do is to make sense of our life in that time and in that time included, of course, not only my anthropological experience, but included the political history of Northern Ireland. (2:38 – 3:25)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7sskc1pi_k&fbclid=IwAR1iQEVlkXvYvzSNidaASXoD3KLcOHqjrRzLSaJGFFo08JdzLPj7vupe39k.

Chapter 1:

Uncoding All Landscapes: Theoretical Framework and Methodology¹⁵

Introduction

For me it [the physical environment that nurtured my childhood] was all-important. When I think back, it's sensation, really, rather than intellection that returns to me. A feel for places. I mean, the body stores so much. [...] I still remember that, but I think that's not uncommon, is it? What is stored bodily is very important for memory, and I think that other bodily sensations later on can bring it all back.¹⁶

The centrality of sensory and bodily experiences as a way of remembering and making sense of the surrounding world underpins Seamus Heaney's poetic imagination. In a flashback, he notes that "my earliest memory is of my foot touching the ground of Mossbawn, [...]" and then continues "and I can still feel my little foot inside my old foot here".¹⁷ Elsewhere, he points out how "[t]he amount of sensory material stored up or stored down in the brain's and the body's systems is inestimable. It's like a culture at the bottom of a jar" and then accents the active effort it takes to locate and dig out the underlying life force in order to enrich his mind and imagination: "it doesn't grow, I think, or help anything else to grow unless you find a way to reach it and touch it. But once you do, it's like putting your hand into a nest and finding something beginning to hatch out in your head" (SS 58). But for Heaney, the centrality of sensory experiences, in general, and auditory experience, in particular, is not limited to his relationship with his birthplace only. In *Crediting Poetry*, his 1995 Nobel lecture, Heaney describes listening as a salient way of not only perceiving the world around him but also undertaking "a journey into the wideness of the world beyond" (OG 449).

¹⁵ The title of this chapter is inspired by a line from Heaney's 'The Peninsula' (OG 21).

¹⁶ The quotation is taken from Eleanor Wachtel's interview with Heaney. See brickmag.com/an-interview-with-seamus-heaney/.

¹⁷ See brickmag.com/an-interview-with-seamus-heaney/.

As suggested in the introduction to the thesis, Heaney's poetry is a repository of his acoustic experiences and memories. Making use of the ecological approach to auditory perception, and the analytical lens of acoustic ecology and soundscape ecology, I attempt to identify and interpret references to sounds – and their absence – in Heaney's third poetry collection, *Wintering Out* (1972). The purpose of this study is to show that such acoustic references in Heaney's poems are guided by the time and place they evoke and thus can be personally, socially, culturally and politically charged and meaningful.

Questions relating to aural perception, sound, music, voice and silence, as well as their actual and metaphorical implications have been considered at great length by a variety of thinkers and scholars. Their approaches vary in the definition of sound and in their methods for measuring and analysing it.¹⁸ From acoustics and ecological acoustics we learn about the physical properties of sound-producing sources and the relationship between human behaviour and the changes in the acoustic environment throughout time. Psychoacoustic researchers indicate the way the human brain interprets the basic attributes of soundwaves, such as frequency, amplitude, phase, duration, pitch, timbre and rhythm. Scholars using a cognitive approach are interested in the mental associations of the form, tonality, rhythm and melodic organisation of the sounds experienced by the listener. Humanities and social sciences explore the social, cultural, political, and aesthetic associations of the sounds, music, and silence. And, finally, literature and art reflect man's perception, interpretation and imagination about his auditory experiences.

This thesis does not engage with psychological and cognitive approaches that investigate the attributes of the soundwaves and their mental associations; nor is it concerned with the applied sciences of acoustics, such as architectural acoustics, noise abatement practices and electroacoustics. Likewise, in this thesis, I do not engage with the physiology of

¹⁸ See Clarke's *Ways of Listening* (2005) for a schematic representation of approaches to listening (13-15).

hearing, otology or neurolinguistics and, while some of the discussions might touch on phenomenological questions about auditory perception, I am not concerned with metaphysical and epistemological matters.

The theoretical framework applied in this thesis relies on an ecological approach to sound and listening, which reaches beyond the traditional sensation-based theories of elemental stimuli – e.g. frequency, amplitude, phase and duration – and focuses on the physical properties of sound-producing sources and their surrounding environment.¹⁹ It also incorporates studies in humanities and social sciences to explore the social, cultural, political, or aesthetic associations of the sounds, music, and silence illustrated in Heaney’s poetry.

In order to establish the groundwork for this analysis, in this chapter I (I) provide a brief overview of traditional approaches to the study of sound and listening in poetry; (II) provide a selective review of the literature relevant to the cross-disciplinary field of hearing history within the broad study of sensory history; (III) introduce the theoretical basis of my study – the ecological approach to auditory perception and soundscape interpretation; and (IV) explain the terminology associated with that approach.

1.1 Sounds in Poetry

Although traditional literary criticism has made seminal contributions to the study of sound in poetry, the importance of sound and listening remains one of the more challenging aspects for critical analysis. As this review suggests, whereas the majority of traditional approaches deal with the major elements that contribute to the aural effect of the poetic language, more recently, literary scholars offer interdisciplinary approaches to the study of sound – whether understood as noise, music, or voice – and treat literary texts as an archive of soundscapes.

¹⁹ “Ecology is the study of the relationship between living organisms and their environment. Acoustic ecology is therefore the study of sounds in relationship to life and society” (Schafer 205).

In *The Sound Shape of Language* (1979/2002), a study focused on uncovering the function and structure of sound in language and its relation to meaning, the linguists Roman Jakobson and Linda R. Waugh maintain that “nowhere is the direct interplay of sound and meaning more salient than in poetry” (4-5):

Poetry, whether written or oral, whether the production of experienced professionals or of children, or whether oriented towards or against ordinary language, displays its own peculiar sound shape and grammatical structuration. [...] The sounds of poetry indispensably carry a distinctively more autonomous task, and their bonds with poetic semantics are not reducible to the ordinary role required for them within these conventional units by the humdrum use of language. In poetry speech sounds spontaneously and immediately display their proper semantic function. (225)

Jakobson and Waugh’s study sheds light on the way sounds function differently in ordinary and poetic language, and, although it does not offer specific ways for analysing sound in poetry, it provides a linguistic basis for the long-standing attention literary critics have historically paid to the analysis of sound. Eagleton, however, critiques the tendency to treat a poem as merely ‘language’ and to reduce it to its constituting devices. In *How to Read a Poem* (2007), he maintains that poetry should, instead, be approached holistically and read as a “discourse” by attending to language in all of its material density, arguing that although there is a “conceptual distinction” between poetic form – i.e. tone, pitch, rhythm, diction, voice, syntax, register, point of view and punctuation – and its content – i.e. idea, moral vision, argument, the two are “inseparable in experience” (2-65).

There exists a considerable body of literature on the formal analysis of the aural features of poetic language that precedes and follows Eagleton’s caveat. George Saintsbury’s *A History of English Prosody* (1906) is a classic example that provides a comprehensive – albeit now dated and controversial – historical account of English prosody from the twelfth to the end of the nineteenth century, including an overview of the Anglo-Saxon accentual verse and the impact of the Latin, Celtic, Scandinavian, as well as Italian and French traditions in the 14th century with the introduction of a stricter alternation of stressed and unstressed

syllables, which dominated English poetry until the modern period. Saintsbury takes as his starting point the notion of “long” and “short” syllables and defines prosody as “the laws and variations observable in the rhythmical and metrical grouping of sets of the two [...]” (5). It has been a century since Saintsbury produced his three-volume book and in that period, there have been many changes in the ways poets versify and even more in the methods critics use to analyse poetry. Saintsbury’s theory of a strictly temporal metre is not seen as applicable to English, which functions instead by an alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. His work nevertheless provides evidence of a long-standing interest in the aural features of poetry and an attempt to understand and account for those features.

In *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (1965), Paul Fussell highlights metre as “the most fundamental technique of order available to the poet” while other poetic techniques of order – i.e. rhyme, line division, stanzaic form, and structure – are all projections of the kind of formalizing repetition that metre embodies (4-5). His definition of metre evinces its importance and complexity: “Meter is what results when the natural rhythmical movements of colloquial speech are heightened, organized, and regulated so that pattern – which means repetition – emerges from the relative phonetic haphazard of ordinary utterance” (4-5). According to him, the impulse toward the metrical organisation of assertions stems from the more primal human impulse towards order, one that was originally used as a mere mnemonic device to help individuals remember epics, prescriptions, legal codes and recipes, before the days of the printed book (17-30). However, he stresses that the importance of metre goes beyond an aid to the memory and states “[t]he empirical study of poetry [reveals] meter is a prime physical and emotional constituent of poetic meaning” (3). He points out that metre echoes rhythmical human phenomena and its effect is – like breathing, walking, love making, foot tapping, and head nodding – essentially physiological (4).

This emphasis on poetic metre and rhythm is also present in Harvey Gross's *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry* (1964/2014). In the 2014 expanded version, Robert McDowell maintains that a poem is not the rendering of an idea, an experience or an attitude, but their transmutation into feelings. It is, then, prosody and its structure that articulate and transmit the arrangement of feelings in a poem and enhance our understanding of its meaning. In his opinion, the various elements of prosody – i.e. rhythmic form, onomatopoeia, the patterning of syntax and stress, vowels and alliterations – have a more crucial role than exclusively phonetically surfacing the meaning. He maintains: “Prosody enables the poet to communicate states of awareness, tensions, emotions, all of humanity’s inner life that the helter-skelter of ordinary propositional language cannot express” (8-9).

John Hollander's *Rhyme's Reason* (1981/2014) is another classic text that surveys aspects of poetic form including those that contribute to the aural features of a poem – i.e. the patterns of rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and refrains, among others. Echoing Walter Pater's well-known statement, “all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music” (86), Hollander argues that “poetry is not speech raised to the level of music, but music lowered to the level of speech” (x) and, therefore, poetic form is “an abstraction from or a residue of musical form, from which it came to be divorced when writing replaced memory as a way of preserving poetic utterance [...]” (4). In a poem, details are fuzzier, but the structure of sounds – built of repetitions and variations, of expectations fulfilled or thwarted – has a richness to it. Poetic form is the very underpinning of poetry, which echoes and reinforces the poetic meaning, giving the poem “a tone of voice, an emotional intensity, and a moral force quite unlike anything else” (X-XI).

In *The Sound of Poetry* (1998), Robert Pinsky echoes Fussell's views of the physiological effect of poetic metre and rhythm. He gives an account of poetry as a bodily and aural experience when he says: “Poetry is a vocal, which is to say a bodily, art” (8).

Pinsky provides a guide for enhancing the readers' ability to both perform and hear the sounds of a poem, which, according to him, is, nonetheless, an intuitive skill. He brings examples from the work of fifty different poets – including Shakespeare, Frost, Bishop and Bidart – to demonstrate the various terms and principles that shape the overall sound of a poem – accent and duration of a syllable, syntax and line, like and unlike sounds, as well as blank verse and free verse. Pinsky encourages his readers to be aware of the distinction between these pairs in order to gain more enjoyment and understanding of a poem. His emphasis is that the knowledge to recognise and deal with sounds in a line of poetry stems organically from the knowledge of patterns in everyday speech, which we begin to absorb from the cradle. Therefore, readers of poetry should not rely on absolutist or rigid principles of prosody and instead adopt a more flexible approach to reading a poem, one that could open up new working principle options for poetry (4-5).

The brief sample of the literary works above indicates how traditional literary criticism deals with specific aural aspects of a poem. In the same way, a considerable number of works of literary criticism provide broad introductions to the art of poetry typically including extended and detailed accounts of how language and sound function in a poem. Shira Wolosky's *The Art of Poetry* (2008) is one such example. Her analysis moves progressively from smaller units such as the word and line to larger features such as verse forms in the English lyric tradition discussing in great detail the concepts of metre, rhythm, syntax, metaphor, personification, poetic voice and diction. Wolosky's emphasis is that what makes poetry distinctive from other literary forms is its language:

A definition that underscores what makes poetry distinctive is: poetry is language in which every component element – word and word order, sound and pause, image and echo – is significant, significant in that every element points toward or stands for further relationships among and beyond themselves. (3)

According to her, poetic language comprises a highly organised pattern in which each word has a specific place and purpose. These words are chosen partly for the purpose of a

particular sound pattern – as through consonants, vowels, and the sound repetitions of rhyme, half-rhymes and full-rhymes, with variations of unrhymed words – or a particular metrical pattern – as through the rhythm of the words – so that the poem has a melody or rhythm, like music. Therefore, a serious consideration of form in poetry can lead to a full understanding and enjoyment of poetry (Wolosky 3-4).

Sam Halliday's *Sonic Modernity* (2013) brings to light what he identifies as a 'modern' approach to sound in literature and other forms of art, such as painting, sculpture and cinema, where the act of listening turns into an object of visual representation. His study is a significant addition to the surge of interdisciplinary approaches to sound studies I discuss further in the following sections of this chapter. He explores the relationship between music and poetry in the light of Eliot's theory of the 'auditory imagination' – i.e. in relation to 'the feeling for syllable and rhythm' – but also explores how the themes of sound, voice and silence in the work of modernist writers reflect the auditory dimensions of their time. According to Halliday, in modern art and culture, the concepts of sound and listening are presented in a trans-sensory and trans-disciplinary matrix of concerns, which are in dialogue with social, cultural, technological associations (3). He maintains:

Sound in modernism, in whatever art form, is irreducible to sound alone. Sound, instead, is best conceived as a configuration, with real sound at its centre, to be sure, but other sense phenomena, such as touch and vision, rarely at more than one or two removes at its periphery. To fully grasp the significance of sound in modern culture, it follows, we must consider visual cultures of sound and verbal cultures of sound, and see all of these in dialogue with 'sounded' cultures of sound, more self-evidently made out of sound itself. (3)

Julia C. Obert's *Postcolonial Overtures* (2015) is a testimony to the proposition that an auditory study of the work of modernist writers reflects some of the contemporary auditory dimensions of their time. According to her, contemporary Northern Irish writers, particularly those who came of age during the Troubles, take the concepts of "discomfort and dislocation as their driving themes" (2). Her study brings together the postcolonial theories of, among

others, Edward Said and Homi K Bhabha, as well as the major theoretical concepts by philosophers and sound scholars, including McLuhan, Idhe and Schafer to examine the work of the three contemporary Northern Irish poets – Ciaran Carson, Derek Mahon, and Paul Muldoon – for the role of sound in the ongoing work of reconciliation with their troubled land. She maintains: “[t]his strategy suggests sound’s political and affective potential: music, accent, and even familiar white noise can help otherwise unmoored subjects feel at home” (Obert 3). Yet although Obert hopes to offer an exemplary work for a systematic study of sound in contemporary Northern Irish poetry, her concerns remain solely within Northern Irish politics.

Angela Leighton’s *Hearing Things* (2018) bridges the traditional studies of sounds in poetry and the more recent approaches to sound and listening in humanities. Leighton remarks that “the fact that so many writers have stressed the importance of hearing, as the mainspring of both composition and interpretation, might be a reminder of something in the literary text which challenges our critical commonplaces, as well as perhaps our very styles of critical writing” (3). Drawing on the writings of critics and philosophers, including Idhe and Schafer, as well as on the commentaries of many poets and novelists from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, Leighton offers a re-consideration of the role of the ear in literature. For her the concept of sound in literature could encompass a wide range of referents from the immediate sounds of the words on the page, to the echo of other texts or the acoustic memory of physical surroundings in the writer’s head while writing, to the voices of the characters or sounds experienced by them evoked in the text, as well as to the sounds readers pick up in the process of reading from both their memory and the surrounding world. Her main thesis is that listening is a form of cognitive perception that has often been overlooked and that all engagement with literature – i.e. writing, reading and interpreting – by the very nature requires listening. Poetry, she maintains, is:

[...] the art which speaks the act of listening, not only as a check on composition – the poet submitting his work to a later painstaking listening which might revise the original – but also as a kind of writing which contains the space of listening within itself. (11)

This thesis is aligned with the work of more recent literary scholars in the sense it bridges the traditional approaches in literary criticism and the more recent approaches in sound studies for interpretive purposes. But unlike any of the previous studies, it also offers a framework for identifying potentially auditory references in writing, one that also includes silence. In other words, as one of its primary goals, this study sets out to offer a way to read poetry more acoustically, but a way that goes beyond the traditional studies of the word-sound per se. Moreover, this thesis argues for the Northern Irish poet's acoustic attunement with his surroundings in a more global sense. Thus while it testifies to the significance of sound in understanding Heaney's engagement with the political circumstances of Ireland, this thesis relates to the concept of sound in Heaney's work in a much broader context, one that includes his aesthetic, personal, social, cultural and environmental concerns as well.

1.2 A Historical and Anthropological Perspective

A well-established approach to the study of sounds has been developed by scholars in hearing history and anthropology.²⁰ These scholars have attempted to identify the characteristics and potentials of auditory experience, as a sensory experience, in constructing and reflecting the culture – i.e. “the habits, systems of belief, knowledge and action” in a given time and place (Bull & Back 223). This section provides a brief overview of historical and anthropological approaches to hearing and sounds in order to prepare an intellectual and conceptual context for the ecological approach applied in the thesis.

²⁰ While, in their publications, some historians refer to this approach as ‘the history of the senses’ or ‘history of hearing’, others prefer the term ‘sensory history’ or ‘hearing history’. These scholars refer to relatively similar concerns and can be used interchangeably (M. M. Smith 842).

In many respects, the scholarly attention to sound that has burgeoned in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries can be connected to the notion of ‘orality’ and of oral cultures explored at length in the work of Walter Jackson Ong. In *The Presence of the Word* (1967), Ong discusses the three phases of human civilisation: the primary preliterate or the oral/aural period of spoken communication; the scribal or chirographic/typographic phase; and, finally, the electronic or secondary orality/aural phase (72). Ong’s theory highlights the difference he sees between orality and writing, privileging the latter as a more advanced phase in human civilisation. In *Orality and Literacy* (1982), he notes:

Without writing, words as such have no visual presence, even when the objects they represent are visual. They are sounds. You might ‘call’ them back – ‘recall’ them. But there is nowhere to ‘look’ for them. They have no focus and no trace (a visual metaphor, showing dependency on writing), not even a trajectory. They are occurrences, events. (31)

Ong is certainly not the only one to write on oral cultures, and in *Orality and Literacy*, he refers to earlier scholars such as Milman Parry, Alfred Lord and Eric Lovelock, together with his contemporary and colleague, Marshall McLuhan, who also wrote at length on the significance of the historical emergence and gradual dominance of print cultures. McLuhan and Ong agree on the fundamental bracketing of the pre-modern age as non-visual, or primarily aural, and the modern age as visual, generally cited as “the orality theory” or “the great divide theory” (McLuhan 20-21). In *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), McLuhan also introduces the concept of “the ratio of the senses” or “sensory ratios” – i.e. the ranking of the senses – in order to explain the transformations of language and technology, as well as the differences in social structures throughout history (20-21).

According to McLuhan’s orality theory, before the invention of writing humans lived in a “boundless, directionless, horizonless” acoustic space in which speech and hearing – and thus tactility and olfaction – constituted the basis of communication and the nature of collective behaviour (207). With the invention of the phonetic alphabet humans abandoned

this highly social and hyperesthetic primal space for the sake of the more detached, homogeneous and static domain of vision (54). Yet it was not until the invention of movable type that visual culture became prominent. The manuscript or scribal culture was still intensely audile-tactile. As in antiquity, people read principally with their lips pronouncing what they saw and listening to the words pronounced. With the advent of print technology in the fifteenth century, texts became eventually standardised, affordable, portable and reproduceable on a large scale, pushing auditory and other senses to the background and contributing to the new cult of individualism, detachment and non-involvement (125-206). It was this visual hegemony that, according to McLuhan, characterised Western society until fairly lately. In *Understanding Media* (1994), he maintains that, thanks to electronic technology and the advent of telephone, gramophone, radio and even television, the modern age witnessed a resurrection of hearing and sounds as a major medium of perceiving and communicating. In post-literate acoustic spaces, the eye no longer reigns. Time has ceased. Space has vanished. We now live in a “global village” (263-269).

The study of sounds and hearing was affected by McLuhan’s and Ong’s ear/eye, premodern/postmodern binarism in many ways. This binarism has, on the one hand, pushed aural perception to the secondary position in the traditional hierarchy of the senses. As a result, in Western sensory history, hearing has often been regarded as the second sense and as the bridge between what is commonly referred to as the “highest” sense of sight and the “lower” senses of smell, taste and touch or kinesthetic. The emphasis placed on the transition from oral to printed word has, on the other hand, privileged orality and linguistic sounds over non-linguistic sounds (M. M. Smith 850). McLuhan’s and Ong’s treatment of orality has attracted much criticism,²¹ informing much of the later scholarly discussions on sensory studies in general, and on hearing studies in particular. These historians refrain from leaning

²¹ See, for instance, Edward J. Chamberlin’s chapter “A New History of Reading: Hunting, Tracking, and Reading” in *Geography of a Soul* (2001) and Bruce Rosenberg’s “The Complexity of Oral Tradition” (1987).

too heavily on such meta-historical frameworks, whose application is limited by new findings. There have been numerous studies to investigate the role of the senses in various cultures contributing to the broad field of sensory studies.²² Sound and hearing scholars aim mainly at disrupting the privileging of sight by giving voice and place, in their studies, to the role of listening, sound and silence in shaping and reflecting different cultures. As I discuss in the following paragraphs, their studies show that different modes of perception may overlap one another and that aural perception has remained an important aspect of human life throughout history.

Aurality and orality had a prominent status in many ancient cultures, when the word of God, the knowledge and history of the tribe were transferred orally. Denys Thompson's study of the role of poetry in *The Uses of Poetry* (1978) points out the cultural, social, medical and legal prominence of orality in ancient Persia, Greece, China, Pre-Islamic Arabia, Scotland and Ireland. His study shows that vocable and non-vocable sounds were integral parts of many ancient and medieval societies not only for communication but also for mediating various forms of social engagements, economic arrangements, cultural and religious rituals, as well as legal and political expressions (117-212). In *Coming to Our Senses* (1992), Bernard Hibbitts introduces the concept of "performance culture" to refer to societies that have maintained their pre-literate expressive and intellectual habits (882). Among these societies are pre-Hellenistic Greece, biblical Israel, early republican Rome, tenth-century England and medieval Europe, in which the "saying mattered more than the writing" (897). The term "performance culture" makes a general reference to theatrical connotations of interaction and the fact that in oral cultures significant information was delivered through a combination of all sensory media and not just speech. Hibbitts remarks:

²² See, for instance, Mark M. Smith's *Sensing the Past* (2007) and Alain Corbin's *Time, Desire and Horror: Toward a History of the Senses* (1995), for an introduction to sensory history; and David Howes' *The Varieties of Sensory Experience* (1991) for a typology of various cultures based on variations in the organisation of the sensorium.

“Individuals in these societies are performers in the sense of being culturally fluent in speech, gesture, touch, smell, and taste” (883). Richard Cullen Rath maintains that, just as in Greek poleis, Medieval European geographical territories were sometimes established by the range of a crier’s voice and according to the hearing distance, a practice that endured until the time Christian parishes were defined by the distance at which church bells could be heard (56-57).

As the printing press became an agent of cultural transformation in Western societies, the more traditional oral-aural channels of communication lost a crucial measure of their legitimacy. Nonetheless, with industrialisation, sound and aural communication turned into a critical matter to everyday urban life, particularly in early modern Europe, serving to coordinate civic, political, economic and social life. Davis Garrioch notes that for the inhabitants of seventeenth, eighteenth and even nineteenth-century Europe, city noise had a different function from today. Whereas today many may try to escape city noise, the acoustic space of early modern European cities functioned as a crucial source of information: “it formed a semiotic system, conveying news, helping people to locate themselves in time and in space, and making them part of an auditory community” (5). From market voices and shouts, to the rattling of bicycles, the hissing of hot metal in a blacksmith's workshop, and to the noises of local industries, each city developed the ‘keynotes’ of what Mark M. Smith calls “a distinctive aural signature” (45).²³ However, the sounds of economic development and productivity during the modern ages became so loud and blended with one another that formerly ‘soundmarks’ – sounds of a particular trade in a particular geographic area – collapsed. A mixing of sounds, from varied trades and businesses, marked the soundscape of the modern era and formerly discrete soundmarks either disappeared or spilled their sounds to adjacent regions (45).

²³ The technical terms are formally defined at the end of this chapter.

Among others, the church bells of early modern and modern years have attracted much attention from sound historians and urban sound scholars. According to Garrioch, the sound of bells in early modern cities functioned as alarm clocks, factory horns and school bells of today (5). In *Village Bells* (1998), Alain Corbin explores the history and meaning of bells in nineteenth-century France as a broad proxy for the Western experience in general. Corbin summarises the important role of bells as signals, markers and symbols of local and communal identity and resistance:

Finally, we have come to realize just what emotional power bells possessed. Peals solemnized an occasion and gave rise to or expressed rejoicing. They were far more effective in this regard than were rough music or the charivari. Any collective emotion that ran deep involved use of a bell, be it the threat of fire or bloodshed announced by an alarm or the terror aroused by the passing bell tolled during epidemics. (288)

Corbin's study also identifies how the conceptualisation of bells – or any sound, keynote or otherwise – can be class-based and clash as we pass from rural to urban life. He maintains that “complaining of discomfort caused by the din of bells was a venerable urban tradition [...]” (299). The interpretation of bell sounds – and street music – also “formed part of a struggle of the elites, who were intent on imposing their fastidious taste” (299).

With colonisation, the acoustic markers of place and identity, and the associations of silence, loudness and noise with social class expanded to new territories. Colonisers carefully structured the new soundscapes in such a way as to create and regulate social hierarchies and to define their own cultural superiority (Rath 104-175). A clash between cultures and languages is evident in the course of English colonialism beginning in the sixteen and seventeenth centuries. In *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland* (1997), Christopher Highley calls attention to the English impulse to merge all its borderlands – Wales, Scotland, and Ireland – “into a single territorial and ethnographic zone, with common linguistic and cultural ties, and with a shared hostility to the English” (68). Bruce R. Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (1999) maintains that for the ears of the imperial-minded

English, Gaelic was treated as not only an “aural assault” but also a mode of communication that was only “one step removed from noise” (306). One reason for the English hostility may have been the fact that Gaelic was “notoriously difficult for a non-native to learn” (306). More importantly, however, it was encouraged by the imperialistic attitudes towards the Irish themselves. Such attitudes had roots in pre- and early modern theories of the racial origins of the Irish as “mixed of Scithian and Spanish blood” by such figures as William Harrison and Edmund Spenser, among others (Highley 68). During the eighteenth and nineteenth century, in which the idea of noise and silence was closely dependent on social identity and class, some commentators continued to describe the Irish acoustically as rowdies and noisy. In his 1839 *Diary*, for instance, the British Royal Navy officer Frederick Marryat spoke of “the turbulence of the Irish lower classes ... [a] disposition that appears to follow them everywhere” (140-141).

Although the majority of hearing scholars explore historical agencies of sound, silence too played a significant role in shaping and reflecting social and political dynamics. According to M. M. Smith, in *Hearing History*, the injunctions for silence, as the marker of class and taste, were rooted in an older, more hierarchical use of sounds and listening in which ruling classes demanded quietude and obedience in an effort to reaffirm the contours of power in their society (93-260). As I explain in the final chapter of the thesis, this authoritative use of silence – more apparent in the relationship between slaves, servants and masters as well as women and children, as inferior and dependent categories of society – is also explored in Heaney’s poetry.

It is in listening for moments of silence and in attempting to redefine the concepts of noise and music that one can unfold pivotal turning points in political, social and cultural history (Parr 740). Raymond Smilor has shown that the period 1893-1932 witnessed shifts in what was deemed the ‘sound’ of modernity to the ‘noise’ of modernity. Whereas an earlier

generation applauded the sound of industries as inseparable from modernity and capitalist progress, the reformers of the early twentieth century Progressive Era redefined it as the excessive, frustrating and damaging noise of modernity, giving rise to multiple anti-noise campaigns and legislative attacks (24-25). Schafer suggests that the very emergence of the concept of noise pollution as a public concern testifies to the fact that the modern world is not unaware of the role of sounds and hearing on human society and the natural environment (4). However, modern efforts to combat the noise of modernity reside in the very subjectivity of the distinction between noise, sound and music. The First and Second World War, for instance, witnessed a deliberate use of noise as a terror tactic (Priestley 100). White noise – a high-pitch disorienting electronic sound, was used by British security forces in Northern Ireland during the early 1970s for interrogation purposes (Bailey 25). This insight becomes particularly relevant when interpreting the political connotations of Orange drumming, British helicopters, paramilitary shootings and bombings in Heaney's poetry.

The persistent presence and development of auditory experience can be traced in the advent of recording and electronic technology. Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past* (2003) shows that while early wax cylinder recordings and even metal or shellac disks were fragile, the advent of sound recording and reproduction technology at the end of the nineteenth century re-established the position of sound and listening. Audible records gave the appearance of permanence to the hitherto ephemeral sounds, music and voices, that could till then be captured by silent script and print only (288). Don Ihde also notes that the birth of electronic instruments has revolutionised our ability to experience sounds. Thanks to telephones, radios, sound amplifiers and radio telescopes, to name a few, we have learnt to extend the range and scope of our aural experiences. We are now aware that once silent oceans resound with the songs of sharks and whales and the Galilean macrocosm is not thoroughly quiet (14).

In sum, despite the growing dominance of print culture, as well as the emphasis Renaissance perspective and Enlightenment science and rationalism placed on sight as a conveyor of truth and knowledge, sound continued to function as a marker of time and place, as well as the concepts of identity, nationalism, and social and economic class. The persistent role of sounds and aural perception during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, too, suggests that seeing and hearing continue to operate in conjunction with one another.

1.3 Towards an Ecological Approach to Sounds and Listening

As sonic worlds have changed, so too have the conceptual infrastructures and scholarly approaches to examine and interpret them. Scholars who champion an ecological approach argue that the questions concerning sounds and listening have to deal with higher levels of cognition than the elemental stimuli – e.g. frequency, amplitude, phase and duration – discussed primarily in traditional psychoacoustic and cognitive approaches. An ecological approach is more concerned with the content of the cognition and explores auditory perception along the dimensions of sound-producing source, the location and the environment rather than soundwaves per se (Clarke 7). The ecological approach to sounds and listening is intertwined with complementary fields of acoustic ecology, bioacoustics, urban soundscape and soundscape ecology which similarly explore the potentials of an ecological approach in relation to aural perception, natural sounds, speech sounds and even musical sound.

The ecological approach to auditory perception – also sometimes referred to as ecological acoustics – stems from James Jerome Gibson’s study of the senses as perceptual systems and his accounts of the ecological approach to visual perception. According to Gibson’s 1966 theory, the surrounding environment consists of enormously complex but lawful and legitimate “affordances” essentially perceived through touch, sounds, odour, taste

and the ambient light (127).²⁴ The human sensory system is a perceptual system that can facilitate knowing and understanding at the ecological level (251).²⁵ Gibson maintains that a person's understanding of things in life depends on how he perceives the surrounding environment and interacts with it: "to perceive is to be aware of the surfaces of the environment and of oneself in it" (XXIII) and "knowing is an extension of perceiving" (246).²⁶ Thus, according to an ecological approach, people's knowledge of themselves and their surroundings is acquired through looking, listening, feeling, smelling, and tasting, which is, of course, influenced by the knowledge coming from society in general. As Eric Clarke points out,

[i]n ecological theory, perception and meaning are closely related. When people perceive what is happening around them, they are trying to understand and adapt to what is going on. In this sense, they are engaged with the meaning of the events in their environment. (7)

Since then, sound scholars have attempted to apply the ecological approach to a variety of research in the study of listening in order to gain a different and deeper insight into the relationship between listening, meaning, culture and nature.²⁷ From an ecological perspective, the soundscape of a place can be seen as the way the surroundings present themselves acoustically to a listener. Thus, everything audible in the setting can be treated as conveying meaning (Clarke 6-7). In other words, human aural perception, the surrounding soundscape and the process of meaning-making are deeply intertwined:

²⁴ Gibson maintains: "The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill [...]. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment" (127).

²⁵ According to Gibson, the anatomical definition of sensory system – as merely receptor elements, cerebral cortex and neural pathways – fails to accommodate factors like adaptation, purposefulness and anticipation that define the relationship between actions and behaviours of a living being and the surrounding environment. From this perspective, there are several kinds of knowing, of which sensory perceptions is the "simplest and the best kind". Knowing can also be obtained by means of instruments, such as movies and books, which extend perceiving into the realm of the very "distant" and the very "small" (246-251).

²⁶ See Claire Michaels and Claudia Carello's *Direct Perception* (1981), Edward Reed and Rebecca Jones's "Perception and Cognition" (1982) for more complete reviews of Gibson's perceptual theory. Also see Robert M. Boynton's *Visual and Auditory Perception* (1975) for counter arguments.

²⁷ See, for instance, Nancy Jean Vanderveer's "Ecological Acoustics" (1979); Stephen Handel's *Listening: An Introduction to the Perception of Auditory Events* (1989); Albert Bregman's *Auditory Scene Analysis* (1990) and Rainer Guski's "Auditory Localization: Effects of Reflecting Surfaces" (1990).

[...] to hear a sound and recognize what it is [...] is to understand its perceptual meaning, which will result in corresponding actions. By contrast, to hear a sound and not recognize what it is, is to fail to understand its meanings and thus to act appropriately. (Clarke 6-7)

An ecological study of aural perception aims at “uncovering ecologically relevant dimensions of perception and the invariant perceptual information for them” (Clarke 7). In his 1990s ground-breaking twin articles – “What in the World Do We Hear?” and “How in the World Do We Hear?” – William Gaver endeavours to organise a descriptive framework for identifying ecologically relevant perceptual attributes of the sound-producing sources. The upshot of this perspective is the premise that rebukes the traditional assumption of perception in many ways. An ecological approach to aural perception stretches beyond the accounts of elemental sensation by exploring the perceptual parameters of the sound source; it focuses on all sounds, including musical sounds and the everyday sounds of the mundane; it explains that the perception of complex sound sources does not rely on a complex integration of sensations, but may instead be stimulated by the complex perceptual information emitted by a combination of simple physical features; finally, it is direct and first-hand and far from any biased interventions by memory or subconscious (Gaver, “What” 4-27). Gaver argues from the point of view of an ecological acoustician:

There is rich and varied information in the world, both because our descriptions are no longer limited to primitive physical dimensions and because exploration of the world over time – as opposed to passive exposure to discrete stimuli – becomes an important component of perception. (“What” 4-5)

The social, ethical and aesthetic dimensions of auditory perception are pervasive themes in acoustic ecology, a relatively new field of study initiated by the Canadian musicologist and composer Raymond Murray Schafer in the early 1960s.²⁸ The ecological

²⁸ The project was inspired by Schafer's interest in environmental acoustics in the late 1960s. Publications which emerged from the World Soundscape Project include Schafer's *The Book of Noise* (1970) and *The Tuning of the World* (1977), Truax's *Handbook of Acoustic Ecology* (1978), and Järviuoma and Wagstaff's *Soundscape Studies and Their Methods* (2002). Institutes of sound studies are now aggregated by the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE) and unified by the field's seminal journal, *Soundscape*. See www.wfae.net for more details.

study of soundscape, as envisioned by Schafer, Barry Truax, Helmy Järviluoma and Gregg Wagstaff is an interdisciplinary approach that studies relationships and interactions between human beings and their sonic environment. Schafer's foundational work was conducted with the World Soundscape Project which inaugurated the field of acoustic ecology, a discipline that quickly developed an international profile among academics and activists. Its ultimate purpose, in addition to recording and cataloguing international soundscapes with a focus on dying soundmarks, was to investigate the impact of soundscape on our sense of place and to raise consciousness about the impact of increasing noise pollution on the sonic environment.²⁹

Schafer's benchmark 1977 book includes essays on the history of soundscape and introduces a rich terminology and taxonomy of sounds – e.g. keynote, soundmark, sound signal, and archetypal sounds. For Schafer touch is the most personal and intimate of the senses and hearing is “a special sense” because its vibrational spectrum includes frequencies that are felt as well as heard – i.e. about 20 hertz: “Hearing is a way of touching at a distance and the intimacy of the first sense is fused with sociability whenever people gather together to hear something special” (11). Like McLuhan, Schafer too believes that the invention of print technology and perspective painting shifted the ratio of the senses towards the eye, but also that the advent of electric technology and the emergence of noise pollution as a public concern testifies to the fact that aurality is regaining its relevance once again. He reminds us of the subjectivity of the terms noise, sounds and music throughout history and writes about the “positive” role of silence in our lives. He treats the world as “a macrocosmic musical composition” and calls for a culture of “ear cleaning” or “clairaudience” and, ultimately, for an improvement in the “acoustic design” of the sonic world (3-12).

²⁹ See www.wikiwand.com/en/World_Soundscape_Project.

Truax's 1978 publication introduces the term 'soundscape ecology' almost interchangeably with acoustic ecology to refer to the "study of the effects of the acoustic environment on the physical responses or behaviour of those living in it" (127). In 2011, Pijanowski et. al. published the foundational elements of soundscape ecology as an independent field of study defined as "the science of sounds in the landscape" (203). According to them, the arguments in acoustic ecology are largely human-centred, while the field of soundscape ecology focuses on the larger ecological systems (204). However, there are strong parallels and shared terminology between the two fields. Soundscape ecologists treat sounds as perpetual and dynamic properties of all landscapes and, unlike the previous eco-acoustic, urban acoustic and bioacoustic approaches, are interested in the entirety of sounds. Soundscape ecologists identify the three fundamental sources comprising the soundscape – geophony, biophony and anthrophony – to examine relationships between living organisms, including human and other terrestrial or marine organisms, and their environment across different spatial and temporal scales. The aim of this approach is to describe how various factors – e.g. climate, land transformations, biodiversity patterns, timing of life history events and human activities – control and shape the soundscape. Soundscape ecologists argue that natural sounds engage our aural sense and provide us with a lot of information about our surroundings, and therefore they should be carefully listened to and valued: "as with other natural resources, natural and unique soundscapes have many associated human ideals, such as cultural, sense of place, recreational, therapeutic, educational, research, artistic, and aesthetic values" (Pijanowski, et. al 204).

Finally, the 1976 ground-breaking publication of Ihde has provided the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings for sound studies. In its 2007 expanded edition, *Listening and Voice*, Ihde offers a phenomenological interpretation of auditory perception, ranging from the experience of sound through language, music, religion and silence. He maintains

that a mute and stable object is given “voice” only in the encounter with some other object and, thus, in listening to the voice of an object we often hear interactions, configurations, materials, surfaces, and shapes related to more than just one object. Voices of objects often also reveal information about the specific time, place and environment from which they are emitted (67-68). Ihde also speaks about the horizons or limitations of auditory experience and the fact that there is often some degree of overlapping of seeing and listening domains. According to him, there remains the “excess” of sight over sound in the realm of the mute object, while listening “exceeds” seeing in the realm of the invisible, or where sight may not matter as much. In other words, silence is the horizon of sounds, and the invisible offers a horizon to vision (50-55).

The study of sound and listening is not exclusive to sound scholars, but as shown in the previous sections of this chapter belongs to multiple scholarly traditions. Over the last few decades, there has been a growth in writings by humanities and social science scholars, whose work is distinguished by an interdisciplinary discussion that involves any sonic phenomena. Scholars from different fields such as history, anthropology, media studies, postcolonial studies, and many others, began to use sounds to investigate major cultural and political moments. These scholars are not necessarily sound scholars, but, as Sterne phrases it in *Sound Studies Reader*, they “think sonically” (1-2). They reach across disciplines and traditions in sound studies in order to “re-describe what sound does in the human world, and what humans do in the sonic world” (1-2). It is this multi and transdisciplinary curiosity that informs the research questions of this thesis.

1.4 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This thesis adopts a sonic approach to the study of the poetry of Seamus Heaney, for whom listening was a prominent way of perceiving the surrounding world and whose poetry

is an archive of culturally, politically, socially and personally loaded references to sounds. In attempting to answer the research questions of this thesis, I rely on close reading as an effective lens to identify and interpret the numerous references to sound – and their absence – that are found in Heaney's poetry. The theoretical framework applied in the thesis offers a new strategy for both identifying and interpreting auditory references in his work, one that unlike the previous studies on Heaney's auditory imagination looks specifically and holistically at all the various aspects of the soundscape in his writing. The focus of my analysis is on individual poems, even individual stanzas or lines in *Wintering Out*. I contextualise this close reading within wider discourses of literary criticism on Heaney.

The theoretical framework applied in this thesis is primarily based on the descriptive framework in the ecological approach to auditory perception (Gaver 1992) in order to facilitate the identification of the references to sounds – and their absence – in the poems. It also benefits from the vocabulary related to the taxonomy of sounds in acoustic ecology (Schafer 1977) and soundscape ecology (Pijanowski et. al. 2011) as well as a variety of aspects in hearing history and anthropology so as to explain the personal-social-cultural associations of sounds and their absence. In addition, where appropriate, I draw from acoustic phenomenology (Ihde 2007).

I propose that the integration of these approaches provides the framework for identifying and interpreting the references to sounds woven into the soundscape of the poems. This approach provides readers, scholars and translators alike with a perspective for reading and experiencing poetry in a way that is more evocative, tangible and interpretative.

In the remainder of this chapter, I elaborate on the concepts and terminology that are used in the ecological approach to auditory perception and soundscape interpretation and I consider the implications of using them in the analysis of the poems. I complete this chapter with an examination of *Wintering Out* as the specific focus of this study.

1.4.1 An Ecological Approach to Listening: A Descriptive Framework

As discussed above, a descriptive framework based on the ecological approach to listening reaches beyond the traditional sensation-based theories of elemental stimuli. Instead, it focuses on the range of the perceptual attributes and dimensions that characterise the auditory perception of the sound-producing source, its specific time and location (Gaver 5-8). This section provides an elaborate discussion of the concepts of source, place and time as the three main dimensions of a sound from an ecological point of view.

Auditory Source

One of the first things we identify when hearing a sound is its source. Sound sources share several common features, the most common of which is the “interaction of materials” (Gaver 8). The terms “sound-producing event” (Gaver 9) or “sound event” (Schafer 274) are often used to refer to the smallest self-contained sound-producing source in a soundscape. In this thesis, I use these terms interchangeably to refer to a sound-producing source.³⁰

Gaver’s study indicates that, in each auditory experience, the sounds emitted reveal the type of the material (e.g. elasticity, viscosity, tension, texture), their configuration (e.g. size, dimension, shape) and the type of the interaction (e.g. vibration, escarping) involved in producing the sound. Sound-producing sources fall into the three “basic-level” events caused by (a) vibrating solids; (b) changes in liquids; and (c) changes in aerodynamic materials. The combination of more than one type of interaction and/or material, and the involvement of an initial force can add more “complexity” to the energy patterns emitted by the sound-producing event and, thus, more information to the sounds perceived by the listener (Gaver 9-17). The identification of potentially audible physical properties and interactions, by Gaver,

³⁰ Other scholars alternatively use the terms “auditory source”, “sonic source” and “acoustic source” to refer to sound-producing events in an environment. See William Whitmer, et. al. (2014), Brian Shaw, et. al (1991). and Gabriele Proy (2002), for instance. These terms should not be confused with Pierre Schaeffer’s concept of ‘sound object’ which is an acoustic object independent of the original source.

can be beneficial when tracing the references to sound – and their absence – in Heaney’s poetry.

However, this is not to claim that every sound provides the listener with all the physical attributes of their source, but, as Ihde points out, neither does every sighting give the observer a full outline of objects seen. He maintains that our inability to discriminate the perceptual characteristics of sounds often stems from the “inadequacy” of our prior observations and knowledge and encourages us to sharpen our listening abilities and learn to listen to the information transmitted through sounds (61-64).

The definition of the sound source as an “event” indicates that a sound cannot be abstracted from the spatial and temporal continuum that defines it. Moreover, a sound event is “a symbolic, semantic or structural object for study” further bound to the socio-cultural context in which it occurs (Schafer 274).

Auditory Space

Listening is also a spatial experience. A sound-producing event always occurs in a specific “location” and within a specific “environment” (Gaver 6). Once produced, the energy waves emitted by the source event are exposed to several landmarks, whose specific characteristic modifies the original energy patterns through “reflection”, “absorption”, “refraction” and “diffraction” (Schafer 217). These sound waves converge at the listening point at different times enabling the listener to distinguish the information about the source and its location from the ones reflected from the surroundings. Therefore, listening to a sound enables the listener to identify the spatial properties of the sound source – i.e. position, proximity, force, mobility and direction – and the sonic environment – i.e. structure, dimensions, density and changes (Gaver 6-17).

The energy waves emitted by a sound source can convey information about the proximity of a source event and its changes with respect to a certain point. Directional information can also be identified as a result of the sensitivity of our auditory system to the difference in the arrival time between the ears. However, since the auditory system is mobile the listener can turn his head to improve localisation, orienting towards what he may consider as the source event (Gaver 6-8).

The experience of echo and reverberation conveys the sense of distance, depth, surface, size and continuity. Echo is produced when sound reflections – caused, for instance, by the bottom of a well or the walls of an enclosed and empty room – return to the listener with a delay. It is distinguishable as “repetition or partial repetition” of the original soundwave. Reverberation is created when the reflections persist for a while and then decay and die as the soundwaves are absorbed by surfaces they hit. It implies an enormous space. Therefore, both reverberation and echo re-sound the original sound and, because of their continuity, give the illusion of permanence to it (Schafer 130; 219).

The last two spatial terms that I use throughout this thesis and would like to define in this section are acoustic space and auditory field. Schafer suggests the term “acoustic space” to refer to “the profile of a sound over the landscape” (271) and explains how technology – e.g. radios, microphone and amplifiers – have enabled individuals to expand their acoustic space (91-92). He also introduces the concept of “the sonic intruder” to refer to the unwanted sounds that invade other acoustic territories (214) and the term “imperialistic” sounds to refer to the sounds that have “the power to interrupt and dominate other acoustic activities in the vicinity” (77). The term “auditory field” is offered by Ihde to refer to the implicit context “that situates and surrounds” a more “explicit and focal” sounding source. However, he also explains that the distinction between “a fringe phenomenon” and “a focal phenomenon” constantly shifts and is keyed to “personal-social structures” (73-75). As I explain in the

following paragraphs, such elements as personal interests, habits, social occasions, as well as the geographical and climatic characteristics of a place are the determining factors in distinguishing foreground and background sounds.

Auditory Time

There is an established debate about the temporality of auditory experience amongst philosophers and sound scholars.³¹ From an ecological perspective, the definition of a sound source as an “event” involving an action or movement suggests that a sound “is not abstractable from the time-and-space continuum” (Schafer 274). The temporal dimension of sound and auditory experience can be revealed in many ways, including its instantaneousness, sequentiality, pause, or rhythm and repetitive patterns, which I illustrate throughout my analysis.

One of the most obvious time-related characteristics of sounds is its instantaneousness. Sounds are temporal. They exist now and then they are gone. This relationship between time and sound reveals itself as soon as we begin to “listen reflectively” – i.e. with conscious awareness (Ihde 57-59). Reflective listening, therefore, unfolds the transitory nature of sounds as temporal events and highlights the essentiality of mindfulness in order to capture them.

Another time-related feature of auditory experience becomes apparent when sounds occur sequentially representing a succession of acoustic events (Ihde 59). This characteristic is more evident when metaphorical or descriptive language adopts an auditory tone, as in the first stanza of the poem ‘Land’ where Heaney describes the Ulster farmer – or himself – stepping through the land and doing the daily chores one after another.

³¹ See for instance, Edmund Husserl’s *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893), Søren Kierkegaard’s *Either/or* (1959), and Ong’s *Orality and Literacy* (1982).

The auditory system is sensitive to the patterns and repetitions in the flux and flow of the sound events that occur. The rhythmic patterns of sound events register a sense of motion and continuity, as well as a sense of stability and orderliness in the listener (Ihde 87-89). The rhythms of the universe are infinitely varied in scale and tempo, ranging from our own heartbeats, breathing, footsteps to circadian and seasonal rhythms in nature and human life, and to the celestial motions (Schafer 226-229). The appreciation of rhythm in poetry has a long tradition and is illustrated through not only metre or foot, but also alliteration, assonance, repetitions, descriptions, and metaphorical images.

The relationship between sound and time is also revealed in the experience of pause. In musical notation, the term ‘rest’ is applied to define a measurable stoppage – i.e. half-beat or four beats, the term ‘pausa’ is used to define a long rest, and the term ‘pause’ is applied when the stoppage lasts for an imprecise amount of time – i.e. at the performer’s discretion (Kennedy and Bourne 551-602). OED defines ‘pause’ as “a break or rest made for effect, according to the sense, in speaking, reading, [...]”. In the general use, it is used to refer to “an act of stopping or ceasing for a short time in a course of action; a short interval of silence or inaction, especially one arising from uncertainty, doubt, or reflection; an intermission; a delay, a hesitation”. Likewise, throughout the thesis, I will use the term ‘pause’ to refer to a stoppage that occurs over the course of an acoustic event or in between the succession of acoustic events.

Ear and the Others: Overlaps and Horizons

Senses interact with one another and might be transformed by particular circumstances. We might then question to what extent these senses overlap or in what ways they diverge in their respective domain and also if there are any boundaries. The definition of sound-event as an interaction of materials that occurs at a certain time and in a certain place

implies that while a stable and still material object belongs to the realm of silence and vision, a moving and active object could potentially belong to both the visual and the auditory realm, where what is seen and what is heard might overlap (Ihde 50). Ihde remarks:

The mute object stands beyond the horizon of sound. Silence is the horizon of sound, yet the mute object is silently present. [...] Of both animate and inanimate beings, motion and sound, when paired, belong together. Visualistically, sound overlaps with moving being. (50)

My analysis of references to sounds and their absence in Heaney's poetry occasionally overlaps with visual references as well. However, there is an area beyond the overlapping noted above, where listening exceeds seeing or where sight may not enter. Darkness amplifies the presence of sounds. In darkness the ears become more aware of the sounds in the surroundings. However, it is in the realm of the invisible – i.e. the horizon of sight – when through listening we can perceive the presence of the invisible (Ihde 51).

1.4.2 Acoustic Ecology and Soundscape Ecology: Terms and Classifications

Scholars of acoustic ecology and soundscape ecology offer useful terms and taxonomy to identify significant features of sounds. In this section, I provide the definition of the technical terms I apply in my analysis of the poems.

Soundscape

The term soundscape has been used by scholars from a variety of disciplines, from scientific, environmental, social, political and cultural to literary and artistic domains, where soundscape studies can lead to better insight into the research. The first mention of the term appears in Michael Southworth's 1969 article "The Sonic Environment of Cities" and his exploration of the relationship between the urban soundscape and people's perception. The term reappears in Schafer's 1977 book and has remained relatively unchanged throughout the past decades being adopted in more contemporary studies by Bryan Pijanowski, et. al., Jøran

Rudi and Almo Farina, for instance, who continue to use the term soundscape to refer to the entirety of sounds being audible in a certain region and at a certain time. The term soundscape may be applied to “any portion of the sonic environment regarded as a field for study”. It can refer to an “actual environment” or an “abstract construction” of sounds, such as a musical composition, a radio or television program, or a stanza of a poem (Schafer 274). Relying on Schafer’s definition, in this study I use the term soundscape to refer to the sounds – and their absence – woven into the world of each poem.

Geophony, Biophony and Anthrophony

According to soundscape ecologists the soundscape of any given environment is composed of a complex arrangement of sounds produced by geophysical, biological, and anthropogenic sources. This taxonomy of sound-producing sources can help illustrate the dynamics between human beings and the soundscape of their rural and urban environment. In 1987, Bernie Krause introduced the term biophony to describe sounds emanating from non-human sentient organisms and the term geophony to describe sounds of non-sentient natural phenomena, such as wind, thunder and rain. The term “anthrophony” refers to all sounds produced by humans, as well as to sounds produced by stationary and moving human-made objects (qtd in Pijanowski et al. 1214). This classification informs my categorisation of sounds in Heaney’s poetry in this thesis.

Keynotes, Signals, Soundmarks and Archetypal Sounds

Acoustic ecology offers the classification of keynote sounds, sound signals and soundmarks to distinguish between the sounds important for their “individuality”, “numerousness” or “domination”, respectively (Schafer 9; Rudi 187). This distinction is

conducive to identifying values inherent in each sound as shaped by the social and cultural structures.

In musical composition, the term keynote refers to the note that identifies the tonality or the arrangement of pitches and/or chords of a particular composition. Although the material modulated around the keynote often obscures its centrality, keynote remains the anchor or fundamental tone according to which everything else takes on its special meaning (Schafer 9). In soundscape studies, keynote sounds are created by the characteristic geological, geographical, topographical and climatic features of a region, such as wind, water, vegetation and the distribution of living organisms (Schafer 272).

There is a reciprocal relationship between the type of landscape and its “basic sonic character” (Rudi 187). Keynote sounds “are heard by a particular society continuously or frequently enough to form a background against which other sounds are perceived” (Schafer 272). Keynote sounds of a landscape become “listening habits” and leave a deep and pervasive influence on the moods, character, habits, and as such, lifestyle and culture of a particular community (Schafer 9). They are then the familiar white noises that make individuals feel at home. In fact, as Schafer puts it, “they may have imprinted themselves so deeply on the people hearing them that life without them would be sensed as a distinct impoverishment” (10). Many of the keynote sounds may also possess symbolic connotation for people inhabiting a particular place and might be remembered nostalgically. Since keynote sounds have a direct impact on the mood and lifestyle of the inhabitants of a landscape, their transformation and disappearance have been the concern of ecomusicologists, anthologists and literary writers. Likewise, this thesis defamiliarises the keynotes evoked by Heaney and provides a lens for unfolding their political, cultural and environmental implications.

Keynote sounds provide the context for the more foreground signal sounds, which are emitted “with the purpose of catching someone’s attention and being listened to” attentively (Rudi 187). Signals are consciously listened to because they carry a specific message for the listener (Schafer 10). Examples could include a bird’s shriek, a dog’s bark, or the rush of a flood, as well as clock alarms, electronic signals from cell phones, crosswalks alarms, church bells, car horns and sirens, which may carry specific semantic meanings or acoustic warnings. In urban soundscapes, such electronic devices are often organised by the controlling institutions into elaborated codes so as to transmit specific messages to the individuals who are able to interpret them correctly. Therefore, as a member of a community one needs to acquire the knowledge to interpret and engage with the shared community signals (Schafer 10).

Location-specific sounds, such as the chorus of native birds, the church bell in a small town, or a specific mechanical noise, are referred to as soundmarks. The term is the sonic equivalent of landmark and can be defined as a “sound unique to a specific area or location” (Rudi 187). Soundmarks designate the unique acoustic experience of the community living in a specific place and, thus, establish a unique sense of place often only experienced by the locals. Schafer defines a soundmark as “a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by people in that community” (10). Both keynote sounds and soundmarks can also fall into the category of signal sounds by marking a specific time or bringing a specific message (Rudi 187).

Schafer extends this taxonomy to include archetypal sounds and defines them as “those mysterious ancient sounds, often possessing felicitous symbolism, which we have inherited from remote antiquity or prehistory” (9). The associations related to these sounds often surpass the boundaries of time and place to create sound symbolism. The experience of

archetypal sounds can often stir universal responses and connect listeners “with ancient ancestral heritages, providing continuity at the deepest levels of consciousness” (47).

Sound, Noise or Music

In 1966, Schaeffer coined the term ‘sound object’ to refer to “an acoustical object for human perception and not a mathematical or electro-acoustical object for synthesis” (127). The sound object is “defined by the human ear as the smallest self-contained particle of a SOUNDSCAPE [emphasis in the original]” and may be referential – i.e., a car, a bell, or a drum. In sound studies, it is considered primarily as a phenomenological sound formation independently of the referential qualities of the sound event (Schafer 274). Throughout this thesis, I use the term ‘sound’ to refer to anything audible by the human auditory system and the term ‘silence’ to the absence of any such sound. However, as I explain in the following chapter, our interpretation of sounds and silences can be mediated through culture, religion, politics as well as personal preferences.

A sound can be interpreted as noisy or musical. The arbitrariness in the interpretation of sounds, noise and music – and even silence – is best reflected when we explore the history of hearing (see 1.2). Noise, in its contemporary sense as a technical phenomenon, varies greatly from its initial definition and application. From an ecological point of view, sound and noise constitute the same phenomenon; however, the differentiation is greatly subjective. As Jacques Attali notes, “noise, then, does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed: emitter, transmitter, receiver” (26-27). In music studies, psychology, noise abatement practices, media theory and electronics, in particular, the term ‘noise’ refers to any random, unpredictable, disagreeable, unwanted and undesirable sound that may interfere with the detection of a target or signal sound or have adverse effects on

health (Seidman and Standing 3731-3732). Throughout my analysis, I apply the standard definition of the term noise as “any sound that is undesired by the recipient”.³²

Music – especially in ancient societies – originated in a collective longing for order and harmony (Attali 20). A practical and conventional definition of music includes sounds that are, among other things: (1) “humanly organised”, (2) “organised with a goal”, and (3) can be identified as “a recognisable aesthetic entity” (Godt 84). From an ecological perspective, however, music is not merely the sound of musical instruments but could potentially be that of other human-made objects and ultimately the natural environment. As John Cage has declared: “Music is sounds, sounds around us whether we’re in or out of concert halls” (30). In this thesis, too, I use the terms music and musical more broadly and to refer to any sound that is perceived as harmonic and pleasant.

Hi-fi and Low-fi

Independently from the perspective with which one enters the domain of soundscape analysis, key terms of hi-fi and low-fi are applied to describe its density or transparency. A hi-fi or high-fidelity soundscape has a favourable signal-to-noise ratio. It is one in which the ambient noise level is low, sounds overlap less frequently and discrete sounds can be heard clearly (Schafer 272). In a hi-fi soundscape, the listeners can experience perspective – foreground and background sounds – and expand their auditory horizon and practise “distant hearing” (43).

Soundscapes with an unfavourable signal-to-noise ratio are known as low-fi or low-fidelity soundscapes. In such environments, signals compete for their space in the same niche, “resulting in masking or lack of clarity” (Schafer 272). In a low-fi soundscape, “[p]erspective is lost. [...] there is no distance; there is only presence. There is cross-talk on all the channels,

³² Most definitions of acoustic terms have been internationally standardised. See IEC 801-21-08 at www.acoustic-glossary.co.uk.

and in order for the most ordinary sounds to be heard they have to be increasingly amplified” (Schafer 43). In a busy city centre, for instance, one frequency spectrum dominates and, therefore, distant and low-frequency sounds cannot be discerned (Rudi 187).

1.4.3 *Wintering Out*: A Telling Case Study

Wintering Out presents a variety of cultural, political, societal, linguistic and personal soundscapes. The poems in the collection were largely composed during his sabbatical year in Berkeley and in the months following his return to Belfast. *Wintering Out* appeared when the poet was in his early thirties facing the financial and domestic demands of life as a young parent as well as the daily professional routines as a lecturer in Queen’s. He had also recently returned to Northern Ireland from a sabbatical year (1970-71) in Berkeley. The year had brought him into contact with a new cultural, intellectual, geographical and climatic environment. Upon his return, Heaney witnessed the introduction of internment without trial, the Bloody Sunday shootings in Co. Derry and Bloody Friday bombings in Belfast, and the constant deterioration of political and sectarian relations in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

Wintering Out was published in 1972 by Faber and Faber. With the publication of his third collection, Heaney felt confident in his vocation as a poet and decided to leave the social and professional pressures of life in Northern Ireland behind him and move to Co. Wicklow to fulfil his life-long intention of being a full-time writer, as he commented: “I had passed the stage where just ‘writing poems’ was enough. I had passed the stage of probation and felt confident of vocation [...], it was time to lose the nine-to-five life and try to find a poetic life” (SS 127).

With the experience of new perspectives, new soundscapes and a sharpened sense of perception, the poet was ready to make changes in the direction of his life, to winter out. The

title comes from the poet's childhood memories of the old farming customs of wintering cattle out in pastures around Co. Derry, but also alludes to the deteriorating social and political condition of Northern Ireland in 1972. As Heaney noted, the title does not guarantee a forthcoming greenness and prosperity, but still hints at hope, survival, continuance and a change for the better: "No spring was being promised, but I still didn't think of the title as despairing" (SS 121). In an interview published in November 1972 in the *Cork Examiner*, he commented: "If we can winter this one out, we can summer anywhere".³³ To winter out, for him, is to get to the end of a tough situation, to reach the other side, and be better for having been through it. The line was posted again in 2020, on the Twitter account of the Listen Now Again exhibition, and has since become a well-known refrain in Ireland both on social media and in the real world appearing on walls and banners to offer messages of optimism and hope during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In sum, the collection charts a transitional stage in the poet's personal life and career bringing together a wide range of new challenges, perspectives, expectations, worries and tensions that he undergoes. It is placed at a turning point of his poetic development when one of the most crucial aspects of his early poems, i.e. the uncertain, more tentative cast of his mind gradually slipped away, to be replaced by a growing sense of certainty about his poetic voice. This drive toward a more certain poetic voice, amidst the uncertain years of the Troubles, must have given the poet the urgency to move to Wicklow. Looking back at his career, in a 1996 interview, he noted:

The move I made in 1972, [...] had, I noticed clearly, nothing to do with the political situation. It had to do with an inner development, an inner necessity in myself as a writer, as a poet to change my life [...]. It was the following of an inner compass which had to do with my own imaginative and psychic needs.³⁴

The acoustic images of *Wintering Out* are born out of the everyday memories of the cattle in winter fields during the 40s and 50s, the warmth and tolerance of his family towards

³³ See jrn1.ie/5065553.

³⁴ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=WT-dub5v4YA (17:40-18:35).

their Protestant neighbours, the poet's anxieties as a new parent, his frustrations with Irish predicaments, the longing for his cultural and linguistic roots, and his transition to a new social and personal consciousness as a Northern Irish poet. *Wintering Out* is one of Heaney's most compelling volumes for reaching back to the inner world of the poet himself, as well as for reaching out to other soundscapes in time and space and transposing them into his poems.

Neil Corcoran remarks that *Wintering Out* is the "seminal single volume of the post-1970 period of English poetry" (182). He argues that *Wintering Out* – and *North* – helped introduce "a lexicon and a register of pronunciation distinct from received or standard English" and continues: "in taking etymology itself as theme and preoccupation, these volumes may also be read as paradigms of the decisive shift in cultural consciousness after the 1960s" (196-197). Richard Rankin Russell notes that *Wintering Out* is one of Heaney's most significant volumes for containing the Northern Irish poet's reclamation of his "linguistic landscape" in Co. Derry (56). Heaney's place-name poems probe particular locales within the landscape and history of Ireland. In the "language poems", he tries to balance between recovering the lost landscape of the "hidden Ulster, the *Uladh* of *Doire Cholmcille*" and his debt to the English language and literature. Heaney is determined to subvert the Protestant myth of belonging in Ulster that would exclude Catholics and Irish culture from their province (56-57). Thomas C. Foster notes that "scattered throughout *Wintering Out* is evidence of a new approach to poetry, a heightened sensitivity to the historical and political implications of many of Heaney's interests and preoccupations" (35). Heaney himself said that with the escalation of the Troubles in the late 1960s, "the problems of poetry moved from being simply a matter of achieving the satisfactory verbal icon to being a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament" (PO 56). A study of the references to sound and silence is important in showing this new approach in his poetry.

Chapter 2:

On Seamus Heaney: The Critical Reception

Introduction

In 1992, three years before Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize, a *Guardian International* article revealed that “Shakespeare takes the second place to Seamus Heaney as the writer whose name appears most in English Literature courses at polytechnics and colleges of higher education [in Britain]” (Meikle 1). Since the publication of his first major poetry collection, *Death of a Naturalist*, more critical and public attention has been given to Heaney and his work than any other contemporary Irish poet – perhaps more than any other poet in the English-speaking world (O’Donoghue 2). Heaney’s talent and popularity have generated a large volume of critical materials – reviews, interviews, readings, conferences, articles, bibliographies, monographs and collections of essays together with a wealth of artistic responses – paintings, musical settings, sculptures, audio and video recordings – from all over the world. Heaney’s poetry, translations and prose have been examined by numerous scholars for traces of the voices and perspectives of other poets, manifestations of such genres as pastoral and elegy, as well as themes of liminality, memory, archaeology, mythology and music. To attempt a comprehensive review of the critical publications on Heaney’s work would be a nearly impossible task and goes beyond the scope of the present study. The essays reviewed in this chapter are selective but representative of the scholarly writings whose focus is of interest and significance to this thesis. I narrow this scope further to the studies on his poetry in general, and on *Wintering Out* in particular. Where appropriate, I benefit from earlier studies of Heaney’s work, but to avoid repetition, in this literature review, I mainly focus on a number of more recent publications.

Since the beginning of his career, Heaney's reputation has emerged both as one of the most gifted poets of the English-speaking world and as an intelligent reader of poetry. As Burris has noted, Heaney undertook the task of reading with a "native sensibility" and "indigenous feeling" for words (59-60). In order to set the ground for the analytical chapters of the thesis, in this chapter, I (i) explore studies on the voices behind Heaney's own, literary figures from the classics to broader European and anglophone world, for their influence on Heaney's conceptualisation of place and his relationship with it, as well as on the way they shaped or steered his poetic imagination; (ii) review the studies that examine Heaney's position in relation to various landscapes, from rural to urban. I attend to the themes of place, identity, liminality, as well as more recent works on the concepts of landscape, environment and ecology; and (iii) explore the studies that examine the concepts of listening, music, sounds, voice and silence in Heaney's work.

2.1 The Persuasive Voices Behind: Poets and Poetics³⁵

Heaney's poetic language is widely recognised for its vibrant diction, intense imagery and application of powerful symbols, metaphors and allusions that open a gate to his cultural identity and global history. Hardy's 2007 study shows a detailed list of literary allusions in Heaney's work. Yet Heaney's relationship with his literary precursors and contemporaries goes beyond allusions and has been the concern of many scholars. If one looks back over the trajectory of Heaney's poetic career, it is clear that Virgil, Dante, along with Mandelstam, Yeats, Miłosz, and others have "completely exemplary force" for Heaney (FK 172). Moreover, Heaney's extensive use of the classics has encouraged many scholars to explore the affinities between his work and the work of Greek, Roman, Gaelic and Anglo-Saxon ancestors. His oeuvre has also been studied for traces of his American and European contemporaries. The following pages of this critical review focus on a selection of studies

³⁵ The title of this section is inspired by a quote from Heaney's Nobel Lecture (1995).

that have examined the literary influences on his perception and conceptualisation of places and, thus, their soundscapes.

Heaney encountered Virgil's *Aeneid Book VI and IX* in school, but his engagement with Virgil began more earnestly and consciously later (SS 296). The contextualisation of pastoral and epic in his poetry has attracted the attention of scholars. The presence of Virgilian – and also Theocritean – pastoral in Heaney's early work presents itself as a natural process: Having grown up on the family farm, in *Death of a Naturalist* and *Door into the Dark*, Heaney often returns to his Irish bucolic landscape with the sadness of a child who comes to new realisations about life. Yet even those early pastorals are by no means idyllic and overlap with the elegiac mode: in 'Digging', for instance, he declares he cannot follow the tradition of his fathers; in 'Blackberry Picking', he illustrates rotting and death; and in 'Death of a Naturalist' he expresses the loss of innocence. Henry Hart remarks, "the celebration of rural securities collapses as he grows up and realises the antipastoral nature of that landscape and the society that lives within it" (9-13). Likewise, Bernard O'Donoghue states that although eclogue appears as the central form in his later poetry, as in *Electric Light*, it strikes dark notes about the years to come even more explicitly (117).

Ruben Moi notes how Heaney revisits classical models in order to reflect on his own position in literary history and theory. In his opinion, *Electric Light* in particular reflects Heaney's "canonical self-awareness" and his attempt at transcending his measured time and place (174). This concern is echoed through the volume with the poems juxtaposing the wonders of births and the commemorations of losses, as well as through Heaney's contemplation of the contemporary socio-political conditions of Ireland within the frames offered by Virgil's eclogues, Shakespeare's plays and the many allusions to Macbeth. Moi views this attempt by Heaney as "a canonical recontextualisation" and writes: "*Electric Light* appears as a canon-building project, in which Heaney both revisits and renews his own

writing” (Moi 174). Throughout his poetic career, Heaney has been in search of what poetry can and should do in response to the harsh realities of life. Rachel Falconer traces the constant presence of the Virgilian katabatic journey in Heaney’s artistic development. From digging in *Death of a Naturalist* through to exhuming bodies from peat bogs in *Wintering Out* and *North* and probing the ground and listening to the ghosts in the subsequent volumes, as Falconer notes, the poet is in search of “inspiration within the recesses of his memory and a home ground” (431-432). A recent study by Ian Hickey draws similar conclusions by adopting another theoretical lens. Hickey, too, examines the haunting presence of Virgil in the later poetry of Heaney, but his starting point is Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* (1994), in which the repetitive nature of history is explained through its haunting spectre (48). The presence of Virgil – and classical literature and history, in general – not only adds a sense of universality to Heaney’s work, but also revisits the pastoral and politics of contemporary Northern Ireland from a more stable standpoint, one whose spectre, like that of Virgil’s, lives on for eternity (26-28).

There has been similar critical interest in Dante’s influence on Heaney’s oeuvre and his representation of the contemporary political context. According to Joseph Heininger, Heaney’s work, in the last twenty-five years of his poetic career, shows strong Dantean influence. *Field Work* and *Station Island*, in particular, indicate the poetics and habits of mind cultivated by Dante. While the episode of ‘Ugolino’ can be found in *Inferno*, the model for the pilgrimage sequence and encounters with familiar ghosts in ‘Station Island’ is *Purgatorio* (Heininger 50). Heaney translated Dante in the intense socio-political atmosphere of Northern Ireland and amidst “Dirty” protests in the H-blocks in Long Kesh. For him, the harrowing experience of Republicans hunger striking in prison is a reminder of the harrowing starvations of Ugolino and his children in *Inferno*. Heininger maintains that Heaney’s adaptations of Dante’s work as a series of aesthetic choices provide him with “a more open

and self-scrutinizing poetic practice” and “a political stance in which self-acceptance triumphs over rage, timorousness, and guilt” (63). Daniela Panzera’s more recent study focuses on Heaney’s fascination with Dante’s language and concern for themes such as land and politics. Heaney admires Dante’s profound devotion to his local culture and vernacular, but is principally fascinated by the medieval Italian poet’s ability to transcend “ethnic boundaries and create an increasingly cosmopolitan poetry” (Panzera 200). It is Dante’s creation of “a unitary poetic language” that becomes fundamental to the Irish poet and reappears, in particular, in his place-name poems in *Wintering Out*. Both ‘Broagh and ‘Anahorish’ are the English transliterations of the original Irish ‘bruach’ and ‘anach fhíor uisce’ (O’Brien 16). Referring to these poems, Panzera comments that Heaney displays the willingness to reconcile both the English and the Irish traditions by meditating on the semantic elements of both cultures, in the same way that Dante believed the creation of a unitary poetic language would promote national solidarity (200).

If Heaney raided Dante, he settled with *Beowulf* for 15 years.³⁶ Heaney’s knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon poem can be traced back to his undergraduate days. One aspect of Old English poetry that influenced Heaney from the beginning is its highly alliterative language and diction. Critics have been meticulously examining the Irish poet’s choice of word in his translation of it. Howell Chickering condemns what he calls the appropriation of the text, calling it pejoratively “*Heaneywulf*” (160-178). Yet Seth Lerer sees the “Irishness” of Heaney’s translation as a way to transcend his postcolonial relationship to England and to let philology reverberate away from empire and colony (13-14). Alison Finlay celebrates the marriage of Anglo-Saxon culture and modern Irish concerns in *Beowulf* (136-154). Karlo Megec considers Heaney’s attempts at vernacularizing and localizing the language as a very

³⁶ In an interview with Robert Hass, Heaney clarifies that his approach to translation relies on different motives, of which ‘raid’ best describes his approach to Dante and ‘settlement’ describes his approach to *Beowulf*. Raid, he explains, is slightly predatory, “the translator hears something in the other language and says, ‘I would like that, that sounds right, I need that’”. In settlement, “the translator enters an oeuvre and colonises it but also stays with it to interact and make mutual adaptations” (1-2).

“genuine way of translation” (25-26). Heaney’s long settlement in the text, in fact, allowed the Anglo-Saxon poem the chance to enter his poetic language and broaden his sense of historical heritage.

Heaney’s Hiberno-English version of *Philoctetes*’ has also received contradictory reviews from the critics. For instance, while Paul Turner scrutinises Heaney’s *The Cure at Troy* for the general “ungreekness” (121-122), Marianne McDonald and Michael Walton admire Heaney’s contextualisation of the classic text (70-71). Alan Peacock discusses *The Cure at Troy* as a major point in Heaney’s development of a public poetic voice (233-255). Marylinn Richtarik pursues the question of its relevance to the contemporary Irish context. She examines the Chorus speech, in particular, as Heaney’s attempt to encourage the audience to believe in what seemed utopian in 1990, but what would come to be referred to as the Northern Ireland peace process (98-112).

The influence of Eastern European poetry on anglophone poetry during the Cold War was deep and wide-ranging. Heaney wrote essays on the Polish poets Czesław Miłosz and Zbigniew Herbert, the Russian poets Osip Mandelstam and Joseph Brodsky, and the Czech poet Miroslav Holub, among others, paying particular attention to Mandelstam and Miłosz in his poetry. The fact that the Northern Irish poet has been influenced by Eastern European poetry is beyond dispute. The way in which he has been influenced and the degree to which he has responded to them have been the focus of many critics. According to Clare Cavanagh, in his later poetry Heaney turns repeatedly to the voices of poets from Eastern Europe to reframe the relationship between his poetry and the social and political obligation (105). He remarks that Heaney is united with Russian Mandelstam and Polish Miłosz, who have likewise witnessed victimisation and deprivation of people in the history of their nations and who take as their mission “not merely to bear witness to history, but to participate in its

creative reshaping as national myth and legend” (105-106).³⁷ Justin Quinn explores the depth and dimensions of Eastern European poetry influence on Heaney’s oeuvre, suggesting Heaney’s engagement with Eastern European poets was, paradoxically, at once superficial and profound: superficial in the sense that Heaney’s access to these texts was confined to translated versions, and profound in the sense that “these poets provided him with new ways to respond to the pressure of politics on poetry” (93).³⁸ Magdalena Kay’s more recent study traces the subtle manner in which Heaney acknowledges the value of Eastern European poetry. According to Kay, for Heaney, the power of Eastern European poetry does not inhere in political utility alone. Instead, it relies greatly on the fierce manner in which these poets use such abstract words as faith, spirit, justification and love. In doing so, she also indicates the ways Eastern European poets have encouraged Heaney to recalibrate his relationship with words in a broader sense: “Heaney has always insisted on the word’s ultimate ability to release energies that act within and upon both the individual and the community. The word does not simply mediate but creates, performs, makes present (18-19).

Heaney’s poetry also reflects his awareness of the broader international context than just Europe. In *Poetry and Posterity* (2000), Edna Longley suggests Heaney and several of his contemporaries show a strong pull towards the American dream drawing them eventually to prestigious US universities (253). Daniel Ross argues that the years of teaching at Harvard have left a much more elemental American mark on Heaney’s poetic career than merely broadening his circle of literary figures. Having lived through the years of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Heaney had become able to see America in a special light: “a former British colony that has distinctively found its own identity and literary tradition within the confines of the English language” (Ross 253). American writers have given the Northern Irish poet a model for making the language of his oppressors his own, an element that, as

³⁷ Heaney explains the reason for finding their voices compelling: “because there is something in their situation that makes them attractive to a reader whose formative experiences have been largely Irish” (GT XX).

³⁸ For Heaney’s views, see ‘The Impact of Translation’ (GT 36-44).

noted before, is evident as early as 1970s in such poems as ‘Fodder’, ‘Broagh’ and ‘Anahorish’ in *Wintering Out*, when Heaney includes some Irish words and place names.³⁹

Ross also believes that the influence of Eliot and Frost, in particular, is more evident in Heaney’s later publications. He identifies the two great hungers undergirding Heaney’s poetic career: the hunger for origins, which has enabled Heaney to recapture an original sense of encountering with an ancient language and, thus, to escape Englishness. The hunger for transcendence began in the 1980s in *North* and *Field Work*, with Dante as the key figure. But, in turning to Dante, as Ross argues, Heaney was also following in the footsteps of Eliot, hoping “to grow up to the end of life” (26). Frost, too, offered him a new perspective to reconsider the values of balance in life and in poetry. Beginning with *Seeing Things*, Heaney described the political Troubles of Northern Ireland as “a too-consuming passion” (Ross 92-95). Ross believes that the American influence encouraged Heaney to broaden his vision and, thus, to transcend the condition of “boundedness” (95).

Yeats is regarded as the father of modern Irish poetry who elevated the state of Irish literature to the international level. Since the publication of his first poetry collection, Heaney has been frequently compared to Yeats.⁴⁰ Patrick Ryan compares Yeats’ and Heaney’s political engagement (21), while Longley and Tomoaki Suwa address Bloom’s theory of the anxiety of influence in Heaney’s relationship with Yeats (194; 49). According to Ryan, Yeats and Heaney are the right examples for proving that “there are no political neutrals” (21). While Yeats preferred to avoid a deliberate and direct political theme in literature, Heaney was more consistent than Yeats in facing up to the political realities around him (21-24).

³⁹ In ‘Belfast’, Heaney discusses his relationship with English language and literary tradition, saying: “I speak and write in English, but do not altogether share the preoccupations and perspective of an Englishman. I teach English literature, I publish in London, but the English tradition is not ultimately home” (PO 34).

⁴⁰ For instance, Robert Lowell famously calls Heaney “the most important Irish poet since Yeats” (19). Jon Stallworthy, Steven Matthews, and Corcoran examine Heaney’s poetry for elements of Yeatsian influence. David Wheatley’s 2008 study pays tribute to Heaney as a critic and, in 1995, Foster refers to Heaney’s critical writings as “the best Irish literary criticism since Yeats” (2). In 2008, O’Donoghue comments on Heaney’s lifestyle who chose to be a busy “career-teacher of literature as well as a writer” rather than “a man of letters” (2). Patrick Crotty compares him to Yeats and highlights Heaney’s “warm and accessible demeanour”, identifying it as a major factor in his reception (38).

Longley's 2013 study touches on a similar topic by refuting Bloom's theory and bringing up the Irish context as a case in which religious and political factors interfere with such influences. The relationship between Heaney and Yeats is complicated by Heaney's admiration of Yeats' use of form and the post-colonial consideration of Yeats as a "taboo model" for a Northern Irish poet of Catholic background (209). Likewise, Suwa presents the counter argument for Bloom's theory by highlighting the conflicts and complexities in the poet's religious, cultural and historical contexts (49). Suwa identifies three distinct phases in Heaney's work during which he responds differently to Yeats's influence. The period between the 1960s and the 1980s marks a phase of "ambivalent apprenticeship" when Heaney's relationship with Yeats was more polemical than is generally known. In this early period, Heaney often refers to Kavanagh and Joyce as his literary influences. Suwa recognises a turning point from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, when Heaney develops a broader sense of literary borders and, thus, when a discreet re-appraisal of Yeats begins. The years after the mid-1990s designate a movement to the next phase of world history, the era of globalisation and Heaney's reconciliation towards "the other" in Ireland (50-57).

2.2 The Republic of Conscience: Landscapes, Places and Spaces⁴¹

Heaney's relationship with the concept of place has been examined in relation to the themes of exile, liminality, displacement and identity, as well as through the theoretical lenses of landscape theories and ecocritical theories.⁴² These studies highlight the centrality of landscape and place, as a leitmotif of Heaney's work, and indicate the various ways in which he perceives his relationship with his surroundings. I start this section with the review of the studies on exile and liminality, as early concepts of Heaney scholarship, and proceed to more recent studies with ecocritical concerns, which explore the implications attached to the

⁴¹ The title of this section is inspired by Heaney's 'From the Republic of Conscience' (HL 14).

⁴² Heaney comments about the concept of place in his essay 'The Sense of Place'(PO).

concept of place and landscape. I end this section with a review of the discussions on major biophonic and geophonic elements of the Irish soundscape – i.e. the bogland, the wood, stones, birds and some of the other animals. The understanding of these concepts underlies Heaney's illustration of his sense of place and his relationship with the surrounding landscape through sounds.

The political situation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Heaney was writing the poems in *Wintering Out*, was an inescapable barbaric horror (Mahon 115), leaving people divided between "Britain's Ireland" and "Ireland's Ireland" (RP 188).⁴³ Early plantation settlement in the seventeenth century and the sectarian divisions and tensions that followed it have left a deep impact on the landscape of Ireland, both literally and ideologically. The experience of the divisions and the quest for defining the concepts of identity and belonging have impacted the literary enterprises of the territory, including Heaney's. In *Writing Home* (2008), Elmer Andrews notes that there is a particular dimension to Irish writers' preoccupation with their land: "Yeats and Lady Gregory's Co. Galway, J. M. Synge's Aran Islands, Patrick Kavanagh's Co. Monaghan, John Hewitt's Glens of Antrim, Seamus Heaney's Co. Derry, John Montague's Co. Tyrone, Michael Longley's Co. Mayo" (1).⁴⁴

Exile, displacement, liminality and in-betweenness are some of the early concepts with which scholars have approached and interpreted Heaney's relationship with his homeland. Such debates are often contradictory in their interpretation of liminality. While some consider it as an empowering element, others view in-betweenness as a restricting position. Jonathan Allison refers to liminality as a frequent topic of Heaney criticism, and

⁴³ The divisions in the landscape of the region can be traced back to the contacts with largely Protestant Scottish and English settlers from 1608, who wrestled economic, political and religious power from the Catholic minority. Up to the present day, the region has suffered from the effects of sectarian violence, culminating in the years that led up to the publication of *Wintering Out* and *North* (Whyte 342–343).

⁴⁴ In 'Frontiers of Writing', Heaney describes the impact of the riven landscape on himself and all the residents of the region, but he also emphasises the desire to move beyond them:

[T]he whole population are adepts in the mystery of living at two places at one time. Like all human beings, of course, they would prefer to live in one, but in the meantime they make do with a constructed destination, an interim place whose foundations straddle the areas of self-division, a place of resolved contradiction, beyond confusion. (RP 190)

comments: “To regard Heaney as a poet of self-division has become a critical commonplace. His poetry is said to mediate between, oscillate between, chart a course between, struggle between, and voice the conflict between certain opposing choices” (187). Considering Heaney’s Catholic upbringing in an officially Protestant country, as well as his persistency in placing himself in between the binaries of Irish/Englishness, North/South and classics/contemporary, Heaney’s experience of in-betweenness is undeniable: “Two buckets were easier carried than one. / I grew up in between” (HL 5).

Dominic Manganiello counters Allison’s interpretation of displacement as an uncertain and struggling state by arguing that liminality is, in fact, a fundamental element of any creating process (101-103). Heaney himself notes, “a writer cannot dwell completely in origin – Origin is almost Eden, you know. You have to leave Eden and get the division; the loss of Eden, the memory, is one of the ways writing occurs” (qtd in Foster 139.). Manganiello highlights the sense of self-exile that the “Northern Irish Dante” shares with his Italian precursor and exemplar. An early point of contact between the two poets occurs in the rootedness of their literature in the local and the vernacular (see 2.1). Heaney finds the origin of all writing in the distance the “inner émigré” (N 68) travels to retrieve his cultural memories.⁴⁵ In his place-name poems, in particular, it is in this journey back “[i]nto the heartland of the ordinary” (ST 7) – to rocks, bogs, the wool trade, buses and bicycles from his homeland – that Heaney reaches the embedded meanings and rooted memories (Manganiello 101-103).

Likewise, in “Poems without Frontiers” (2007), Rankin Russell argues that, for Heaney, in-betweenness was an enabling and empowering meditative state (26). In ‘Digging’, for instance, the liminal positions between the domestic space and exterior world as well as

⁴⁵ Heaney maintains:

I like to remember that Dante was very much a man of a particular place, that his great poem is full of intimate placings and place-names, and that as he moves round the murky circles of hell, often heard rather than seen by his damned friends and enemies, he is recognised by his local speech or so he recognises them. (PO 136-137)

between the present and the memory of his grandfather enable Heaney to project his future as a writer. The composition of the poems in *Station Island* is another evident illustration of Heaney's commitment to this poetic approach. The tripartite structure of the volume reflects a correspondence to Dante's *Divine Comedy*: opening with 'the Underground'; entering the middle passage of 'Station Island'; and, finally, encountering the poetic muse, 'Sweeney Redivivus'. The titular poems are also carefully and purposely placed in the middle section of the entire collection dramatizing a purgatorial phase in which the poet-narrator encounters various dead personages (Rankin Russell 30-33). Jonathan Hufstader refers to this tripartite structure as Heaney's "ritual procedure" (61-62). In his view, this structure is followed in many of his other poems where "[there is an] entrance rite, [a] central action, and [then] the subject's emergence from the ritual in a new state of mind" (61-62). Rankin Russell concludes the Janus-faced poet "is straddling the threshold between what is and what can be. His poetic invitation to us is to join him at the frontier of writing, where hope, tempered by reality, awaits us" (39).

A more novel branch of Heaney scholarship has been fashioned by studies that approach the concept of place and landscape from a broad range of perspectives, from natural and social sciences to humanities and arts. Landscapes are composed of complex physical, chemical and biological systems, which change over time and whose change determines the transformations of the soundscape. They are shaped by human societies who inhabit them and base their existence and habits on the natural features of their landscapes. "We are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers", says Heaney, "we make homes and search for our histories" (PO 148-149). In the next paragraphs, I exemplify how Heaney's way of redressing the fractures and divisions in the socio-political landscapes of Ireland has been examined by Heaney scholars.

Drawing on the key elements in landscape theory, Sukanya Basu presents the concept of “poetic landscape” and defines it as a creative domain in which the Irish poet redresses this liminal state (29).⁴⁶ He maintains that poetic landscapes are “verbal entities because their visual reality is truly realised only through the power of the poetic utterance” (29). According to Michael Harkin, Heaney is aware of the impacts of colonisation and divisions on the landscape of Ireland and views it as not merely a “passive recipient [...] of human agency, but” a “subject” that needs to be given voice (50). Heaney’s poetic landscapes are the space where he fuses both “material places” and “imagined spaces” in order to uncover and vocalise the hidden energies of landscape through the power of his poetry (Harkin 50). Therefore, whereas in essays – like ‘Mossbawn’, ‘Belfast’, ‘The Sense of Place’, ‘Place’ and ‘Displacement’, ‘The Place of Writing’ and ‘Frontiers of Writing’ – Heaney unravels the social and cultural implications attached to his places and landscapes,⁴⁷ in his place-name poems, language is intimately tied to the landscape in order to create a geographical myth of Irish identity (50). Heaney explains that, as an Irish poet, his “quest for definition” is to be “conducted in the living speech of the landscape” he was born into (PO 37). Thus, the soundscapes of Heaney’s childhood are placed at the centre of his Irishness and poetic agenda. The river Moyola, the bogs, trees, animals, farms, and fields become personal and collective touchstones, to which Heaney returns to, as Basu puts it, “renew and sustain his poetic imagination” (20).

Walt Hunter too highlights the centrality of landscape and place as a leitmotif of Irish poetic creation, but one that is intensely politicised and globally oriented. From Wilde’s ‘The Famine Year’ (1848), Yeats’s ‘The Stolen Child’ (1889), Kavanagh’s ‘The Great Hunger’

⁴⁶ See Christopher Tilley’s *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994), John Wylie’s *Landscape* (2007) and Tim Cresswell’s *Place* (2004), for a detailed discussion on the theories regarding the concepts of ‘place’, ‘space’ and ‘landscape’.

⁴⁷ In landscape theories, ‘place’ is applied to refer to a space invested with meaning in the context of power relations (Cresswell 12; Basu 28) and the term ‘landscape’ to refer to “a set of relational places” (Tilley 44) or “a wide range of different interlocking places which interact with one other to generate a complex web of meaning” (Basu 29).

(1942), through to French's *Broken Harbour* (2012) and one of Heaney's final poems, 'Banks of a Canal' (2013), Hunter argues the landscape of Irish poetry is haunted by violence of dispossession and uprooting (19-26). Drawing on Heaney's essay, 'Place and Displacement', he comments: "What he names as a 'displaced perspective' amplifies rather than mutes the poem's effects" (27).⁴⁸ This sense of displacement is dramatised in Heaney's landscape poems, when he attempts to open a liminal space for poetry in a politicised context, by preventing its "pigeon-holing" (Hunter 27) in one of two alternatives, to use the poet's terms, of "deliberately provocative" or "culpably detached" (Heaney 29). The contemporary Irish landscape poetry's obsession with local places is not for the purpose of commodifying and marketing their Irishness, but in order to respond to the process of globalisation from an exilic and resistant position (Hunter 28).

Ross Moore examines the representation of natural landscapes in some of the poems that feature Heaney driving in the countryside (71-72). 'Postscript', for instance, begins with a sense of motion urging the reader to make some time and drive along the coastal line in Co. Clare and then continues, "useless to think you'll park and capture it" (SL 70). Looking closely at the language and the imagery, Moore suggests the effect is to create a sense of transience and liminality. The poem signals a fundamental shift in Heaney's approach to the natural environment and this shift is reliant on poetic procedures which Heaney had come to trust early in his career. 'Postscript' arches back to the opening of 'The Peninsula' in the way it maintains the perspective of a driver on a solitary trip through the landscape of Ireland: "When you have nothing more to say, just drive / For a day all around the peninsula" (DD 11). Moore comments that both poems are geographically and temporally grounded, giving a

⁴⁸ In 'Place and Displacement', Heaney speaks of the liminal position as enabling and empowering:

The poet is stretched between politics and transcendence, and is often displaced from a confidence in a single position by his disposition to be affected by all positions, negatively rather than positively capable. This, and the complexity of the present conditions, may go some way to explain the large number of poems in which the Northern Irish writer views the world from a great spatial or temporal distance, the number of poems imagined from beyond the grave, from the perspective of mythological or historically remote characters. (130-131)

sense of direction to the reader, but for all its determination and forward look, the drive in ‘Postscript’ retains something of the melancholic freedom of ‘The Tollund Man’ (WO 36-37). Both poems share some of the unstable attributes of an in-between protagonist but reveal a significant register in the tone of the poet. ‘The Peninsula’, he writes, “hopes to “uncode” truths through attention to physical description and material actualities. In taking the landscape on its own terms and remaining open to place and experience, ‘Postscript’ does not grant the narrator any defining comprehension over it. Instead, it encourages the reader to open their heart to the marvellous and feel “the insignificance of the self when placed against the natural landscape” (Moore 71-72).

Ecologically, the poem ‘Postscript’ associates itself with the West of Ireland, a source of inspiration for many of Heaney’s contemporary poets who, as Tom Herron notes, contribute to its mythic status by depopulating their poems in favour of “pristine ecological experiences” (81). In that sense, Heaney’s “driving” poems too contribute to the literary mythologizing of the West of Ireland by eliding the narrator along with any other potential human characters. Yet, unlike his contemporaries,⁴⁹ Heaney attempts to portray the place on its own terms, by keeping the physical description of the landscape at the heart of his poem. Heaney’s main emphasis on elemental physical attributes of the West – i.e. Burren rock, lake and sea – “achieves both a unique presence for itself as poem, and for the place itself, beyond, or in spite of, all the ‘scripts’ associated with the West of Ireland” (Moore 75-76).

The features of any landscape play significant roles in the development of its culture and society. With the rise of ecocriticism, the question of how geography and ecology of the Irish landscape influence the imagination of its writers has turned into a sustained critical attention.⁵⁰ In the remainder of this section, I turn to the representation of the major elements

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Longley’s collection *An Exploded View* (1972).

⁵⁰ Recent environmentalist concerns and the question of their relevance in the Irish literary enterprise have led to the publication of various notable books, including Christine Cusick’s *Out of the Earth* (2010), Robert Brazeau and Derek Gladwin’s *Eco-Joyce* (2014) and Gladwin’s *Contentious Terrains* (2016).

of Irish landscape, bogs, water, stones, birds. Donna Potts, for example, focuses on the cultural, social, historical and ecological implications of bog and Burren in Irish poetry. Regarded as waste land by the British, both the Burren and bog have come to epitomise Irish character, resisting both colonisation and settlement and thus, any alteration to their landscape.⁵¹ Irish people themselves came to associate bogs with supernatural stories. In pre-colonial Ireland, bogs were repositories for handcrafts and human bodies since the Iron Age, or even the Stone Age. During the industrial period, peat bogs became a source of economic value. Today bogs have emerged as the focus of conservation efforts in Ireland, celebrated by writers and artists for their cultural and aesthetic values (Potts 69-72). Potts' draws attention to Heaney's bog poems as illustrative examples.⁵² Heaney's Mossbawn house was surrounded by bogs (see my Introduction). He encountered Danish bog bodies and the Jutland landscapes in the work of the Danish archaeologist Peter Glob, *The Bog People* (1965), when he visited the Danish museum in 1973.⁵³ Potts explains Heaney's personification of the bogland as feminised earth, in 'The Tollund Man', recalls the ancient earth's role as a "deity", "goddess" and "holy ground" into which victims were ritually sacrificed and the juxtaposition of human bodies and grain is the reminder of "the ultimate inseparability of human and non-human nature" (76-77).

The presence of the bog as one of the most familiar and characteristic features of Irish landscape has attracted the attention of many critics. For Jahan Ramazani, the structure of peat bogs is indicative of multiple temporalities. He argues that peat bogs are particularly

⁵¹ See Gerard Boate's *Ireland's Natural History* (1652) for more information of how colonisers compared the character of Irish people to bogs.

⁵² Heaney's bog poems include the following: 'Digging' (DN); 'Bogland' (DD); 'The Tollund Man', 'Bog Oak' and 'Nerthus' (WO); 'Come to the Bower', 'Belderg', 'Bog Queen', 'The Grauballe Man', 'Punishment', 'Kinship', 'Strange Fruit' and 'Act of Union' (N). The bog poems based on Tollund man's body are: 'The Tollund man' (WO); 'Tollund' (SL) and 'The Tollund Man in Springtime' (DC).

⁵³ The book was translated into English in 1969, at the height of the Troubles. According to Heaney, Glob argues that the bog bodies are related to a number of "ritual sacrifices to the Mother Goddess [...], who needed new bridegrooms each winter to bed with her in her sacred place, in the bog, to ensure the renewal and fertility of the territory in the spring". Heaney quickly associated these sacrificial rites with "the tradition of Irish political martyrdom for that cause whose icon is Kathleen Ni Houlihan" and realised how they constituted "an archetypal pattern" (PO 57).

significant to the cultural memory of Ireland for being a reminder of the hidden layers of history: “the imaginative topography of Heaney’s poetry is an intercultural space, a layered geography” (346). Karin Sanders discusses bogs’ capacity to preserve human bodies and artefacts. In Heaney’s work the silent peat bogs serve as useful loci for preserving history and revisiting memories of the human past with such startling details that only the Tollund man’s body would preserve under anaerobic conditions. Sanders maintains bog bodies “negotiate the liminality that comes with having to travel between their material reality as archaeological artefacts and the temporality that comes with their humanness” (9).

Gladwin’s 2014 study spans a broad period in Irish writing, examining the work of Marina Carr, Frank O’Connor, Bram Stoker and Seamus Heaney, among others, to probe the connections between Ireland’s peat bogs and the postcolonial and Gothic literary traditions. Adopting Joseph Roach’s notion of the circum-Atlantic, Alison Garden traces the association between Heaney’s waterlogged poems and the familiar themes of exile and diaspora in his poetry.⁵⁴ For Ireland, the Atlantic is marked by its association with decades of mostly traumatic emigration as a result of the Famine years (1845-1852) and the sectarian violence and unrest as a continuing legacy of colonisation until recent years. The archipelagic nature of Ireland and the transatlantic associations of its history have encouraged Heaney – as well as the American poet Natasha Trethewey and the Caribbean poet Kwame Senu Neville Dawes – to fashion watery interstices as a site for evoking the shared memory of the “the chorus of water-lost” voices (Garden 91).⁵⁵ Heaney’s boglands present an uncanny type of landscape that brings together land and water as the locus of an intercultural heritage Ireland shares with nations across the ocean. The fluidity of bogs, particularly in *Door into the Dark*, *Wintering Out* and *North*, not only embodies the unsteadiness of Ireland, in terms of its

⁵⁴ See *Cities of the Dead* (1996) for Roach’s concept of a “circum-Atlantic” (4).

⁵⁵ The exilic quality of Heaney’s bog poetry is connected to the continuing legacy of British colonialism in Northern Ireland. David Gleeson suggests it was Britain that “dragged [Ireland], willing or not, into the nascent English/British Atlantic” in the early modern period and that we can read “Ireland, in some ways, [as] the prototype for the whole transatlantic English colonial enterprise of the 1600s” (2).

political, cultural and social condition but it also refers to the sheer expanse of the lives lost throughout Irish history. Bogs are the sites where an “unfenced Ireland seeps into the Atlantic” (Garden 95). Garden particularly invites us to listen to what the Atlantic waves echoed in Heaney’s bogland and hear the long history of outmigration across the Atlantic (95).

Nicholas Allen too is interested in the representation of water and liquidity in Heaney’s poetry. From the dripping water in the backyard of his Mossbawn house to the ink at the tip of his pen in *Death of Naturalist*, from the river Moyola flowing in *Wintering Out* to the feel of a greasy eel in *Human Chain*, according to Allen, Heaney’s poetic and intellectual landscape is rich with symbolic representations of water in all its manifestations (173-174). Water – in the form of drips, juices, ink, riverbanks, boggy stretches, lakes and oceans – can be seen as a key medium for constructing cultural and historical associations (173). He views this liquidity as a mode of transition and therefore maintains that the profusion of the many varieties of water in Heaney’s work is a metaphor for changing states and flexibility required to confront the sharp realities in Northern Ireland (174).

In addition to land and water, Heaney scholars have been drawn to the presence and meaning of trees, birds and other animals in Heaney’s poetry. In one of his early essays, Heaney recalls crouching in one of his secret nests, “the fork of a beech tree”, and comments “once you squeezed in through it, you were at the heart of a different life” (PO 18). Heaney also refers to the “mysteries of the grove” and “the powers of the Celtic otherworld” to describe the symbolism of the wood in early Irish nature poetry (PO 186). From Sweeney’s praise of the trees, to Frank O’Connor and James Patrick Carney and to Heaney himself, Celtic imagination has been “beautifully entangled with the vegetation and the weathers and animals of the countryside [...] attesting to the god in the tree as a source of poetic

inspiration” (PO 188).⁵⁶ This engagement with nature, and the wood in particular, has been examined by a score of literary critics and environmental activists. Terry Gifford includes Heaney in *Green Voices* (1995) and Sidney Burris meticulously examines Heaney’s handling of pastoral and anti-pastoral traditions in *The Poetry of Resistance* (1990). Meg Tyler too pays specific attention to Heaney’s re-writings of pastoral texts (4-28). In the following paragraphs, I discuss such elements of the Irish environment as the wood and native animals.

Colleen McKenna explores the literary, mythical and cultural connotations of trees in Heaney’s poetry and translations. For him, ‘Sweeney Astray’ is a rich source of the liminal image of the tree: set in the Irish forest beyond the walls of the city, with named and venerated trees, the wood serves as a “passing phase” for Mad Sweeney to transform and achieve redemption (42-43). The voice of Heaney-Sweeney continues to be heard in a number of poems in *Wintering Out*, *North* and especially *Station Island*, where Heaney identifies himself with Sweeney as the “small dreamself in the branches” (McKenna 43).⁵⁷ In ‘Oracle’, ‘Exposure’ and ‘Glanmore Sonnets V’, for instance, the tree is seen as a sanctuary for the poet, while ‘In the Beech’ probes the contradictory nature of the tree: “it is solid and soft, strange and comfortable, timeless and time-specific, personal and universal” (44-45). Heaney, as it were, “unwrites” the symbol of the tree in his poetry and translation. This conceptualisation of the tree as a liminal space is

indicative of an epistemological shift and poetic crossing, and the event itself can be read as an analogue for an artistic passing through, a paradigm for the general

⁵⁶ In his essay ‘The Placeless heaven’, he talks about how a chestnut tree in Mossbawn – planted by his aunt at the time of his birth – once cut down, became a symbol of “being rooted in the home ground” and how he envisioned the place where it had been as “a kind of luminous emptiness” (181-182).

⁵⁷ Heaney’s remark on this famously known personal allegory further confirms the Heaney-Sweeney conflation. In his 1984 interview with Paul Vaughan, he explains that the identity of Sweeney blends with “the child Heaney in the tree”:

There are some poems which are clearly autobiographical. [...] Now, the Sweeney figure spends a lot of his time roosting in trees – so in a sense, that gives permission for *this voice* to speak and it remembers a moment which I think all children have. [...] And in my case, I remember this particular tree I used to climb; [...] *Sweeney in the tree, and the child Heaney in the tree are merged together there and I use them to re-collect and to re-member* [emphasis in the original]. (Heaney qtd in McKenna)

lightening of Heaney's verse, which has been increasingly engaged with issues of space and the ephemeral. (McKenna 55-56)

Krishnendu Bera adds the ecological concerns of the last few decades to the large body of Heaney scholarship to examine Heaney's "eco-consciousness" – i.e. the way he establishes his individual and communal identity in relation to the natural environment – arguing that, in his poems and translations, Heaney subverts the stereotypical binaries of human/non-human encouraged by anthropomorphism throughout the centuries of human civilisation (1-3).⁵⁸ Bera suggests that Heaney's eco-consciousness is particularly evident in his presentation of the peat bogs as the archetypal memory of the nation's past and as a symbol of Irish identity. In his bog poems, he not only identifies his communal identity with the land but also indicates that violence has always been an integral part of human culture. The sensibility that "the whole world is a vast eco-system and we are merely part of it like any other animate or inanimate element" is also evident in *Station Island*, where the central voice belongs to Sweeney, the king transformed into a bird, which serves as the poet's own self (Bera 1-3). Just like bogs, the trees are not merely an ornamental part of a pastoral landscape or a material for construction in Heaney's poetry. Irish vegetation forms an integral part of his personal and collective identity. In 'Oracle' and 'Sweeney Praises the Trees', the poet's treatment of the trees contributes to their status as "mythic" and "spiritual" (Bera 1-3). In 'Land' the greenery serves as a symbol of the spirit of the country and memory. In 'Sibyl', the partitioned Ireland is described in the image of a "helmeted and bleeding tree" which requires "green and open buds" to recover (FW 5). Heaney's poetry is reflective of the "ecosophical outlook" he has developed through a deep identification of his identity with his natural environment, one that is not delimited by the personal ego and instead urges him to experience his self as "a genuine part of all life" (Bera 174).

⁵⁸ Bera bases his ecocritical perspectives on Glotfelty's 1996 definition of ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" in order to look at the psychological significance of environment in identity formation (XIX).

Indigenous Irish animals too carry a symbolic weight in Irish literature, culture and politics.⁵⁹ Potts' sharp ecocritical approach traces Heaney's concerns for the Irish ecology at the heart of his bog poems, as in 'Bogland' where Heaney seeks his Irish identity by corkscrewing downwards into the repository of Irish history only to find the skeleton of the long-extinct Irish Elk. "The extinction of animals", she argues, "also provides a means for talking about the consequences of colonisation" (144-145). In 'Midnight', similarly, Heaney compares the disappearance of the Irish language to the extinction of the wolf in Ireland after the wars of the seventeenth century and the colonial settlement, but also laments the extinction of the Irish wolf as the consequence of human greed and deforestation. In No. III from his sequence 'Glanmore Sonnets', Heaney writes of the cry of the cuckoo and corncrake, which, in addition to its pastoral implications, reveals the poet's concern for the extinction of avian life due to the mechanisation of agriculture (Potts 165-167).

2.3 The Music of What Happens: Music, Sound, Voice and Silence ⁶⁰

In this section, I shall review and critique a number of scholarly works where the concepts of language and voice, sound and music, as well as silence in the poetry of Heaney are examined. My review begins by acknowledging a score of critical works that have analysed Heaney's poetic language from various critical lenses – e.g. cognitive theories, New Criticism, as well as etymological and structural analysis, prosody and phonetics. I direct the discussion towards studies that examine the concepts of music, sound and silence in his work. This literature review particularly indicates the original contribution of this thesis to what is becoming the field of Heaney Studies. It shows that despite the scholarly attention Heaney's auditory imagination has received to date, there is none that offers a systematic approach for both identifying and interpreting auditory references in his work; nor does any of the previous

⁵⁹ See Kathryn Kirkpatrick and Borbála Faragó's *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture* (2015), for a symbolic study of animals in Irish literature.

⁶⁰ The title of this section is inspired by Heaney's 'Song' (FW 53).

studies look specifically and thoroughly at all the various aspects of the soundscape in his writing.

Heaney's language has been studied from a variety of theoretical perspectives.⁶¹ Since the publication of *Wintering Out*, with emphatic reflections on place-names – and their etymology, pronunciation and societal relevance – a considerable body of literature has been produced with a focus on Heaney's use of language for its syntactic structure and etymological depth as symptoms of human history, culture, memory and identity, and as the poet's attempt to unify his culturally diverse roots.⁶² Since Heaney's acknowledgement of his debt to Eliot's concept of "auditory imagination", many critical debates have centred on the sonic and musical aspects in Heaney's language.⁶³ In his *All the Realms of Whisper* (1988), Andrews highlights the cognitive import of auditory perceptions and responses in Heaney's poetry (41). He also shows a linguistic bent in his analysis of Heaney's poetry focusing mostly on the composition of his vowels and consonants. In *Seamus Heaney* (1989), Thomas C. Foster too presents an enlightening study of the prosodic features of Heaney's poetry

⁶¹ For instance, David Lloyd examines Heaney's language use in relation to identity. His work has also been studied from a cognitive stylistic perspective by many critics. Elena Semino uses Schema Theory to examine Heaney's linguistic description in 'The Pillowed Head'. Maria Teresa Calderón Quindós applies Blending Theory to explain the integration of the various pieces of the poem 'Oracle' in relation to the aesthetic principle of unity-in-variety. Nigel McLoughlin applies Text World Theory to study interactions of the reader with the different worlds Heaney has constructed in his poem 'Squarings: Lightenings VIII'.

⁶² For instance, Michael Molino views Heaney's language as "an innovative way" of addressing centuries-old antagonism in Ireland (181). Crotty identifies a trajectory from a first-person, private point of view to more public verses and varying viewpoints in Heaney's early poetry and interprets this transition as reflective of the poet's response to his literary exemplars – i.e. Kinsella, Murphy and Montague (41). Rankin Russell comments on how Heaney's play with various etymologies contributes to the reconciliation of his divided landscape: "Heaney clearly draws upon his Scots, Irish, and English linguistic heritage in his poetic vocabulary, implicitly suggesting that so should the inhabitants of Northern Ireland in order to form an imagined community" (*Poetry and Peace* 203). Tyler discusses Heaney's relationship to the genres of elegy and pastoral elegy at the level of language and examines Heaney's word choice as influenced by a knowledge of etymology and prosody: "the diction he uses, ranging from Ulster idioms to Latinate phrasing, illustrates his intentional reach towards languages and cultures other than his own" (4-28). Wheatley's 2016 study examines the dialogue between English and Irish languages in Heaney's work as markers of cultural identity and the complexity of his relationship to British colonialism.

⁶³ Eliot defines "auditory imagination" as:

the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilised mentality. (118-119)

focusing mostly on its syllables and metre. Michael Parker's 1993 book, instead, presents an analysis of phonemes and sounds in Heaney's poetry. Other scholars, like Alan Robinson and Hart, have emphasised the cultural and political relevance of the phonetic features of 'Anahorish' and 'Broagh', a significant aspect of vocal sounds in Heaney's poetry that I will elaborate in the analytical chapters of this thesis (see 3.1 and 3.4). In *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (1998), Corcoran admires Heaney's onomatopoeia, alliteration and synaesthesia, which allow him to convey the "observed and recollected facts of his early rural experience [...] in a language of great sensuous richness and directness" (i). In *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry* (1994), O'Donoghue highlights the centrality of the sound of the words in Heaney's place-name poems and applies the traditional linguistic categories of phonology, word class and vocabulary to present a formal and comprehensive analysis of both Heaney's poetry and his commentaries.

For David Perkins, Heaney is a born poet, a person of truly poetic gifts and that impression is made readily apparent when listening to the music of his language. He illustrates Heaney's masterful use of "poetic sound" as a way of achieving "multeity in unity", explaining that Heaney's language weaves together a variety of sounds that – as a pattern or not – reinforces the semantic meaning of words and profoundly affects the reader, reminding one of what, in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge described as "the sense of musical delight" (qtd in Perkins 63). In 2017, Falconer studies Heaney's *Aeneid Book VI* highlighting that Heaney matches the music of the original work – i.e. rhythm, metre, lineation, the voice, tone, register, diction, pacing and pitch – enough to be true to Virgil but not so antique as to stand out of tune with contemporary taste (430-439).⁶⁴ Other contributions worth noting are by Anthony Cuda, who focuses on the sonic features of

⁶⁴ Referring to 'music', in the context of poetry translation, Heaney says:

It is one thing to find lexical meanings for the words and to have some feel for how the metre might go, but it is quite another thing to find the tuning fork that will give you the note and pitch for the overall music of the work. Without some melody sensed or promised, it is simply impossible for a poet to establish the translator's right of way into and through a text. (*Beowulf* XXVI)

Heaney's language and its relationship to his sense of "historical and racial continuity" (171), and Jeffrey Bilbro, who highlights the "linguistic delights" or "healing delights" that come from the poet's "delicate feel for the aural qualities of language" (322). For Bilbro, what is pivotal is "the way in which Heaney embeds the soothing effect of the sounds into his poem instead of attempting to didactically explicate their function" (322).

The association between music and poetry has often been overshadowed by the nineteenth and twentieth-century insistence on the aesthetics of poetic language. However, not all Heaney scholars restrict commentary to the musicality and sonic properties of his language. More recent studies have examined the concepts of sound and music from ecological and eco-musicological approaches. In her 2014 study, Leighton explores the concept of music in Heaney's "the music of what happens" (FW 56). Her argument revolves around the arbitrariness of this familiar concept, its particular relation to the definitive article that precedes it – i.e. 'the' – and the preposition that follows it – i.e. 'of' – in Heaney's quotation. Leighton argues that Heaney's music is not exactly music in the traditional Romantic-aesthetic sense and the art of sounds indifferent to the cruelties of history, nor is it merely a masterful composition of sounds intended to lift the semantic meaning of the words, it is rather "a poetic song, which comes close to the reality of the world" (20). Heaney's music records the actual presence of things that happen: someone digging with a spade, a singing bird, a leaking pump, or a gunshot. It is not composed, it happens. She then quotes a well-known poem from *The Spirit Level*, where Heaney encourages his readers to listen 'for' – and not 'to' – this music: "what happens next / Is a music that you never would have known / To listen for" (SL 1). According to Leighton, the music Heaney refers to in these lines happens where there is a chance to go beyond the apparent meaning of what is happening, offering a better chance to capture the message beyond (20). As Heaney says: "Who cares if all the music that transpires // Is the fall of grit or dry seeds through a cactus?"

(SL 1). Indeed, in *Crediting Poetry*, referring to the poignant story of the Catholic who survived what first appeared to be a Protestant paramilitary plot, but turned out to be an IRA's ambush,⁶⁵ Heaney says: "the gunfire that followed, so absolute and so desolate, if also so much part of the music of what happens" (OG 457). The music in Heaney's poetry is "beyond what is told, beyond the register of accessible plain-speaking and factual recall" (Leighton 30). This music can be the sound of whatever happens as long as we train our ears not to ignore it. As the Irish mythology sums it, "the music of what happens [...] that is the greatest music in the world".⁶⁶

The relationship between poetry and its surrounding natural soundscape has been the focus of the poet and his critics. Heaney celebrates the natural soundscape for nourishing poetry as much as he celebrates poetry in the acoustic ways of reflecting it. In his review of *The Penguin Book of Pastoral Verse* (1974), he criticises the short-sightedness of Marxist interpretation of pastoral poetry as a social criticism, which "sweeps the poetic enterprise clean of those somewhat hedonistic impulses towards the satisfactions of aural and formal play out of which poems arise, whether they aspire to delineate or to obfuscate 'things as they are'" (PO 174). Instead, he endeavours to capture the sounds of the natural environment as much for educating the ear as for delighting it. Fanny Quément's 2016 study uses the ecological lens to investigate the auditory space of Heaney's pastoral poems for the various ways in which the poet expresses his mission to enlighten his readers about the endangered sounds. From the "strong gauze of sound" around the "flax-dam" in 'Death of a Naturalist' to the song of the curlew in 'From the Republic of Conscience', Heaney attempts to evoke and

⁶⁵ On January 5th 1976, near the village of Kingsmill in Northern Ireland, a bus carried sixteen textile workers – five Catholics and eleven Protestants – home from work in Glenanne. Four of the Catholics got off the bus on the way, while one continued on the road to Bessbrook. Somewhere on the road, the bus was stopped by what they first assumed to be a British Army or RUC checkpoint. However, the gunmen identified and released the only Catholic man, but shot the remaining eleven men, for the gunmen were members of the Provisional IRA (O'Brien 13-14).

⁶⁶ Heaney took the line from a translation by James Stephens of an Irish folktale: "'The music of what happens', said great Fionn, 'that is the greatest music in the world'": www.youtube.com/watch?v=e87nqv9PiLA (22:30-22:50). He re-uses this phrase in 'Song': "that moment when the bird sings very close / To the music of what happens" (FW 53).

archive the slightest details in the disappearing soundscape of Ireland (38). Yet in “The Tollund Man in the Springtime”, he stresses the more global dimension of sound pollution in a space where he can “smell the air, exhaust fumes, silage reek” (DC 56). In the meantime, however, he hints at the limitations of language for translating and preserving the soundscape encouraging his readers to go back to and appreciate the “extratextual landscape” (Buell 33).

The examination of the concept of soundscape and music in relation to the ecological environment has also been the critical concern of Potts, who examines how the Irish environmental movement – which began gaining momentum in the 1970s – has influenced and been addressed by contemporary Irish writers and artists (Potts XIX). As a subdiscipline of environmentalism, ecomusicology is essentially concerned with recognizing the aesthetic values of nature and resisting the relentless quests for its alteration. Within this field, the concept of biosemiotics interprets both plants and animals as communicating agents in the natural soundscape. Potts’ chapter ‘Music in Stone’, in particular, explores the Burren region of Southwestern Ireland as a source of imaginative inspiration for modern Irish writers such as Cora Harrison, Ré Ó Laighléis, Moya Cannon, Michael Longley and Seamus Heaney. The Burren – from the Irish word *Boireann* meaning ‘great rock’ – is a unique lunar-like landscape of bedrock resistant to cultivation and commodification (Potts 39-41). Potts explains how the Burren has been affected by British colonials, nationalists or tourists throughout time focusing on ‘An Aisling in the Burren’ as the example in which the poet, as an environmental activist, seeks to convey the intrinsic values of this so-called barren, wild and untamed region of Ireland. In the poem, Heaney’s Aisling – meaning dream or vision in Irish – is embodied in the figure of a woman who arrives “licked with the wet cold fires of St Elmo, / angel of the last chance” (SI 47). The Burren is thus a symbol of hope amidst the Troubles.

In addition to sounds, in both his poetry and prose, Heaney voices his awareness of silence in all its forms, meanings and implications. However, most early studies as well as current work focus on silence in the context of Irish studies in general and more specifically in relation to the Troubles. In “Speaking of Silence” (2012), Maria Beville and Sara Dybris McQuaid discuss silence as “a forbearing presence in literary, historical, cultural and political discourse in Ireland”, drawing on Heaney’s ‘Whatever You Say, Say Nothing’ as an example in which silence defines the cultural encounter between the communities (7). In “The Stones of Silence” (2016), Petar Penda focuses on Heaney’s political views regarding the Troubles in his poetry. To begin with, he identifies two major types of critical response to Heaney’s work: on the one hand, critics who either accuse Heaney of taking sides with the nationalist ideology or those who criticise him for silence and appropriation towards the British and, on the other, the critics who denounce politics as the subject matter of poetry.⁶⁷ While he condemns the first category of Heaney critics for imposing their own personal political inclination and neglecting “what literary criticism is about”, Penda argues that separating poetry from politics “would denote separation of poetry from life itself” (269). “Belonging to a society”, he argues, “the poet is a political being – *homo politicus*. Hence, a work of art is, to a certain extent, a product of a politics or its ideology; it produces an ideology as well” (269). As already noted, Heaney himself maintains that “poetry’s existence as a form of art relates to our existence as citizens of society” (RP 1). Heaney condemns what Vendler calls “a generalised cultural approval of violence” (51). According to Penda, his disapproval of silence, in this context, is illustrated in the poem ‘Punishment’ from *North*, where he

⁶⁷ For instance, Lloyd accuses Heaney for being subservient to nationalist politics; Robert McLiam Wilson and Maurice Harmon accuse him of not confronting the violence directly and not having a firm standpoint about British discrimination against the Irish; while Ciaran Carson accuses him of aestheticizing and mythicizing violence, Eugene O’Brien and Longley disapprove of him for politicizing poetry. Non-scholarly works dealing with the concept of silence in Heaney’s poetry include the 2001 article in *The Irish Times*, which indicates Heaney’s preoccupation with silenced and forgotten voices of the survivors of the Holocaust: www.irishtimes.com/culture/remembering-the-unspeakable-1.273250 and the 2013 article in *The New York Times* by Francis X. Clines who argues that for Heaney, poetry was an escape from the fear of being silent: www.nytimes.com/2013/08/31/opinion/seamus-heaney-poet-of-the-silent-things.html). See Heaney’s own views on the topic in his 1996 interview with Charlie Rose: charlierose.com/videos/12382.

juxtaposes similar but distant events in the history of human violence.⁶⁸ The poem stretches between the stoning of a fourteen-year-old girl by Germanic tribes and the punishment of some Irish women in contemporary Belfast by members of the IRA, condemning the poet-narrator for remaining uncertain, passive and “dumb” casting again “the stones of silence” (N 31). He ends the poem saying:

Who would connive
in civilized outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge. (N 31)

In 1990, Hart wrote about the sense of “silence”, “absence” and “emptiness” that disappointed several Heaney critics after reading his then newly published collection, *The Haw Lantern*, arguing that Heaney’s illustration of absence is in fact a sign to be identified and interpreted. The emptiness that haunts his volume unfolds the maturing poet’s mistrust of speech and therefore hints at the underlying political impulses behind speech and writing (Hart 461-492). This perspective is also echoed in Wheatley’s 2001 study of the various ways in which, in a violently divided society, Heaney and other Northern Irish poets “deploy strategies of silence, secrecy, private reference, and tribal shibboleth rather than “blabb[ing] out”” (HL 19). He maintains that these strategies may superficially appear to work against self-expression, but in reality they unfold layers of meaning in the most unusual ways (Wheatley 1-2).

Similarly, Eileen Cahill writes about Heaney’s poetry as the space wherein the poet fuses speech and silence in “introspective rather than expressive” manner (29). Heaney, like his father, was a naturally quiet person but his poetry discloses his feelings about the political situation in Northern Ireland. Heaney’s poetry is, therefore, “tactically political” without being explicitly and explosively so (Cahill 29). Elizabeth Lunday argues that Heaney is not a

⁶⁸ The poem refers to the 1951 discovery of the body of a girl of about fourteen years old from the Iron Age weighed down in a bog by trees and a stone. Heaney finds the parallel in contemporary Ireland, when women who entertained intimate relationship with British soldiers were shaved, stripped of their clothes and handcuffed to rails by IRA members as punishment for adultery (Penda 270).

silent and indifferent bystander of the Troubles that we could accuse of aestheticizing the violence (111). She gives the example of ‘Mycenae Lookout’, in which the poet declares that there is “No such thing / as innocent / bystanding” (SL 30). Heaney notes that he was in search of “an adequate response to conditions in the world at a moment when the world was in crisis” (RP 191). In ‘Whatever You Say Say Nothing’, he shows his readers how violence in a society can affect each individual living in it and result in “a conspiracy of silence” (Lunday 111). But Heaney’s silence is, in fact, the silence of contemplation. It is a type of silence that often breaks into a distinctive voice. Heaney read Aeschylus’s *The Oresteia* after the 1997 ceasefire, finding a parallel between the end of the Trojan War and the end of The Troubles in Ireland. He identified with the silence of the character of the Watchman in the first of the three plays in the *Oresteia* trilogy:

The Watchman [...] began to keep coming back to me with his in-between situation and responsibilities and inner conflicts, his silence and his knowledge, and all this kept building until I very deliberately began a monologue for him using a rhythmed couplet like a pneumatic drill, just trying to bite and shudder inward whatever was there. (“Art of Poetry” 137)

The Watchman’s character and his silence have been interpreted in various ways by various translators, primarily as a way to set the scene and start the narration of the plot. For Heaney, however, the Watchman functions as more than a literary device. He has a story to tell. Heaney offers the Watchman “a voice that breaks the silence” (Lunday 113-114). Likewise, in his poetry, Heaney grants himself the right to break free from “the pincer jaws of an emotional and artistic dilemma” (SS 392). He does not speak for either side, but opens in-between a free space to voice his thoughts, and in doing so he expresses the responsibility to make himself heard. His poetry, therefore, comes, as the poet himself quotes from Yeats, like “[s]peech after long silence. It is right” (SS 203).

Silence in these studies has been examined more generally and as a response to the contemporary socio-political situation. To my knowledge, very little scholarly work has been

devoted to the other aspects of this significant and empowering concept in Heaney's work. More recently, Jae Joon Kim has focused on silence as an aesthetic device in Heaney's poetry. Kim traces two types of silence in Heaney's 'Station Island' sequence. His paper begins with a brief reference to a type of silence he compares to the intervals of rest in or the end of a musical piece. This type of silence, he comments, is prevalent throughout the poem: The opening poem in the sequence opens with: "[...] an escaped ringing / that stopped as quickly // as it started" and towards the end of the first part he writes: "[t]he quick bell rang again" (SI 61-63). The second type he identifies is the silence that prompts a discourse (Kim 5). In psychoanalysis, the psychiatrist's absolute silence is known as the Freudian methodological principle encouraging an uninterrupted monologue by the patient (Reik 122). According to Kim, this type of silence is often performed by one of the characters in Heaney's poem as in the first part of 'Station Island', prompting the persona to develop a poetic discourse in the form of a monologue. In this case, the persona performs one part of the monologue while the other side is performed by the silent auditor. In these instances, Heaney attempts to "bring out the oppressed, silenced voices from his consciousness" (5). Drawing on Bakhtin, Kim claims that, during the monologue, silent readers "should try to participate actively in developing the monologue into a dialogue" (5), but a further question that remains unanswered is who are the oppressed voices in the poet's mind and memory, which I address in the final section of the thesis.

Conclusion

The association between Heaney's poetry, sound and auditory perception has often been overshadowed by the traditional literary insistence on the aesthetics of poetic language. Since the publication of his early poetry collections, several scholars have addressed the aural aspects of Heaney's poetry in relation to Eliot's auditory imagination, restricting their

commentary largely to the aural functions of his language in poetry. More recently, scholars have examined the concepts of sound, listening and music from ecological approaches, in relation to the Irish political climate. However, their exploration of Heaney's poetry often approaches the concept of sound in a more peripheral manner rather than directly examining how it may contribute to the reading and interpretation of poetry. This thesis is interested in listening as an important medium of experiencing, understanding, communicating and remembering, and approaches the study of sound in Heaney's poetry in a systematic and holistic way. It offers a framework that helps identify and interpret auditory references in Heaney's writing in general, one that includes not only the aural features of his poetic language, but also his mere descriptions and commentaries. Moreover, this thesis relates to the concepts of sound and listening in Heaney's work in a much broader context than just political to include his aesthetic, personal, social, cultural and environmental concerns as well.

Heaney scholars have demonstrated how reading and translating other poets enabled him to enter and document other times and places in history, leading to a better understanding of his own time and place and to tilt his scale towards a more global reality. The concern for the idea of balance has in turn expanded his audience beyond the limits of time and place. In his Nobel Lecture, Heaney states he regards poetry as "a journey into the wideness of the world" and credits poetry "for making this space-walk possible" (OG 449). In *The Redress of Poetry*, Heaney notes the "tendency to place a counter-reality in the scales – a reality which may be only imagined but which nevertheless has weight because it is imagined within the gravitational pull of the actual and can therefore hold its own and balance out against the historical situation" (RP 3-4). Heaney's work bears witness to his talent as a reader while paying homage to his private experiences. In the analytical chapters of this thesis, I explore

how his imaginary and real soundscapes further our understanding of not only his own time and place, but also the soundscape of the world throughout history.

The fact that the surrounding landscapes – rural as well as urban – nourished Heaney’s imagination and conceptualisation of the world hardly needs saying. Heaney is known as an author who, in his poetry and prose, writes intimately of a locality. But, as Allen, Basu and other scholars have reminded us, Heaney’s ‘given landscapes’ and ‘given notes’ ought not to be misinterpreted as mere topographical descriptions. Heaney’s poetry is a record of his memory and experiences of life and a medium to probe depths of meaning associated with them. His acoustic representation of the locale is one of his major poetic tropes and a metaphor for his ideas of human relationship, sense of community, and by extension, identity. In an early translation from the Irish, Heaney reminds us that “[p]oetry of any power is always deeper than its declared meaning. The secret between the words, the binding element, is often a psychic force that is elusive, archaic and only half-apprehended by maker and audience” (PO 186). In this thesis, I show how in his re-construction of a place, Heaney brings together the various elements of the soundscape into a tapestry of personal, cultural, social and historical implications that he wishes us to feel, to ponder upon and to remember.

Chapter 3:

Sounding, Soundings: A Study of Sound in Heaney's *Wintering Out*⁶⁹

Introduction

As you came with me in silence
to the pump in the long grass

I heard much that you could not hear:
the bite of the spade that sank it,

the slithering and grumble
as the mason mixed his mortar,

and women coming with white buckets
like flashes on their ruffled wings. (SI 36)

A close reading of the lines above indicates the way Heaney introduces silence only to immediately suggest that in fact silence is filled with many sounds – sounds that growing up in a city his young companion could no longer hear: the bite of the spade as it sinks into the ground, the mixing of mortar, the footsteps of women approaching a water pump and the rattling of empty buckets. Poetically, if we read the lines aloud, we realise how Heaney recreates these sounds through his extensive alliterations, linked velar and bilabial plosives, sibilants and even onomatopoeia. The third line of the poem becomes a key indicator of Heaney's alertness to sounds, of the importance of listening, of experiencing the world through sounds and of remembering the sounds that could no longer be heard. Heaney has a lesson to impart to everyone: "Remember this. / It will be good for you to retrace this path" (SI 37).⁷⁰

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the significance of sounds in Heaney's poetry and to explore the relationship between human beings and their acoustic environment

⁶⁹ The title of this chapter is inspired by a line from 'Gifts of Rain' (WO 13).

⁷⁰ Heaney talks about the poem 'Changes' in *Stepping Stones*, answering a question concerning the family's move from Co. Wicklow to Dublin and the urban upbringing to which this would expose his children. (See SS 255)

as illustrated by the poet. The interpretation of sounds in Heaney's poetry is integral to an understanding of the poet's thoughts and experiences. The fact that Heaney writes intimately of places hardly needs saying now. From Mossbawn and its neighbouring regions, to the North and South of Ireland, Denmark, Greece, France, Italy, Poland and America, the concept of place has been a consistent source of inspiration for Heaney's work. In his poetic re-construction of a sense of place, Heaney brings together the various components of the soundscape – i.e. geophony, biophony and anthrophony – to weave together the underlying social, political, cultural and personal associations. This chapter – divided into the four sections of geophonic sounds, biophonic sounds, anthrophonic sounds and human vocal sounds – aims at identifying and interpreting such references in *Wintering Out*.⁷¹

In the first section, I focus on Heaney's representation of geophonic sounds – i.e. non-sentient ambient sounds of the natural phenomena (Pijanowski et al. 1214). In soundscape studies, the major elements of the natural environment are 'given voice' in the form of wind in trees, rocks and grass, water flowing in a stream or as raindrops and ocean waves, as well as movement of sand dunes and rocks, among others.⁷² Geophonic sounds have countless manifestations throughout Heaney's poetry.⁷³ The transposition of the sounds of natural phenomena into his poetry has, on the one hand, allowed the poet to evoke the cultural, social and historical associations underlying the apparent topography and geography, and thus to bridge the "lived, illiterate and unconscious" and the "learned, literate and conscious" (PO

⁷¹ Since 'voice' is an important concept for Heaney and in Heaney scholarship, in this chapter, I have separated my study of human voice from other anthrophonic sounds.

⁷² In this chapter, I am using the term 'element' in the general sense of the term in OED as "a component part of a complex whole" – i.e. major components of the soundscape. For an elemental approach – the four elements of earth, water, air and fire – to Heaney's work see Tobin, Garden and Allen, for instance. See also 2.2 and 2.3.

⁷³ Examples of literal and metaphorical references to geophonic sounds in Heaney's poems include: "water goes over / like villains dropped screaming to justice" (DN 40); "the wind heavy / With spits of rain" (DD 19); "mizzling rain" (WO 4); "[b]ehind a windbreak wind is breaking through" (N XI); "rustling and twig-combing breeze" (FW 30); "wind blowing round the car" (SI 64); "From a hot spring, I could hear nothing / But the whole mud-slick muttering and boiling" (HL 39); "I hear an old sombre tide awash in the headboard" (ST 28); "Listening to the rain drip off the trees" (SL 59); "[t]he sea hushed and glittered" (EL 25); "at the back of a garden, in earshot of river water" (DC 72); "[a] white wing beating high against the breeze" (HC 85).

131). On the other hand, it has enabled him to expand and enrich the world of his mind and poetry.

Just as natural phenomena engender and convey various cultural, social and historical associations, the complexities and transformations in the distribution of biophony – i.e. sounds produced by non-human sentient organisms – can reflect certain characteristics of landscapes and societies living within them. Irish folklore and poetry have a long-standing tradition of featuring animals.⁷⁴ Heaney's poetry is populated with a wide variety of river and sea animals, such as the eel, salmon, trout, lobster, oyster; farm animals such as horse, pig, cow, sheep, dog and cat; other land animals including wolf, deer, rabbit, rodents, rat, ferret; and a variety of birds such as the snipe, blackbird, swan, nightingale, cuckoo, corncrake and magpie.⁷⁵ His poetry has been approached by several scholars for the symbolic significance of native animals as well as to illustrate the poet's eco-awareness.⁷⁶ Heaney makes effective use of animals and their sounds to tell us about himself and the world around him. My examination of the references to animals in *Wintering Out*, in the second section of this chapter, builds upon previous studies of animals in Heaney's work but introduces the analytical lens of soundscape ecology and acoustic ecology.

In the third section of this chapter, I focus on the type of sounds our ears might interpret as unnecessary human 'noises'. Over history, transformations in the quality, intensity and spread of anthrophonic sounds – i.e. all sounds produced by humans and human-made objects (Pijanowski et al. 1214) – have led to a change in our perception of sound and noise (See 1.2). Yet, as Schafer has suggested, it is our definition of 'noise' that

⁷⁴ For animal symbolism in Irish literature see Kirkpatrick and Faragò's *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture* (2015).

⁷⁵ For instance, "angry frogs" and "gross-bellied frogs" (DN 3); "an unlicensed bull" (DD 6); "the wolf has died out" (WO 35); "like a dog turning / its memories of wilderness" (N 33); the "[a]live and violated" oysters (FW 3); the "fortified and bewildered" lobsters (SI 16); "the peacock's feather in the grass" (HL 41); "the roosters in the farm" (ST 32); "we were killing pigs" (DC 7); "gulls *in excelsis* / Bobbed and flashed on air" (EL 25); "it's you, blackbird, I love" (DC 75); "the cattle" (HC 11).

⁷⁶ For an environmental approach to Irish animals, see Cusick's *Out of the Earth* (2010) and "A Capacity for Sustained Flight" (2015), as well as Potts's *Contemporary Irish Writing and Environmentalism* (2018).

underlies such discussions and interpretations (4). On many occasions, in his poetry, prose, as well as interviews, as Vendler has remarked, Heaney makes himself into an “anthropologist” of not only his own culture but also human civilisation through auditory experiences (18). It is hard to read Heaney’s work and not be struck by the sounds of human activities and human artefacts: the squeak of a hand-operated water “plunger slugging up and down” (PO 17); the shunting of the train at the station in Castledawson (SS 8); the “clean rasping sound / When the spade sinks into gravelly ground” (DN 1); “the hammered anvil’s short pitched ring” from inside the forge (DD 9); the clatter and clang of the wool factory (WO 27); “the tick of two clocks” in the kitchen (N x); the gargling of a tractor (FW 41); the “hurry of bell-notes” during the “morning hush” (SI 61); the “shunting” of the car engine (HL 4); the whirring of a bicycle’s tyre (ST 46-47); the rifle’s “bullet’s song” (ST 77); the groaning of a lorry’s engine (SL 13); “the throttle and articulated whops / Of a helicopter crossing” (DC 42); or the kettling sound of the boiler as it “comes to life / [a]bruptly, drowsily” (HC 4). Some of these sounds are discrete, others are continuous and monotonous. Some carry a cultural value, others are perceived as unwanted and disturbing. The purpose of this section is to identify and interpret Heaney’s attitude towards such human-produced sounds in *Wintering Out*.

In the final section of this chapter, I focus on the representation of human voice. Nowell Smith remarks that any poem is “constructed out of voice as material or medium” and comments: “poems display, or stage, or generate, a speaking voice, or speaking voices, and these effects are registered as we readers, silently or aloud, are invited to ‘voice’ a poem” (1). The unique and distinctive qualities of Heaney’s poetic voice have attracted the attention of many scholars. Much work has been done to examine its vibrant diction, intense imagery and application of powerful symbols, metaphors and allusions (see 2.3). Interestingly, Heaney’s poetry is not only a medium for his own voice, but also a platform for a polyphony of voices – in the form of crying, laughing, humming, grunting, calling, naming, whispering,

screaming, yelling, singing or speaking.⁷⁷ Since the beginning of his career, Heaney has been aware of his poetry as an enabling and empowering medium for those who unlike him did not have this platform. When asked about the transition from ‘I’ in the first collection to ‘we’ in the latter, he remarks that

Not many poets had come to the fore in that particular group [Northern Irish Catholic with a nationalist background] [...]. From the beginning, I was conscious of a need to voice something that hadn’t got voiced, to tune the medium in order to do that particular job. (SS 90)

My analysis of the representation of human vocal sounds in *Wintering Out* aims at identifying and interpreting the human voices evoked by the poet. An ecological study of vocal sounds takes into consideration the relationship between human voice and its ‘ecology’. It is the study of human voice in relation to the physical environment it inhabits (B. R. Smith 16-17). Therefore, in this final section, I explore the social and political norms governing voices of the individuals and communities inscribed in the poems. This study, in summary, leads to a more complete appreciation of the sounds evoked by the poet and can give us the resources for improving our understanding of his poetry.⁷⁸

3.1 Through the Ear of a Raindrop: Geophonic Sounds⁷⁹

The aquatic resonance of the amniotic fluid, the heartbeat, blood running through the veins and then the laps, splash and gurgle of the waters from the oceans, rain and rivers are amongst the first sounds perceived by the human ear (Schafer 15). In this section, I trace and examine geophonic sounds evoked in Heaney’s poetry focusing mostly on water as the major

⁷⁷ Examples of vocal sounds include: “Bloody pups” (DN 11); “[t]hen grunts and goes in” (DD 9); “my children weep out” (WO 49); ““Go Back’ one said ‘try to touch the people” (N 64); ““Oh, Sir Jasper, do not touch me!’ / You roared across at me” (FW 13); “[a]ll the time they were shouting, ‘Shop! // Shop!’” (SI 78); “Then voices over, in different Irishes, / Discussing translation job and rates per line” (HL 47); “Youngsters shouting their heads off in a field” (ST 8); “I coughed and coughed and coughed” (SL 44); ““Light came from the east’, he sang” (EL 57); ““Well, for Jesus sake’ cried Duffy coming at me” (DC 29); “[w]aving and calling something I cannot hear” (HC 11).

⁷⁸ At no point does this study attempt to exhaust acoustic references in Heaney’s poetry. Rather, it desires to use examples that illustrate the importance of sounds and listening.

⁷⁹ The title of this section is inspired by a line from ‘The Rain Stick’ (SL 1).

geophonic sound-source in *Wintering Out*. The sound of water is a fundamental element of the natural soundscapes and the sound that often gives the listener delight in its varied transformations. As a dominant feature of the Irish climate and landscape, water, in its various forms, has numerous manifestations throughout Heaney's poetry. From 'Death of a Naturalist' and 'Personal Helicon', in his first collection, to the water-logged poems of *Wintering Out*, to the "misty" atmosphere of 'The Strand at Lough Beg',⁸⁰ to 'The Sound of Rain' in *Seeing Things* and the waves in 'Postscript' from *The Spirit Level*, among others, the sound of water is recalled not only as a soundmark and a keynote of the Irish landscape, but also as an acoustic symbol to speak of cleansing, purification, change, renewal, healing, eternity, serenity and perseverance. In the following paragraphs, I trace these implications in the references to the sounds of sea, river and rain, concluding this section with a brief consideration of some of the poems in which the sound of wind is to the fore.

The sea is one of Heaney's primary sources of inspiration. The patterns of the sea are many: from the scarcely perceptible rippling of the wavelets, to rolling breakers, enormous tidal waves, and to the daily ebb and flow, each drop rings at a different pitch and each wave has a different velocity. Seascapes affect and reflect the life, mood and language of the people within earshot. When calm, the sea is a "sound romance" that conjures up nostalgic feelings and when worked into anger, it is a brutal force and "trembling presence" that cares nothing about human hopes and fears (Schafer 170-171). The relationship between the sea and the land is made audible at the shore. As Heaney puts it, "each drew new meaning from the waves' collision" (DN 34). The Flaggy Shore, the long stretches of Donegal coast and Kerry coast, and the West coast of Ireland often appear in Heaney's poetry to recall the traditional rural Irish lifestyle and to transpose the poet to his memories of the coastal Irish

⁸⁰ Heaney recalls it as a poem with poignant watery moments at The John Adams Institute, in Amsterdam, in 1993. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bEmyan5cMA (30:40-35:20).

landscape, but also to convey the concepts of life, hope, transformation, separation, adventure, danger and even death.

On several occasions, Heaney's vivid descriptions capture and manifest the orchestrations of the sea to reflect the dynamics and variations of his themes. In 'Valediction', from his first collection, Heaney uses marine imagery to depict the sense of stability and liveliness that Marie Devlin's "presence" brings to him:

In your presence
time rode easy, anchored
on a smile: but absence
rocked love's balance, unmoored
the days. (DN 33)

In Marie's presence, all is well in the poet's inner and outer world, but when she is gone, he loses the sense of time and the command of his feelings and thoughts. Heaney reinforces the concept by unveiling the association between her "flower-tender / voice" and the acoustics of the sea pleading her to return and retune his days with her soft and melodious voice (DN 33). In 'Lovers on Aran', the eye and the ear work side by side to transfer a full-fledged sense of the place: "The timeless waves, bright, sifting, broken glass, / came dazzling around, into the rocks" (DN 34). The poem refers to the shores of the Aran Islands at Galway Bay, on the West Coast of Ireland, where the couple spent a holiday. Heaney continues to use marine imagery of 'Valediction' to celebrate "the unity and exhilaration of love and marriage" (Parker 72). He is at the sea, where the sight sets a vibrant scene before his eyes and allows him to envision his marriage in the embrace of tides and the rocks, and where the comforting patterns of the waves can "penetrate" his awareness (Ihde 81). Similarly, in 'Postscript', Heaney presents a blend of his auditory and visual experiences of "County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore" (SL 70) to evoke a profound sense of the place for himself as well as for his readers. He describes the poem as having the ability to seize a fleeting moment of poetic

revelation and a glimpse of the past memories:⁸¹ “They [some poems] leave you with a sensation of having been visited, and this was one of them. It excited me, and yet publishing it in *The Irish Times* was, as much as anything else, a way of sending a holiday postcard – a PS of sorts – to the Friels” (SS 366). In the poem, he encourages his readers to let their imagination travel with him from scene to scene. By experiencing places through movement, a person enters into a “dialogue” with the environment (Järviluoma et. al. 31). Aware of the rush of modern man and his affinity with machinery, Heaney invites his readers to do so even while driving, perhaps with the car windows open, so the wind breathes in the voice of the foaming “ocean” from one direction and the silence of the glittering “lake” from the other: “Useless to think you’ll park and capture it / More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there, / A hurry through which known and strange things pass [...]” (SL 70). ‘Ballynahinch Lake’ captures and recalls a memory of a Sunday morning in Connemara when Heaney and his family drove through Co. Galway. This time, however, he invites his readers to stop and indulge in the sounds and the sights of the landscape “more thoroughly” (SL 70): “[...] that this time, yes, it had indeed / Been useful to stop [...]” (EL 26).

In *Wintering Out*, the poems ‘Shore Woman’ and ‘Maighdean Mara’ depict other contrasting connotations of the sea and its keynote to depict some of the predicaments surrounding women. ‘Maighdean Mara’ – literally meaning the ‘maiden/virgin of the sea’ – is based on a version of the mermaid legend in Northern Ireland and depicts the failed attempt of a female selkie to return to her original home, the sea, after enduring several years of enslavement on land. For Heaney, the story is an allegory for a real-life suicide of an Irish woman by drowning. During the 1970s, in Irish society, single mothers were still treated as

⁸¹ Heaney refers to the poem as a “surge of utterance” that represents a glimpse of past memory of the south coast of Galway Bay while the poet was teaching at Oxford:

It came from remembering a windy Saturday afternoon when Marie and I drove with Brian and Anne Friel along the south coast of Galway Bay. We had stopped to look at Mount Vernon, Lady Gregory’s summer house – still there, facing the waters and the wild; then we drove on into this glorious exultation of air and sea and swans. (SS 366)

outcasts and considered sinful, often bullied by the family and the Church to give up their children (Nugent et al. 372). Heaney offers his perspective on the matter in ‘Maighdean Mara’, as well as in poems like ‘Limbo’ when he writes “A small one thrown back / To the waters” (WO 58). In these poems, the presence of water helps broaden the vision and emotions of his readers to perceive the entirety of the circumstances concerning the event. Rather than interpreting the incident as sinful and unfortunate, he invites us to see the woman’s suicide as a fearless attempt to break free from the confining laws and taboos of Irish society and return to the purity and comfort of the original life element to which she truly belongs.

His tripartite poem, ‘Maighdean Mara’, opens with the relaxing acoustics of the sea. Undercurrents are drifting towards the coast where the woman’s cold and naked body is laid, embracing it, and then retreating back to the sea. The opening lines, which also provide the final refrain, engulf the poem in what Schafer categorises as “biological” wave rhymes (16):

She sleeps now, her cold breasts
Dandled by undertow,
Her hair lifted and laid.
Undulant slow seawracks
Cast about shin and thigh,
Bangles of wort, drifting
Liens catch, dislodge gently. (WO 56)

Without the single discordant word “cold”, almost the entire passage is an evocative and beautiful rendition of life, lyrical in its language and acoustic image: the present tense of the verbs conveys the concept of life; the clusters of soft sibilants introduce a soothing effect; and, the balance of enjambment and punctuation regulates the reader’s breath with the rhythm of ebb and flow. Heaney carefully portrays the scene: the woman’s dandling breasts, the rising of her hair in each gentle and steady coming of the waves, and the undulating bangles of marine plants present her lifeless body “with the patterns of heart and lung” (Schafer 16), giving the impression that the reunion has granted the woman an eternal life and

peace. In each wave, the sea brings forth “seawracks” and “bangles of wort” to bedeck her daughter from shin to chest: “This is the great first sleep / Of homecoming [...]” (WO 56).

A similar sea wave pattern can be perceived at the opening and closing stanzas of ‘Shore Woman’. The poem is “a sophisticated blend of observation and reminiscence, realism and fancy” moving from “mood to mood, image to image, [and] thought to thought” to depict the dynamics of the marital relationship between the silent fisherman and his unhappy wife (Andrews 69). Although the opening epigraph of the poem links men to “the hills” and women to “the shore” and despite the fact that, in myth and literature, water has often been a primary symbol of rebirth, fertility and purity, the woman-narrator herself chooses to remain in the liminal space between sea and land, to be a shore-walker: “I have rights on this fallow avenue” (WO 54-55). For her, the sea is the state of terror, brute force, chaos and masculine sexuality, while the shoreline is the place she can experience “the taste of safety” and exult to the “moonlight”. Although at some point, the woman-narrator says she is “conscious” of what is happening around, it is the sea symphony that gives voice to the hidden depths of her psyche (WO 54-55).

The opening stanza of ‘Shore Woman’ is an audio-tactile presentation of the shoreline as mediated through the wind and the waves. Here, the regular, continuous and indolent coming and going of tidal froth registers a pleasant tempo that corresponds with “relaxed breathing pattern” and “the sense of well-being” (Schafer 227). The ubiquitous nature of the wind, on the other hand, brings the woman into touch with the “riddling” sand and “whistling” grass from far away assuring her that no one except her walks along the shoreline for miles. The woman’s calm strides on “the firm margin” further reinforce the sense of security and solidarity for which she returns to the shore after accompanying her husband on a fishing journey (WO 54-55). As we move further into the sea, in the next section of the poem, rhythm gives way to disorder, silence to white noise, and the sense of security to

uncertainty and threat. The tension between the woman and her husband is made audible in the slapping of “the mackerel” on the boat, “the close irruption” of the porpoises from the water, “the flywheels of the tide” and the “rocking boat” (WO 54-55). Here, the sea brings the woman into touch with “suprabiological rhythms” giving the impression of an “immense and oppressive power expressed as a continuous flow of acoustic energy” (Schafer 170-171), which she associates with the man. For her, the sea is the zone of the unknown and the unknowable, and the land, the zone of safety and comfort. After experiencing what Auden refers to as “the state of barbaric vagueness and disorder” of the sea (6-7),⁸² the woman feels the need to return to the shoreline, where rhythm replaces chaos and the sea becomes benign: “I sometimes walk this strand for thanksgiving / Or maybe it’s to get away from him” (WO 55).

For the woman, the shore is the place where she can seek the muse of the moon, let her imagination wander freely in the equivocal world of the wind, and rhyme her breaths with the gentle coming and going of the waves. Yet, like the poet, she is far from forgetting the tales of sufferings and gasping breaths lying out “[i]n darker fathoms” of her memories (WO 55). After returning from the sabbatical year in Berkeley and witnessing the deteriorating sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, Heaney decided to move to Co. Wicklow to fulfil his need for solitude and commit himself totally to writing, getting away from the duties of the academic profession and societal obligations. In the poem ‘North’, from the collection of the same title, which was published about three years after he had left Ulster, Heaney writes: “I returned to a long strand” (N 10), not to escape the violence, but to find inspiration and to reconcile with himself.⁸³

Rain, another determining factor and a recurrent feature of the Irish landscape,

⁸² See Auden’s *The Enchafed Flood* (1950).

⁸³ Other examples of references to seascape include: “[a]t dusk, horizons drink down sea and hill” (DD 11); “You might think that the sea is company, / Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs, / But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits / The very windows, spits like a tame cat / Turned savage” (DN 38); “the longed-for tidal wave / of justice” and “a great sea-change” (CT 2).

appears frequently in Heaney's poetry.⁸⁴ In 'Broagh', the poet rejoices in the correspondence between the shape and sound of the place-name and its vernacular geophony. But before bringing up the analogy, he invites his companion to undertake what Schafer calls "ear cleaning" (272) and train his ears to perceive rain and wind, the two major elements of the ambient sound in rural Ireland:

[...] the shower
gathering in your heelmark
was the black *O*

in *Broagh*,
its low tattoo
among the windy boortrees
and rhubarb-blades

ended almost
suddenly, like that last
gh [...] [emphasis in the original]. (WO 17)

Keynotes inform a community's listening habits and lifestyle throughout time. They are not listened to consciously, but heard so frequently that they form an imprinted connection to the sense of time and place (see 1.4.2). The poem 'Broagh' is the creation of just another "soundwalk" (Schafer 212) on the familiar hills of Ulster and the poet's attempt to bring into consciousness the sense of territory, history, and community by underpinning the everyday acoustics of the land: "its low tattoo" (WO 17). The sound of rain on the windswept vegetation, which Heaney hears in Broagh, is unlike the sound of raindrops that "hit the roof with smacking little clicks, uneven and stabbing [...]. It is more like a continuous sigh, a breath always spending with no fresh intake" (Carr 406). For Heaney, the continuous and gentle shower that registers as the keynote of Broagh is like the extended exhalation that breathes out the sound of the letter *O* in the place-name; one that could cease almost as abruptly as the final throaty *gh* brings the word to an end. There is a linguistic and phonetic

⁸⁴ Other positive references to rain include: "[r]ain and hay and woods on the air / Made warm droughts in the open car" (DD 24); "the road, the mountain top, // and the air, softened by a shower of rain" (SI 65); but the monotonous drumming of rain in 'Two Lorries' connotes to his bleak memories of the IRA during the nineties: "It's raining on black coal and warm wet ashes" (SL 13).

politics at play here. Despite the fact that ‘Broagh’ is an anglicisation of the original Gaelic ‘bruach’ (O’Brien 16), Heaney’s description details the affinity between the place-name and its soundscape, and highlights its unique Irishness from the British Empire of which it is now a part (see also 3.4).

The ceaseless rainfall in ‘The Sounds of Rain’ and rainstorm of ‘Gifts of Rain’ are nothing like the breath-like precipitation readers perceive in ‘Broagh’. In ‘The Sounds of Rain’, rain drums “[o]n the veranda” (ST 48), tapping at the poet’s inner ear persuading him to listen to the assuring voices of the fellow authors lying “in the long moil” of his subconscious. In the middle and longest part of the three-fold poem, Heaney unfolds reminiscences of meeting the Russian Nobel Laureate Boris Pasternak and William Alfred, colleagues at Harvard. It is as if the poet awakens from a long sleep or returns from a long state of trance to the recognition of his vocation as a poet:

The eaves a water-fringe and steady lash
Of summer downpour: *You are steeped in luck,*
I hear them say, *Steeped, steeped in luck.*
And hear the flood too, gathering from under,
Biding and boding like a masterwork
Or a named name that overbrims itself [emphasis in the original]. (ST 49)

The “steady” lashing of the rain on the roof that provokes the poet’s thoughts and imagination is the mantra of blessing and bounty that promises the ultimate overflow of “a masterwork” (ST 49).⁸⁵ Very often, especially in his later years, Heaney acknowledges having been “lucky” to have discovered a path into the writing of poems and to have experienced a steady personal and professional growth in this path, an element that was accompanied with support and love from family and friends. In his 2012 American Ireland Fund AWB Vincent Literary Award acceptance speech, he says “a woman from Mayo [...]

⁸⁵ In his 1997 conversation with Henri Cole, Heaney confirms the extension of the metaphor to himself:

I still think I have been inordinately lucky. I regard first of all the discovery of a path into the writing of poems as luck. And the salute that my early poems received and the consequent steadying of direction and identity in my life all coinciding with, as you say, love – I do regard it as a real benediction. And, of course, there’s the whole matter of friendships and family solidarity and the trust of cherished ones. See www.ricorso.net/rx/library/criticism/revue/Zundry_AZ/Cole_H.htm.

once said to me, you are steeped in luck, and after this evening, after this award I feel myself deeper still in that happy, lucky element". Here the sound of rain too seems to remind him of what he perceives as "real benediction[s]".⁸⁶

In 'Gifts of Rain', however, the rainfall has a different implication. The title of the poem may connect with rain as a heavenly gift suggesting a mythical and healing atmosphere to follow. Yet the auditory images of the opening line and the tactility of the experience disclose the poignant irony of the title:

Cloudburst and steady downpour now
for days.

Still mammal,
straw-footed on the mud,
he begins to sense weather
by his skin.

A nimble snout of flood
licks over stepping stones
and goes uprooting.

He fords
his life by sounding.

Soundings. (WO 13)

The "cloudburst and steady downpour" with which Heaney opens the poem are the archetypal acoustics of bleak and threatening conditions that "he begins to sense [...] / by his skin" (WO 13). This time the gifts of rain are not bounty, purity, joy and life. They are life-threatening. Written while in Berkeley, the poem borrows its acoustic images from the poet's memory bank and his contemplation on the effect of the persistent socio-political upheavals on the life and landscape of Ulster. Heaney's reference to the noisy turbulence of the flood, as the immediate aftermath of rain, and the tense silence of the vulnerable land dwellers suggest the pervasiveness of the conflicts and the depth of their impact on the life and well-being of people in Northern Ireland. Yet, at the end of the passage, he adds that although the flooding river forges its way by "uprooting" the "stepping stones" and despite the fact that its mighty

⁸⁶ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdTQPZGW0Bs (0:05-0:30).

voice takes over the quiet voices of the inhabitants, the Ulster men manage to survive and remain a “sounding” entity among the “[s]oundings” (WO 13). As Parker comments:

To survive, he must acknowledge his kinship with and dependence on the rest of the natural world, for he is part of the pattern not its center. Heaney contrasts the figure’s hesitant progress with the assured movement of the water, which seems to possess a sense of purpose. (100)

Heaney’s childhood memories are shaped by his experiences within Anahorish, a flat townland in Co. Derry that stretches from the river Moyola to Lough Beg. Anahorish, officially known as Creagh, features in Heaney’s poetry very often and is highly regarded by the locals.⁸⁷ Geography and climate determine the vernacular keynotes that form an imprinted connection to our sense of place and time. Soundmarks, on the other hand, establish a unique sense of place often only experienced by the locals (see 1.4.2). In the opening line of ‘Anahorish’, the poet offers the translation of *anach fhíor uisce* – the English transliteration of the Gaelic name – and in doing so, introduces the sounds of water as both the keynote and soundmark of the hills on which his earliest memories are grounded: “My ‘place of clear water’” (WO 6). Water is a primary life element. It belongs to the “first soundscapes” of the world (Schafer 13). For the poet, Anahorish is, in name and essence, the source of purity, hope and life, a place where his mind is blessed by the unique acoustics of the river Moyola:

the first hill in the world
where springs washed into
the shiny grass

and darkened cobbles [...]. (WO 6)

Even the echoes of the first land-dwellers in Anahorish are characterised by water associations, but not with the vibrant acoustics of water in spring. In spring, there is a sense of urge, liveliness, and hope in the air. Heaney evokes the memories of his ancestors with the

⁸⁷ The townland takes the title of some of Heaney’s best-known poems – ‘Anahorish’ and ‘Anahorish 1944’ – in which Heaney gives voice to the locals Owen and Roddy Gribbin. For disputes over the name see: www.placenamesni.org/resultdetails.php?entry=5352 and www.irishnews.com/news/2013/09/09/news/heaney-townland-doesn-t-exist-69745/.

acoustics of frozen water so as to acknowledge their hard work and determination during the bleak winter days:

those mound-dwellers
go waist-deep in mist
to break the light ice
at wells and dunghills. (WO 6)

A similar impression is evoked in the second part of ‘Gifts of Rain’, when a resolute Ulster country man appears squelching through the flooded land: “A man wading lost fields / breaks the pane of flood [...]” (WO 13). The man has survived the flooding but his “reflection” in water, his hopes for a brighter and more settled future, is immediately distorted as “a flower of mud- / water blooms up” and ripples blood-like over the surface of the water (WO 13). “Lost” in the flood or to the land seizers, the kinship between the Ulster man and his land is unshakable: he “depends on” it, he is “hooped to” it, he embraces it and the universe rotates between them “naturally” (WO 14). For Heaney, in Ulster, the man is an integral part of the harmonious cycle of natural landscape and, thus, the universal symphony.

Water never dies; rather it changes its state and location as rain, bubbling brooks, swirling rivers, waterfalls, fountains, bogs, lakes, the sea, oceans, and their tides. Musicians, anthropologists, historians and environmentalists have utilised local music, songs or lyrics to discuss the relationships between the sound of rivers, cultures and concept of identity.⁸⁸ These studies suggest that rivers of the world have unique acoustics that only locals can fully identify and decipher. For Heaney too rivers are the repository of local history and the failure to listen to their voice and music would impact our understanding of a place and its culture.⁸⁹ In ‘Gifts of Rain’, Heaney notes how the living being has been able to be a sound-producing member of the soundscape and also develop an intuitive understanding of water depth

⁸⁸ For more information on the sound of rivers from the perspective of environmental history see, for instance: Schönach’s “River histories” (2017); Cioc’s *The Rhine* (2009); Simmons and Scott’s “The River has Recorded the Story” (2006).

⁸⁹ Other references include: “We crossed the quiet river” (DN 31); “Slubbed with eddies, / the laden silent river / ran mud and olive into summer” (FW 41); “River gravel. In the beginning, that” (SL 39).

through its acoustics: “sounding. / Soundings” (WO 13). As mentioned earlier, an ecological approach to listening explores auditory perception along the dimensions of a sound producing source and its location, proposing that through listening the human ear can identify such information as the material, texture, and configuration of the objects, the force and the type of the interaction involved, as well as the proximity, time and direction of the sound event (see 1.3). In the third section of the poem, there is a sense of the flood getting stronger and more aggressive during the night but the poet assures his readers that the well-trained ears of the locals were able to discern every note amidst the chord of many notes that Moyola persistently played on “its gravel beds” (WO 14). The changes in level of the water (“roaring off the ford”), direction, proximity and velocity (“the race / slabbering past the gable”) were the information that “[t]heir world-schooled ear // could monitor” in the absence of daylight (WO 14).

‘Gifts of Rain’ originates from the poet’s memories of the conversations of the locals he had overheard during his teenage years.⁹⁰ Returning to the acoustic images of Moyola’s flooding recalls the poet’s own celebration of the river Moyola as “the source of his initiation into music, [and] his baptism in sound” (Parker 101). Based on an ecological approach to listening, the distinction between “everyday listening” and “musical listening” relies on the kind of the auditory experience and not on the sounds per se. It is possible, at any time, to listen to the perceptual attributes of the sound – e.g. harmony and sensuousness – or the attributes of the sound-producing event – e.g. intensity of rain (Gaver 1-2). In ‘Gifts of Rain’, Heaney’s attentive ears also celebrate the transpiring music in Moyola’s everyday cocktail of sounds: “The Moyola harping on // its gravel beds [...]” (WO 14). His interpretation of Moyola’s “usual / confabulations” (WO 14) may remind readers of Hardy’s description of

⁹⁰ Heaney commented:

Moyola had overflowed and flooded some of the houses in Broagh. Older people would occasionally remember events and date them by asking, ‘Was that before or after the flood? So ‘Gifts of Rain’ came out of this sense of belonging to an antediluvian world [...]”. (SS 125)

rivers at night as “a lampless orchestra, all playing in their sundry tones from near and far parts of the moor”, which he encourages the wanderer to “stand still” and attentively listen to (Hardy 341). Heaney invites his readers to school their ears and learn through listening but also to appreciate the sheer poetry and music inherent in the acoustic environment:

[...] Moyola
 is its own score and consort,

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

 breathing its mists
 through vowels and history. (WO 15)

For the poet, Moyola is wedded to the local land and impregnated with the shared history. As Tobin has noted, “spelling itself, the river becomes a transcendental signifier” (82). It is a poem in which language and land have reached a perfect sexual union. It is also a self-contained orchestra. Heaney avers that Moyola’s “reed music” breaks from the chest of the native land speaking with the familiar “guttural” voice and singing the “old chanter” of Ulster (WO 15).

Heaney elaborates further on his perception of the ‘music’ of everyday sounds in ‘The Rain Stick’. Earlier, I explained how the differentiation between ‘noise’ and ‘music’ can be subjective and reliant on social and personal preferences, as well as how acoustic ecology calls for a culture of ‘ear cleaning’, a culture in which we train our ears to listen more “discriminatingly” to all sounds (Schafer 272) (see 1.2 and 1.4.2). In the poem ‘The Rain Stick’, Heaney encourages his readers to take a moment and recognise the never-aging music of “what happens”: “Upend the rain stick and what happens next / Is a music that you never would have known / To listen for” (SL 1).⁹¹ The kind of music that Heaney invites his

⁹¹ Traditionally, rain sticks are made from dried out cactus tubes and used to summon supernatural powers to change the weather. When the cacti die, the waxy green pulp dries out and the cacti spines are pressed inward. The hollow tube is gradually filled with grit before the ends are sealed. If the stick is upended, the grit falling

readers to recognise is the music of every sound and everyday sounds. A music that “needs no preamble” and has in it “the sense of accident, chance, and sheer provisionality” (Leighton 21). It is a music that could be dismissed as the sound of rain or noise of pebbles if not “listened for” (SL 1). It is a music that in each occurrence brings about a new insight about life and is “undiminished for having happened once, / twice, ten, a thousand times before” (SL 1).

‘The Rain Stick’ is the first poem of Heaney’s post-Nobel Prize volume. When we first read it, the poem seems to present ample reference to elements: “Grit”, “Rain”, “breaths of air”, “grass and daisies” and “glitter”, but Heaney re-directs the attention to the transpiring music occurring between them. Heaney writes that he had occasionally heard the sound of the instrument in ethnic shops but that on one occasion, when he carefully listened to it, the experience was different and unforgettable:⁹² “It was so lush and I was so entranced (SS 345). *The Spirit Level* was published in 1996 when the poet was in his late fifties and at the height of his career. Heaney shares the harmonising and elevating effect of his experience, only to continue to acknowledge the “everyday miracles” which a year earlier the Swedish Academy had recognised in its Nobel citation.⁹³ Towards the end of the poem, Heaney asks:

Who cares if all the music that transpires

Is the fall of grit or dry seeds through a cactus?
You are like a rich man entering heaven
Through the ear of a raindrop. (SL 1).

In *Stepping Stones*, he comments on how the poem serves as a “reminder” for himself as well as the reader: “That first poem is as much about middle age as about a rain stick. The instruction to listen was directed more to myself than to the reader, a reminder to keep the

over the nodes produces the sound of a gentle rain, which Heaney describes in this poem. See johnseandoyle.com/the-rain-stick/.

⁹² The poem is dedicated to the literary critic and biographer, Rand Brandes, who gifted the poet a rain stick. See www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/sorting-seamus-heaney-s-study-i-could-hear-archivists-groan-as-we-threw-things-away-1.3087628.

⁹³ See: www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1995/heaney-facts.html.

lyric faith, [...]. ‘The Rain Stick’ is about being irrigated by delicious sound, about water music being created by the driest of elements – desiccated seeds falling through a cactus stalk” (SS 345).

Like water, the wind possesses splendid voice variation. The sound of wind is broadband and within the wide range of its frequencies gives voice to various objects on its way, from amongst rotating blades of wind turbines, tree branches, rocks and grass from far and near.⁹⁴ Like references to the sounds of water, Heaney’s poetry is characterised by a remarkably large vocabulary for wind features.⁹⁵ To close the section of geophonic sounds, I examine ‘The Given Note’, from *Door into the Dark*, which was read at Heaney’s funeral, and ‘Had I Not Been Awake’, from his final collection, *Human Chain*, where the fleeting nature of the wind and its energy and ability to give life and voice to otherwise mute objects turn it into a symbol of artistic inspiration. In ‘The Given Note’, as Tobin has stressed, the wind is the presiding element and it is through wind that the source of creation is disclosed (53). The poem is inspired by a story about the traditional Irish folk song *Port na bPúcaí* – meaning ‘song of the fairies’ – which the poet had heard from the Irish folk composer, Sean O’Riada. In *The Poet and the Piper*, a 2003 studio album by Heaney and piper Liam O’Flynn, Heaney explains the origin of his poem and how Sean O’Riada’s piece, ‘The Music of the Spirits’ – also based on the Irish folk song *Port na bPúcaí* – inspired him too:⁹⁶

⁹⁴ The sound of wind depends on various factors such as the speed, direction, distance of the wind, the shape of the landscape and the objects on its way. The source of sound from wind can be solely aerodynamic – e.g. changes in the pressure – or a result of interaction between wind and other materials – e.g. when the wind passes over the rotating blades of a wind turbine (Gaver, “what” 9-17).

⁹⁵ Other poems with reference to wind include: “Air from another life and time and place, / Pale blue heavenly air is supporting / A white wing beating high against the breeze” (HC 85); “‘See me?’ it says, / ‘The wind // Has me well-rehearsed / In the ways of the world. // Unstable is good. / Permission granted! // Go then, citizen / Of the wind. / Go with the flow’” (HC 36-37); “It’s not that I can’t imagine still / That slight untoward rupture and world-tilt / As a wind freshened and the anchor weighed” (HC 84).

⁹⁶ The album is made up of a mix of instrumental tracks and spoken poetry, and features traditional and contemporary music and lyrics. The story originates in the Blasket Islands, off the west coast of Ireland. In the story, a local fiddler hears a mysterious music floating across the night air and recreates the song onto his fiddle. Inspired by both Heaney’s poem and the original composition, in 2013, David Bruce produced his interpretation of the story. See www.davidbruce.net/works/the-given-note.asp.

This one's called The Given Note and it's really just the retelling of a story that I heard Sean O'Riada tell when he was in Belfast a number of years ago as composer at the Belfast Festival. He played a piece of music which he called the Music of the Spirits and told a story about a fiddler getting it over the air at the Blasket Island and it seemed to me an image of inspiration, a mighty wind blowing the music to you. So, I wrote it down just as a figure of craft and inspiration.⁹⁷

In the poem, the local fiddler grasps a melody across the night air and deftly reproduces it on his fiddle; the attempts of the other villagers, however, are not as remarkable:

He got this air out of the night.

Strange noises were heard
By others who followed, bits of a tune
Coming in on loud weather

Though nothing like melody.
He blamed their fingers and ear
As unpractised, their fiddling easy, [...]. (DD 36)

While the villagers wonder about the source of the melody, the fiddler blames their “unpractised” fingers and ears for not being able to capture it. Heaney reads ‘The Given Note’ as part of the Poetry Ireland lunchtime reading series, placing emphasis on wind as a source of inspiration, on the one hand, and on the poet’s capacity and readiness to seize it, on the other. The poem can, in fact, be read as Heaney’s meditation on the origins of all artistic inspiration “given” (DD 36) to the artists from an unknown origin, on the wind as the carrier of the message and on the artists as the ones who capture it and eternalise it through their art:

So whether he calls it spirit music
Or not, I don't care. He took it
Out of wind off mid-Atlantic.

Still he maintains, from nowhere.
It comes off the bow gravely,
Rephrases itself into the air. (DD 36).

The poem ‘Had I not been awake’ captures one of these moments of consciousness and poetic revelation inspired by the sound of wind. Heaney recalls a moment during his recovery from a stroke in 2006. In the poem, he is woken up by a gust of wind that blows

⁹⁷ See www.dailymotion.com/video/x2yu7h2 (0:00-0:37).

leaves onto the roof making a tapping sound (“pattered”), absorbs the spark, energy and message of it (“the whole of me a-patter”) and captures this fleeting moment of inspiration in his poem forever:

Had I not been awake I would have missed it,
A wind that rose and whirled until the roof
Pattered with quick leaves off the sycamore

And got me up, the whole of me a-patter,
Alive and ticking like an electric fence [...]. (HC 3)

The wind, here, re-awakens Heaney’s internal voice and retains its marvel through his poetic imagination. In his 2010 poetry reading, Heaney explains the reasons for choosing this “windy” poem as the opening to the session, bringing up the two sides of artistic revelation, the ability to surprise and inspire, as well as the technique to be able to capture it, work it into art, and thus keep it forever:

[...] I’ll read it because it came very quickly to me, and it’s the way poems tend to come, I think, to poets, suddenly and, if you are lucky, joyfully and, then, it’s over [...] if they’re successful, the poem doesn’t slip back into the ordinary; something of the surprise and the gift of the thing stays [...].⁹⁸

3.2 My Serenades: Biophonic Sounds⁹⁹

An ecological study of sounds in any given soundscape is based on an understanding of how sounds from various geological, biological and anthropogenic sources can be used to illustrate the relationship between human beings and their sonic environment. In this sense, soundscape ecology shares considerable parallels with landscape ecology, which, as one of its main focuses, emphasises the interaction between biological and anthropogenic factors (see 1.3). Since the coupled human-animal relationship is a central focus of soundscape studies, in this section I focus on Heaney’s illustration of the interactions between humans and non-human animals starting from the rural environment he grew up in and to which he returns in his poetry. This analysis is followed by a study of biophonic sounds from a broader range of

⁹⁸ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOTrSdlsPVk (0:28-0:52).

⁹⁹ The title of this section is inspired by the poem ‘Serenades’ (WO 50).

soundscapes Heaney evokes. I explore how attention to sounds of particular animals and their presence or absence as major components of the soundscape can unfold the underlying political, historical, personal and environmental dimensions and thus enrich our understanding of Heaney's poetry.

In contrast with the urban landscapes that are dominated by human-produced sounds, such as cries of street vendors, friction of tyres on the roads, car horns and sirens, rural landscapes are characterised by an abundance of vocal and mechanical sounds of animals, such as barking of dogs and stridulation of crickets, and of geophonic sounds of running water and rustling wind (Pijanowski et. al. 2003). Heaney grew up on a farm, where humans share their habitation with animals and where they live in close relationship with the natural world. The overlapping of human-animal acoustic spaces in rural environments is reflected in his description of the backyard of their Mossbawn house, where he could hear voices of men and women, their footsteps, rattling buckets, along with the clip-clop of horses, their drinking and snorting, and the ceaseless pumping of the water:

Women came and went, came rattling, between empty enamel buckets, went evenly away, weighed down by silent water. The horses came home to it in those first lengthening evenings of spring, and in a single draught emptied one bucket and then another as the man pumped and pumped, the plunger slugging up and down, *omphalos, omphalos, omphalos*. (PO 17)¹⁰⁰

In rural soundscapes, the sounds of natural elements co-exist with the sounds of animals to provide a vibrant blend of geophony and biophony. Reminiscing about his childhood, Heaney speaks about the impact of the land, the vegetation and the animals on his life and mind:

The world grew. Mossbawn, the first place, widened. There was what we called the Sandy Loaning, a sanded pathway between old hedges leading in off the road, first among fields and then through a small bog, to a remote farmhouse. It was a silky,

¹⁰⁰ According to OED 'Omphalos' is a Greek term meaning "centre, heart, or hub of a place, organisation, sphere of activity". The term was used to refer to the hand-operated water pump near the poet's house, in Co. Derry. In the following section on anthrophonic sounds, I return to this term and how its sound and meaning have forged the poet's imagination.

See also www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/70148/omphalos.

fragrant world there, and for the first few hundred yards you were safe enough. The sides of the lane were banks of earth topped with broom and ferns, quilted with moss and primroses. Behind the broom, in the rich grass, cattle munched reassuringly. Rabbits occasionally broke cover and ran ahead of you in a flurry of dry sand. There were wrens and goldfinches. (PO 18)

Keynote sounds are the background sounds that imprint the sense of time and place in memory. They can almost instantly align themselves with our memories of a particular place and time without the need for a visual clue (see 1.4.2). The reassuring munching of the cattle, the swift flurry of rabbits running across fresh grass and dry sand, the songs of wrens and the undulating flight of goldfinches, which he refers to in the lines quoted above (PO 18), as well as the constant “cackles and clucks” (SS 8) of hens, occasional roaring of cows, grunting pigs, scampering of mice on the old ceilings of their house, comforting neighing of horses, their big body rolls and foot stamps in the stable and even the cacophony of turkeys or geese every Christmas (SS 8-15) are among the biphonic keynotes of farm life that Heaney’s attentive ears took in early in life. These acoustic memories re-surface every now and again in his poetry so as to re-construct the soundscape of his childhood and re-orient the poet towards the earliest bonds.

References to farm animals and their associated sounds are scattered through Heaney’s poetry. ‘Follower’ is an early example that brings together biphonic and anthroponic sounds related to ploughing to create a familiar acoustic image from the poet’s childhood, which he fondly associates with his father and the family tradition of farming. Although by choosing to be a poet Heaney does not “follow” in the footsteps of his father, his implicit reference to the heavy pounding of draught horses’ hooves as they “strained” at each “clicking” of his father’s tongue registers the poet’s admiration of his father’s skill and his own desire to bridge the gap between his career as a poet and his agrarian background (DN 12). In ‘Cow in Calf’, he shows his own acoustic experiences and skills demonstrating what Ihde calls “hearing interiors” through echoes and resounds (Ihde 70). Heaney detects the signs

of pregnancy while “slapping” the cows’ belly which feels and sounds “like slapping / a great bag of seed” and echoes “like a depth-charge / far in her gut” (DN 25). Furthermore, to him, the growing udder resembles the “windbag” of a bagpipe “dron[ing] to her lowing” and singing the unchanging rhythm of bovine life: “Her cuts and her milk, her heats and her calves / keep coming and going” (25). In ‘First Calf’ from *Wintering Out*, Heaney does not refer to the sounds of the cattle directly; instead, he focuses on a deep sense of silence and absence.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, there is no doubt the sight of a hanging placenta and a calf sucking “hard” at the cow’s full udder, which he encounters again after “a long time” and interprets as “semaphores of hurt” (WO 62), evoke the same continuous and melancholic melody of the bagpipe in ‘Cow in Calf’.

The co-habitation of human and animal is not always harmonious. The increasing presence of “indiscriminate and imperialistic” human-produced sounds (Schafer 3) and the “modification of the land” by human beings (Pijanowski et. al. 204) affect the natural patterns of biophony. In the opposite direction, the transformation of the natural and unique soundscapes inflicts a reciprocal impact on the well-being of human beings and many associated human concepts, such as culture, identity, sense of place, as well as educational, artistic, and aesthetic values (Pijanowski et. al. 203-205).¹⁰² Heaney illustrates the tensions underpinning human-animal relationship in some of his best-known poems, such as ‘Death of a Naturalist’, ‘The Early Purges’ and ‘Dawn Shoot’ from his first collection, and ‘Shore Woman’ from *Wintering Out*. Looking at it through the lens of acoustic ecology and soundscape ecology indicates how Heaney uses biophonic sounds to show a range of tangible instances where human beings have not been able to come to terms with the idea of sharing

¹⁰¹ Heaney refers to his father’s cattle trade in other poems, as in ‘Ancestral Photograph’ (DN 13-14), his memories of bulls and cows in ‘The Outlaw’ (DD 6) and ‘Mother’ (DD 19), “barking dogs” in ‘The Loaning’ (SI 52), and the sound of a “trotting” horse in ‘Terminus’ (HL 4).

¹⁰² See Lambin and Geist’s *Land-use and Land-cover Change* (2006) for how human beings can transform the composition of a soundscape, and Barber et al. “The costs of chronic noise exposure for terrestrial organisms” (2009) for the impact of human noise on the distribution of animals.

their acoustic territory with non-human animals. This theme is further developed in ‘Bogland’ from his second collection and ‘Midnight’ from *Wintering Out*, which depict the impact of the confiscation and plantation of the Irish lands and the extinction of the native animals.

According to Vendler, ‘Death of a Naturalist’ demonstrates the death of the “naive” and “dutiful” child and his transition to a new intellectual level. She sees Heaney’s “most virtuosic moment of sound” in using the frogs’ sexual noises to “awaken self-lacerating shame” in the boy whose pastoral innocence is now contaminated by the smear of the freshly laid spawn (29-30). Frogs are among the native amphibians of Ireland.¹⁰³ Parker raises a similar point, noting that the poem indicates the young boy’s “fall from innocence into experience” (65). In the following paragraphs, I will indicate how Heaney’s representation of biophonic sounds hints at a broader tension in human/non-human relationship. In the early spring, marshes and flax-dams are filled with frogs, toads and their chorus of “mating calls” and “territorial calls” as auditory signals to attract mates and indicate their readiness for territorial defence (Capranica 9). In ‘Death of a Naturalist’, Heaney refers to sounds of frogs, as a familiar Irish keynote, to evoke the soundscape of his childhood and re-live the local townland, but also to indicate a transitional phase in his relationship with the natural environment. The first stanza of the poem presents a rather pleasant and delightful experience of the poet’s local flax-hole, where all he can hear is the delicate gargling sound of bubbles and flies buzzing around the flax-dams. The acoustics are powerfully recreated through Heaney’s rich onomatopoeic effect of “bubbles gargled” and the notable clusters of sibilant sounds (DN 3):

Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragonflies, spotted butterflies [...]. (DN 3)

¹⁰³ See animals.mom.me/indigenous-animals-ireland-5197.html.

Heaney recalls his fascination when watching the growth of frogspawn in a jar he often placed on the window-sills at his house and his satisfaction with his biology teacher's age-appropriate explanation of mating process between "the daddy frog" and "the mammy frog" (DN 3). Yet, on one particular day, Heaney's personal encounter with the croaking bullfrogs proves to be different to the extent that he believes he had not experienced anything like that before: "a coarse croaking that I had not heard / before" (DN 3). This statement on Heaney's own part signals the child's awakening to something new. In one sense, of course, the pre-adolescent Heaney had "heard" the sound of the bullfrogs before but had not noticed it. The internal development – from childhood to adolescence – is also illustrated through the transition, in the poem, from the quiet ambience of "the flax-dams" in the first stanza to the heavy din of bullfrogs in the second: "the air was thick with a bass chorus" (DN 3). Phrases like "angry frogs", "a coarse croaking", "gross-bellied frogs", "mud grenades" and "obscene threats" (DN 3) show a direct contrast to his initial fascination and sense of wonder and innocence. Here too Heaney manipulates the sounds of the words to serve his purpose. The proliferation of plosive and harsh consonants [p], [d], [k] and [g] indicates feelings of uneasiness. The growing Heaney experiences feelings of disgust and fear at the sight and sound of the frogs and begins to feel unsafe in what he now believes to be the territory of the animal and runs away:

[...] I ducked through hedges
 To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
 Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
 Right down the dam gross bellied frogs were cocked
 On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
 The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
 Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
 I sickened, turned, and ran. (DN 3-4)

Heaney's initial wonder toward animals as a child and his later uneasiness in the acoustic territory of the frogs reflect the complex dynamics of the human-animal relationship. 'The Early Purges' shows another episode of this tension, where the young Heaney watches the

drowning of kittens by another boy. Such incidents initially arouse mixed feelings of sympathy and fright in him but over time he begins to accept it as a matter of fact as he watches more and more animals dying at the hands of man. This tension is particularly evident when Heaney juxtaposes Dan's position of superiority and power – when he pitches the kittens into the bucket saying: “the scraggy wee shits” (DN 11) – with the “frail” sounds as the kittens desperately scrape the bucket, as well as when “their tiny din” dies but the noise of the omphalos ceaselessly pumping out water continues. The animals are dead, but life goes on for the man, undisturbed.

The disturbing transition from a child's innocent compassion for animals to an adult's recognition of the need to rule over and manipulate nature is a common aspect of human-animal relationships in soundscape ecology that Heaney wants to de-familiarise and highlight.¹⁰⁴ The grown-up Heaney has become desensitised toward animal cruelty. Now, he turns a deaf ear to their cries of agony and adds insults to ease his conscience: “And now, when shrill pups are prodded to drown, / I just shrug, ‘Bloody pups’” (DN 11). He even sees it as a sensible formula for orderly management of the farm:

[...] It makes sense:

‘Prevention of cruelty’ talk cuts ice in town
Where they consider death unnatural,
But on well-run farms pests have to be kept down. (DN 11)

The rats, rabbits, crows, hens, kittens and pups which set the vibrant rhythm of the farmland could be seen as merely “pests” and thus unwanted noises that humans feel free to eliminate (DN 11). Still more disturbing is the thrill with which the poet describes a hunting day in ‘Dawn Shoot’. The adult Heaney joins a friend, Donnelly, on a pseudo-military mission, a

¹⁰⁴ I am using the term ‘de-familiarise’ as in its general sense: “to cause (a person, the mind) to take a fresh view of something that is familiar” in OED. Defamiliarisation, as a literary technique, introduced by the Russian Formalist Šklovskij's is not my intention here and throughout the thesis.

bounty hunting that turns to a pleasure hunting.¹⁰⁵ The pair set out at dawn, “rubber-booted, belted, [and] tense as two parachutists”, walking stealthily, crawling, hiding behind the shrubs “with ravenous eyes” (16). Nature detects the intruders and sets off alarming signals: a corncrake’s cry challenges them like “a hoarse sentry”, a snipe darts away “on reconnaissance”, the cock is “sounding reveille”, a mare whines, another snipe flies away, yet Heaney and his companion dismiss them all and compete for the thrill of killing: “‘For Christ sake’, I spat, ‘Take your time, there will be more’” (17).

In *Wintering Out*, the poem ‘Shore Woman’ describes a similarly tense relationship between human beings and sea animals, particularly mackerel and porpoises. The poem is about a wife who accompanies her husband on a fishing journey (see 3.1). While she finds the man’s catching of the mackerel to be brutal and frightening, the woman herself fails to empathise with porpoises and whales: “Under the boards the mackerel slapped to death / Yet still we took them in at every cast, / Stiff flails of cold convulsed with their first breath” (WO 54). Mackerel is a common and widespread fish around Irish coasts often caught in great numbers during the summer.¹⁰⁶ In these lines, Heaney shows how the cold-blooded creature is being caught so cold-bloodedly by both the fisherman and his wife. Earlier I discussed how sounds can inform the listener about the type, force and proximity of the sound-producing event (see 1.4.1). The soundscape of the fisher’s boat speaks of the desperation and suffering of the animal in the face of the indifference, brutality and endless greed of human beings. This effect is made more notable in the backdrop of the acoustic properties of the lines – the strict iambic of the monosyllables in line 9 combined with a Hopkinsian overloading of consonants in line 10. Moreover, the use of the plural pronoun (“we”) and the woman’s cry of

¹⁰⁵ The poem does not overtly deal with politics and history. However, Heaney’s use of what Corcoran interprets as an “almost absurd range of military metaphors” (43) suggests that Heaney and his companion sense the violence inherent in the land.

¹⁰⁶ See irelandswildlife.com/atlantic-mackerel-scomber-scombrus/.

joy and excitement (“this is so easy that it’s hardly right”) show that, in fact, she shares similar feelings towards catching fish to the man.

Porpoises’ practice of breaking the water’s surface and then returning to it, and the splashing and pressure waves they may cause can, according to the ecological approach to listening, be acoustic (see Gaver 9-10). But porpoises are less “showy” than dolphins and can often be difficult to spot or hear in the water. They typically surface very briefly in a sequence just to breathe and then disappear beneath the waves again until the next sequence of breathing. In fact, they may only produce a “sneeze-like” sound without being seen.¹⁰⁷ Yet the woman renders a very dramatic acoustic – and visual – description of the experience:

Cartwheeling like the flywheels of the tide,
Soapy and shining. To have seen a hill
Splitting the water could not have numbed me more
Than the close irruption of that school,
Tight viscous muscle, hooped from tail to snout,
Each one revealed complete as it bowled out
And under.

They will attack a boat. (WO 54-55)

She describes the porpoise’s sequential surfacing as an act of “irruption” or “cartwheeling like the flywheels of the tide” and interprets it as an attempt to attack the boat. She is completely repulsed by their vigorous bodies, which she associates with masculinity (“Tight viscous muscle”) to rationalise her fear and dislike (“Sick at their huge pleasures in the water”) (WO 54-55). The poem is, therefore, an example of misunderstanding, misinterpreting and disregarding the world of non-human animals.¹⁰⁸

Just as geography and climate determine vernacular keynotes, the sounds of native animals provide soundmarks that establish a unique sense of place often only experienced by the locals. Therefore, the loss of unique biophonic sounds can often impose a profound impoverishment on the sense of place and identity (see 1.4.2). Human beings transform

¹⁰⁷ It is a trait that has earned them the old English name of “Puffing Pig” and the Irish name of “Muc Mhara” meaning sea pig. See www.irelandswildlife.com/harbour-porpoise-phocoena-phocoena/.

¹⁰⁸ Other examples of human-animal tension can often be seen in his early poetry, including ‘Turkeys Observed’ (DN 24), ‘For the Commander of the ‘Eliza’ (DN 21-22) and ‘The Outlaw’ (DD 6).

landscapes mainly through “land-use” and “land-cover change”. These human “modifications” of the landscape influence the distribution and abundance of biodiversity and at times lead to the complete extinction of some species (Pijanowski et. al. 204-205). Heaney’s reference to the absence of the Great Irish elk and the grey Irish wolf, which I discuss next, not only highlights the human/non-human tension at the ecological level but also explains their symbolic weight in Irish literature, culture and politics.¹⁰⁹ In these instances, Heaney has not personally heard the elk or the wolf, but he acknowledges that they have nevertheless been members of the past soundscapes. What he highlights in these instances are the changes in the soundscape throughout time – symbolically or literally – because of the absence or disappearance of some biophonic sound sources. Heaney inscribes their presence in his poetry and in the memory of his readers (see also 4.4). In ‘Bogland’, Heaney brings up the striking image of the unearthed skeleton of the long-extinct “Great Irish Elk” (DD 43), highlighting its absence from the contemporary Irish soundscape. The giant deer became extinct around 10,000 years ago, even before the arrival of the first Mesolithic people in Ireland. Nonetheless, it has become a key icon in Irish history and mythology (Gould 191).¹¹⁰ Heaney’s recognition of the Irish Elk as an archetypal element of the ancient Irish history can be perceived as an attempt to emphasise the need to return to a mythologised Irish past, before the disappearance of the Irish wood and wildlife, in order to summon and re-establish the sense of national identity in the present day of Ireland.

In ‘Midnight’, from *Wintering Out*, similarly, Heaney links the disappearance of the Irish language and identity to the extinction of the grey wolf after the wars of the seventeenth

¹⁰⁹ Around 10,000 years ago, Ireland became isolated from mainland Europe limiting its indigenous animal population. See animals.mom.me/indigenous-animals-ireland-5197.html. Ireland’s extinct indigenous mammals are the giant deer (the great Irish elk), the grey wolf and the great auk. In both Irish literature and environmental discussions, the extinction of the native Irish animals is seen as an emblem of the concurrent brutalisation of Irish people. See animals.mom.me/indigenous-animals-ireland-5197.html.

¹¹⁰ Although the Irish Elk “is neither exclusively Irish nor an elk” – it is a Pleistocene deer also widely spread through Europe, northern Asia and Africa – it has a symbolic significance in the Irish culture (Gould 191). However, deer and elk have very complex vocal mechanisms producing high-pitched calls, which they engage in elaborate manoeuvres for courtship and territorial purposes (Roland and Riede 307).

century and the colonial settlement, but also laments the extinction of the Irish wolf as the consequence of colonisation, agricultural expansion, deforestation and hunting. Before 1600 and the arrival of the first English settlers a number of wolves were living in the woodland of Ireland. Although often associated with evil and threat, the wolf was regarded as a keynote component of the Irish landscape, leading to Ireland being called “Wolf-Land” by newly arrived English settlers (Hickey 194). The systematic eradication of the wolf by the colonisers was in many ways parallel to the restrictive measures imposed on the Gaelic language and culture. In Irish poetry, the extinction of the Irish wolf has been transformed into a recurring metaphor for the loss of a linguistic and national identity, as well as a symbol for Ireland.¹¹¹ In “Midnight”, Heaney writes:

The wolf has died out

In Ireland. The packs
Scoured parkland and moor
Till a Quaker buck and his dogs
Killed the last one

In some scraggy waste of Kildare.
The wolfhound was crossed
With inferior strains,
Forests coopered to wine casks. (WO 35)

According to Hickey, there are two primary causes for the decline and extermination of the wolf in Ireland: habitat change and professional hunting. Between 1600 and 1700, the forested area of Ireland, the primary habitat of the wolves, declined from approximately 12.5 percent to 2 percent. This deforestation came about as a result of a number of factors, including the settlement of the English colonisers, who wanted to replicate an English landscape in Ireland, the plantations of Ulster in order to meet the growing demands for arable land, and the deforestation of the Irish woodland for industrial and construction purposes in Britain (Hickey 193-195). Heaney refers to this factor in the last line of the

¹¹¹ See www.thelearnedpig.org/wild-alphabet-wolf-irish-poetry/4386.

stanza: “Forests coopered to wine casks” (WO 35). The second factor that led to the extinction of the Irish wolf was the legislation and bounties, starting as early as 1584, to encourage the professional hunting of wolves that were now seen as a threat to the agricultural economy (Hickey 193-195). As Heaney too mentions the last wolf was killed by a professional hunter equipped with two wolf dogs: “[t]ill a Quaker buck and his dogs / Killed the last one” (WO 35). By 1786, wolves were completely exterminated from the Irish landscape leading to the loss of one of Ireland's most formidable post-glacial species and the only major carnivore to have survived into the historic period (Hickey 197). Today, Heaney feels the absence of the Irish wolf in its native habitat: “[t]he old dens are soaking”, “pads are lost”, “[n]othing is panting, lolling, / Vapouring” (WO 35).

Politically and symbolically, the rampant deforestation of the Irish land and eradication of the wolf were also seen as ways of leashing the “wolf-like” Irish rebels – known by the English as “woodkerne” – and depriving them of a place of refuge (Neeson 140-141).¹¹² Given that the wolf had disappeared in both England and Scotland in the mid 18th century, the new settlers associated the wild animal with the language and the behaviour of the natives, which they were determined to suppress. The fact that the Irish wolf was a keynote element of the Irish soundscape and had a great impact on the Irish culture is indisputable.¹¹³ But the association between Irish identity and the Irish wolf can be viewed differently from the perspective of sound studies. In the haunting howling of wolves we encounter “a vocal ritual” (Schafer 39) which defines the territorial claim of the pack to their

¹¹² In 1610, Lord Blennerhasset, Chief Baron of the Irish Exchequer, described the woodkernes as “human wolves” and “recommended periodic manhunts to track down the human wolves to their lairs”. The Irish were thereby bestialised and political resistance was coded as “wolf-like” (Neeson 140-141).

¹¹³ Cunningham’s 2017 research indicates the positive associations between the Irish people and wolves in Irish mythology and hagiography. See www.thelearnedpig.org/wild-alphabet-wolf-irish-poetry/4386. However, the English equated the Irish with wolves as a means of justifying their brutalisation. In *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596), Spenser viciously states the Irish were in the habit of eating wolves, befriending them, and even transforming into them. See celt.ucc.ie//published/E500000-001/. In *As You Like It* (1562), Shakespeare too writes disparagingly of the association, describing Rosalind’s lovers’ complaints “like the howling of Irish wolves” (145). In a testimony, a military captain and his forty soldiers, who witnessed the bodies of an Irish garrison slaughtered at Cashel in 1647, asserted the dead “had tails near a quarter of a yard long” (Wiseman 71).

acoustic space. Perhaps it was this territorial call of the grey wolf, and not the assumptions about its wildness, that rang as a threat to the ears of English colonisers. Heaney ends his poem saying the ruthless suppression of his language, culture and territory has left him speechless: “The tongue’s / Leashed in my throat” (WO 35).

Heaney also makes an effective use of the vocal and mechanical sounds of native birds to communicate themes regarding the environment, society and even personal memories. The diversity, abundance and richness of bird species has been the focus of scholars including bio-acousticians, ornithologists and soundscape scholars.¹¹⁴ Like birds themselves, bird vocalisations are of different types, some are penetratingly loud and intense – e.g. the scrubbird and the corncrake, some have a bell-like sound – e.g. the sparrow, some others are two-tone – e.g. the male cuckoo, and some are superb mimics – e.g. the lyrebird. Birds can often be distinguished by the sounds of their flights too. The slow flapping of an eagle is different from the startled slapping of a flock of geese on the water or the shaking of the sparrow’s wings against the air. We may not see the birds but hear the fast whirl of their wings or tails and distinguish the type and direction of their flight (Schafer 31-33).

The song of birds can register as a vernacular keynote, given the uniqueness of some species, and can even dominate the soundscape because of their abundance. Nonetheless, as Krause’s soundscape archive shows, birds’ vocalisations have in fact little spectral or temporal overlap (14-18).¹¹⁵ As Schafer notes, birdsongs are rich and varied without “imperialistically dominating” the soundscape leading to listeners identifying them as one of the most “pleasant” elements of the natural environment (29-31). In literature and mythology of the East and the West, birds have often been attached to the human imagination as the

¹¹⁴ Almost 500 varieties of bird species can be found in Ireland. Swans, ducks, waders and curlew are the vulnerable species to which Heaney refers in his poetry. For environmental approaches of Irish writers see Potts. For a complete list of birds in Ireland, see avibase.bsc-eoc.org/checklist.jsp?region=IE&list=howardmoore.

¹¹⁵ After observing and analyzing his recordings of soundscapes in multiple habitat types, Krause postulated that the competition for auditory space prompts organisms to adjust their signal calls so as to exploit vacant niches in the auditory spectrum and minimise spectral or temporal overlaps (qtd in Pijanowski et.al. 14-18).

archetypes of gentleness, delightfulness, spirituality and peace. The mythological bird Sīmurǧ – also known as Humā or the Persian phoenix – is the iconic figure of poetry and painting within the realm of the Persian and Byzantine empires and appears along with nightingale, cuckoo and other birds in the Sufi poetry of Hafez, Saadi and Ferideddin Attar. Birds, particularly the nightingale, appear in the epic poetry of Homer and the bucolic poetry of Theocritus, in the poetry of Virgil and Ovid, and in the writings of Chaucer, Eliot, Hardy, Hopkins, Hemingway and Wordsworth, some of whom are among Heaney’s inspirations. In ‘The God in the Tree’ Heaney quotes his translation of the 9th century Irish poem ‘The Blackbird of Belfast Lough’ to refer to the “Little jabs of delight in the elemental” communicated through the presence of “woods”, “water” and “birdsong” in the ancient Irish nature poems (PO 181):

The small bird
let a chirp
from its beak:
 I heard
woodnotes, whin-
gold, sudden.
The Lagan
 blackbird! (PO 181)

The influence of early Irish nature poetry and the presence of the archetypes of idyllic nature continue to echo throughout Heaney’s work and appear as a focus of the scholarship on Heaney (see 2.1 and 2.2). In his 1989 Desert Island Disc interview with Sue Lawley, Heaney confirmed this while expressing his feelings regarding the idyllic countryside of Ireland and the early Irish nature poetry: “I’m in the tradition of the hermit poets of the early Celtic nature tradition”.¹¹⁶ As I argue, while appreciating their overtly bucolic associations, Heaney’s poetry goes beyond the archetypal representation of birds and birdsong to deal with the underlying personal, social and environmental associations.

¹¹⁶ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAuucSly7t8 (3:50-3:59). And, more extensively, here, where the poet reads several translations from the Irish of this particular tradition: www.youtube.com/watch?v=emuYwWT7s4A (1:06:02-1:06:04).

One of the birds that features in Heaney's poetry frequently is the blackbird. The blackbird is a keynote feature of both the urban and agricultural Irish landscape and fondly known for its rich, warbling song and restless hopping flights (Jones).¹¹⁷ In a 1978 interview, Heaney explains that he had to leave the North in order to gain a greater perspective on his home place and on his own status as a poet during the Troubles.¹¹⁸ The soundscape of Glanmore, which features the song of blackbird as one of its main keynotes, evokes the memories of Mossbawn and becomes a place of contemplation and inspiration for much of his poetry. 'The Blackbird of Glanmore' opens as, on his way to visit the cottage, the aging poet reflects upon his views on the transitory nature of life, the memory of his father and younger brother Christopher, all inspired by a simple encounter with a blackbird which immediately calls to mind the soundscape of his childhood. Keynotes are often heard but not carefully listened to (see 1.4.2). Yet Heaney is not one to overlook a keynote. He decides to "park, pause, [and] take heed. / Breathe. Just breathe and sit" to observe and listen to the bird (DC 75). The sudden flight of the blackbird startled by the clunk of the car lock ("the automatic lock / clunks shut") and its restless flitting from one hedge to another ("hedge-hop") is thought provoking for Heaney, encouraging him to reflect on the passing of life, to commute between the "house of life" in Glanmore where he lived and raised his children to the "house of death" where the memories of his father and brother lie, and thus, to reflect on his own longevity from "a bird's eye view" (DC 76).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ See www.irelandswildlife.com/blackbird-turdus-merula/.

¹¹⁸ In a 1979 interview with Randall, Heaney comments on his reasons for moving to Wicklow, saying:
I left [...] not really out of any rejection of Belfast but because [...] well, I had written three books, had published two, and one was due to come out. I had the name for being a poet but I was also discovering myself being interviewed as, more or less, a spokesman for the Catholic minority during this early stage of the Troubles. I found the whole question of what was the status of art within my own life and the question of what is an artist to do in a political situation very urgent matters [...] I wanted to step out of the rhythms I had established; I wanted to be alone with myself.

See www.pshares.org/authors/james-randall.

¹¹⁹ Heaney here is also referring to the superstition surrounding the blackbird as an evil omen, which according to a neighbour had been sitting on their roof prior to Christopher's death. In a 2006 interview with Sam Leith, in the *Daily Telegraph*, he reveals that "an old woman – a weird sister figure, she lived down the fields. [...] She read the world in terms of signs, omens". See www.theage.com.au/entertainment/books/back-on-home-turf-

Along with blackbirds, the lark, corncrakes, and snipe are known as familiar elements of the Irish landscape and major contributors to local biodiversity. The snipe is a mostly ground bird and prefers bogs, marshy ground and fields filled with rushes and grass as its habitat. It is a mostly nocturnal or crepuscular unobtrusive wading bird that depends on silence and camouflage to avoid detection. When flushed, it utters a unique alarming cry and erupts suddenly from the ground (Campbell and Lack 202). Heaney describes this characteristic behaviour of the snipe in ‘Dawn Shoot’, when he writes: “a snipe rocketed away on reconnaissance” or when, towards the end of the shooting day, “another snipe catapulted into the light” (DN 16-17).¹²⁰

Like snipes, larks are one of the most common residents of Ireland, but unlike them, they are known as vocal birds whose distinctive continuous stream of warbling songs, mostly heard during spring and summer, can last up to half an hour and while the bird is flying 50 to 100 metres overhead.¹²¹ In ‘Glanmore Eclogue’, the “poet” refers to this fact and writes that the song of the lark makes the idyllic soundscape of Wicklow even more “perfect” during summer days (EL 37).¹²²

A little nippy chirpy fellow
Hits the highest note there is;
The lark sings out his clear tidings.
Summer, shimmer, perfect days. (EL 37)

Corncrakes are relatively shy and hard to see but have a very distinctive rasping call which they use repeatedly to indicate their presence (Dempsey and O’Clery 82). In ‘Dawn

[20060527-ge2e94.html](https://doi.org/10.2060527-ge2e94.html). Nevertheless, Heaney himself recalls the bird affectionately: “It’s you, blackbird, I love” (DC 75). In ‘The Loaning’ Heaney makes a passing reference to its “startled volubility” (SI 52), and in ‘St. Kevin and the Blackbird’, he associates the blackbird with spirituality.

¹²⁰ References to the snipe recur in Heaney’s work. For instance, in ‘A Kite for Michael and Christopher’, it is a metaphor for the human soul: “the human soul / is about the weight of a snipe” (SI 44). In ‘At the Water’s Edge’, he hears the sound of the snipe among the monastic recitals: “On Devenish I heard a snipe” (FW 6).

¹²¹ See birdwatchireland.ie/birds/skylark/.

¹²² In the poem, Heaney also refers to the welcoming song of the cuckoo: “[e]arly summer, cuckoo, cuckoos, / *Welcome, summer* is what he sings” (EL 37), alluding to the 13th century English poem about the approach of summer, ‘The Cuckoo Song’; In ‘A Kite for Michael and Christopher’, Heaney likens the kite to a “small black lark” flying high up in the sky and uses both as a symbol of the human soul (SI 44).

Shoot', discussed earlier in this section, the unexpected cry of the corncrake signals the presence of an intruder in their habitat: "[...] A corncrake challenged / Unexpectedly like a hoarse sentry" (DN 16). In a later poem, 'Castling and Gathering, the call of the corncrake reaffirms its status as a prominent keynote of the soundscape inscribed in the memory and mindscape of the poet. The poem captures the sharp contrast between the views of two fishermen – Ted Hughes, a poet to whom the poem is dedicated, and Barrie Cook, an artist – through the sounds they are producing on either side of the river: "these sounds took sides" (ST 13). On one side, the fishing fly goes "whispering through the air" and, on the other, the repetitive, intense and grating cry of the corncrake becomes a metaphor for "the sharp ratcheting" sound of the fisher's reel that goes "on and on" disturbing the "stillness" of the riverbank (ST 13). Heaney states that, although he liked fishing with a fly, he was never patient enough to cast one, but also that he could never forget the feelings – and sounds – related to fishing: "I wanted to fish with a fly and just never stayed at it long enough to learn to cast, so that effort fizzled out [...]. But inside my sixty-eight-year-old arm there's a totally enlivened twelve-year-old one, feeling the bite" (SS 95). The poem gives voice to "the music of fishing, its swishing and whispering and sharp ratcheting" (Parker 220), and in doing so it indicates the grating call of the corncrake as a central keynote of the poet's mind and memory.

In addition to their personal and idyllic associations, birds appear in Heaney's poetry to illuminate his social and environmental awareness. In poem xlii of 'Squarings', Heaney commemorates the farmers of his father's generation, the "apparitions" who are still "active", "territorial", "sure of their ground" and "interested" (ST 102). Yet he laments over their lack of awareness that their intensive methods of agriculture have led to the gradual disappearance of their natural landscape and its biophony. He notes heather, kesh, turf stacks and grasshoppers reappear each summer, but they are becoming increasingly rare: "Heather and

kesh and turf stacks reappear / Summer by summer still, grasshoppers and all, / The same yet rarer [...]” (ST 102). The transformation of farming methods and presence of noise from agricultural machinery can also heavily impact the population of the larks, who favour uplands and areas of farmland as their breeding places. Heaney also laments the general local assumption that the spread of larks is still as “unstoppable” as the sudden spread of “sunshine” on hills, and notes: “How long the lark has stopped outside these fields / And only seems unstoppable to them / Caught like a far hill in a freak of sunshine” (ST 102).

Although the snipe is a well-established breeding species in Ireland, its population has undergone a decline due to seasonal shooting and the loss of its habitat through afforestation of moorlands and bogs.¹²³ In ‘The Backward Look’, Heaney attempts, on the one hand, to celebrate the native bird as a keynote of the Irish soundscape and culture and, on the other hand, to bring to light the threat of its gradual decline. Earlier I discussed how the call of native birds can provide a vernacular keynote as characteristic as the language of the people who live there (see 1.4.2). In ‘The Backward Look’, Heaney links Gaelic language and the snipe, which as Foster has also noted, is a “particularly Irish bird” (38), but also indicates the call of the snipe we hear in the poem is not what could be interpreted as an aggressive “territorial” call, a cheerful “pleasure” call or an intense “mating” call. Heaney implies that the snipe’s cry is what Schafer identifies as a feeble “distress” call (33-40) and likens it to the status of the Irish language in its original land. Today, Northern Ireland has no official language. English is the de facto first official language, and Irish and Ulster-Scots are recognised regional languages. Like the native language, as Heaney states, the snipe gives out a mournful cry as distancing its natural habitat and original nesting ground into less suitable realms:

A snipe’s bleat is fleeing

¹²³ See Barry’s *Shooting: Moor and Marsh* (2013) for details about snipe shooting in Ireland. The population of the local snipe in Ireland has undergone a decline in recent decades. See snipeconservationalliance.org/snipe-in-ireland/.

its nesting ground
 into dialect,
 into variants [...]. (WO 19)

In ‘The Backward Look’, even the flight of the snipe speaks of a mournful situation and a forthcoming threat. Heaney compares the decline of the Irish language in its native land to an ominous sound, a change in the familiar flapping and throbbing sound of the snipe’s wing as it struggles to maintain its balance in the air:

A stagger in air
 as if a language
 failed, a sleight
 of wing. (WO 19)

Garrard draws attention to the intertwined relationship between ecology and language in ‘The Backward Look’, but rather than drawing a metaphorical comparison, he suggests that the fate of the bird itself has a direct impact on the language of its native place (193). Lidström also comments that Heaney’s use of the term “sleight” to describe the snipe gives it a kind of “personhood” that further reinforces the relationship between nature and culture (Lidström 88). In fact, the term “dialect” – as a form of a language particular to a specific region or social group – directly links the snipe to its acoustics and the language and culture of its native place. Heaney compares the unfamiliar sound of the bird’s flight to the Norse “transliterations whirr[ing] / on the nature reserves” (WO 19) and then offers the more colourful and Irish folk alternative in italics: “*little goat of the air, / of the evening, // little goat of the frost*” (WO 19), which becomes a faded memory if the local snipe itself becomes extinct. The snipe is widely recognised for the beating sound it can produce in the air through vibrating its tail-feathers as it dives. Thus, the bird being audible is only a sign of descent (O’Brien Johnson 137). In the poem, the bird’s tail-feathers are “drumming”, not to celebrate, but to lament. The “drumming elegies” of the snipe reinforce the theme of the extinction of the bird and the disappearance of the language while travelling “in the slipstream // of [the less common] wild goose / and yellow bittern” (WO 19). The possibility that the snipe

becomes a forgotten entry is intensified by the vocabulary of decline (“stagger”, “failed”, “bleat”, “fleeing”), closure (“gleaning”, “leavings” and “archive”) and threat (“sniper”). The term sniper was originally coined by British soldiers in India in the early nineteenth century and refers to a skilled gunman who could shoot a snipe (Lidström 89). Therefore, while associating with the contemporary Troubles and the legacy of colonisation, the term “sniper” too highlights the impact of seasonal hunting on the population of the local snipe. Heaney is worried that, like Irish language and culture, the local snipe becomes a forgotten entry in the “archive” of history (WO 20). The bird’s downward flight and disappearance is made almost inevitable by Heaney’s use of short-lined stanzas, enjambment, and the assonance woven in the final lines.:

disappearing among
gleanings and leavings
in the combs
of a fieldworker’s archive. (WO 20)

In ‘Glanmore Sonnets’ the presence of the corncrake exceeds its idyllic associations and contributes to the thematic development of the poem. ‘Glanmore Sonnets’ are among the first poems Heaney wrote after moving to Wicklow, a countryside environment that in *Preoccupations* he defines “as being pastoral rather than rural, trying to impose notions of a beautified landscape on the word, in order to keep ‘rural’ for the unselfconscious face of raggle-taggle farmland” (PO 173). By comparison with the “turmoil of activities” on the farmland where human beings and animals cohabit, the pasture feels “generally quieter” characterised by pleasing geophonic and biophonic sounds (Schafer 44-48). Heaney explains that it was “the too literary nature of the reality of Wicklow” in an evening in the month of May that inspired the first sonnet featuring the cuckoo and the corncrake (SS 162-163). The sonnet opens: “This evening the cuckoo and the corncrake / (So much, too much) consorted at twilight. / It was all crepuscular and iambic” (FW 30). Ironically, these lines are not iambic pentameter and as Gifford notes, “the call of the cuckoo is a trochee, and that of the

corncrake is a spondee” (106). However, Heaney uses the term “iambic” to suggest the rhythmic call of the birds and the idyllic soundscape of Wicklow. In a 2011 poetry reading session, he describes the organic continuum between the rhythmic singing of the birds and the sonnet: “one evening the iambic pentameter flew across and I let it happen”.¹²⁴ Yet the birdsongs Heaney refers to in ‘Sonnet III’ are not “beautified” in the escapist sense (Gifford 104-105). The consorting call of the cuckoo and nocturnal corncrake – together with the sight of the deer and the rabbit, and the sound of “a rustling and twig-combing breeze” (FW 30) to which Heaney refers in the final line of the poem – are the natural “cadences” (FW 30) that recall the now-vanished soundscape of the pre-mechanised farmlands of Ulster.

In addition to illustrating the poet’s ecological awareness, the poem also can be read in the context of postcolonial literature for recalling the legacy of English colonisation (Allison 79). In 1988 Cheltenham Literature Festival, Heaney explained his mixed feelings towards these lines, which come across to him as “too comfortable [...] English even” (qtd in Gifford 106). In an interview with Frank Kinahan he explained: “Back then I thought 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, I felt at the time that its sweetness disabled it somehow” (412). The reference to colonialism is made earlier in ‘Sonnet II’, where Heaney speaks of landing in “the hedge-school of Glanmore” (FW 29). Hedge-schools were the only way the native Irish, specifically those who were not Anglican, could have education during the period of the Penal Laws of the 1830s and even earlier. These schools were illegally operated by and for Irish Catholic peasants in barns and cowsheds (Corcoran 147). In ‘Sonnet III’, the phrase “too much” (FW 30), in the second line, establishes a tension which prevents the temptation to pastoralise the call of the cuckoo and the corncrake at

¹²⁴ Heaney comments on Sonnet III at a poetry reading session in New York, in September 2011. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=tj8dATdoES0 (12:17-14:52). In *Stepping Stones*, he explains: “I remember wondering, what the hell is all this iambic pentameter doing in my life? There’s even a line mocking the too literary nature of the reality of Wicklow that evening” (SS 162-163).

twilight. The hoarse cry of the corncrake which registers as a keynote of the rural Irish soundscape becomes, as Allison suggests, an apt symbol for the guttural sounds of the Irish language (74).

Heaney's reference to "the ack-ack" (WO 50) of the corncrake in 'Serenades' can also be read in the same colonial/ecological context.¹²⁵ In the poem, he encourages his readers to join him and listen to his "serenades", to the poetry which as much celebrates the scolding chattering of the "sedge-warbler", the throaty kraa of "a crow", the hoarse call of the "corncrake" and the barely audible "wheeze of bats" as the melodic song of a "nightingale" (WO 50). In his blend of discordant word sounds too Heaney breaks the conventional idea of a serenade:

My serenades have been
The broken voice of a crow
In a draught or a dream,
The wheeze of bats

Or the ack-ack
Of the tramp corncrake [...]. (WO 50)

Heaney likens his own voice and poetry to the grating call of the corncrake contrasting it with the melodic song of the nightingale that occupies a special place in English literature for the mellifluous quality of its song. To make his point clearer, he goes as far as to instead suggest the sedge-warbler, a very common bird with a high-pitched rattling call, as the "Irish nightingale":

The Irish nightingale
Is a sedge-warbler,
A little bird with a big voice
Kicking up a racket all night. (WO 50)

He demonstrates his ecological concerns when stating that the species' survival is threatened by the "combines and chemicals" (WO 50). Allison also argues that "the crane might also be considered as a symbol of Ulster's Catholics, marginalised and intimidated by Unionist

¹²⁵ In OED, 'Ack-ack' or 'a. a.' is also a British colloquial for "an anti-aircraft gun". In these poems, however, the poet is remembering the sound fondly and as a keynote element of the Irish soundscape.

hegemony” (77). This statement too can be better understood in relation to the “imperialistic” (Schafer 3) noises of modern agricultural machinery and techniques in the habitat of the corncrake.

In Heaney’s poetry, the songs of birds are not just a metaphor for happiness and an idyllic world, or a symbol of cultural identity and childhood memory. Vehicle and tenor are so intertwined with each other that an exclusive prioritisation of the latter would be an obvious example of “eco-blindness” (Garrard 193). The lark and the blackbird sing out to make the soundscape of the poems we read “perfect” (EL 37) but also to alert us to the fact that their absence will be felt as a deep impoverishment in the soundscape of the world we live in. Heaney’s poetry makes a close association between the vocalisation of the native birds and the local language encouraging his readers to appreciate them as equally significant elements of cultural identity that need to be preserved and protected. Heaney writes about non-human animals as a major component of the world soundscape to tap into the consciousness of his readers and awake their compassion for the living beings with whom they share the planet. Yet he also writes about humans, their sounds, noises and voices which I embark on in the following section.

3.3 The Epic of the Noise: Anthrophonic Sounds¹²⁶

In this section, I identify and interpret the references to a selection of man-made sounds. This analysis begins with anthrophonic sounds of farm life and early crafts evoked by the poet and, then, attends to sounds of various means of transport. I close this section with the symbolism of the sounds of bells and time.

Throughout his poetry, Heaney gives us a precise acoustic picture of Irish farm life. Earlier in this chapter, I wrote about the biophonic sounds of farm life – e.g. the neighing and snorting of horses, the munching and moaning of cows, the grunting of pigs, the constant

¹²⁶ The title of this section is inspired by Heaney’s description of Barney Devlin’s hammer strikes (SS 91).

cackles of hens and the scurry of rats on the ceiling. The keynotes of the rural Irish life that Heaney recalls and awakens in his work include a diverse variety of anthrophonic sounds as well. I have noted that keynotes are the familiar background sounds of any soundscape, and that although the material modulated around keynotes often obscures their centrality, keynotes remain the fundamental sounds that influence and reflect the mood and lifestyle of the people living within their earshot (See 1.4.2). Heaney captures the sounds and rhythms of early trades and manual farming practices, sounds that were “sealed down” in his memory and re-appear in his poetry to allow the poet to reach into the world of his father and ancestors. In his 1980 interview with John Edwards, Heaney remarks:

When I began to write for some reason or other, it was that first deposit of experience that was almost hermetically sealed down came up. It was like reaching into another world even though it was a world that I had experienced 15 or 20 years ago.¹²⁷

The soundscape of farm life has changed over time. The reassuring stamping of the farmer’s boots and the horse’s hooves during ploughing, the earthy grating of the spade, the rhythmic swish and slash of the mowing scythes, the squeak of old rusty hinges and the hand-operated water pump, as well as the acoustics of such crafts as blacksmithing, turf-cutting, water divining, dealing cattle, retting flax in a flax dam, thatching, churning, and even purging unwanted farm animals – all of which Heaney evokes in his poetry – are the vernaculars of the old ways of agriculture and early crafts that have been replaced by the whirring of combines, threshers, mowers, tractors and the din of factories. In this interview, Heaney continues to comment on the rhythm of farm life during the forties comparing it with the more mechanised pattern during the fifties and afterwards:

Well it’s what they called a small farm [...]. This was actually about fifty acres. I say ‘was’, the land is still the same, but things have changed on the land, I mean, when I was growing up in the forties, you could still see people ploughing with horses, you could still see people mowing with scythes, you could still see people using forks to build hay and the rhythm of life was really a medieval rhythm almost, you know. When the fifties, with mechanisation and so on, that all changed. And now, it’s the

¹²⁷ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yt4m2Z4Pmw (1:53-2:14).

same land, the same ground, but there are milking parlours and tractors and mechanisations and the rhythms have changed considerably.¹²⁸

Listening to such background sounds provides us with the opportunity to measure social and historical changes in the soundscape of the poet's world and reflect on their social and cultural associations. One of the most familiar anthrophonic sounds, for Heaney and Heaney scholars, which I have frequently referred to in the previous sections, is the familiar sound of a hand-operated water pump referred to as *omphalos*, positioned outside the back door of Heaney's house. For Heaney the sound of the *omphalos* is what Schafer calls "a soundmark" and "a centripetal sound" (10; 56). Heaney describes the sound of the *omphalos* as a familiar rhythmic squeak that unified the rhythm of life in the backyard:

Women came and went, came rattling between empty enamel buckets, went evenly away, weighed down by silent water. The horses came home to it in those first lengthening evenings of spring, and in a single draught emptied one bucket and then another as the man pumped and pumped, the plunger slugging up and down, *omphalos, omphalos, omphalos*. (PO 17)

The central role of the water pump is so ingrained in the mind and life of the people that even the manoeuvre of the American troops in the neighbouring fields would not disturb it. Heaney captures this in his description of the pump's verticality, armoured and ironed appearance and position in the yard: "there the pump stands, a slender, iron idol, snouted, helmeted [...] marking the centre of another world" (PO 17). For the poet, however, the rhythmic squeak of the water pump was as much a central element of life as a source of the poetic imagination. Until years later, it is the sound of the word and its repetition that taps into the memory of the poet and conjures up the soundscape of his childhood.¹²⁹

Equally important to him is digging and "the ring of it" (DC 25). As many scholars have noted, the rhythmic grating sound of the spade is the sound with which he opens not

¹²⁸ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yt4m2Z4Pmw (0:50-1:38).

¹²⁹ In 'The Toome Road', he presents the image of "[t]he invisible, untoppled *omphalos*" to give a glimpse of hope (FW 7). In 'A Drink of Water', he uses the "whooping cough" of the pump and "clatter" of the empty bucket as the acoustic signs that announce the presence of an elderly woman in the yard every morning (FW 8).

only his first collection of poetry, but also his poetic vocation.¹³⁰ In ‘Digging’, Heaney celebrates the family tradition of farming. The poem was written in the summer of 1964, when, amidst the bustle of life in Belfast, Heaney recalls the most familiar and comforting sound he associates with his father and forefathers. The first stanza portrays the poet-narrator sitting at a window, holding a pen between his fingers and listening to his father digging the flowerbeds in the backyard of their house: “Under my window, a clean rasping sound / When the spade sinks into gravelly ground: / My father, digging” (DN 1). The rhythmic grating sound of the spade as it cuts through the gravelly ground immediately transposes Heaney to twenty years before and the memories of his father “stooping in rhythm through potato drills” (DN 1). It is not just the “sound” of digging but also its distinctive “rhythm” that registers the familiar keynote of the family tradition in his memory perpetually (see 1.4.1). Heaney declares that he will continue the family tradition, not with a spade, but with the pen in his grasp. Digging is emblematic. It establishes the centripetal and centrifugal rhythm Heaney would maintain throughout his entire poetic vocation. From the beginning, the young poet is determined to bring the world of farming and writing together, to excavate his cultural identity from the hidden corners of memory and to restore “culture to itself” (PO 41).¹³¹

Digging takes us to the memories of his fathers and ancestors in the potato fields and turfs, to their silence, rough hands and determined steps which he greatly admires. In Heaney’s poetry, even the farmer’s footsteps and silence are amplified and celebrated. In ‘Digging’, he recalls “the squelch and slap / of soggy peat” as his grandfather waded through

¹³⁰ The position of ‘Digging’ not only on the opening page of his first volume, but also his *Selected Poems*, *New Selected Poems* and *Opened Ground* indicates the significance of the poem for Heaney (Murphy 8-28). Heaney affirms the essential role of this poem in ‘Mossbawn’: “I now believe that the ‘Digging’ poem had for me the force of an initiation: [...] having experienced the excitement and release of it once, I was doomed to look for it again and again” (PO 42-43). He explains:

‘Digging’, in fact, was the name of the first poem I wrote where I thought my feelings had got into words, or to put it more accurately, where I thought my *feel* had got into words. Its rhythms and noises still please me, [...]. I wrote it in the summer of 1964, almost two years after I had begun to ‘dabble in verses’. This was the first place where I felt I had done more than make an arrangement of words: I felt that I had let down a shaft into real life. (PO 41)

¹³¹ The metaphor of digging returns in a number of other poems, as in ‘Poem’ (DN 35) and ‘Undine’ (DD 16).

peat bogs (DN 1). In ‘Follower’, Heaney expresses his respect for his father, who unlike the poet, is “an expert”. He is a man of few words, strong, tenacious and sure-footed, mapping and digging the furrows with precision, deftly handling the plough, the shafts and the sod. The young Heaney, by comparison, is “tripping, falling, / yapping always” (DN 12). This theme is subtly brought up in ‘Poem’, a poem dedicated and addressed to his wife. Heaney is determined to renew his wedding vows with Marie promising her to mature the child of his memories into a perfect man (“love I shall perfect for you the child”) (DN 35). The child of Heaney’s memories is comparable to the “stumbling” child of ‘Follower’ (DN 12). He too is “puddling through muck” and “splashing delightedly” (DN 35). However, Heaney hopes that, in this new world of companionship that their union has brought into being, he will overcome his own “imperfect limits” and grow into the ideal man of his mind. The “perfect” he aspires to become is, like his father, a skilled farmer capable of handling “heavy” spades, wading through the mushy land, sowing seeds, and building dams (DN 35).

In ‘Anahorish’, Heaney evokes the memories of “those mound-dwellers”, whose way of life “differed little” from that of his father and grandfather (Vendler 18). They also worked “[w]ith pails and barrows” (WO 6). They were such resilient men who would “go waist-deep in mist / to break the light ice / at wells and dunghills” (WO 6). In ‘Land’, the poem in which Heaney expresses his readiness to leave his homeland and start a new lifestyle, the poet’s own determined footsteps immediately reverberate in the ear of the reader through Heaney’s use of punctuation, linked plosives and word repetition in the first line. He is not stumbling, yapping, splashing, or puddling. He is not following in the “broad shadow” of his father (DN 12). Here, he is the resolute farmer himself:

I stepped it, perch by perch.
Unbraiding rushes and grass
I opened my right-of-way
through old bottoms and sowed-out ground
and gathered stones off the ploughing
to raise a small cairn.

Cleaned out the drains, faced the hedges
 often got up at dawn
 to walk the outlying fields. (WO 11)

It is impractical to list and describe all the diverse anthropogenic sounds related to agricultural lifestyle. The vernaculars of manual farming methods are often discrete, slow, and heavyweight. Heaney shows that through a careful balance between enjambment and punctuation in these lines. The farmer's calendar and clock are synchronised by the circadian and seasonal rhythms, and the rhythms of his labour are synchronised with the breath cycle and the habits of hands and feet (Schafer 63). In 'Land', Heaney performs the family tradition for one last time. His use of first-person voice reveals his affinity and familiarity with the practice. He carefully recreates the acoustics of farming routine through his action verbs and metonymic references. He is awake at dawn to make sure he has enough time to finish the routine before the sun sets, marches through his land in his boots, stops, stoops, straightens up, and then falls in again, digging, ploughing, weeding, cutting, plucking, irrigating. Having performed and instilled the rhythms of the farm life in his mind, Heaney is now ready to begin a new lifestyle:

I composed habits for those acres
 so that my last look would be
 neither gluttonous nor starved.
 I was ready to go anywhere. (WO 11)

Among the other sounds and rhythms absent from the contemporary soundscape of Irish agriculture is the traditional way of making butter from milk. The mechanical separators were introduced into the country towards the end of the nineteenth century to gradually replace the older methods, which remained in use on small farms until the 1940s (Keenan 47). Like the tasks of traditional agriculture, the process of churning manually is laborious and requires much patience, accuracy and skill. In 'Churning Day', Heaney uses a wide a range of sensory images and metaphors to render his experience of the process in the family farm – visual ("a yellow curd" and "white insides"), olfactory ("acrid as a sulphur mine" and

“the house would stink long after”), and tactile (“arms ached. Hands blistered”). Heaney uses onomatopoeia and precise auditory images to also render his memory of the curdling milk as it “slugged and thumped” and “spattered”, of “the splash and gurgle of the sour-breathed milk”, and of “the pat and slap of small spades on wet lumps” (DN 9-10). He comments that his use of such an “exact” and “evocative” way of describing the experience was “more a case of personal securing [...], an entirely intuitive move to restore something to yourself” (SS 16). Yet there is no doubt that his private motives have acquired more general and social dimensions. More importantly churning had a regular and reassuring rhythm that was set by his mother and continues to stay with him and reverberate in the ears of his readers: “My mother took first turn, set up rhythms / that slugged and thumped for hours” (DN 9-10).

Another acoustic experience inscribed in the mind of the young Heaney is the smithy’s strikes on the anvil, a resonating tintinnabulation that Heaney describes as “the noise of myth” (SS 91). Although the first strikes on iron could be heard as early as the Iron Age and human discovery of the basic properties of iron, it was not until the medieval period that blacksmithing became an indispensable part of everyday life in almost every town and village. Farmers, in particular, needed the services of the blacksmith to shoe their horses, repair their ploughs and iron gates, and constantly sharpen their scythes during harvest seasons. Artisans, armies and households needed something made with iron (Westfahl 589-592). In fact, until the mid-nineteenth century, the strikes of the blacksmith's hammer produced one of the most strident sounds that could reach to over 100 decibels and be heard by most residents every day from dawn to dusk (Schafer 57-58). With the introduction of machinery and mass production during the Industrial Revolution, blacksmithing became a rather redundant craft limited to farrier work. For Heaney, the tintinnabulation that came from the local blacksmith’s forge belonged to the age of epics and myths, while car horns and rolling tyres produced contemporary keynotes. Referring to Barney Devlin’s forge, situated at

Hillhead roadside, in Bellaghy, Co. Derry, he remarks: “you had the noise of myth in the anvil and the noise of the 1940s in the passing cars. As ordinary or archetypal as you cared to make it. Barney’s in his late eighties now, but still capable of striking the epic out of the usual” (SS 91).¹³²

In the poet’s mind, Barney Devlin remains the “master blacksmith” of all times (Westfahl 590) inspiring his early poem ‘The Forge’, as well as ‘Poem to Blacksmith’ and ‘Midnight Anvil’ in his later collections. ‘The Forge’ can be read as an elegy to the dying craft. Heaney’s second collection takes its title from the first line of the sonnet: “All I know is a door into the dark” (DD 9). To begin with, the term “dark” adds a sense of mysteriousness to the interior of the forge. The fact that the profession belongs to the past getting rusty and dusty in the dark corners of the archives becomes more evident when placed in contrast with the brightness of the outside world. The idea is reinforced through the images of the “old” and “rusting” tools visible from the outside and through the “short-pitched ring” coming from inside of the forge: “Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting; / Inside, the hammered anvil’s short-pitched ring” (DD 9). Heaney tells us that even Barney is saddened when reminiscing about the forge’s thriving past in the days of horses and carts: “He leans out the jamb, recalls a clatter / Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows; / Then grunts and goes in, [...]” (DD 9). Nonetheless, the poem opens the door into the darkness of the forge’s interior to see “the unpredictable fantail of sparks” of creation as they enlighten the place and hear the “hiss when a new shoe toughens in water” (DD 9). The precision of his visual and acoustic images and the first-person point of view with which Heaney narrates his recollections transfer a

¹³² In a 2014 interview by Countryfile, Barney Devlin comments about the child Heaney and the poem ‘The Forge’:

Why did he say all I know is a door into the dark? The reason was he never had been in. He was a lad going to school and he’d go past. He refers to the man standing outside with the hair under his lip, hair in his nose, leaning against the jamb. That was my father. The description of the anvil crowned like a unicorn at the centre of the floor, he describes everything which is directly here.

See www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqWGTeBcxYg.

See also Sean McCormack’s 2014 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDWLUL5s7NI) and Roger Lennox’s 2015 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGw0NhUXG00) interviews with Barney, where the old man talks about his long-term relationship with the poet and shows around his forge.

strong impression of immediacy and intimacy to the readers, placing them in direct sensory relation with the nature of the profession.

Heaney glorifies the craft by also adding an air of otherworldliness and spirituality to its seemingly ordinary tools and space. During the Middle Ages, blacksmiths were always respected, or even feared, for their seemingly magical ability to start and maintain huge fires and crafting polished items out of black and heavy irons (Westfahl 589-590). To forge iron, blacksmiths required several tools: a furnace, a bellow, tongs, several types of hammers, axes, chisels, moulds, and an anvil. For Heaney, it is the anvil that has a central role in the blacksmith's magical capabilities:

The anvil must be somewhere in the centre,
Horned as a unicorn, at one end square,
Set there immovable: an altar
Where he expends himself in shape and music. (DD 9)

The word “unicorn” with which he describes the anvil's front horn gives it a fantastical quality linking it, as Andrews and Tobin note, to the realm of legends and medieval romantic tales (Andrews 26; Tobin 50). The magical anvil is positioned “somewhere” in the middle of Barney's workshop; but more importantly, it is at the “centre” of his world and the core of his art. The anvil is an “altar”, his workshop a sacred place and the blacksmith himself a priest performing a ritual. But he is also, like Heaney himself, a maker expending his life in “shape and music” (DD 9). To Heaney, the anvil is not an ordinary tool but an archetypal one. Likewise, the sound it produces is not a noise. It is, like its position and shape, irremovable from memory.

The archetypal status of the anvil and its melody is highlighted in ‘Midnight Anvil’ as well. The poem is for the millennium New Year's Eve in Co. Derry, when Barney, already in his 80s, strikes the anvil with his hammer twelve times. Although Heaney was not personally present at the forge, the “sweet and carrying note” of the strikes continues to reverberate in

his ear. Thus, he opens the poem with: “I can still hear it” (DC 26).¹³³ Here too Heaney highlights the otherworldliness of the clang by putting it side by side with church bells alluding to Herbert’s ‘Prayer 1’ in which a prayer is described in terms of several images including “a kind of tune”: “Afterwards, I thought / *Church bells beyond the starres heard* [...]” (DC 26). In the final lines, he quotes from ‘Poet to Blacksmith’ to capture the perfection of the outcome: the forged spade “ringing sweet as a bell” (DC 27). In fact, for Heaney, any sound coming from the smithy’s workshop is not only a source of inspiration, but also the material of poetry itself:

And then imagined
Barney putting it to me:
‘You’ll maybe write a poem.’

What I’ll do instead
Is quote those waterburning
Medieval smiths:
‘Huf, puf! Lus, bus! Col!’ *Such noise*
On nights heard no one never. (DC 26)

Heaney also quotes from an anonymous medieval poem, usually known as ‘The Blacksmiths’, that captures and criticises the clamour of a busy medieval forge through skilled alliteration and precise auditory and visual images.¹³⁴ The “huf! puf!” of the bellow, as it pipes the air to the base of the fire, and the “lus, bus” of the hot metal, when immersed in water, are not ordinary noises, but archetypal sounds and lines from the poetry of the smithy that Heaney would like to “quote” in his own poem (DC 26). Heaney dedicates his poem not only to Barney, but to all the blacksmiths: “those waterburning / Medieval smiths” (DC 26). After all, to him, “any one forge is all the forges” (SS 91).

¹³³ Heaney recalls the occasion in *Stepping Stones*:

He’s still going strong; the last time I was with him, he showed me two different anvils and played them for their two different musics: a sweet and carrying note from the one that had belonged to his grandfather – which is the one I would have heard a mile away when I was a youngster – and an abrupt unmelodious dint from a later industrial ingot, definitely not the one that rang in the year 2000. (SS 91)

¹³⁴ The poem was written in the 15th century. Besides the din of the forge, the writer conjures the noisiness of the smiths themselves as they yell for more coal, spit, or groan. The poem appears in Davies’s *Medieval English Lyrics* (1991). See also: www.theguardian.com/books/2012/feb/20/poem-of-the-week-the-blacksmiths.

Heaney's treatment of the thatcher's acoustics is no different. He makes some passing references to the thatcher in *Wintering Out*. In 'Land', he is the creator of the "plaited and branchy" effigy that transposes the poet to the Irish past (WO 11). In 'Maighdean Mara', he is the tradesman who hides the selkie's magic garment in his stack and unwittingly brings about her departure (WO 57). In 'Thatcher', from the previous collection, he captures the thatcher's acoustics accurately. Like the blacksmith, the figure of the thatcher comes from the countryside where he grew up. Unlike the blacksmith's, however, the nature of his work is quieter. The keynotes of the thatcher are bound to his tools. The man deals with reeds, rushes, "wheat-straw", "rods", and "hazel and willow" timbre (DD 10). Due to the geography of Ireland and the abundance of vegetation, these materials have been familiar to the Irish since the earliest period of Celtic civilisation and possess archetypal significance.¹³⁵ The movements of the thatcher's hands and the rhythm of his work too are also unique to him. He works gradually and quietly but steadily and deftly. Heaney reflects this through his assonance and rhyme ("flicked" and "twisted", "eaves" and "sheaves") and meticulous descriptions: he flicks and twists the rods to test their strength, sharpens their ends, carries up sheaves "handful by handful" and lays them in regular breadths, and stitches the butts together with ropes to build the summit. But, like the blacksmith, the thatcher too is an inspirational figure. He is standing upon his ladder and the young Heaney watches him in awe from the ground, as he handles everything with "his Midas touch" (DD 10).¹³⁶ The thatcher's mastery of his work and his dedication become a metaphor for the practice of writing, which involves technique and craftsmanship as much as inspiration and intuition.

As the poet's world grows, the rhythm of life begins to change. Until the arrival of the diesel engine tractor, in the 1920s, people, bulls and horses played an essential role in Irish

¹³⁵ For making eel traps, harvesting baskets, roofs, huts, and other wickerwork and basketwork, some of which are mentioned in 'At a Potato Digging' (DN 18-20) and 'Land' (WO 11-12)

¹³⁶ Much in the same way, Heaney imbues work of the water diviner with a sense of otherworldliness. He too is "unfussed" but works "professionally" (DN 23).

agriculture. With the introduction of mechanisation and the advancement of technology, the internal combustion engine became the fundamental keynote of farm life. Soon the motor of newly introduced tractors became increasingly light and versatile, able to manage a wide range of farm tasks from ploughing, threshing, hay making, fertilizing, and pulping with the speed of almost six horses (Keenan 139). Heaney recalls this transitional phase vividly:

The horses were used for carting stuff from field to barn, or from shop to farm – grain, potatoes, provisions; or for work in the fields – ploughing, harrowing, drilling, grubbing, rolling, mowing, potato digging, drawing in hay or corn or turf. And yes, of course, the tractor gradually replaced them. [...] . The pace of farm work speeded up greatly with the tractor: on those small-holdings, a man who owned a tractor could do his ploughing in less than half the time it had taken previously; [...]. (SS 10)

The fact that agricultural machinery had begun to turn into an unquestionable part of farming soundscape is reflected in the considerable numbers of poems in which Heaney evokes them.¹³⁷ In ‘Tractors’, ‘A Potato Digging’, ‘The Baler’, ‘Glanmore Sonnets I’ and ‘In a Field’, Heaney revisits the soundscape of rural Ireland through the sounds of the mechanical digger, tractor, combine harvester and hay baler.¹³⁸

For Heaney, the gargling of tractors is the acoustic symbol of empowering and enduring power and almost synonymous with farm life and prosperity. Published in *The Belfast Telegraph* in November 1962, the poem ‘Tractors’ captures the fascination of the young Derry poet with tractors lumbering ruthlessly “on roadways” and “on land”, in both hot summer days and wet winters with “no fear”.¹³⁹ Tractors return frequently in his poetry. Spring is the time when many farmers prepare the soil for sowing. In ‘Glanmore Sonnets I’, the “gargling tractors”, the lathe, and the ploughing machine permeate the poem to create the

¹³⁷ Heaney is not alone in this influence from the technological transformations. The representation of machinery in the rural environment is a recurrent feature of some poetry from the period. For instance, in ‘Cynddylan on a tractor’, from *An Acre of Land* (1952), the Welsh poet R. S. Thomas, similarly recounts the role of the tractor in rural Wales.

¹³⁸ Similarly, in ‘High Summer’, the children soothed into sleep by the “familiar, [yet] ignorant and hard” gargling of the neighbour’s tractor (FW 41). Coming from an agricultural background, the fisher men of ‘Eelworks’ adopt tractor engines for their boats (HC 28-32). In ‘Keeping Going’, the tractor symbolises the poet’s brother’s “stamina” who is driving it (SL 12).

¹³⁹ See www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/how-belfast-telegraph-gave-seamus-heaney-an-early-break-29546167.html.

sense of rebirth and fertility (FW 28). Heaney thinks of his “personal and Irish pieties” as vowels (PO 37). In these poems, it is the presence of the agricultural machinery that breathes “good life” and “vowels” to the ground of the fields as to his poetry (FW 28).

In ‘The Baler’, the familiar and continuous “clunk” of a hay baler triggers the memories of haymaking in his childhood home. Heaney wrote the poem after experiencing a stroke in 2006. The “all day” and “ongoing” sound of the baler not only affirms its status as a keynote of farm life, but also turns it into a metaphor for life itself and the dull and continuous pounding of the heart, which we take for granted (“All day the clunk of a baler / Ongoing, cardiac-dull, / So taken for granted”). He suggests that the loud, continuous clunk-sound of the hay baler’s blades as well as the accelerating engine of the tractor (“the giddied-up race of a tractor”) enriched the summer evenings of the hayfields (HC 24). Heaney wrote his final poem, ‘In a Field’, as a response to Edward Thomas’ poem, ‘As the Team’s Head Brass’, in order to contribute to a memorial anthology marking the centenary of the outbreak of the first world war. Thomas’ poem is set in the wood and features a farmer ploughing with a horse. Heaney’s poem features a tractor from the familiar fields of Ulster racing to finish the farm tasks before sunset: “The tractor with its hoisted plough just gone / Snarling at an unexpected speed / Out on the road. Last of the jobs, [...]”.¹⁴⁰

In the present day, the constant engine noises, from water pump generators, tractors and power tools, have replaced the slower and quieter stamping of the horses’ hooves and the farmers’ boots, as well as the regular rhythm of scything, digging and tilling in the once quiet ambience of the countryside. Heaney is very well aware of the downsides of machinery, of the disappearance of rhythms, songs and collective practices in the fields, and of the presence and dominance of noise. His awareness is reflected in ‘At a Potato Digging’ which features

¹⁴⁰ The poem was written at the request of the poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, who asked poets to respond to poetry, letters and diary entries from the time and Heaney chose Thomas’ poem. The poem was completed two months before Heaney’s death and published by the *Guardian* before it appeared in the anthology. See www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/25/seamus-heaney-last-poem-published.

“a mechanical digger” (DN 19). The poem depicts the relationship between the Irish and the earth, as well as their dependence on potato crops, hinting at the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, beginning with the following lines: “A mechanical digger wrecks the drill, / Spins up a dark shower of roots and mould” (DN 19). The presence of the harsh and mechanised harvesting process indicates the introduction of the modern harvesting methods and a more contemporary period but it is juxtaposed with the demonstrations of a menacing condition suggested by such terms as “wrecks” and “a dark shower of roots and mould” (DN 19). The workers, on the other hand, are involved in a traditional and intense manual labour. They are being cooperative with the machine, stooping to collect the potatoes and fill their creels. Yet they are lacking harmony, lyric and rhythm. To begin with, they “swarm in behind” the machine, like a flood of insects, and then: “Like crows attacking crow-black fields, they stretch / A higgledy line from hedge to headland [...]” (DN 19). Their disorganised and rushed movements across the field are compared to the flight of a flock of crows. All of the labourers’ efforts are put towards the operation of the machine but their circumstances, as Heaney says, have not improved: “Fingers go dead in the cold” (DN 19). Once again, the harvesting process is seen as harsh and intense for the workers, just as it was in the past. In *Wintering Out*, ‘Serenades’ hints at this contemporary issue of noise pollution by inviting his wife to delight in the sounds of birds before they disappear “[b]etween combines and chemicals” (WO 50). Heaney sees the increasing noise of machinery as a threat not only to the natural environment but also the age-old traditions and crafts of Ireland, urging his readers to beware of it.

Like the sounds of crafts and industries, the sounds emitted by the various means of transport signal the presence of human beings and fall into the category of anthroponic sounds. Heaney evokes the sounds of various public, private and military, as well as ancient and contemporary modes of transportation, such as horses, carts, wagons, bicycles, taxis,

lorries, ambulances, hearses, trains, planes, helicopters, boats and ferries. In 2019, the National Library of Ireland (NLI) launched a special campaign running from the poet's 80th birthday on 13 April, during which five of Heaney's poems – 'The Clothes Shrine', 'Postscript', 'The Railway Children', 'Route 110' and 'Squarings' – were displayed on buses, trams and trains throughout the country. The poems were chosen by Heaney's family and share common themes related to journeys, transport and daily life. Referring to this occasion, the Director of the NLI, Sandra Collins echoes the 1995 Nobel Prize citation¹⁴¹ commenting on Heaney's ability to bring "the wonderful" out of "the ordinary".¹⁴² My study of the sounds of transport in Heaney's *Wintering Out* highlights the same aspect of Heaney's poetry. I apply the theoretical perspective of acoustic ecology to show how the various means of transport and their noises are charged with multiple layers of personal and collective implications.

The sounds related to various types of transport in more ancient times, such as the stamping of hooves, creaking of cart wheels, cracking of whips, and the more recent clang of bicycles, hum of engines, rumbling of trains, and the high-frequency noises of airplanes and helicopters were each keynotes of specific periods of time in history. Prior to the advent of motor cars, walking, horseback, jaunting cars, were the major modes of transportation across Ireland until well into the 1960s and the expansion of road construction (Biagini and Daly 206). Heaney refers to the sounds of passing cars as "the noise of the 1940s", when he lived in Mossbawn, Co. Derry (SS 91). The family house was on the main road – between Belfast and Magherafelt, Belfast and Cookstown, Belfast and Derry – where he could hear the sounds of passing cars, buses, bicycles, lorries and vans. But the clip-clopping of horses and

¹⁴¹ In 1995, the Nobel Prize citation paid tribute to Heaney's work for its combination of "lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past".

See www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1995/press-release/.

¹⁴² The intention was to not only celebrate the poet's 80th birthday, but also bring his thoughts and words into the lives of "harried commuters" caught up in the daily grind. See www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/seamus-heaney-public-transport.

donkeys, and rattling of carts and wagons were the sounds that had already started to become “rare enough” (SS 4).

In ‘Bog Oak’, ‘The Tollund Man’, and ‘Linen Town’ from *Wintering Out*, Heaney evokes the sounds of cart wheels and hoofbeats to distance his readers from the contemporary urban soundscape and transpose them to an earlier period of time in history. For the poet, peat bogs are the archives and witnesses of history and sites of memory banks. In ‘Bog Oak’, Heaney makes use of an approaching cart to evoke a sense of history and the need to retrieve it in the present time. A crucial figure in this process is the carter. The approaching cart is moving in triumph, pounding fervently and unweariedly along “the cart track” bringing its “trophy” into the present and future of his Ireland (WO 4). In ‘The Tollund Man’, Heaney compares his “freedom” – while driving to Aarhus – with the ironic “freedom” of the Iron Age man – as he was being driven to the site of his slaughter (WO 36-37) (see also 3.4 and 4.2). Heaney uses this acoustic feature in ‘Linen Town’ to transport his readers to Belfast in the early Industrial period and before the arrival of cars, when the clip-clop of horse hooves on the pavements was the keynote sound of urban streets. In ‘Linen Town’ the sound of time is very prominent, yet it is the rhythmic clopping of the cloaked rider’s horse that re-creates the acoustic space of Belfast’s Linen Square in 1786, where the young Henry Joy McCracken was hanged on lands once donated to the city by his family.¹⁴³

Like the rattling of carts and carriages, the clicks and clunks of bicycles mark the poet’s early years. Heaney’s earliest experiences of such sounds date back to the forties and

¹⁴³ Also, in ‘Eelworks’, he refers to the fisherman as a “[h]orse-and-cart men” to create a rural atmosphere (HC 28); in ‘Known World’, he uses tractors and carts to create images of countryside roads in Mossbawn and empathise with the refugees from Eastern Europe during the 1990s Balkan Wars (EL 19-25); in ‘Station Island’, the cart recalls the memories of his childhood and the tinkers (SI 62); in ‘Birthplace’, he likens the “slow” pace of the wind in Hardy’s hometown, Upper Bockhampton, to the pace of “Victorian rural life” which he associates with the “slow” pace of “a cart / coming late from market” (SI 34); in *The Last Walk*, Heaney’s version of Pascoli’s *L’Ultima Passeggiata*, there is reference to a cart too. In fact, one of the reasons why Heaney was drawn to Pascoli was precisely the shared interest in rural activities and sounds (Rankin Russell 252-256).

the memories of Mossbawn, when recounting the sounds of transport coming from the road in front of the family house:

There were bicycles too, a few regular pedallers and the occasional traveller from farther up or down the country. Kathleen Garvin going to her job in Castledawson. Paddy McNicholl going to do yardwork in Gribbin's of Anahorish. RUC men now and again. But the most spectacular was definitely Master Pollock, a schoolmaster, a recreational cyclist in shorts, pelting along on his 'racer' – he always created a bit of a stir. (SS 4)

As a child, Heaney was fascinated by bicycles. In 'Wheels within Wheels', he reveals that "the first real grip [he] ever got on things" involved a bicycle (ST 46). The poem lists the discoveries of the inquisitive youngster through his bicycle, recounting any experiment from turning the bicycle upside down, pedalling it with his hand really fast until the spokes became indistinguishable, throwing a potato and chucking a straw into the spinning wheels, riding in the mud and dung and spinning the wheels in the water (ST 46-47). In fact, such descriptions and their visual, aural, kinaesthetic and tactile associations could trigger the reader back to their own childhood and the period of life filled with innocence, curiosity and fascination. The young Heaney associates bicycles with creativity, speed, aspiration and power ("the art of pedalling", "an access of free power" and "a new momentum", "an orbit coterminous with longing") (ST 46-47). After all, each time, the schoolmaster's fast pedalling along the road "created a bit of a stir" (SS 4). Aunt Mary, with whom Heaney was very close was a "bicycle woman" (SS 5). The thatcher, whom he admired, was also a pedaller (DD 10). Later, during Queen's summer vacations, he would go on romantic bicycle rides along the Bann's riverbank (SS 406). But growing up in a country that had experienced centuries-long colonialism, sectarian violence and religious segregation, the sounds of bicycle could stir up contradictory emotions.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ In 'An Ulster Twilight', he associates the sound of Eric Dawson's pedalling with his childhood memories of Christmas (SI 38); in 'Station Island IV', he associates his childhood memories of Terry Keenan with the man's cycling (SI 70); in 'The Summer of Lost Rachel', he sets the innocence of the young Rachel and her bike against the merciless power of the car that caused the fatal accident (HL 36-37); yet in 'Senior Infants', the young Heaney and his friend, Tommy, shoot the bicycle's bell with an airgun (DC 29-30).

Bicycles – in their contemporary form with chain and rubber tyres – began to be mass-produced from the beginning of the 1890s, turning this vehicle and its whirring and clicking sounds into the familiar keynote of both urban and rural life in Ireland.¹⁴⁵ During the forties, as Heaney recalls it, Northern Ireland’s armed police force – the Royal Ulster Constabulary men (RUC), whom Heaney mentions in the lines quoted above – would patrol the countryside by bicycle. In ‘A Constable Calls’, the sight and sounds of the bicycle trigger feelings of fear and distrust his Catholic family had towards the mostly protestant police force. The poem begins with a close-up of the policeman’s bicycle standing by the window-sill, portrayed from the gaze of the terrified young Heaney, who is witnessing the interrogation of his father. When put alongside the policeman’s boots, cap and gun, the “rubber cowl”, “mud-splasher”, “front mudguard”, “handlegrips”, “dynamo” and “pedal treads” are the signs of threat (N 61-62). The freedom and power machine now belongs to the antagonist. The poem ends with the rhythmic clicking sound that resonates in the mind of the reader ceaselessly: “[...] His boot pushed off / And the bicycle ticked, ticked, ticked” (N 62). Heaney’s onomatopoeic description of the bicycle’s rhythmic clicking sound, as the policeman pedals away, reveals its deep and enduring impact on not only his own mind but also the soundscape and atmosphere of the neighbourhood he lived in. Moreover, the bicycle’s noise recalls that of a clock, as if foreseeing and counting towards the Troubles.

Although the sound of the bicycle marks Heaney’s early years, as I noted above, the vehicle had arrived in Ireland much earlier and about the same time as railways began to transform urban and rural landscapes. Unlike the subtle clicking and whirring of bicycles, the rumbling of the locomotives could make the earth quake and walls tremble from miles away.

¹⁴⁵ The first pedal-driven bicycle arrived in Ireland in the 1860s. Yet it is interesting to know that, the first “safety bicycles” with a pneumatic tyres were invented by the Belfast-based John Dunlop in 1888, turning it into an important part of the social and cultural life in Ireland. Perhaps this cultural “craze” for the bicycle could partially explain Heaney’s fascination with the vehicle. See www.museum.ie/Country-Life/Exhibitions/Current-Exhibitions/Cycling-the-Country/The-History-of-the-Bicycle.

Heaney captures this striking characteristic of trains in some of the lines from his Nobel lecture, when describing his and his siblings' intuitive receptiveness to the ambient sounds which he concretises through an aquatic analogy:

It [the Mossbawn house] was an intimate, physical, creaturely existence [...]. We took in everything that was going on, of course – rain in the trees, mice on the ceiling, a steam train rumbling along the railway line one field back from the house – but we took it in as if we were in the doze of hibernation. Ahistorical, pre-sexual, in suspension between the archaic and the modern, we were as susceptible and impressionable as the drinking water that stood in a bucket in our scullery: every time a passing train made the earth shake, the surface of that water used to ripple delicately, concentrically, and in utter silence. (OG 447)

Like the noises of factories, the rumbling of the locomotives was the by-product of the Industrial Revolution. The first railway was set in England in 1825 to carry coal from the mines across Britain. Yet within just a few years, it conquered the world as one of the most familiar and exciting keynotes of travelling unlike any other previous means of transportation. Compared to the previous horse-drawn carts, carriages and wagons, trains were faster, more comfortable, smoother, and more reliable, particularly for merchants and manufacturers (Herbst 29-30). Colonisation facilitated the introduction of railways to Ireland. In the 1940s, when Heaney was growing up in Mossbawn, the sound of the steam train coming from the railway behind the fields had turned into one of the most familiar keynotes of Co. Derry as surely as the sounds of passing cars, buses, vans, lorries driving through the road. He writes: “[m]aybe a train shunting at the station in Castledawson – because we had the railway, running parallel to the road, about a hundred yards away at the end of the field behind the byre” (SS 8). The train introduced a rich variety of sounds – the whistle of an approaching train, the slowing of the engine as the train shunts into the station, the chattering of passengers, hurried footsteps, the loud cries of the ticket man, the collecting and punching of tickets, the gradual acceleration of the wheels, the rattling of carriages, and the sudden explosions of escaping steam – into the soundscapes, which Heaney carefully evokes in a childhood make-believe game in ‘A Sofa in the Forties’:

All of us on the sofa in a line, kneeling
 Behind each other, eldest down to youngest,
 Elbows going like pistons, for this was a train

And between the jamb-wall and the bedroom door
 Our speed and distance were inestimable.
 First we shunted, then we whistled, then

Somebody collected the invisible
 For tickets and very gravely punched it
 As carriage after carriage under us

Moved faster, *chooka-chook*, the sofa legs
 Went giddy and the unreachable ones
 Far out on the kitchen floor began to wave. (SL 7)

As Heaney suggests in these lines, the train and its memorable and inescapable noises became almost synonymous with “inestimable” distances, and as such with the concepts of travelling, migrating, the unknown (“Ghost-train”) and even death (“Death-gondola”) (SL 7).¹⁴⁶ The idea of the train as a means of transporting passengers into a new sound space and as an acoustic signal of the colonisation is reinforced when Heaney juxtaposes it with the voices of the British speaker coming from the radio:

We entered history and ignorance
 Under the wireless shelf. *Yippee-i-ay*,
 Sang ‘The Riders of the Range’. HERE IS THE NEWS,

Said the absolute speaker. Between him and us
 A great gulf was fixed where pronunciation
 Reigned tyrannically. The aerial wire

Swept from a treetop down in through a hole
 Bored in the windowframe. When it moved in wind,
 The sway of language and its furtherings

Swept and swayed in us like nets in water
 Or the abstract, lonely curve of distant trains
 As we entered history and ignorance. (SL 8)

¹⁴⁶ In 2008, Heaney read an excerpt from the poem on Holocaust Memory Day. In the poem, he pays tribute to the victims and makes a reference to the Nazis using trains to move Jews to ‘the place of birth trees’, Auschwitz, during WWII. He talks about “the abstract, lonely curve of distant trains / As we entered history and ignorance” (SL 8). The Shoah of course changed the perceptions of trains. But the train, here, can be a metaphor for transporting everyone from ignorance to the awareness of atrocities occurring in history.

The invention of radio separated sounds from sound-sources and transformed the idea of acoustic space by extending the outreach of sounds and connecting various interrupted spaces: “[n]ever before had sound disappeared across space to reappear again at a distance” (Schafer 91-92). This idea is captured in the lines from the poem where Heaney says “Between him and us / A great gulf was fixed” (SL 8). The radio crossed both the geographical and metaphorical “gulf” between Ireland and Britain, enabling the British accent to reach, imperialistically, the ears of the inhabitants of the lands where Irish accents and dialects belonged. Heaney comments that “The sway of language and its furtherings // Swept and swayed in us like nets in water (SL 8). Just like the noises of the train, the “aerial” voices streaming through the radio became a familiar and inescapable background sound for the young Heaney, exposing him to a strong sense of linguistic and cultural divide (SL 8). As Stephen James has noted, Heaney exploits the ambiguity of the term ‘sway’ to suggest how the imperial influence of “the absolute speaker” was nonetheless resisted in the Irish context. Heaney’s “the sway of language” (SL 8) reveals the dynamics between an externally imposed rhetoric and an internally generated drive. According to James:

The ‘command’ of the newscaster’s voice, whose ‘pronunciation’ is presumably that of BBC ‘Queen’s English’, is presented in the poem as a form of cultural imperialism in a 1940’s County Derry Catholic home. Broadcast across ‘a great gulf’ from the supposed centre to the provinces, this voice communicates an ostensibly definitive version (‘THE NEWS’) of momentous events going on elsewhere; its tone and concerns are so at odds with the dialect and day-to-day experiences of the rural household as to seem a tyrannical imposition. (137)¹⁴⁷

‘A Sofa in the Forties’ was published long after Northern Ireland was annexed to the United Kingdom. In these lines, Heaney showcases the strangely divided sense of identity – as both British and Irish – that has since continued to haunt Northern Ireland, but also acknowledges the broadening of his “den-life” and the chance to reach out of the “emotionally and

¹⁴⁷ James is commenting in reference to an in a 1994 personal interview with Heaney where he comments on the word ‘sway’: “an image of command [...] and then there is one’s swaying in sympathy or of necessity. [...] It has that double sense, that double possibility, of active or passive engagement” (qtd in James 273).

intellectually proofed” (OG 447) acoustic space of his household and into the wideness of the world.¹⁴⁸

It was not until they had moved to ‘The Wood’ farm in the 1950s that Heaney’s family bought their own first car. Yet the fact that Heaney’s Mossbawn house was near the main road exposed him to the sound of cars, buses, lorries and vans early on. The motor car opened access to areas without railway and made medium-distance travel more convenient and affordable for individuals (Biagini and Daly 206). Heaney bought his own first car early in the 1960s after starting his career as a lecturer. The liberty and freedom of movement that the motor car introduced to society was noticeable for him (SS 4). Recollecting his days as a lecturer at St Joseph’s, he writes that he bought his first car so that he “could drive round the country to inspect students on teaching practice” (SS 45). Since the 1960s, the internal combustion engine has turned into a fundamental keynote of Irish roadways. Not only cars, but also motorcycles, trucks, tractors, power lawnmowers, generators, and other power tools were operated with internal combustion engines, turning the sound of the engine into a fundamental soundmark of contemporary civilisation in both urban and rural soundscapes.

The internal combustion engine is light and easy to operate transferring a sense of authority to the individual in charge. The car facilitates freedom of movement and the movement, in turn, invites the driver into “dialogue” with various soundscapes (Järvioluoma et. al., 31). Moreover, driving facilitates access to unknown worlds, new sounds, and fresh inspirations. Not surprisingly, as McGuckian writes, during the twentieth century, the car became a potent symbol of power and freedom for not only several Irish poets but indeed for contemporary poetry in general (70).¹⁴⁹ Heaney was a poet with a passion for cars. This

¹⁴⁸ In ‘Dawn Shoot’, the railway is part of the rural landscape (DN 16). In ‘The Railway Children’ too, the railway and the telegraph’s cable are juxtaposed (SI 45).

¹⁴⁹ McGuckian’s study brings to light Heaney’s fascination with cars and its role as not only an occasionally suitable literary vehicle but also a “fifth element” and a symbol of “a gradual mobilisation of the spirit” (71-72). Examples of Irish poets using the car symbol include John Montague, Paul Muldoon, Paul Durcan and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill.

attitude towards the modern-day vehicle is reflected in Paul Durcan's poem 'A Spin in the Rain with Seamus Heaney'. It appears that it was raining heavily and Durcan decided to join Heaney as he drove across the hills of Donegal to drop off friends at a bus stop. Here is Durcan's impression of the experience:

Bales of rain
 But you did not alter your method of driving,

 Which is to sit right down under the steering wheel
 And to maintain an upward-peering posture
 Treating the road as part of the sky,

 A method which motoring correspondents call
 Horizontal-to-the-vertical. (Durcan 308)

The fast, smooth and quiet operation of the motor engine, conveyed by the poet through the persona of a driver, transfers a sense of liberty, power and autonomy, as we see reflected in a number of Heaney's own car poems such as 'The Tollund Man' and 'Westering' from *Wintering Out*.¹⁵⁰ In 'The Tollund Man', Heaney directly associates "freedom" with driving. At the beginning of the poem, Heaney states his intention and destination: "Some day I will go to Aarhus" (WO 37).¹⁵¹ In fact, the entire poem takes place as the poet is on an imaginary drive to the sites of killings during the Iron Age, where the body of the Tollund man – now displayed in Silkeborg, Denmark – was first discovered (see 2.2). It is while driving that the poet's thoughts are drawn to the Tollund man's last day as he was being carried on "the tumbril" to the place of his slaughter (WO 37). Both men are in motion, free and empowered by the manmade vehicle prevalent in their times. Yet they vary in the fact that the poet is in charge of the engine power roaring along the road, while the Tollund man is being carried perhaps against his will, and the poet is aware of this:

¹⁵⁰ Heaney refers to the car and driving positively as an empowering experience in 'Oyster' (FW 3), 'A Pillowed Head' (ST 38-39) and 'Postscript' (SL 70). In 'A Retrospect', he affectionately recalls various sounds related to the gear and the break in an excursion to Glenshane Pass (ST 42-44) and in 'On the Road' (SI 119), he even enters a state of trance through such car noises as the "reeling" wheels and the "steady" sound of the engine.

¹⁵¹ The poem calls to mind one of Yeats's best-known poems, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', particularly the lines: "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree" (10).

Something of his sad freedom
 As he rode the tumbril
 Should come to me, driving, [...]

Out there in Jutland [...]. (WO 37)

The last three poems of *Wintering Out* reveal the poet's desire to make a change in his life. 'Dawn' already hints at a turning point in its title. Heaney is driving through a town with a group of academics. The progress seems tedious and slow-paced: "We went at five miles an hour" and the poet feels the need to get away by himself (WO 65). Heaney's desire to get away is revealed in the next poem, 'Travel', to be "a quest for psychic release, an effort to transcend routine responsibility, to discover the means to cope with violence and aftermath" (Andrews 78). In 'Westering', he reveals the mixed feelings of freedom and sadness while driving. The poem makes a direct reference to California in its epigraph – "*In California*" (WO 67) – as if it intends to prepare the reader for the concluding episode of what would be a diary of an "inner émigré" embracing the West-land (Longley 63). The first lines, however, depict the "homesick" poet (Parker 113) sitting under the "Official Map of the Moon" (WO 67). A glance over the "frogskin" colour of the lunar surface is enough for his imagination to return to the familiar shores of Donegal. Heaney reminisces about his departure day as he was driving westward to prepare for his journey across the ocean. His excitement at the thought of starting a new phase of his life in California coincides with the expectation of silence and stillness on Good Friday:¹⁵²

[...] Good Friday

We had started out
 Past shopblinds drawn on the afternoon.
 Cars stilled outside still churches,
 Bikes tilting to a wall;

We drove by,
 A dwindling interruption [...]. (WO 67)

¹⁵² The poem makes an allusion to Donne's 'Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward', which was composed while the poet was travelling from Warwickshire to Wales, on Good Friday. In the poem Donne expresses "his doubts, his prayers for God's acceptance, and his hesitant step towards priesthood" (Barfoot and Todd 46-47).

Heaney's reference to the dominating silence of the day draws on the major issues of sectarian burdens and the mainstream Irish submission to the dominion of religion: Lifeless streets and silenced believers ("shopblinds drawn", "cars stilled", "bikes tilted to a wall", "still churches" with their "congregations bent / To the studded crucifix") (WO 67-68). He bitterly remembers that his driving was perceived as an unwanted distraction to the devotees, while the vigorous sound of the church bells was the "sacred noise" of religion (Schafer 51). In Heaney's opinion, the atrocities and estrangement in the name of Christ won't lead to any healing or redemption.

Living in Northern Ireland, the sense of freedom, power, and adventure-seeking fuelled by the roaring of the gas pedal is overshadowed by the spectres of politics, violence, and death.¹⁵³ In 'Funeral Rites' the recurring history of sectarian violence in Ireland is echoed through its "customary" noises, therefore, the presence of the engines. The poem juxtaposes three scenarios from the rites of traditional Irish Catholic family funerals, the burial of individuals killed during the Troubles and the burials of a Viking hero. In the first section, Heaney describes and embraces the sombre silence of the traditional Irish Catholic ceremonies by highlighting the sense of courtesy and admiration he has for the deceased ("I shouldered a kind of manhood", "I knelt courteously, / admiring it all") and the sense of orderliness, compliance and spirituality ("their dough-white hands / shackled in rosary beads", "the wrists / obediently sloped") that is dominating the ceremony (N 6-7). In the final section too, he speaks about "chanting", "honour" and "lights" (N 9). By contrast, in the second section, he resonates the rumbling and roaring of the cars every time the "news [...] / of each neighbourly murder" is made public (N 7):

Out of side-streets and bye-roads

¹⁵³ In 'Casualty', similarly, Heaney associates the "[p]urring of the hearse" and the slow muffing engines to death and funeral (FW 17). The poem refers to the casualties of Bloody Sunday, in Londonderry, in 1972, during which 13 civil rights protesters were killed by the British army. 'The Toome Road' opens with an intrusive presence of army cars near his house. For him, the "warbling" of the armoured cars is "the bringer of bad news", signalling the presence of the British army in Ulster (FW 7).

purring family cars
 nose into line,
 the whole country tunes
 to the muffled drumming

of ten thousand engines. (N 7-8)

The poem makes a reference to the sectarian violence that dominated Northern Irish politics during the mid-twentieth century. Upon witnessing the disorder of the mourners (“purring family cars” and “somnambulant women, / [who are] left behind”), Heaney longs for the “customary rhythms” and “temperate footsteps” that coordinate the feelings of the mourners in traditional Catholic funerals. He criticises the normality and prevalence of the “neighbourly” killings, which he associates with broadband noises of the car engines. Moreover, the roaring car engines echo the boisterous drumming of Orangemen, which have been showcasing their triumph and filling the air with the ding of sectarianism since the late eighteenth century. Every year, as Paul Moore notes, more that the change in climate conditions, it is the drumming period that defines the construction of the seasons in Northern Ireland:

While time might be measured by the natural evolution of spring, summer and autumn, cultural memory is measured by the start and finish of the ‘marching season’, a source of pride and cultural reinforcement for one community, a period of fear and perceived triumphalism for the other. A central feature of this season is the insistent vibration of the drum. (254)

For Heaney, Orangemen’s drumming is the acoustic representation of sectarianism and violence. He wishes for the end of what he perceives as an unwanted noise. He wishes for silence, serenity and peace in the soundscape of Ireland.

The sound of drumming is evoked in ‘Land’ as well. Heaney links “drumming” as a symbol of sectarianism with its lasting social and cultural consequences (WO 19). As

explained earlier in this section, in the poem, he reveals his decision to leave his birthplace and make changes in his lifestyle. Residing on the foreign “ground”, in the third section of the poem, the poet has no other way to learn about what is happening in his homeland than to keep an ear to the ground so he can detect the vibrations made by every movement. To his disappointment, however, there is no sign of improvement. The drumming of the Orangemen continues to reverberate in “this loop of silence” (WO 12):¹⁵⁴

if I lie with my ear
in this loop of silence

long enough, thigh-bone
and shoulder against the phantom ground,

I expect to pick up
a small drumming (W 12)

In the final lines of the poem, Heaney refers to yet another familiar sound of violence: the blast of bombs going off. Heaney had experienced the groaning of the American bombers as a young boy: “The American bombers groan towards the aerodrome at Toomebridge, the American troops manoeuvre in the fields along the road [...] (PO 17). In the frontispiece of *Wintering Out*, a poem dedicated to David Hammond and Michael Longley, the poet’s Protestant friends, the sight of a bombing site becomes the symbol of sectarian violence and the depth and immediacy of its impact: “A bomb had left a crater of fresh clay / In the roadside” (N 55). High-intensity sounds, such as bombing or supersonic aircrafts, create intense and sudden release of energy waves that can actually inflict damage to the surrounding and deeply impact listeners (Schafer 86). In the third section of the poem ‘Land’, his

¹⁵⁴ Each year, since the late eighteenth century, the Protestant parade is held in the streets of Northern Ireland, Scotland and England to commemorate the triumph of Protestant king William of Orange over King James II, the last English Catholic monarch, in the 1690 battle of the Boyne. The drumming resonates through Heaney’s poetry. In ‘Whatever You Say Say Nothing’, he notes that “[l]ast night you didn’t need a stethoscope / To hear the eruption of Orange drums” (N 53). In ‘Orange Drums, Tyrone, 1966’, he likens the drums to “giant tumours” (N 63). In ‘July’, Heaney concludes: “and so my ear was winnowed annually” suggesting how his ears have become attuned to the sectarian nature of drumming (S 15). In ‘Ocean’s Love to Ireland’, he links iambic pentameter of English poetry with drumming (N 40-41).

imagination and memories enable him to identify the signs of a deteriorating Ulster and the scale and depth of this damage on his mind and life:

and must not be surprised
in bursting air

to find myself snared, swinging
an ear-ring of sharp wire. (WO 12)

The sombre footsteps of people in a cortege, huffing of many engines, sirens, and bombings are not the only sounds that Heaney associates with funeral, death and therefore the long history of violence in Ireland. The rhythmic throbbing of the helicopters was one of the most ordinary aspects of the everyday life of the poet and his fellow men until the mid-1980s, turning it into a recurring motif in many audio-visual works about Northern Ireland.¹⁵⁵ ‘The Lift’ captures the solemn silence of the funeral of Heaney’s aunt Mary, who passed away in the mid-1970s. Yet, as Heaney documents, the silence of this private cortege is disrupted by “the throttle and articulated whops / Of a helicopter crossing” (DC 42). During the Troubles helicopters were plentifully available to the British Army, “to patrol, survey and photograph, as well as to drop off and evacuate soldiers” (Dalsimer and Kreilkamp 226). The presence of the helicopters hovering in the “open air” above the heads of the mourners, in ‘The Lift’, signals the ceaseless and intensive surveillance of the British army during the Troubles. Heaney juxtaposes the aerial throbbing of the helicopter with sounds of their “own footsteps” (DC 42) which become audible only after the helicopter has passed and silence is restored, to indicate their “imperialistic” presence in the private acoustic space (Schafer 77). The image exemplifies the smothering situation of Ireland.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ In Orla Walsh’s *The Visit* (1992), Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game* (1992) and Terry George’s *Some Mother’s Son* (1997), for instance, helicopters are the symbol of terror and aerial surveillance.

¹⁵⁶ In ‘At the Water’s Edge’, Heaney recalls “listen[ing] to the thick rotations / Of an army helicopter patrolling” in the silence of Horse Island and how they were “shadowing” the People’s Democracy March of 1969, in Northern Ireland, particularly in Newry and Derry (FW 6). The sound of airplane engines is also evoked in Heaney’s poetry. By contrast to the helicopter, the airplane is evoked to represent a sense of advancement, progress and the unknown. This association is raised in ‘Honeymoon Flight’, where “[t]he engine noises” stimulate mixed feelings of progression and unpredictability (DN 36). In ‘Dream of Solstice’, however, the sounds of the flight’s engine, as it prepares for landing, awakens the dreaming poet. In ‘From the Republic of

In addition to the rich and varied references to the means of transport, Heaney pays great attention to church bells and clocks. In the remainder of this section, I attend to the sounds of time and of bells, both of which feature frequently in Heaney's poetry, stretching from being a signal sound that transmits a specific message to the listeners, to being a sound symbol, stirring feelings and reactions beyond the limits of time and space.

One of the most salient signal sounds in a Christian community is the church bell (see 1.2). Signal sounds are sounds that must be listened to as they carry a specific meaning (see 1.4.2). Church bells are signal sounds as, in their various ways of ringing, they mediate various forms of social messages. Church bells are community sounds as they define the acoustic space of the community and the territory of each parish. They are also centripetal sounds as they can "unify and regulate the community". Church bells were widespread in Europe by the eighth century. With the spread of Christianity, church bells were introduced to new regions "acoustically demarking the civilisation of the parish" from what, in comparison, would be interpreted as the chaos of the wilderness before their presence and beyond their earshot (Schafer 53-56). The idea that church bells define the acoustic territory of the Christian community and control the rhythm of life underpins the Irish bardic work *Buile Shuibhne* and Heaney's translation, *Sweeney Astray*. The narrative focuses on a time of religious change in Ireland and revolves around the tensions between Sweeney, the pagan king of Dal-Arie, in what is now Ulster, and St. Ronan Finn, a Christian missionary, who is attempting to establish a church in Sweeney's kingdom. In this extract from the opening of the work, Sweeney becomes aware of Ronan's presence through the sound of his bells:

One time when Sweeney was king of Dal-Arie, Ronan was there marking out a church called Killaney. Sweeney was in a place where he heard the clink of Ronan's bell as he was marking out the site, so he asked his people what the sound was.

– It is Ronan Finn, the son of Bearach, they said. He is marking out a church in your territory and what you hear is the ringing of his bell. (SA 3)

Conscience', when the plane's engine stops, the poet is able to hear the slightest sounds: "a curlew high above the runway" (HL 14).

Sweeney feels the threat, is infuriated and rushes to prevent the construction and banish the priest from his territory. In the first encounter, Sweeney throws Ronan's psalter into a nearby lake and, then, in the battle of Magh Rath, he eventually pierces a hole in Ronan's bell with his spear, which causes the priest to discharge a curse that transforms Sweeney into a bird-man. Sweeney's dismay over the sound of the bell is stressed throughout the book. On one occasion, Ronan recalls how "Sweeney was [...]. Screaming against my bell, he said he preferred the sound of birds in the trees and the rushing waters of the glens" (SA 5).

Heaney resurrects Sweeney in a number of poems in *Station Island*. In the opening poem of the title sequence, Heaney is poised between the call of church bells urging him to join the pilgrimage and the dissenting voice of Sweeney that pressures him to break free from the orthodoxy of his Catholic upbringing. Church bells function as "an acoustic calendar", celebrating cultural festivals and religious rituals with the members of the community and, in doing so, they regulate the rhythm of life in the parish (Schafer 53-55). The poem describes an early Donegal Sunday morning when the church bells of Station Island – a thousand-year-old site of pilgrimage in Lough Derg, more commonly known as St Patrick's Purgatory – urge people to cease their daily chores and join the procession. As the faithful cease their daily routine, silence takes over the soundscape, but is almost immediately disturbed by the presence of the pagan figure from the pre-Christian period. Simon Sweeney is the head of a family of tinkers who camped in the neighbourhood of Heaney's Co. Derry home, but in the poem, his memory blends with the figure of the anarchic pagan king Sweeney, "an old Sabbath-breaker", who doesn't abide by the aural implications of the church bell and encourages Heaney to "stay clear of all processions" – of religion, politics, and literary and cultural conformity:

A hurry of bell-notes
flew over morning hush
and water-blistered cornfields,
an escaped ringing

that stopped as quickly

as it started. *Sunday*,
the silence breathed
and could not settle back
for a man had appeared
at the side of the field

with a bow-saw, held
stiffly up like a lyre. (SI 61)

Yet, just as the lines of the verse hurry forward, Heaney is swept along by the crowd of pilgrims onto the trail his upbringing has set him up for: “a drugged path // I was set upon” (SI 63).

A signal sound becomes an acoustic symbol “when it stirs in us emotions or thoughts beyond its mechanical sensations or signalling function, when it has a numinosity or reverberation that rings through the deeper recesses of the psyche” (Schafer 169). In ‘Mid-term Break’, ‘Midnight Anvil’ and ‘Poet to Blacksmith’ (DC 25) Heaney uses the symbolic association between church bells and spirituality.¹⁵⁷ In ‘Mid-term Break’, he tells us that he “sat all morning in the college sick bay / counting bells knelling classes to a close” (DN 15). The “knelling” he is waiting for in the college is meant to signal the end of the class but, as Heaney reveals later in the poem, it also resonates with the sound of funeral bells. Heaney uses the social and religious connotations of bell sounds to prepare readers with the grieving atmosphere of his household and the death of his four-year-old brother, Christopher. In ‘Poet to Blacksmith’, he draws an analogy between the resonating clang of a sharpened spade, as it hits the soil, to the chime of the bell (“sweet as a bell”) (DC 25), and in ‘Midnight Anvil’, he likens the sound of the blacksmith’s strikes to church bells to highlight the social and cultural

¹⁵⁷ In *Station Island* IX, the bell calls for a pilgrimage (SI 85). In ‘Parable Island’, the bell tower and the sound of the bell are directly associated with the Christianisation of Ireland (HL 11-13). In ‘Out of Shot’, he describes the sunny Sunday weather as “bell-clear” (DC 15). In ‘Chanson d’Aventure’, Heaney likens the word “[a]part” (HC 15) to the knelling of the bell, which similar to the poem ‘Mid-Term Break’, recalls the announcement of a funeral by the church (DN 15). The poem was written after Heaney was hospitalised for a stroke. However, in ‘A Herbal’, he reminds us that not every time that bells ring is there a funeral: “[w]hen the funeral bell tolls / The grass is all a-tremble. // But only then. / Not every time any old bell // Rings” (HC 38).

values of this disappearing keynote (DC 26). In ‘Summer Home’, from *Wintering Out*, it is Marie Devlin’s voice that “bells” in the poet’s ear. Although he does not mention the church bell directly, his reference to the offering of “wild cherry and rhododendron”, the flowers and blooms composed on the “May altar” and “a sweet chrism” evokes the atmosphere of a Christian liturgy. The unbearable summer heat (“the hot foreign night”), unpleasant accommodation (“a fouled nest incubating somewhere?”), marital complications (“The loosened flowers between us”) and the demands of domestic life (“My children weep out”) spoil the summer plans (“the summer gone sour”). The resonating and inescapable toll of the church bell makes it an apt metaphor for Marie’s soundless weeping (WO 47-49). The remorseful poet finds it impossible to escape the sense of guilt and responsibility: “I hear her small lost weeping / through the hall, that bells and hoarsens / on my name, my name” (WO 47).¹⁵⁸

It was during the fourteenth century that the mechanical clock was wedded to the inescapable chimes of church bells to regulate the rhythm of life with even more precision (Schafer 55). The historian, Spengler, believes that the chimes of countless clock towers, which echoed day and night over the auditory space of European cities, were perhaps “the most wonderful expression of which a historical world-feeling is capable” (8). The high-pitched metallic sound of some bells imposed a presence over the noises of everyday life, evoking a sphere of order and serenity. The clock-regulated bells had the great convenience of announcing the passing of time far and wide. In ‘Mid-term Break’, as I explained above, the “knelling” of the school bells suggests the solemn atmosphere of a church funeral. Even more importantly, it is the integration of time, through such phrases as “counting” and “at two o’clock”, to the sound of bells that recalls the passage of time, preparing the readers to

¹⁵⁸ The poem suggests a parallel with the summer of 1969, when Heaney spent a week in the Bas-Pyrénées region of France to fulfill a commitment for the Somerset Maugham Award in the previous year.

hear about Christopher's call of destiny: "I sat all morning in the college sick bay, / Counting bells knelling classes to a close. / At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home" (DN 15).

Unlike the previously silent means of measuring time – i.e. water clocks, sand clocks, candle clocks, time sticks and sundials – the mechanical clock measured "the passing of time audibly" (Schafer 55). Their tick-tock sounds fly forth even more quickly than bells' notes, reminding the listeners that the passing of life is inexorable. It was the discovery of the mechanical clock that gave European soundscape "the dread symbol of the flow of time" (Spengler 8). In 'A Call' and 'Linen Town', the ticking of the clock and the strike of its pendulums signal the passage of time and evoke a sense of destiny and the transient nature of life.¹⁵⁹ 'A Call' is paradigmatic. The poet recalls a time before his parents passed away. Heaney has left the family home to go to university, work and build his own family, but keeps in telephone contact with his parents. While waiting for his mother to go to the garden and ask his father to get the phone, Heaney is left to his thoughts and memories, using his imagination to re-create the household in his mind:

So I saw him
Down on his hands and knees beside the leek rig,
Touching, inspecting, separating one
Stalk from the other [...]. (SL 53)

Heaney's attention is then drawn to a ticking echoing through the receiver:

Then found myself listening to
The amplified grave ticking of hall clocks
Where the phone lay unattended in a calm
Of mirror glass and sunstruck pendulums (SL 53)

The recurring present participles ("touching", "inspecting", "separating", "listening", "ticking") create a momentary sense of stasis in the poem, but the ticking of clock, almost

¹⁵⁹ In 'Mossbawn: Sunlight', he recalls a scene when his aunt, Mary is baking in the kitchen. In the poem Heaney refers to "the tick of two clocks", which while it can be read symbolically to mean both his mother and aunt, as the sources of order and care, can also refer to the abundance of "space" and, therefore, a calm and homely atmosphere in the family home. In 'Milk Factory', the concept of time ("round the clock") is used to refer to the routine of shift-workers and their destiny (HL 35).

echoed through the internal rhyme, takes the poet's imagination to the time when he lived in that house and his parents were young, and then back to the present. He waits on. The inescapable sound of time carries him forward to the future and the thoughts of death run through his mind: "And found myself then thinking: if it were nowadays, / This is how Death would summon Everyman" (SL 53).

Similarly, 'Linen Town' illustrates this association between time and the notions of life, fate and death. The clock fastens time onto a still image taking the reader to High Street, Belfast, in 1786, twelve years before the Irish Rebellion of 1798: "It's twenty to four / By the public clock" (WO 28). The imagined ticking clock prepares the reader for an ominous announcement. The print unfreezes ("the civic print unfrozen") moving twelve years into the future when the young Henry Joy McCracken, a member of the United Irishmen, is hanged and his voice lost in the bustle of a fast thriving town ("This lownecked belle and tricornd fop's // Still flourish undisturbed / By the swinging tongue of his body") (WO 28).¹⁶⁰ The passing of time indicates what seems like a fated violence. As Tobin comments, "Heaney warns us of the irreversibility of history and cautions us against the historical recurrence of brutality" (84). Fast forward to the present, in the final stanza, the clock is sitting at twenty to four again. Heaney encourages his fellow compatriots to "Take a last turn / In the tang of possibility" and avoid yet another recurrence of violence in the history of Ireland (WO 28).

3.4 The Gallery of Tongue: Vocal Sounds¹⁶¹

In any soundscape, human vocal sounds take their place in a larger structure of biophonic, geophonic and anthrophonic sounds. Earlier I discussed how we might be led to believe that our modes of perception are dominated by vision (see 1.2). Yet the musician and

¹⁶⁰ Henry Joy McCracken was born in High Street, Belfast, into one of the city's most prominent Protestant families. His family led linen manufacture and founded the *Belfast News Letter*. He established the Society of the United Irishmen in 1795 and led the United Irishmen Rebellion in 1798. He was eventually defeated and hanged at Corn Market on land his grandfather had donated to the city (Hamilton 23).

¹⁶¹ The title of this section is inspired by a line from 'The Wool Trade' (WO 27).

audio-visual theorist, Chion, urges us to remember our “vococentrism” as one of the elements countering this assumption: “[In every sonic environment] there are not *all the sounds including the human voice*. *There are voices, and then everything else*. In other words, [...], the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception [emphasis in original]” (5). According to the philosopher and psychoanalyst, Dolar, what distinguishes voice from other sounds is its inner relationship with meaning: “the voice is the instrument, the vehicle, the medium, and the meaning is the goal” (14-15). However, the function of voice exceeds its immediate and common use as merely the bearer of a linguistic meaning. In the following paragraphs, I explore the references to human vocal sounds – including pre-linguistic, linguistic and post-linguistic (23)¹⁶² – in *Wintering Out*, considering such questions as: Whose voices have been evoked in the poems? What are the socio-political norms governing them, and what is the poet’s attitude towards them? In order to answer these questions, I also include Heaney’s evocations of the voices of the dead. I close this section with the examination of Heaney’s perspective towards the dynamics between English and Gaelic in the Irish soundscape and society.

In his Lannan Foundation poetry reading, Heaney comments on his depiction of the kitchen in ‘Mossbawn: Sunlight’ from the point of view of an infant in the cradle, defining infancy as a pre-speaking and unspeaking phase of life: “Infans, the Latin word, means unspeaking, and the infant is the unspeaking one”.¹⁶³ Pre-linguistic sounds are primal in essence. From the first cry, a child uses sounds as a way of communicating its basic needs and a way of projecting its inner feelings into the surrounding world (B. R. Smith 13). Heaney refers to this basic yet highly communicative signal in ‘Summer Home’ and ‘Serenades’, and highlights it even more explicitly in ‘High Summer’, for instance. In

¹⁶² Dolar introduces the two categories of pre-linguistic and post-linguistic phenomena to refer to the non-structured, pre-cultural, and pre-signifying voices – such as a child’s babbling and scream or a person coughing and having hiccups – and the voices that exceed structure of speech and bring it to the forefront – such as singing – respectively (12-33).

¹⁶³ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjV7APxLa8c (0:40-0:50).

‘Serenades’ the reference is rather implicit. Heaney invites his wife to join him and listen to the quiet ambience of rural Wicklow, but he recommends her to first “fill the bottles” with milk and put the babies “inside their cots” so they won’t cry from hunger or the need to sleep (WO 50). In ‘Summer Home’, he gives an account of a domestic tribulation – during a 1969 holiday in France, when the damp and hot nights and the foul odour of the rubbish and the maggots in the cottage are aggravating the family’s discontent: “My children weep out the hot foreign night” (WO 49). In ‘High Summer’, he takes the reader back to the same holiday atmosphere, in the Basque country, when “Christopher is teething and cries at night” (FW 41). The crying and screaming of a child represent “the pure process of enunciation before the infant is capable of any statement” (Dolar 28). In the examples above, the baby’s cries are not irritating for the father who is capable of interpreting them justly.

The resonance of pre-linguistic sounds continues to signal the inner feelings and psychological states of human beings even after they learn to speak, but often displays more sophisticated social and cultural traits. For this reason, Smith categorises them within ‘non-verbal’ and not necessarily ‘pre-verbal’ sounds: “In crying, screaming, moaning, wailing, ululating the human voice emits sounds that are non-verbal if not pre-verbal – sounds that, according to Aristotle, ally the human voice with the voices of all breathing creatures in the soundscape of the world” (B. R. Smith 45). The sounds of sobbing, laughing, humming, grunting, evoked in Heaney’s poetry, are the non-verbal vocal signals executed to communicate inner feelings beyond words, sounds that the poet does not want us to disregard or forget. Heaney’s father’s quiet crying in ‘Mid-Term Break’ indicates his feelings of grief and despair over the loss of his young child: “in the porch I met my father crying” (DN 15). In ‘The Forge’, he points out the grunting sound that Barney makes while watching the traffic in the street and reminiscing about the forge’s thriving past in the days of horses and carts: “Then grunts and goes in [...]” (DD 9). In ‘Keeping Going’, Heaney pays tribute to his

brother Hugh who expresses his confidence and sociable nature through his attitude and laughter: “[...] you wave at people, / You shout and laugh above the revs” (SL 12).¹⁶⁴

Heaney’s alertness to these sounds is demonstrated particularly in the second part of *Wintering Out*, in ‘Wedding Day’, ‘Summer Home’ and ‘Winter’s Tale’. For most people, the wedding day is a prominent and life-changing occasion. Yet anyone who has been to a wedding has experienced the co-existence of cries and laughter on this special day. Heaney’s wedding day, as depicted in ‘Wedding Day’, is filled with mixed feelings of celebration, anxiety and sorrow for both the couple and their families. As the moment of departure approaches and the couple prepare for their honeymoon “the sap / Of mourning rises” (WO 45). The groom “is baffled by the emotionality of wedding guests surrounding the honeymoon taxi”¹⁶⁵ and reflects on the reasons behind “all those tears” (WO 45). The wedding day is not only a transitional moment in the life of the couple but also their families. The feeling of separating from a daughter or a son, on a wedding day, underlies the happiness for their union and new start. Therefore, the moment of departure is symbolic in the way it dramatises the couple’s separation from their parental home. Heaney’s recognition of the tears, on the day of celebrating love, is a way of appreciating the nuances of the feelings involved and of foregrounding the parent-child relationship.

Crying is a way of projecting oneself into the surrounding environment. In crying, humans seek communication. They seek a listener (B. R. Smith 13). In ‘Winter’s Tale’, Heaney lets us hear the faint “weeping” of the village girl to bring to light her inner distress and isolation (WO 52). The poem is based on the story of a young girl from Ulster but also alludes to Shakespeare’s play, *The Winter’s Tale*, and the figure of Perdita, who was affected by complex circumstances and psychological states. In Shakespeare’s play, Perdita – meaning ‘the lost one’, ‘abandoned’ or ‘desperate’, in Latin – is unaware of her royal lineage

¹⁶⁴ The term laughter, of course, includes a wide array, from a mild smile to uncontrollable laughter. According to Dolar, laughter is “a cultural trait of which only humankind is capable” (29)

¹⁶⁵ See fawbie.info/wintering-out/wedding-day/.

as the daughter of the King of Sicilia. The young woman lives the life of a simple shepherd in Bohemia for more than sixteen years until, after a set of complex events, she is reunited with her parents. Heaney's anonymous character stands for the men and women who cannot fit into the society they live in and are in need of an empathetic listener to communicate their stories. Likewise, in 'Summer Home', Marie's sobbing is a call for communication with her husband. Heaney's juxtaposition of his own "unmusical drive" and "foul mouth" with Maria's "small lost weeping" (WO 47-49) further evokes her feelings of "isolation", "repression" and "disenchantment" (Corcoran 30). However, a profound listening enables the fair-minded poet to hear his name as the only one to blame. The polysemous word "attend" indicates his intention to turn both his ears and mind to his wife and attempt to heal the growing "wound" in their marital relationships (WO 47-49):¹⁶⁶

I hear her small lost weeping
through the hall, that bells and hoarsens
on my name, my name.
[...]
Attend. Anoint the wound. (WO 48-51).

In 'Shore Woman', the woman's cry is a projection of her fears and frustration. Earlier I highlighted how sounds can show the greed and insensitivity of the fisherman and his wife towards sea animals (see 3.2). The fisher's wife is, on the one hand, alarmed by propelling porpoises; on the other, she is frustrated over her husband's unsympathetic behaviour towards herself (see also 3.1 and 4.2). On the fisher's boat, the woman's peace is violated, but more importantly, her voice is ignored and her feelings are disregarded. Disappointed in her efforts to encourage her husband to retire, she lies helpless on the boat and screams. But her cry is not a "pleasure call". It is what Schafer describes as an "alarm call" and a "distress call" (33):

[...] I lay and screamed
Under splashed brine in an open rocking boat
Feeling each dunt and slither through the timber,
Sick at their huge pleasures in the water. (WO 55)

¹⁶⁶ OED offers the multiple meanings of the verb 'attend', of which 'to listen to' is amongst the firsts.

Yet ‘Shore Woman’ points out the woman’s voice in more ways than just one. The entirety of the poem is narrated in first person by the woman herself. Similarly, in ‘Maighdean Mara’, despite her isolation and suffering on earth, the mermaid can voice her feelings through ballad. Tired of judgemental voices and the gazes of other village women, exacerbated by greedy men luring her to their land lives, and unable to retrieve her garment, the mermaid has no other choice but to relive the “Patterns of home” through her voice. Her singing is an act of tuning her feelings with the rhythm of tidesongs and projecting her inner world into the surrounding world: “She had no choice – conjured / Patterns of home and drained / The tidesong from her voice” (WO 56-57). Likewise, in ‘Wedding Day’, the bride is the only individual who has the power to bear the strain and restore balance between “grief and joy” during the ceremony performing a solo ballad that according to her sister Polly Devlin, “shivered the day” (84).¹⁶⁷ In these poems, Heaney gives women not only a voice but also the medium of expressing and projecting it, one that emerges from their inner feelings and is projected into the outside world.

References to linguistic utterances in Heaney’s poetry can be viewed in a similar manner as pre-linguistic and post-linguistic vocal sounds. From an ecological point of view, there is a complicated and mutually dynamic relationship between social structures and linguistic structures (B. R. Smith 17-18).¹⁶⁸ Here, I explore how the way in which we interpret linguistic utterances in *Wintering Out* depends on the relationship between language and its social, political, academic, natural and cultural environment as a set of protocols for perceiving, interpreting, shaping and issuing information.

¹⁶⁷ In her autobiographical book, *All of Us There* (1983), Polly Devlin refers to “the thin membrane [...] between grief and joy in Irish celebrations” as illustrated on Marie and Seamus’s wedding day, and explains [H’s comment not clear] Heaney noticed the impact of Marie’s poignant rendering of the traditional ballad ‘Slieve Gallion Brae’ on the listeners (84).

¹⁶⁸ According to B. R. Smith, the other three main models put forward to explain the relationship between language and society include: the long-standing view that linguistic and social structures are analogous (Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Derrida); social structures shape linguistic structures (Durkheim); linguistic structures shape social structures (Sapir, Whorf, Ong). (17-18).

The poem 'The Wool Trade' laments the loss of the Irish wool industry and its associated sounds after the restrictions placed by English commercial policies on the Irish wool industry during the 17th century.¹⁶⁹ But the poem is in fact constructed on the memory of the vanished trade as it resonates richly and warmly from the mouth of the unnamed Irish interlocutor: "'The wool trade' – the phrase / Rambled warm as a fleece // Out of his hoard" (WO 27). Listening to the man's voice opens up much knowledge about the long gone keynotes of Irish prosperity and the soundmarks of national identity – "to shear, to bale and bleach and card" – but it also reveals the social divide it generated. The epigraph arches back to a passage in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "How different are the words 'home', 'Christ', 'ale', 'master', on his lips and on mine" (WO 27). The passage, uttered by Joyce's character Stephen Dedalus, indicates the unresolved discomfort of the young Irish man towards the English language, as a major legacy of British colonisation and indicates how the connotations of a linguistic utterance can exceed its semantic meaning. The terms "ale" and "home" show how the use of English language can suddenly make even the most familiar concepts in Irish life feel foreign, and the term "master" directly refers to the bitterness with which the Irish recall colonisation. In the poem, Heaney depicts a similar situation. The unnamed speaker appears to be a Protestant merchant who speaks to the Catholic Heaney nostalgically recalling memories of: "[...] square-set men in tunics / Who plied soft names like Bruges // In their talk, [...]" (WO 27). For the speaker, the name of the Flemish city, Bruges, which was a very significant commercial hub renowned for the thriving textile industry during the medieval period, recalls the memories of prosperity of the Protestant urban middle class who would go to Flanders for trade. For the Catholic poet of rural working-class background, instead, it is a reminder of the voices of men who raised the sheep and spun the wool and wove the cloth, and as Mark M. Smith notes, of the rural

¹⁶⁹ See celt.ucc.ie/published/E900040/text007.html.

hamlets “locked in stagnation and marginality” after the British embargo on the Irish wool industry left the accumulated resources in the hands of the Protestant middle class (62). Moreover, the speaker’s speech, articulated in the language of the oppressor reminds the poet of the disappearance of the native language of those hamlets:

O all the hamlets where
Hills and flocks and streams conspired

To a language of waterwheels,
A lost syntax of looms and spindles,

How they hang
Fading, in the gallery of the tongue! (WO 27)

Heaney indicates that the language of the oppressor can still be heard today, but the native tongue of the Irish is disappearing from memory in their native land. It is this absence that he wants his readers to remember and listen to again (see also 4.4).

Among the other voices Heaney listens to and brings up in his poetry are the voices of the dead.¹⁷⁰ In such poems, Heaney uses the existential dimension of listening and the direct relationship between sound and sound-producing source to evoke the presence of the dead and ensure their continuity in his poetry (see 1.4.1).¹⁷¹ Just like any other sound, vocal sounds convey information about their sources – e.g. the vocal organs involved, how certain phonemes or words are pronounced, speaker’s attitude, accent, force, loudness, pitch, tone, intonation, timbre as well as other associated elements, such as the time and place in which they occur (B. R. Smith 3-10). For Heaney, evoking the voices of the characters is a way of

¹⁷⁰ The examples of these poems are scattered in his poetry: ‘A Postcard from North Antrim’ was written in memory of an Ulster writer, Sean Armstrong, killed during the Troubles. Heaney writes: “It [his voice] was independent, rattling, non-transcendent / Ulster-old-decency” (FW 12). ‘In Memoriam Sean O’Riada’ pays tribute to the Irish composer who died in 1971 transcribing a few lines of their dialogue: “‘How do you work? / Sometimes I just lie out / like ballast in the bottom of the boat / listening to the cuckoo’” (FW 23). In ‘The Digging Skeleton’ – translation of ‘After Baudelaire’, the skeletons come to life to talk about brutalities and violence (N 17-18). In ‘Ocean’s Love to Ireland’, Heaney evokes the voice of the girl raped by Sir Walter Raleigh during the Elizabethan conquer of Ireland (N 40-41).

¹⁷¹ The relationship between voice, existence and presence has been theorised by philosophers, anthropologist, and phenomenologists. See Ong’s *The Presence of the Word* (1967), for the relationship between voice and presence in religious studies (114); Derrida’s *Voice and Phenomenon* (1967), for arguments against the deep-rooted Western philosophy of voice as present-in-itself (56-67); and Ihde’s *Listening and Voice* (2007), for an ecological perspective (67-68).

recalling their characteristic features and, as such, evoking their presence in his mind and poetry. ‘A Drink of Water’ is an example of how the speaker brings back his memories of an old woman who would come every morning to the well to fill her bucket with water. Her acoustics and visuals are evoked in the elegy to recall his memories: “[h]er grey apron”, “[c]reak of her voice” and the “slow diminuendo as it filled” (FW 8). In ‘Casualty’, Heaney remembers a friend of his, Louis O’Neill, a Northern Irish fisherman and fellow, through his voice, which he recalls from a conversation in a pub:

‘Now you’re supposed to be
An educated man,’
I hear him say. ‘Puzzle me
The right answer to that one’. (FW 16)

O’Neill ignored the IRA curfew on the day of the funeral of the thirteen victims of 1972 Bloody Sunday to go for a drink and was killed when a bomb went off. Heaney’s personal memory turns into a collective memory by picturing the doomed life of the innocent people involved in the sectarian violence. The final and title poem of *Electric Light* is another example in which Heaney evokes and perpetuates the memory of his grandmother through her whispery and archetypal voice:

She sat [...],

[...] and whispered
In a voice that at its loudest did nothing else
But whisper. (EL 80)

Although the poem does not explicitly point it out, in *Stepping Stones* Heaney reveals that the old woman of the poem is his grandmother: “[t]hat’s her, with her mangled thumb and grey overall and whispery voice and unzipped slippers” (SS 27). In a 2001 interview for the *Guardian*, he explains that “there are cues to show that she is ancient, archetypal and central to the family”.¹⁷² As Rankin Russell notes, an early clue is “not so much in her prophecies

¹⁷² See www.theguardian.com/books/2001/jun/16/poetry.features.

[...], but in her way of speaking, which was an early model for his regionally grounded poetry” (186):

[...] ‘What ails you, child,
What ails you, for God’s sake?’ Urgent, sibilant
Ails, far off and old [his emphasis]. [...] (EL 80)

deceased ancestors. 'The Tollund Man', 'Bogland', 'A Sofa in the Forties', 'England's Difficulty', and 'Act of Union' are some of the poems in which Heaney expresses his stance toward history and the role of literature in representing historical events, especially those that caused much horror, death and trauma in survivors. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, "only when the horror of annihilation is raised fully into consciousness are we placed in the proper relationship to the dead: that of unity with them, since we, like them, are victims of the same conditions and of the same disappointed hope" (178). For Heaney, Moyola's constant roaring, the rotting crops and the muddy riverbed are the ominous signs of yet another flooding of hardship in the future of Ireland, one that could be similar to "the flood of colonisation" that washed away much of the native tradition (Corcoran 41). Heaney is concerned that history may repeat itself. As Tobin has suggested, he is concerned that the violence involved in sectarian conflicts may jeopardise particularly his own Catholic community (81). He feels the "need / for antediluvian lore" (WO 15). He listens to the voices of his pre-colonial Gaelic ancestors to learn about the stories of perseverance and kinship. As an Ulster poet and as a father, Heaney feels the responsibility to retrieve and pass on the "shared" wisdom to the future generations (14-15).

In many of the instances listed above, in his giving space to the voices of others and in evoking the whispering of the dead in his poetry, Heaney also hints at the social dimension inherent in any oral-aural communication. Oral communication is the foundation of a society. The conversation between two or more individuals constructs an acoustical community in the auditory field: "When he speaks the interlocutor's voice fills the auditory field. My bones reverberate to his [O]. In my reply, I interject myself in that auditory field. His bones reverberate to my voice. We create an acoustical community" (B. R. Smith 21). Oral communication keeps the body at the centre of attention separating it from the linguistic component. The understanding we have within any such communication could essentially be

a bodily experience, one beyond and above the linguistic meaning of the utterances, one that is grounded in both the speaker's body and the listener's body.¹⁷⁴ Heaney subtly refers to it in the poem 'M.', when describing a deaf phonetician's embodied perception of the soundwaves: "He could tell which diphthong and which vowel / By the bone vibrating to the sound" (SL 57).

Here, of course, the phonetician is not able to hear the sound, but perceives the vibration of the speaker's body fully by reaching out to his skull. Heaney's emphasis on the social and embodied dimension of oral communication is even more evident in such poems as 'Twice Shy' in which there is less emphasis on the semantic meaning of the utterance. In the poem, Heaney celebrates the earliest stages of his relationship with Marie Devlin, when irrespective of the content, the sheer fact of having a conversation becomes a key bonding element in their companionship. The speaker describes an evening stroll along the quiet riverside with a young woman, whose good taste and sensibility attract his attention at the onset: "Her scarf à la Bardot, / In suede flats for the walk" (DN 31). He shows the initial thoughts behind this walk: "for air and friendly talk" (31). Yet soon the couple find it challenging to overcome the indecisive flux of emotions mounting in their hearts. However, since their virtuous nurturing has taught them "not to publish feeling" so warily, they decide not to vocalise their emotion: "preserved classic decorum, / deployed our talk with art" (31).

In this example, speaking is still a bonding element, while in 'Summer Home' the absence of connection between the couple is demonstrated through their silence (See also 4.2). In 'Mid-Term Break', the social expression of sympathy requires both the words and the physical contact. Heaney remembers the voices of the neighbour men who expressed their condolences for the passing of his younger brother, Christopher (see 3.3). The neighbours complete this social aspect by eliminating the physical distance and shaking the young boy's

¹⁷⁴ For more information regarding the proprioceptive effects of voice see Appelbaum's *Voice* (1990).

hands: “old men standing up to shake my hand // And tell me they were ‘sorry for my trouble’” (DN 15). A similar but more intricate situation is described in the final part of ‘The Other Side’. The poem looks back at the relationship between Heaney’s family and their Protestant neighbour, Johnny Junkin, in the 1940s (SS 130). Despite his occasional outbursts, described in the first part of the poem, the man also has a benign nature and inner bond with his Catholic neighbour, reflected in the final section of the poem. Hoping to restore the bond with his neighbour, the white-haired man approaches their household for a friendly chatter. His willingness to connect is reflected through the manner and tone as he “courteously” and “embarrassedly” lingers outside the Heaney household and remains silent until they have completed the evening prayers, and only then approaches to knock on the door (Vendler 81): “he might say, ‘I was dandering by / and says I, I might as well call’” (WO 25). The young Heaney too who welcomes the man, thinks of touching the man’s shoulder and having a conversation as the options he has for socialising and connecting with him:

But now I stand behind him
[...]

Should I slip away, I wonder,
or go up and touch his shoulder
and talk about the weather

or the price of grass-seed? (WO 26)

There is another type of speech – academic discourse – that according to Heaney does not create a sense of community. An example is the poem ‘Dawn’ where the poet describes his experience of a car trip with a group of academic friends. While in the examples above, both the speaker and the listener keep the body at the centre of attention, the academic discourse – often operating through books, articles, conferences as opposed to the discussion that might follow up – points towards something incorporeal. In this context, the emphasis is often more on what is considered to be the superior power of speaking than the humble task

of listening and connecting (B. R. Smith 22).¹⁷⁵ Heaney shows his frustration over the lack of embodied communication among some of the academics and the need for listening to one another and the surrounding world in 'Dawn', one of the final poems of *Wintering Out*.

'Dawn' emerged from a week of creative activity in May 1969. Heaney had been involved in the everyday routines of academic life as a lecturer in Queen's and the end of the classes provided an opportunity for him to pause and reflect over his academic career. He explains how crucial this experience was for him, perhaps an initiation to a new intellectual phase that eventually urged him to leave the prissiness of Queen's behind and begin his life as a full-time writer in Wicklow. "From that point on", he writes, "I felt different in myself as a writer" (SS 147).¹⁷⁶ The title of the poem too refers to a turning point, a moment of epiphany introduced by the sunlight: "Somebody lets up a blind" (WO 65). Heaney has joined a group of scholars for a car trip in a quiet Mediterranean city. The scholars have been engaged in heated discussions throughout the trip. For the poet, however, it has proved to be a laborious marathon and an irritating companionship:

We went at five miles an hour.
A tut-tutting colloquy
Was in session, scholars
Arguing through until morning

In a Pompeian silence. (WO 65)

Despite being caught amidst the endless conversation of his companions, the surrounding feels "dead and empty" to the poet (Andrews 78). In this context, there is more emphasis on speaking than listening. As Fawbert puts it, "his companions are by nature censorious [...]"

¹⁷⁵ Smith comments that, especially after Descartes, western philosophy has granted "superior power" to speech and the ability to construct rational arguments using language (22).

¹⁷⁶ In *Stepping Stones*, he says:

Several of them appeared in *Wintering Out*: 'Limbo', 'Serenades', 'Veteran's Dream', 'Midnight', 'Navy', 'Dawn'. But a lot more saw the light of day just once, [...]. I don't know how to explain the dam-burst. It began with a hangover and continued with late nights and free days – this was in the month of May: Queen's University classes stopped around that time of year, [...]. It was a visitation, an onset, and as such, powerfully confirming. This, you felt, was 'it'. You had been initiated into the order of the inspired. [...], the experience itself was crucial. From that point on, I felt different in myself as a writer. (SS 147)

everything is formality”.¹⁷⁷ Heaney deliberately places the scholar’s “colloquy” in the informal setting of a private “car” and juxtaposes it with the pejorative qualifier “tut-tutting” to undercut their pretentiousness. For his academic friends, who have achieved a mastery of rhetoric and internalised its superior position, listening seems a humble and exacting effort. Gemma Corradi-Fiumara, who specialises in the philosophy of language and listening, writes:

[A]n élitist power which has become internalised seems to ask rhetorically why there should be any need to listen, when one has not only achieved a mastery of language but also of the metalanguages whereby one can soar to the level of the relations that exist between discourse and reality, or among different types of discourse. (58-59)

Heaney is skeptical about any resulting enlightenment from such scholarly arguments. Their academic discussion lacks embodied understanding and connection that the poet expects from oral communication. There isn’t even enough chance for him to listen to the surrounding environment while driving, which – as he showed us in the poem ‘Postscript’ – he has been fond of (see 3.1). Joining the scholarly mentality holds him back from the practice of listening, which for him is on the same level of significance as speaking. He feels the need to distance himself from the academic rituals based on a disembodied discourse and retrieve his ability to reconnect with the surrounding world through sounds. In fact, as soon as he does so, Heaney realises that even a Pompeii-like silence is full of sounds (see 4.4). The shells crunching beneath his feet enable the bewildered poet and thinker to once again realise his own position in relation to the surrounding reality:

I got away out by myself
 On a scurf of winkles and cockles
 And found myself suddenly
 Unable to move without crunching
 Acres of their crisp delicate turrets. (WO 65)

¹⁷⁷ See fawbie.info/wintering-out/dawn/.

In addition to highlighting the social, political, cultural and personal aspects of voice and speech, Heaney also pays close attention to the dynamics between English and Gaelic language in the Irish soundscape. From an ecological perspective, each culture has distinctive ways of understanding the world through various signals, keynotes and soundmarks from among geophonic, biophonic, and anthrophonic sounds. Among the other varied shared keynotes – such as rain, wind, local crafts and transportation – the sounds that give any community its coherence and demarcate its acoustic space are the distinctive phonemes of its language. The imperialistic presence of the English language in the Irish soundscape, for instance, can be interpreted as an attempt to assimilate the newly-colonised culture and to establish an “aural empire” in Ireland (B. R. Smith 288-289) (see 1.2). The topic of the linguistic dispossession of the Irish as a major legacy of colonialism has been examined from various angles in a succession of poems in *Wintering Out*, including ‘Traditions’, ‘A New Song’, ‘The Backward Look’, ‘The Last Mummer’, and ‘Gifts of Rain’, as well as in his place-name poems, ‘Anahorish’, ‘Broagh’ and ‘Toome’.

In ‘Traditions’, Heaney declares his opposition to the imperialistic presence of the English language in Ireland through a “linguistic-sexual analogy” (Corcoran 40) wherein the muse-like “guttural” sounds of Gaelic are ravished and replaced by the brutal and rapacious “alliterative tradition” of Old English and early Middle English verse: “Our guttural muse / was bulled long ago / by the alliterative tradition [...]” (WO 21). This linguistic imposition, as Heaney emphasises, initiated “long ago” at the same time as the confiscation of Irish lands by the English Crown from Henry VIII through to Elizabeth I and the arrival of the first settlers in the 16th and 17th centuries. B. R. Smith points out that “if each culture has its own distinctive ways of understanding the world through sound, the borders between cultures become, potentially at least, sites of noise, confusion, pandemonium” (289). While some may take delight in this merging of diverse linguistic sounds and open their ears to new

opportunities, the political factors at work often turn this encounter into a clash of cultures. Needless to say, the relationship between English and Gaelic was an uneasy one. As noted earlier, the writings of early modern English commentators show that for the ears of the imperial-minded English, Gaelic was classified as not only an “aural assault” but also a mode of communication that was only “one step removed from noise” (R. B. Smith 306) (see 1.2). This attitude can be inferred from the following passage on the title page on *A Consolation for Our Grammar Schooles* (1622), a pedagogical book by the Puritan minister and English schoolmaster, John Brinsley the Elder, which proposes educational methods for English colonies:

More specially, for all those in the inferior sort, and all ruder countries and places namely, for Ireland, Wales, Virginia, with the Sommer Ilands, and for their more speedie attaining of our English tongue by the same labour, that all may speake one and the same Language. (1)

During the 16th and 17th centuries the dominance of the English language in Ireland was still not well-established and the sounds of Gaelic could still be identified as one of the main keynotes of the Irish landscape. In contemporary Ireland, as Heaney remarks, “her uvula grows // vestigial, forgotten” (WO 21). Heaney maintains that today the sounds of Gaelic have disappeared from the landscape of Ireland and the mindscape of the Irish leading, in turn, to the atrophy of the related vocal organs (see 4.4). In a sarcastic tone, in the second section of the poem, Heaney reveals what the present soundscape of Ireland sounds like:

We are to be proud
of our Elizabethan English:
‘varsity’, for example,
is grass-roots stuff with us;

we ‘deem’ or we ‘allow’
when we suppose
and some cherished archaisms
are correct Shakespearean. (WO 21)

Ironically, “Elizabethan English” is now the language of the élite and educated Irish who are supposed to take pride and pleasure in “correct Shakespearean” terms as their archaic Irish

words.¹⁷⁸ Such English words as “varsity” – shortened form of ‘university’ – have become part of the everyday conversation and the terms “deem” or “allow” have preserved their archaic meaning. Not to mention the foreign footprints on the name of his well-loved home Mossbawn: ‘moss-’ from the Scottish word for ‘bogland’ and ‘-bawn’ drawn from the Irish ‘bábhún’ meaning ‘walled enclosure’, a term used to identify the English fortified farm house (Corcoran 40). As Parker has observed,

Ulster dialect retains ‘strikingly Elizabethan’ words and turns-of-phrase, but Heaney again shows his ambivalent attitude towards these ‘cherished archaisms’, his English inheritance. ‘Correct Shakespearean’ they may be, but they remind him of defeat, like the name of his birthplace, which brings together ‘*Moss*’ from the Scots of the Planters, and ‘*bawn*’, an English colonialist’s fortified farmstead. (98)

Heaney brings up the topic again in the opening epigraph of ‘The Wool Trade’, discussed earlier in this section. He makes a joint reference to the bitterness of the experience for him and for Stephen Dedalus, who declares: “The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words ‘*home*’, ‘*Christ*’, ‘*ale*’, ‘*master*’, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech” (Joyce 221). As common as they may sound in the contemporary soundscape of Ireland, the terms “home”, “Christ”, “ale” and “master” stir up feelings of uneasiness in every Irish. Perhaps these mixed feelings for English words partly explain the reason why in ‘Fodder’, the first poem of the collection, Heaney replaces the title-word with “fother” – as spoken in the Ulster dialect: – in the first line: “Or, as we said, *fother*” (WO 3). The spoken word “fother” is a linguistic soundmark that relocates the poet, all the way from California, to the soundscape of Mossbawn and

¹⁷⁸ Here the reference gains impact from Heaney’s subsequent career, for in the 1983 pamphlet *An Open Letter*, he energetically, if humorously, objected to being included in an anthology of British verse, noting, among other points, “the name is not right” (4). Although he speaks and writes in the language of the coloniser, Heaney feels related to Gaelic Ireland.

brings him into touch with the voices of the Ulster farm men.¹⁷⁹ It is also a disappearing keynote – hence the past tense, “said” (WO 3) – whose very ordinariness turns it into what Schafer calls a “sound souvenir” from the Irish past to the future reader (239).

The disappearance of the Irish language is synonymous with the absence of cultural identity. In ‘Traditions’, Heaney remarks that today Ireland is just one of “the British isles” (WO 21). In the third and final section of the poem, he highlights the distinction between the imperialistic attitude of English speakers towards the sounds of Irish language by juxtaposing an excerpt from the work of the Elizabethan playwright Shakespeare, with one from the twentieth century Irish novelist, Joyce.¹⁸⁰ Heaney’s choice of Shakespeare is crucial for recreating a historical moment – the Elizabethan conquest and Plantation of Ulster – occurring during Shakespeare’s lifetime (Corcoran 40). To the ears of the English coloniser, Irish sounded “whiny” “brutish” and “uncivilised” (B. R. Smith 288-309). Earlier in 1596, in his infamous passage from *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Spenser too had described the Irish victims of famine during the sixteenth century Desmond Rebellion “as anatomies of death”.¹⁸¹ In *Henry V*, Shakespeare fashions the character of MacMorris to render this tell-tale version of Irish as: aimless (“gallivanting / around the Globe”), having a whining tone (“whinged / to courtier”), uneducated (“as going very bare / of learning”), and uncivilised (“as wild hares”), all summed up in his utterance (“What ish my nation?”). Almost three centuries later, Joyce’s character, Leopold Bloom, replies to this question in *Ulysses*, in a tone and with a determination and consciousness that truly represents the Irish:

And sensibly, though so much

¹⁷⁹ Similarly, in ‘The Guttural Muse’, the “guttural” voices of a crowd of youngsters, which Heaney hears from the window of his hotel room and describes as “thick and comforting”, are the acoustic reminders of the Irish soundscape and thus of healing properties for the Irish poet (FW 22).

¹⁸⁰ The poem ‘Traditions’ is dedicated to Tom Flanagan to whom Heaney owed much of his Ireland-oriented standpoint:

It was Tom’s poem because I lifted the conclusion of it from his book on the Irish novelists [i.e. *The Irish Novelists 1800-1850*]. The epigraph to that book juxtaposes MacMorris’s question in *Henry V* [...] with Bloom’s answer in *Ulysses* [...]. That seemed to cut through a lot of the identity crisis stuff that surrounded us in the early seventies, so I stole it for the end of the poem. (SS 143)

¹⁸¹ See celt.ucc.ie/published/E500000-001/.

later, the wandering Bloom
 replied, "Ireland," said Bloom,
 'I was born here. Ireland.' (WO 22)

Bloom's reply challenges the stereotypical notions of Irishness established and echoed by the English commentators. Yet there are still more implications in his reply. Firstly, as Foster notes, both the English language and English literary tradition are undeniable elements of modern Ireland:

However much one may feel the ignominy of speaking the conqueror's language, English is not merely the mother tongue but the native tongue of modern Ireland, just as English literary tradition also forms, like it or not, a major part of the Irish literary landscape. (38)

Bloom speaks in English, as does everyone else in the novel, as do Heaney and many others in modern Ireland. By having Bloom – a Jew of Hungarian origins – respond to the question, Heaney also challenges the notion of linguistic imperialism he opened up earlier, and as such offers "a criticism of the national stereotypes exhibited in the poem and therefore, implicitly, of all such stereotyping" (Corcoran 40). Like Bloom and like Joyce, Heaney is now owning the medium of the invader to project his personal and collective selfhood.

In his place-name poems, 'Broagh' and 'Anahorish', Heaney treats the matter of linguistic dispossession and English as the medium of his poetry with dexterity unique to him (see 4.1). In his essay 'Belfast', he speaks of Broagh and Anahorish as "townlands that are forgotten Gaelic music in the throat, *bruach* and *anach fhíor uisce*, the riverbank and the place of clear water" (PO 36). The poems renew an ancient genre of Irish poetry called "*dinnseanchas*, poems and tales which relate the original meanings of place names and constitute a form of mythological etymology" (PO 131). In his place name poems 'Broagh' and 'Anahorish', the dialectical linguistic evolution from the native Irish words 'anach fhíor uisce' and 'bruach' is traced through their eponymous transliterations into a form of language that is shot through with both the native Irish and the colonising English language. In these poems, the dialectical movement between different cultural significations is instantiated in

the poet's desire to see the place name 'Anahorish' as translated into: "My 'place of clear water'" (WO 6), and in a similar movement, in the first line of 'Broagh' which translates the title as "Riverbank" (WO 17). The terms, however, are anglicisations and transliterations of the original spoken Irish words as opposed to translations; hence they cannot be validated by any English or Irish dictionary. What they signify is a dialectic, a movement between languages which is creative of a new sense of English with an Irish touch. Herman Rapaport makes this point in connection with Derrida, noting that, for Derrida, "language isn't ever entirely masterable to perfection; therefore, one always senses that one is, however slightly, a stranger or foreigner to it" (31). Heaney, in these poems, dealing specifically with language, takes this position fully on board.

Early modern colonial interventions in the toponymy of Ireland began as part of the strategy of extending British authority in Ireland "through plantation, military control and cultural repression" (Nash 461). As part of the mid-nineteenth century colonial project, Gaelic place-names were systematically collected and converted to English language versions. These names became the official versions in colonial cartography and administration in Ireland (Nash 462). Given the difficulty of the Gaelic phonetic system, British cartographers transliterated many such names into the British phonetic and graphological system. This approach to Irish place-names, as Catherine Nash suggests, is a paradigmatic case of colonial cultural erosion:

Conventionally, the existence of a shared language has been one of the fundamental criteria for nationhood [...]. Placenames thus combine the two elements – land and language – that have been central to the cultural projects of romantic nationalism, not least in the late nineteenth-century Irish cultural nationalism in which land and language were twined in an imaginative, political and economic geography of rural life and native landownership. The Gaelic language and the soil of Ireland were, it was argued, deep repositories of native spirit. To lose the Gaelic language would be to lose the soul of the nation and, crucially, the 'natural' connection to the land that could only be experienced and articulated through the native tongue. (461)

Earlier in this chapter, I examined how Heaney's description, in 'Broagh', fuses the shape and sound of the place name (i.e. the sound *gh* and the letter *O*) and its vernacular geophony (i.e. the wind and the rain), and how in doing so he highlights their unique Irishness (see 3.1). 'Broagh', like 'Anahorish' and 'Mossbawn',¹⁸² is not a Gaelic word, but rather it is a transliteration of the Gaelic word 'bruach' by the very "strangers" who, as Heaney indicates in the poem, are deemed to find it too "difficult to manage" (WO 17). The "strangers" who found the original pronunciation "difficult" have altered it, changing the phonetic area of difficulty into another sound that they would be able to manage. Yet the italicised "*gh*" at the end of 'Broagh' continues to operate as what Auden calls "a verbal contraption" (50). The guttural consonant is what the "strangers" still find "difficult to manage" (WO 17). While the term "strangers" could refer to any non-native of Co. Derry, Heaney is particularly referring to the experience of English settlers. The Gaelic velar fricative *gh* – pronounced *ch* [x] – as Foster points out, "was also an English sound that disappeared early in the Modern English Period" (48). Heaney's highlighting of the sound is a way of cherishing the demarcating phoneme and poking the Anglo-Scottish settlers: "the English can't altogether manage that last *gh* sound, that guttural slither [...]. If I can write the right poem about Broagh it might be minuscule definition, getting in affection, elegy, exclusiveness [...] I mean it might touch immediately, though not spectacularly, the nerve of history and culture" (qtd in Foster 10). Heaney turns to the experience of guttural sounds also to indicate the fate of Protestant and Catholic divisions in Northern Ireland (Hart 65). In a

¹⁸² Speaking about the etymology of Mossbawn, in a 2008 interview with Paul Muldoon at the New Yorker Festival, Heaney says:

[...] in fact the place was called Moss bann, and then it became, when you were writing down the address on your letters, it was Mossbawn. And it was only when, I think 1972, when I came back from Berkeley, [...] that came to me as an idea for the divided nature of the world we lived in. [...] The names of many [places], all over Northern Ireland, lead you straight back to pre-Norman, pre-foundation, pre-Tudor Ireland to an option of homeland in the first Celtic place or Gaelic place. So that was Moss bann, Mossbawn b-a-w-n led you to Plantation Ulster, where history begins in the 1620s and everything before that is not there, the land was theirs before the land was ours, so to speak. So, [...] Mossbawn and Moss bann, it seems to be that in the very name of the first house, the division, the problem was implicit ethimologically. (10:40 -12:33)

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HWurkQ1ao4&t=2094s>.

much quoted 1972 interview with Elgy Gillespie in *The Irish Times*, Heaney says: “Protestant and Catholic can say it perfectly in this part of the world. Yet the Protestant won’t be entranced by its Gaelic music. He’ll think of the gh sound perhaps, as in Scottish” (10). On the other hand, however, ‘Broagh’ can be seen as the poet’s finest attempt to bridge the gap between his professional language (English) and the home-grown Ulster tongue (Gaelic).

As previously noted, this level of contextual cultural and linguistic complication is also to be found in ‘Anahorish’, where Heaney translates the anglicised transliteration of the original Irish version into: “My ‘place of clear water’” (WO 6). The hills and meadows of Anahorish are echoed in the name: the “soft gradient / of consonant, vowel meadow” (WO 6). Earlier I noted that Heaney thinks of “the personal and Irish pieties as vowels, and the literary awareness nourished on English as consonants” (PO 37). Therefore, in shape and in name, Anahorish echoes the poet’s life experience as a whole. In other words, although on one level his language and place-name poems mourn the linguistic dispossession of the Irish people as a major legacy of colonialism, on the other, as Parker has identified, “they deny silence and loss” in their utterance (97). In a 1977 interview with Seamus Dean, the poet speaks about his place-name poems in *Wintering Out*:¹⁸³

I had a great sense of relief as they were being written, a joy and devil-may-careness, and that convinced me that one could be faithful to the nature of the English language – for in some sense these poems are erotic mouth-music by and out of the Anglo-Saxon tongue – and, at the same time be faithful to one’s own non-English origin, for me that is County Derry.

Conclusion

The four sections in this chapter have demonstrated the poet’s attention to geophonic, biophonic and anthrophonic sounds. Listening to the natural soundscape is very rewarding. Nature is both a teacher and a joy-bearer. It teaches us that there is much to learn about the habits of the land and its inhabitants. For the attentive listener, water never dies. It lives in the

¹⁸³ See www.ricorso.net/rx/library/criticism/classic/Anglo_I/Heaney_S/Unhappy.htm.

continuous rhythm of waves, chords of streams, patterns of calm oceans and hasty rains. The wind is an element that grasps the ear forcefully when it is heard in the distance. Close by, the sensation is both tactile and aural. Heaney listens to the natural environment like a soundscape analyst to discover and record its significant features: familiar everyday sounds, sounds important to a culture, sounds that are unique to a place or sounds that carry a specific message. Listening to the natural ambient teaches him about the fabulous diversity and rich musicality of the apparently identical and familiar sounds. Like the mad Sweeney, Heaney's imagination is another testimony to nature's abundance and beauty. Sweeney says: "The alder is my darling" (PO 187). Like his Celtic ancestors, Heaney is just "another wood-lover and tree-hugger" (PO 186).

In listening to natural sounds, he also practises musical listening. Heaney listens in order to tune in his senses and emotions to the patterns of nature and perceive the "little jabs of delight in the elemental" (PO 181). In doing so, however, he also reminds his readers of the transient existence of pastoral sounds (Quément 38). He encourages the reader to be in the now, in the present tense. In 'Had I not been awake', he signals the need to be alert and mindful of the present moment, when he writes:

Had I not been awake I would have missed it,
[...]

It came and went so unexpectedly
[...]

[...] But not ever
After. And not now. (HC 3)

He teaches us to listen attentively for what might happen, and then listen to it carefully, because what might happen now, might not happen again. You capture it now or it is gone forever.

Just as with the sounds of the natural phenomena, Heaney's references to the biophonic sounds of the natural world open a wealth of knowledge about the relationship

between humans and non-human animals. Heaney writes not only about birds and other animals in general. He meticulously names a wide variety of species. In a world dominated by the voice of man and the din of his machinery, when the name of a species fades, its very existence and memory can be imperiled. In his poetry, Heaney writes as much about the nightingale and the blackbird, as he does about the sparrow, the corncrake, the cuckoo, the turkey, the snipe, the sand martin, the albatross and the lark. Heaney writes about such farm animals as bulls, sheep, dogs, pigs and horses to recall the soundscape of his childhood and the way of life that his father and grandfather pursued, but also writes about the otter, the ferret, the badger, the deer, the skunk, the fox, the hare and the rodent of which even many contemporary countryside men may barely be aware. He writes not only about the whale, the seals and the porpoise, which might appeal to environmentalists as “charismatic megafauna” – i.e. large species with popular appeal and symbolic values (Bekoff 87). Heaney also writes about a wide variety of less celebrated sea animals, including the oyster, the cod, the minnow, the eel, the spike, the mackerel and the salmon. As Schafer suggests, this “[l]inguistic accuracy is not merely a matter of lexicography” (34). Naming is caring. It is remembering. Naming is a prelude to listening to “a music that you never would have known” (SL 1).

In his poetry, Heaney encourages his readers to listen to the frightened cry of birds, the agony of pigs, and the silent suffering of farm animals. He writes about the disappearing keynotes and identities, about the biophonic sounds that were once part of the natural soundscape, but are now either masked by the noises of “combines and chemicals” (WO 50) or lost in “a fieldworker’s archive” (20). Heaney’s poetry can be seen as a call for his fellow human beings to share the acoustic territory of the world with non-humans. O’Driscoll asks Heaney whether he thinks “poetry can play any practical or meaningful role in changing minds, and hearts on environmental issues” – gently reminding him that he had once, in

reference to the Troubles, conceded that no poem is strong enough to stop a tank. So, O'Driscoll presses him, asking if a poem stops a SUV? Heaney responds:

I think that one answers itself. What has happened, however, is that environmental issues have to a large extent changed the mind of poetry. Again, it's a question of the level of awareness, the horizon of consciousness within which poet and audience operate. (SS 407)

Just as the sounds of the natural environment and non-human living organisms contribute to and reflect various cultural, social and historical associations, the sounds produced by human beings and man-made tools can reveal the social, cultural and political changes in the history of human civilisation. Therefore, blocking them as noise will deprive us of one of the greatest resources to understand the relationship between man and his acoustic environment. Commenting on the contemporary issue of noise pollution, Schafer writes, “[n]oise pollution results when man does not listen carefully. Noises are the sounds we have learned to ignore” (4). Heaney, however, is a careful and attentive listener to all sounds. His poetry brings up both the constructive and destructive noises of modernity. He is fascinated by the empowering presence of tractors and generators in farm life and acknowledges the freedom of movement brought forth by bicycles, cars, trains and planes. Yet he also insists that armoured cars and infantries are the unwelcome noises of human civilisation. He also reminds us that the acoustic space belongs to all living beings and that the noise of the plane engines and car engines can disturb the quietude of the natural environment and transform the habitat of animals.

Heaney is aware of the need to preserve disappearing keynotes of human civilisation. Until not long ago, seed cutting, turf cutting, blacksmithing, thatching, water divining and churning were essential parts of not only Irish rural life, but also many other cultures. Yet, the vernaculars of early trades and manual farming practices which Heaney evokes are on the decline. In the present day, many of these crafts have already become rare or redundant. In his poetry, Heaney evokes the sounds of traditional rural crafts to re-orient himself towards

his origin and bridge the gap between his own profession and those of his ancestors. As Vendler (1998) explains, “he makes himself into an anthropologist of his own culture, and testifies, in each poem, to his profound attachment to the practice described while not concealing his present detachment from rural life” (19). Yet Heaney evokes them not only to recollect the keynotes of his childhood, but also to collect the disappearing keynotes and rhythms of life and to seal their resonance on silent pages, making them a permanent and audible property of the world to come.

Heaney has sometimes considered his first four poetry collections as forming “a single movement” or phase (SS 124). Yet the very notion of linguistic sounds as both the means and subject matter of poetry is the indication of a landmark in the poet’s intellectual development, leading Corcoran to stamp Heaney’s *Wintering Out* as the “seminal single volume of the post-1970 period of English poetry” (182). Both the word ear and tongue become prominent in *Wintering Out*. Scholars have not failed to identify the numerous images of tongue in his third collection: the “river tongues” in ‘A New Song’, the “swinging tongue” of Henry Joy McCracken’s boy in ‘Linen Town’, “the slab of the tongue” in ‘Toome’, ‘the civil tongues’ of ‘The Last Mummer’ and “the gallery of the tongue” in ‘The Wool Trade’.¹⁸⁴ Heaney’s sensitivity and curiosity towards human voice can also be traced in the polyphony of voices evoked through his own voice and poetry.

Sounds of crying, sobbing, laughing, grunting, sighing and humming, as well as the various utterances made to express thoughts and feelings are the integral parts of everyday life. Heaney is aware that the world around us is full of voices, full of people with something to say, people who deserve to be remembered and listened to. “When, [...], environmental sound reaches such proportions that human vocal sounds are masked or overwhelmed, we have produced an inhuman environment” (Schafer 207). Likewise, when louder voices

¹⁸⁴ See, for instance, Corcoran, Morrison, Foster.

obscure others by the din of modern life, we have produced an inhuman environment. However, for Heaney, listening to other voices is vital to his attempt at creating a poetry that is not only personally satisfying but also socially aware. In a 1983 interview with Francis X. Clines, Heaney maintains he wants his poem to be “full of voices, full of people”.¹⁸⁵ In *The Redress of Poetry*, he said: “[p]oetry [...] has to be a working model of inclusive consciousness” (RP 7-8). Heaney’s attention to the voices of others and their evocation in his poetry brings us back to one of the most compelling aspects of acoustic ecology: its emphasis on listening to the other. Heaney’s poetry encourages a sensitivity towards surrounding voices. It highlights the need for opening our ears to not only louder voices but competing voices, silenced voices and forgotten voices.

Heaney’s poetry is an encouragement for what Schafer phrases as “clairaudience” or “a total appreciation of the acoustic environment” (4). On numerous occasions, in his poetry and prose, through his onomatopoeic effects, internal rhymes, alliterations, enjambments, careful word choices and punctuations, metaphorical language, vivid descriptions and deep insights, Heaney invites his readers and himself to listen to ‘the music of what happens’ (FW 53). This music, for him, can be the sound of what happens and what happens next, waves and wind, a singing bird, a digging spade, the bells, the train, the familiar voices or the voices of foreign languages coming from the radio. Heaney draws inspiration from the world around him, where he finds the extraordinary in the ordinary.

¹⁸⁵ See <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/03/13/magazine/poet-of-the-bogs.html>.

Chapter 4:

The Silence Listened For: Silence¹⁸⁶

Introduction

All poems, in a sense, are born out of infancy. *Infans*, the Latin word, means unspeaking, and the infant is the unspeaking one. So all good poems have been gathered in silence and have moved from the unspoken need to the luck of getting spoken right.¹⁸⁷

According to John Cage, “there is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes a sound” (191). Although the experience of absolute silence does not exist, as Heaney’s poetry also shows, we can experience silence in several ways. There is a quiet called silence, a stillness called silence, a loneliness called silence, an absence called silence, or a presence called silence. There have been several attempts by scholars from among psychologists, sociologists and ecologists to enumerate the various meanings of silence.¹⁸⁸ The interpretation of silence in Heaney’s poetry is integral to the understanding of the poet’s thoughts and experiences. The more we dig down, the more we become aware that there are dense strands of silence interwoven into the soundscape of each poem. My interpretation of silence in Heaney’s *Wintering Out* is not encyclopaedic but presents a selection of examples – divided into the four categories of silent places, silent people, silence as a pause and silence as absence – where silence contributes to our understanding of Heaney’s poetry.

This chapter begins with a focus on the relationship between silence and place. A soundscape is often called silent or quiet if it is possible for discrete sounds to be heard

¹⁸⁶ The title of this chapter is inspired by the final line of ‘Clearances’ (HL 26-34).

¹⁸⁷ See Heaney’s 2003 Lannan Foundation Poetry Reading: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjV7APxLa8c (0:38-1:05). For him the poems are the gifts of inspiration and reflection that occur in a pre-speaking period.

¹⁸⁸ See Cage’s *Silence* (1961), for the relationship between sound, music, noise and silence; Schafer’s *The Tuning of the World* (1977), for the definitions of negative and positive silence; Bruneau’s “Communicative Silences” (1973) and Jensen’s “Communicative Functions of Silence” (1973), for the psychological, interactive and sociocultural functions of silence.

clearly (Schafer 43). Moreover, in silent places – where seeing dominates listening – the structure and morphology of the place or the landscape, as well as other sensory, emotional or mental experiences affect the perception of silence (See 1.4.1). The experience of silence in vast prairies is unlike the experience of silence in deep valleys, silence in dense forests, silence on top of a mountain, silence in a farming field, silence on the beach, or silence in a library or a prayer room. The silence of a city at night is different from the silence of countryside at dawn, and silence in winter is different from silence in a summer day. The experience of silent landscapes and places can also be closely tied up with cultural, social, political associations. Silence can also carry different emotional, intellectual and psychological implications for different individuals. One can interpret silence in the mountains as delightful, another as spooky, melancholic or empowering.¹⁸⁹ In the first section, I discuss the different ways in which Heaney's silent places enable us to gain a deeper understanding of his themes.

In the second section, I focus my attention on Heaney's representation of silence among people. According to Johannesen the silence of individuals can have several implications: people can be silent because they are, among other things, listening, daydreaming, thinking, attentive, bored, afraid, doubtful, unhappy, surprised, angry, stressed, impolite or surprised. They may use silence as a response, a way of showing empathy, distancing oneself or isolating others (29).¹⁹⁰ However, their choice of silence may or may

¹⁸⁹ 'Sunlight' provides a powerful example of a quiet and comforting silent place (N ix-x). But the experience of silence in 'Summer Home' – with the presence of maggots and decomposing rubbish – is negative and 'Winter's Tale' opens into the bleak silence of a winter night. For Heaney, the silence of the Flaggy Shore, in 'Postscript', is delightful, yet the silence of the seashore as experienced by the women figures in 'Maighdean Mara' and 'Shore Woman', is gloomy and isolating. In 'Bogland', the silence of the American prairies, as affected by its sights, is liberating, while the profound silence of the Irish bogs encourages a brooding mood.

¹⁹⁰ Heaney's poetry encompasses a diverse range of silent people: In 'Digging', his father is immersed in his work and the poet himself is contemplating (DN 1). In 'Dawn Shoot', the boys are intentionally silent so as not to wake up the prey: "[s]ilent we headed up the railway" (DN 16). In 'Poor Women in a City Church', the devotees are kneeling and praying silently (DN 29). In 'The Play Way', students are mesmerised by the music: "now / [t]he big sound has silenced them. [...] A silence charged with sweetness" (DN 43). In 'The Peninsula', silence is caused as a result of feeling inarticulate, uncertain or absorbed in thoughts: "When you have nothing more to say, just drive [...]" (DD 11). In part two of 'Funeral Rites' and in 'Casualty', the funeral attendants are

not be a conscious and strategic decision. The silence of a vigilant hunter is different from the contemplative silence of a poet, and their silence is different from the silence of their audience or readers. The distinction should also be made in terms of the sources of silence – i.e. internal or external force (Kurzon 1675-1676). Silence can occur in dialogical, educational, legal, political, pathological, psychological or religious settings (Johannesen 29). However, in many situations, the sociocultural contexts can “manipulate” a person’s choice of silence (Bruneau 36).¹⁹¹ Finally, when exploring the communicative or performing implications of silence in Heaney’s poetry, we need to consider that in many instances there might be very little difference between different types of silence and that there might be several overlapping transitional phases.¹⁹² In the second section, I trace and interpret the silence of people in Heaney’s *Wintering Out* relying mainly – but not solely – on Kurzon’s typology of silence in sociocultural contexts.

The length of silence, in many instances, may be hard to determine. But the perception of time in silence may still be relevant.¹⁹³ Silences are differentiated according to their length. There can be a short pause, a long waiting or the eternal silence of death. The third section focuses on the interpretation of silence as a pause (see 1.4.1).¹⁹⁴ In everyday life,

silent: “[t]hose quiet walkers” (FW 17). In poem 3 of ‘Clearances’, the silence between the young Heaney and his mother is unifying (HL 29). In ‘Wedding Day’ and ‘Mother of the Groom’, his mother is emotionally overwhelmed. The silence of his aunt Mary in ‘Chairing Mary’ is, perhaps, out of boredom, old-age, lack of topic or caused by daydreaming: “She sat in all day as the sundialled / Window-splays across the quiet floor” (DC 67).

¹⁹¹ For instance, like many rural communities, Ulster people were renowned for their “inwardness and reserve” (Morrison 23), while the silence of women and children in many societies is due to social-cultural expectations. For the working-class Irish community, for instance, the ideal woman was “dutifully subordinate, submissive, and obedient” (Isenberg 47).

¹⁹² Bruneau explains that it is often difficult to distinguish psychological silences from the interactive ones and that in many cases sociocultural silence underlies other forms of silence (36). Berger and Kurzon too note that there may be transitional cases between the two extremes. For instance, “not finding the right words” or “memory failure” might be the initial reasons behind someone’s silence, which are unintentional, but this might be followed by “a decision not to speak”, which is intentional (Kurzon 1677).

¹⁹³ The concept of time in silence is often measurable. For instance, the silence of the boys in ‘Dawn Shoot’ lasts as long as they can resist speaking and the period of silence of the students in ‘The Play Way’ is perhaps the same as the length of the music they listen to. But, as Kurzon notes, silence about a subject matter cannot be timed as the speaker does not stop speaking and the listener is not often aware of the topic left out (1679).

¹⁹⁴ The term ‘pause’ in the prosodic sense is obviously not the concern of this thesis. In the third section, I also exclude verbal pauses discussed in the previous section. A verbal pause is often considered as an instance of psychological/psycholinguistic silence (e.g. a hesitation or self-correction), which is often very short, or in an

there are several short periods when silence creates a little space for reflecting upon what happened before or what might come after. A pause or stoppage may occur consciously or unconsciously because we are hesitant, tired, or just because we need time to listen, reflect, unwind and retune, and then to re-start. Heaney's life and poetry demonstrate several such periods of silence, short or long, when a pause creates the space for deep listening and pondering.¹⁹⁵

In one of its most conventional meanings, silence indicates the absence of a sound (Schafer 256). The interpretation of silence as 'absence' is also listed as the second definition in OED: "The state or condition when nothing is audible; absence of all sound or noise; complete quietness or stillness; [...]". The final section is dedicated to the interpretation of silence as absence. By 'absence', in this section, I mean the eradication of a sound-producing source – ranging from natural elements, to animals, and to people and their traditions – from a soundscape.¹⁹⁶

4.1 A Contested Zone: Silence and Place¹⁹⁷

In this section, I trace and interpret Heaney's silent places. In quiet soundscapes, there is a low ambient noise level and discrete sounds – of wind, birds and human voice, for instance – can be heard with clarity communicating vital information about their sound-producing sources and their position (Schafer 43). Yet silent places not only amplify sounds encouraging people to listen more attentively, but also intensify sensing as a whole (Sardello 89). Heaney's opening remarks at his Lannan Foundation Poetry Reading, quoted in the

interactive silence (e.g. take turning) that is often longer (Bruneau 36).

¹⁹⁵ Examples of silence as a pause in Heaney's poetry include: 'Digging', when Heaney's grandfather stops for a short while to drink a bottle of milk; 'A Call' by implying the poet's silent wait at the other end of the line; 'The Blackbird of Glanmore', when the poet stops the car to listen to the blackbird's song; 'The Makings of Music' when he advises his readers to stop and listen to the surroundings; as well as poems such as 'The Tollund Man' and 'Land'.

¹⁹⁶ For instance, 'Traditions', 'The Last Mummer' and 'New Song' mourn the absence of the Irish language and tradition; 'Midnight' recalls the extinction of the Irish wolf; and 'The Wool Trade' mourns the eradication of the Irish wool trade.

¹⁹⁷ The title of this section is inspired by Heaney's description of Glanmore Cottage (SS 325).

epigraphs to this chapter, are followed by a reference to one of the most memorable silent places he experienced as a child: “the silence in the kitchen where I was *infans*”.¹⁹⁸ In the absence of sounds, everything in the surroundings, every movement, even the empty space between things is bathed in “the reverence of silence” (Sardello 89). Heaney’s early poem, ‘Sunlight’, depicts a Vermeerian account of the reassuring atmosphere of the kitchen in the family house in 1940s, from the perspective of the young poet:¹⁹⁹ “There was a sunlit absence” (N IX). The growing feelings of warmth and security are further reinforced by and reflected through his aunt’s unhurried movements around the kitchen, the hot stove, the rising scone and the vast space that Heaney realises between the tick of the two clocks in the kitchen:

here is space
again, the scone rising
to the tick of two clocks.

And here is love [...]. (N X)

This sensory awareness and coming together of all the senses in a silent place are also reflected in the third poem of the sequence ‘Clearances’ that opens into the similar intimate and familiar atmosphere of the Mossbawn kitchen in the presence of his mother. Heaney uses the sonnet form to romanticise the memory of the pair existing and working together:²⁰⁰

When all the others were away at Mass
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.
They broke the silence, let fall one by one
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:
Cold comforts set between us, things to share
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes
From each other’s work would bring us to our senses. (HL 29)

The first lines create the image of an exclusive moment of togetherness (“When all the others were away at Mass / I was all hers”). Heaney’s use of the mundane language of everyday

¹⁹⁸ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjV7APxLa8c (1:08-1:12).

¹⁹⁹ Heaney compares his poem to a Vermeer painting saying that there is an almost “ekphrastic” quality to this poem. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywMY7bkSn9g&t=20s.

²⁰⁰ The poem was recognised as Ireland’s best-loved poem in 2015: www.rte.ie/news/2015/0311/686370-poem/.

household chores lends the poem a touch of domestic authenticity (“peeled potatoes”). The poem is delicately balanced with internal rhymes (others/hers, weeping/soldering/gleaming, splashes/senses; one/one; all/fall) and assonances (all/ all/ water, peeled/weeping/between/clean/each, silence/like/beside) to link the words and images, creating an even greater sense of intimacy (HL 29). Heaney wrote the poem in memory of his mother who had passed away in 1984. His mother’s final moments trigger his memories of the days in the past when the silence dominant in the kitchen allowed them to share the deepest and purest feelings of love, comfort and support.

Just as it intensifies the slightest sound from the surroundings, a quiet place also enables the inner voice of the poet to resound. The quietude at Glanmore cottage was similar to that at Mossbawn kitchen in the sense that it enabled the poet to listen to his senses and deepen his understanding of the surroundings but differed in the sense that it enabled him to find his poetic voice. For him, Glanmore was both a country retreat and a workspace, a zone of contest between poetic imagination, thoughts and reality. When asked about the status of the cottage in his life and poetry, he remarks:

Workspace, first and foremost. Which meant that it was also a retreat. It remained what it always had been, the poetry house. It’s a silence bunker, a listening post, a holding, in every sense of that word. It holds meaning and things, and even adds meaning. In my life, Glanmore Cottage stands for what Wallace Stevens said poetry stands for, the imagination pressing back against the pressures of reality. Glanmore is a contested zone – [...], I think it’s a studio for writing in, [...]. I always found the place conducive to writing and it saved my writing life, because I was able to disappear from home in Dublin – which was becoming like a cross between a travel agency and a telephone exchange – and bury myself down there. (SS 325-326)²⁰¹

Listening to the inner voice, in turn, enables the poet to access his creative power. In order for that to take place, Heaney seeks the quietude of Glanmore and embraces the silence of Orkney. ‘From the Republic of Conscience’ illustrates an example, where the experience of a

²⁰¹ He refers to Glanmore cottage as “a completely silent place of writing” on a number of other occasions: “Meanwhile, the formal purchase we’d arranged with Ann Saddlemeyer restored us to the ‘beloved vale’ in Wicklow. Glanmore Cottage was available from then on as a completely silent place of writing, close to Dublin, no phone, no interruptions whatsoever” (SS 322).

silent place opens for him a field of artistic possibilities and enables him to bridge between his ordinary bodily experiences and imagination, directing them towards a poem.²⁰² Heaney elaborates on the connection between the silence of Orkney, the poem and its title, saying:²⁰³

I took it that Conscience would be a republic, a silent, solitary place where a person would find it hard to avoid self-awareness and self-examination; and this made me think of Orkney. I remembered the silence the first time I landed there. When I got off the small propeller plane and started walking across the grass to a little arrivals hut, I heard the cry of a curlew. And as soon as that image came to me, I was up and away, able to proceed with a fiction that felt workable yet unconstrained, a made-up thing that might be hung in the scale as a counterweight to the given actuality of the world.

Natural landscapes are generally imagined to be silent or quiet because they are away from the clamour of the city. They are high-fidelity environments where “sounds overlap less frequently; there is perspective — foreground and background” (Schafer 43). The quiet ambience of Co. Derry’s countryside that Heaney grew up in was an early example of the hi-fi soundscape that allowed the poet to exercise this distant listening and expand his sense of place (see my Introduction). The quietude of the countryside deepens every visitor’s engagement with the topography and ecology of the place. In Heaney’s poetry, there are several other hi-fi soundscapes — ranging from the quiet soundscape of peat bogs, hills and flax dams, to coastlines and lakes, where the experience of silence is also closely bound to the topography of the landscape, as well as the various personal, cultural and social associations.

‘Oracle’ is set in the quietude of the woodland surrounding Heaney’s childhood house. The silence of the wood is full of secrets. There can be a gentle humming through the grass, a whistling through the branches, a gusty wind, a creaking from afar, a lively chattering of birds and then suddenly a rest. In the wood, Nature is not silent, it is not still, but one needs to be both silent and still to be able to see and hear what is happening. There is, therefore, a sense of waiting in this silence and stillness, one that invites the listener to listen attentively

²⁰² The poem was written in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Amnesty International.

²⁰³ The writings collected by Amnesty International Irish Section and published by the *Irish Times*. See: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/human-rights-poetic-redress-1.903757?fbclid=IwAR2VU7aYJph2dNsB8UVnU3cY0uHfX8lNjPQ08YGGZnVrC5xLP9eOuk0nevVE>.

for something, anything (Maitland 160). As Vendler has noted, ‘Oracle’, is Heaney’s announcement of his poetic vocation, for the non-generic way in which the poet thinks of himself (28), as the “lobe and larynx / of the mossy places” (WO 18). In ‘Oracle’, listening becomes the only way of sense-making. The poet-in-the-making becomes a silence seeker and an intent listener, so much so that he proceeds to “[h]ide in the hollow trunk / of the willow tree” (WO 18), allowing the voices of the surroundings to be one with his inner voice.

The stillness of open hills and valleys blurs the sense of time and space (see 1.4.1). In Anahorish – “the first hill in the world” (WO 6) – nature is best listened to. The sounds of the place-name become almost synonymous with the song of the local river in every spring (see 3.1 and 3.4): “[m]y ‘place of clear water’” (WO 6). But in the silence of Anahorish, the poet is also able to travel backward in time to visit men “[w]ith pails and barrows // those mound-dwellers” (WO 6). In the silence of Toome too he embarks on a time journey. Toome Bridge, located in Bann Valley, was the site of archaeological finds and the site of the Irish rebellion in 1798 when the Royal Ulster Constabulary with the king’s soldiers massacred thousands of individuals from the United Irish Army (Molino 183). In the silence of Toome, the wordsound continues to reverberate in the poet’s inner ear “*Toome, Toome*” like a “souterrain” sending the poet back to the “blastings” of British cannon fire and remains of past civilisations: “fragmented ware” and “torcs and fish-bones” (WO 16). But it also sends the poet “a hundred centuries” into the future of Ireland to seek “what [is] new” (WO 16). For Heaney, the silence of his familiar hills and valleys are the sites for travelling through time and space.

The poem ‘Land’ evokes another quiet territory from Heaney’s childhood, but one combined with the view of acres of “outlying fields” (WO 11). Like the wood and hills, the silence of farming fields is nothing like absence. There is perhaps the sound of water running through the stone and grass in narrow streams, the sound of wind whooshing across the fields

and squeezing through the cairns. But more importantly, the silence of the fields amplifies the vernaculars of farming lifestyle (see 3.3). Both in ‘Oracle’ and ‘Land’, as well as in ‘Personal Helicon’ as Tobin has noted, Heaney discloses his poetic vocation (79). While in ‘Oracle’, Heaney is all ears, silent and still waiting in the hollowed trunk of a tree, in ‘Land’ he participates in the making of the soundscape to not only stock up his memories of the family farmland, but also internalise them. Heaney proves his profound attachment to his land by stepping in through the persona of an anonymous and silent Ulster farmer, participating in the composition of the soundscape and making it the “forever part of his inner landscape” (Vendler 21): “I stepped it, perch by perch. / [...] I composed habits for those acres” (WO 11). In the final section of the poem, the poet traveller resorts to listening as a way of reconnecting with his homeland and reliving the sensation of farming life but, having experienced the farming soundscape, it suffices if he lends his ears to silence:

I sense the pads
unfurling under grass and clover:

if I lie with my ear
in this loop of silence. (WO 12)

As his first place and a legacy of his Irish memories, the soundscape of Mossbawn remains an integral part of Heaney’s “Irish memory bank” (SS 142). In the empty silence of California nights, in ‘Fodder’ – the poem he wrote while in Berkeley – he continues to search for the familiar rural and linguistic vernaculars of his first place. The distance from home only heightens and intensifies the Ulster poet’s mixed feelings of homesickness and guilt, and the “chorus of ‘Hi-i-s’ and ‘Wow-w-w-s’ and ‘He-e-eyes!’” of Californian students (SS 138) only makes him long for the most homely word “fother”, a word whose articulations spills out of his sensory memories of the family home in minute details (WO 3) (see also 3.4). The acoustic clarity with which Heaney experienced the soundscape of Mossbawn now enables him to recall the slightest sound, sight and other sensory experiences. Hence, the weathered

eaves gently “falling” on his feet, a bundle of fother being “tossed” over the half-doors onto the wet floor stables and a whiff of old “tumbled” grass and a scent of “meadowsweet” bring the poet to being actually present in the backyard of his Mossbawn house (WO 3). For him “these” long nights of separation feel too quiet, empty and disheartening, and as Parker has remarked: “Heaney summons its memory to sustain him during the cold bleak present” (94).

But Heaney’s acoustic memories of his childhood home are not limited to fields and hills. The profound silence of the surrounding bogs or the kind of rare silence he experienced in the rocky lands of Co. Clare have also forged the poet’s perception of life and ultimately the soundscape of his poetry. In ‘Bogland’, Heaney associates Irish national identity with Irish landscape distinguishing it from that of the US characterised by vast prairies. In the first lines, he juxtaposes the short word ‘bog’, characterised by a short vowel enclosed with hard consonants, with the open expansive word ‘prairies’:

We have no prairies
To slice a big sun at evening – [...]

[...] Our unfenced country
Is bog that keeps crusting
Between the sights of the sun. (DD 43)

In a 2008 poetry reading session at the New Yorker Festival, Heaney explains the genesis of the poem hinting at the main distinction between “outward, direction-finding, [and] pushing-out” American prairies and the “going-down” Irish bogs (DD 43).²⁰⁴ The term soundscape is the sonic equivalent of its visual counterpart, landscape (see 1.4.2). The contrast between the landscapes of the two countries, in the lines quoted above, also highlights the distinction between the silence of vast American prairies and the role of Irish bogs as the echo-chamber of history and culture. Like a historical archive, bogs store and preserve what has been

²⁰⁴ Heaney explains this topographical distinction between America and Ireland and its symbolic importance in a reading-conversation with Muldoon, when he says: “In America, the prairie is very important, the frontier is very important and that is their myth. So, after I taught our class, I thought what’s ours? I mean, Americans have this terrific outward direction-finding, pushing-out, we have a bog going down”
See www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HWurkQ1ao4&t=1913s (34:33-34:53).

deposited in them over millions of years. The kind of silence experienced in a bogland, for Heaney, is earthbound. It is layered. You probe it “inwards and downwards” (DD 43). The layered structure of bogs allows Heaney to transcend temporality and perceive the echoes of the past sounds and voices. The Irish poet is the most scrupulous fieldworker of silent peat bogs. For him every seam of coal underground represents a buried layer of human history. In ‘Bog Oak’, the poet sets out to retrieve the hidden treasures from the deepest layers of the peat bog and bring a “long-seasoned rib” (WO 4) to the troubled days of Ireland. For him, each rift and bruise relate a story of Irish strength and endurance. Schafer says: “[m]an is an anti-entropic creature; he is a random-to-orderly arranger and tries to perceive patterns in all things” (226). The preserving capacity of bogs allows Heaney to not only unearth national memories, but also witnesses the patterns with which the history of mankind repeats itself. In ‘The Tollund Man’, Heaney alludes to this aspect of history by associating the atrocities of the Iron Age in the Jutland Peninsula in Denmark with the modern version of human barbarities, Northern Irish political killings in particular.²⁰⁵ Referring to the Iron Age rituals he says: “[...] this is more than an archaic barbarous rite: it is an archetypal pattern” (PO 57-58).

In the lines quoted from ‘Bogland’ Heaney refers to yet another attribute of the silence he experienced in the Irish bogs, which corresponds with Garden’s references to the transatlantic associations of Heaney’s waterlogged poems (see 2.2). For him, the silence of the Irish bogs is “unfenced” (DD 43). In ‘Bogland’, Heaney cherishes bogs as a “soft” and “waterlogged” ground. The silence that accumulates at the “wet centre” of a bogland is limitless, in the sense that it is, as Heaney puts it, “bottomless” connecting it to the Atlantic waters (DD 43). According to Garden, the shifting and soft soil of the bog has a crucial role

²⁰⁵ The ‘pre-historic face of Denmark’ was discovered in 1950, in the peat bogs of Bjældskovdal. The man had been living during the first phase of the Iron Age (300-400 B.C.). The Tollund man’s incredibly well-preserved body, the rope around his neck, the calm and solemn look on his face, led to questions about his life and death. A year after the publication of *Wintering Out*, he wrote an extract of the poem in the guest book of the museum. See www.tollundman.dk/.

as the shared site of “haunting memories” between Ireland and her neighbouring nations (91). The geological similarities of Jutland are another reason why Heaney feels “at home” in his imaginary trip to Denmark. The setting of ‘The Tollund Man’ crosses the boundaries of the Ulster landscape and stretches over the boglands of Denmark. In his 1996 talk at the Silkeborg Museum, where the body is currently preserved, Heaney reveals his fascination with the mystery and silence that surrounded the peat bogs of his Mossbawn home and Jutland, as well as with their layered structure and their capacity to preserve the treasures of time and place. In his 1996 speech at Silkeborg Museum, he says:

When I was a child and an adolescent I lived among peat-diggers and I also worked in the peat bog myself. I loved the structure the peat bank revealed after the spade had worked its way through the surface of the peat. I loved the mystery and silence of the place when the work was done at the end of the day and I would stand there alone while the larks became quiet and the lapwings started calling, while a snipe would suddenly take off and disappear [...].²⁰⁶

Both bogs and the Burren have come to epitomise Irishness for resisting the colonial settlement and thus, any alteration to the landscape (see 2.2).²⁰⁷ The karst landscape houses over 120 cairns of varying sizes that once served as a landmark for boundaries and routes or memorials and burial chambers from the pre-Christian period.²⁰⁸ Today the resonating silence of the Burren has remained as a symbol of resistance and source of imaginative inspiration for many modern Irish writers and artists including Heaney (see 2.2). Cairn-making for Heaney is an art that associates him closely with his cultural heritage. In fact, before leaving the farming lifestyle behind, in ‘Land’, the poet makes sure to perform cairn-making for one last time: “[...] gathered stones off the ploughing / to raise a small cairn” (WO 11). Heaney’s cairn-maker, in the poem ‘Cairn-maker’, is a painter, who attempts to encode and imprint the

²⁰⁶ See archive.archaeology.org/blog/the-poet-and-the-bog-body/.

²⁰⁷ For this reason, both bogs and Burren were regarded by the British as wasteland. See Gerard Boate’s *Ireland’s natural history* (1652) for more information on how colonisers compared the character of Irish people in relation to bogs and their formation.

²⁰⁸ The Burren – from the Irish word ‘Boireann’ meaning the ‘rocky place’ – stretches over 250 square kilometres in the southwest of the Republic of Ireland in Co. Clare. The landscape has over 6000 years of agricultural history and today is especially recognised for its distinct flora and fauna as well as for the high density of the preserved monuments. See www.burrennationalpark.ie/.

music of the Burren on the canvas.²⁰⁹ Like the poet himself, he is a meticulous observer, a silent listener and a devoted keeper of his cultural heritage. He spends the “whole day” patiently undoing the old cairns and then clamping, balancing, chambering “small cairn after cairn” (WO 39). The so-called barren land continues to resonate what Potts calls the “music in stone” (39), cradling the ears of the attentive observers and listeners. The cairn-maker is, in fact, any contemporary Irish artist with a unique way of restoring “the culture to itself” (PO 41).

4.2 Whatever You Say, Say Nothing: Silence and People²¹⁰

Just as there are various kinds of silent places, the silence of people can have different or even contrasting functions and implications. In this section, my study of the silence of individuals in *Wintering Out* focuses on silence as a psychological state and personal attribute (e.g. silence of an introverted person), silence in everyday interpersonal communications (i.e. silence in a dialogical context between two or more individuals), and the silence of individuals and communities in the broader social, cultural and political context (i.e. silence of minorities, subordinates, women and children).²¹¹

One of the first silent figures in the poet’s life was his father, Patrick Heaney. In his 2012 AWB Vincent Literary Award acceptance speech, Heaney thinks of his father as a man who considered speech as “affectation”.²¹² Patrick Heaney’s silence does not stem from inner conflict, indecisiveness or forgetfulness, but from his lack of faith in and mistrust of the efficiency of language. As Heaney himself puts it, the old man’s silence was “a kind of

²⁰⁹ The poem is dedicated to Barrie Cooke, the Ireland-based British born painter who painted a portrait of the poet (SS 148).

²¹⁰ The title of this section is inspired by Heaney’s poem ‘Whatever You Say Say Nothing’ (N 52-55).

²¹¹ This structure follows Bruneau’s categories of silence in “Communicative Silences” (1973) – i.e. psychological, interactive and sociocultural – in order to encompass the range of silences presented by Heaney. Bruneau, however, explains that it is often difficult to distinguish psychological (i.e. psycholinguistic) silences from the interactive ones and that in many cases the third type – sociocultural silence – underlies the first two forms (36).

²¹² See www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdTQPZGW0Bs (1:20-1:52).

counterweight to all speechifying and theory-speak” (SS 287). This impression is given from Heaney’s first poem, ‘Digging’, where his father is described as being very absorbed in the activity.²¹³ In a 2001 interview with Nigel Farndale, Heaney recounts memories of his father describing him on many occasions as a silent person. One of his earliest and most unforgettable memories is when his father returns home in the afternoon “without his hat and going to bed”. The man had nearly drowned after his horse reared up near a riverbank, but it was the shock of seeing this unusual behaviour – not wearing a hat and not working for the rest of the day – weighed with his silence that turns the incident into “an eternal image” for the poet.²¹⁴ Patrick Heaney left school at the age of 14 and started his career as a cattle dealer and farmer. While Heaney admired his father’s skill and accompanied him to cattle fairs and markets, he chose to follow his education in literature and writing poetry. Yet Heaney’s father’s reaction to his son’s career choice was merely silence. Reflecting on his father’s silence in response to his education and career, Heaney remarks:

I mean, he didn't devalue it, he wasn't afraid of it, or against it, he watched it happen – as he did the oddity of me publishing a book and himself being in it. That must have been a curiosity. We didn't quite deal with that, we didn't even discuss it. No way of discussing it.²¹⁵

Even on his son’s wedding day, Patrick Heaney refused to give the expected traditional wedding speech. Yet on this occasion too his silence was internal and intentional and a way of expressing his presence and support. The poet later commented: “[On the wedding day,] [t]he families being themselves, even more themselves than usual, [...]. My

²¹³ This kind of silence is internal and intentional – as opposed to the imposed silence, which I explain later in this section – and can be considered as a personal attribute. Several other figures in his poetry seem to have a similar attribute: In ‘Digging’, Heaney gives a similar impression about his grandfather/uncle, whom he remembers as a child: “Once I carried him milk in a bottle [...] He straightened up / To drink it, then fell to right away” (DN 1). The thatcher too was a man of few words. In the poem, he almost explicitly states that the man does not engage in any conversation when he arrives at Heaney’s home for work and nor does he talk to the child Heaney who spends the entire day observing him: “[...] he turned up some morning [...]. He eyed the old rigging, [...]. Next, the bundled rods [...].” (DD 10). The tailor, in ‘At Banagher’, is described as being tight-mouthed while working: “His lips tight back, [...], / Keeping his counsel always, giving none” (SL 67). This kind of silence could also be interpreted as cultural. In fact, as Morrison has noted, Ulster was “renowned like all rural communities for its inwardness and reserve” (23).

²¹⁴ See www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4722682/Seamus-Famous.html.

²¹⁵ See www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4722682/Seamus-Famous.html.

father refused to get into the hired gear; nor would he make a speech, since speech was never his thing anyhow” (SS 253-254). Although we cannot know what the person would have exactly said if he or she had spoken, as Kurzon has noted, this type of silence is equivalent to a “speech act” (1676). Heaney says: “There wasn't that much substantial exchange but there was a good bit of silent assignation between us”.²¹⁶ Patrick Heaney’s silence was in fact a way of communicating his thoughts and feelings to his son. In ‘The Harvest Bow’, he gifts his son a plaited bow without speaking a word, yet Heaney is able to correctly interpret his father’s silence as the indication of his love:

As you plaited the harvest bow
 You implicated the mellowed silence in you
 [...]
 A throwaway love-knot of straw. (FW 55)

In another instance, in ‘Mid-Term Break’, the poem that recounts the tragic death of Heaney’s younger brother Christopher (see 3.4), the poet’s father is portrayed crying silently in front of the entrance of the house – whereas one of the neighbours, big Jim Evans, sympathises with the poet about Christopher’s accident describing it as “a hard blow” (DN 15). When asked by Farndale if there was any unfinished business left between him and his father when he passed away, Heaney replies: “plenty left unsaid, but nothing left understood” – which is a wonderful way of describing his silence as a way of communication between himself and his father.²¹⁷ Knowing his father’s mistrust of speech, in ‘The Stone Verdict’, the poem he wrote one year after his father passed away, Heaney anticipates that even on the day of judgement his father will hold on to his silence and pride:

When he stands in the judgment place
 With his stick in his hand and the broad hat
 Still on his head, maimed by self-doubt
 And an old disdain of sweet talk and excuses [...]. (HL 19)

²¹⁶ See www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4722682/Seamus-Famous.html.

²¹⁷ See www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4722682/Seamus-Famous.html.

On the other hand, Heaney is aware of the significance of orality in Catholicism – by contrast with Protestantism that mainly relies on the interpretation of the written script (Ong 284-285).²¹⁸ Moreover, according to Christian teachings, “Word” is almost synonymous with Jesus Christ: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Gospel of John 1:1). It is also believed that immediately after death, Christ will render judgement to the departed person (Gospel of Mathew 25:31-46). Knowing that his father was a man of few words, Heaney suggests that it will not be fair if the old man’s verdict “is blabbed out” in front of him as “he will expect more than [just] words”. Instead, just like the pre-Christian god Hermes, his father should be judged surrounded by silent stones and venerated on the earth by “the cairn / Of his apotheosis” (HL 19):

It will be no justice if the sentence is blabbed out.
He will expect more than words in the ultimate court
He relied on through a lifetime's speechlessness.

Let it be like the judgment of Hermes,
God of the stone heap, where the stones were verdicts [...]. (HL 19)

As Vendler notes, many of Heaney’s elegiac poems could be read as “part of the distinctive (and often successful) modernist effort to rewrite, in more believable terms, the heroic, sublime and religious conventions of the classical elegy” (74). However, when it comes to elegizing his father, who is mistrustful of speech, the poet is driven to the ancient Greek myth of Hermes for what he thinks would be the appropriate judgement process for his father, who might have likewise stood by “a gate-pillar / Or a tumbled wallstead where hogweed earths the silence [...] (HL 19).²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Heaney highlights this in ‘The Other Side’ when describing the chanting of the liturgy in their kitchen, juxtaposing it with the kitchen of the Protestant neighbor “hung with texts” (WO 25).

²¹⁹ Here, Heaney foregrounds the association between Hermes – the tutelary god of speech and oratory – and the countryside, which he drew from Guthrie’s *The Greeks and Their Gods* (1950):

Hermes then is an ancient god of the countryside, named by the Greeks from the *herma*, also called *hermaion*, which was a cairn or heap of stones. These cairns served as landmarks [...] to explain the connexion of Hermes with the cairns, the Greeks characteristically invented an aetiological myth. When Hermes killed Argos, he was brought to trial by the gods. They acquitted him, and in doing so each threw his voting-pebbles (*phethos*) at his feet. Thus, a heap of stones grew up around him. (qtd in Vendler 75)

Heaney also speaks about the silence of his mother on his wedding day. But the silence of Heaney's mother on that day was of a different sort. The poems 'Wedding Day' and 'Mother of the Groom' in *Wintering Out* flash back to two different scenes from the poet's wedding to Marie Devlin in August 1965. For most people, a wedding is a prominent and life-changing occasion. Yet anyone who has been to a wedding has experienced the co-existence of cries and laughters on this special day. Recalling his own wedding party, the poet says: "[e]verybody [was] in good form and in full cry" (SS 253). In 'Mother of the Groom', he captures some of his mother's contrasting feelings through what seems to be silence of a person who "is emotionally overcome" (Johannesen 29). While everyone else is clapping and rejoicing, Margaret Kathleen McCann Heaney is portrayed sitting quietly with her hands on "her [now] voided lap" remembering the time when today's groom was a small toddler (WO 46). As the bride and groom enter the room, she experiences a surge of guilt and grief, as if the child "slipped her soapy hold" (46). For her, the union of the young couple is the indication of an ending to the parent-child circle she and her son have been holding for years. As Heaney puts it: "a wedding always has its moments of strangeness, sudden lancings or fissures in the fun when parent and child have these intense intimations that the first circle is broken. It is in the literal sense *unheimlich*, an unhoming [emphasis in the original]" (SS 254).²²⁰ Yet the wedding ring "bedded" in her finger is the proof that the mother of the groom is not foreign to the "legend of love" herself (45). The woman overcomes her worries and breaks her silence by joining the clapping guests.

Heaney's own silence on the day of his wedding was a rather strange and unforgettable experience for him. It was similar to that of his mother in the sense that it was perhaps unintentional and caused by an external situation. 'Wedding Day' introduces a state of confusion and anxiety experienced by unreeling silent images from the groom's memories.

²²⁰ OED defines the term 'unheimlich' as 'uncanny and weird'. In *Das Unheimliche* (1919), Sigmund Freud used the concept to refer to the experience of strangeness in the familiar. The term has a considerable use in the literary treatment of gothic literature.

It's all vision, "[s]ound has stopped in the day" (WO 45). Unlike sound waves, which "penetrate the body of the listener" inevitably and evoke a sense of connection, visualised objects and images "stay out there" giving the viewer a sense of perspective and otherness (B. R. Smith 7). Heaney's inability to speak and hear the sounds and voices in the wedding party indicate his feelings of being distant, overwhelmed, uncertain and "afraid" (WO 45). Heaney remarks that it was, after all, a party everybody enjoyed, but the grieving faces, cries and waving hands when he and his bride were driving away made it "hallucinatory" and thus, haunting (SS 254). In the poem, Heaney juxtaposes his own speechlessness with Marie's singing. The "deserted bride" (WO 45) is the only individual with the courage and strength to bear the strain, restore balance between "grief and joy" (Devlin 84) during the ceremony and voice her feelings (see also 3.4).

The functions of silence in more overtly dialogical and interpersonal contexts are also brought up in such poems as 'Mid-Term Break', 'Funeral Rites', 'Dock', and 'The Sharpened Stone' as well as in 'Summer Home' and 'The Other Side' from *Wintering Out*. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, silence between two or more individuals can have several communicative functions. It can heal past wounds and bind people or just hurt more and sever relationships (Jensen 149-52).²²¹ 'Dock' – amongst Heaney's first "achieved" poems as a student, reprinted in *Death of a Naturalist* – uses silence to illustrate the uncompromising sectarian prejudice dominating the recruitment policies of the mid-twenties in Belfast (SS 67).²²² The poem describes a Protestant man sitting alone and silent at the corner of a pub, refusing to interact with the rest of the – Catholic – dockers who are involved in a conversation. His tight-shut mouth and uncommunicative attitude, as well as his

²²¹ Jensen identifies the five functions of silence in an interpersonal context: connecting-distancing function, perlocutionary effect, revelational function, judgemental function and activating function (Jensen 249-257).

²²² The scale and impact of sectarian discrimination in the shipbuilding industry of Ulster has been the subject of many debates. See www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/david-mckittrick-not-everyone-is-weeping-as-the-last-ship-leaves-titanic-town-5352380.html?fbclid=IwAR10rF8YnK6WKNKw4issZ2ZdXZ8OYcKDGFGlaAUVIYBa8oYTf0PGOrN-4ZPc.

irritated facial expression and body language, speak of his intentional silence and attempt to isolate himself from the rest whom he despises. Heaney's chooses the vocabulary of heavy and rough equipment (i.e. "gantry", "jaw", "vice" and "hammer") to convey a sense of hostility and resentment. Even the lines are clotted with thick and hard sounds (i.e. plosives, fricatives, sibilants and velars), making it difficult to manage all the consonants in sequence. It's all hard-edges and metallic:

There, in the corner, staring at his drink.
The cap juts like a gantry's crossbeam,
Cowling plated forehead and sledgehead jaw.
Speech is clamped in the lips' vice.

That fist would drop a hammer on a Catholic [...]. (DN 28)

In a sequence of five short poems in 'Summer Home', from *Wintering Out*, the remorseful poet narrates what can be described as an "unmusical" period in their marriage, when silence between the poet and his wife has "loosened" the tie between them (WO 48).²²³ The poem is based on an account of a domestic tribulation – during a 1969 holiday in France, when the damp weather, hot nights and the foul odour of the rubbish and the maggots in the cottage have been aggravating the family's discontent (see also 3.4). The poem begins by trying to locate the source of the bitter silence that prevails at the summer home rejecting the promises of the title in the opening line: "summer [has] gone sour" (47). Like "something in heat" or "a fouled nest incubating" in a hidden place (47), the void between the couple is quietly giving way to more and more agony and unhappiness. The rest of the poem shows the couple's attempts to communicate their feelings and "anoint the wound" (48). But the persistence of silence indicates that the gap between the couple "begin[s] / to open and split // ahead" (48). In the first attempt, the husband and wife lie in the bed, under a warm blanket hoping that the physical proximity will bring their spirits closer. But they are paralyzed by the

²²³ Heaney later commented that "[t]hose little poems in 'Summer Home' come more from pressure of personal experience than any literary influence" of Lowell's *Life Studies* (1959) or Snodgrass's *Heart's Needle* (1959), for instance, which are the canonical examples of the genre of confessional poetry (SS 147).

“cold” and sharp “blade” of estrangement that keeps them apart (48). In a second futile attempt, in the final part of the poem, the poet and his wife “lie stiff till dawn” on their bed, unable to talk their way to reunion and reconciliation (48).

In *The Magic Mountain* (1927), Thomas Mann famously notes that in a society where “speech is civilisation itself [...] it is silence which isolates” (Mann 518). But in the same context, silence, this instrument of isolation, can also create a sense of connection and community. The deliberate observation of silence in memorials, funerals and during worship are the examples of silence as a positive and connecting element (Jensen, 1973; Johannesen, 1974; Schafer, 1977). Heaney brings up these unifying and positive aspects of silence in several instances in his poetry. The silence between Heaney and his mother in “When all the others were away at Mass” has a connecting and unifying function (see also 4.1). Later, at his dying mother’s bedside, while the parish priest is vehemently saying the prayers and some of the other people are repeating and crying, the poet decides to remain silent. At these last minutes, he is reminded of the day when he shared a moment of emotional closeness with his mother in the kitchen while peeling the potatoes. The mother and son once again resort to silence to unite for one last time:

So while the parish priest at her bedside
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying
And some were responding and some crying
I remembered her head bent towards my head,
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives –
Never closer the whole rest of our lives. (HL 29)

The silence of the man in ‘Mid-Term Break’ who only speak in whispers (“Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest”) and limit their verbal communication to brief expressions of condolences (“tell me they were ‘sorry for my trouble’”) is an attempt to empathise with the Heaney family who had just lost the young Christopher in a car accident (DN 15). In ‘Funeral Rites’, similarly, Heaney juxtaposes the orderliness and sombre silence of the traditional Irish Catholic ceremonies and the sense of courtesy he has for the deceased

(“I shouldered a kind of manhood”, “I knelt courteously / admiring it all”) comparing it with the rumbling and roaring of the cars in the contemporary funerals in the second section of the poem (N 6-9) (see also 3.3). In ‘Casualty’ too, Heaney elegises the death of the fisherman killed during Bloody Sunday and describes the funeral attendants as being quiet: “[t]hose quiet walkers” (FW 17).

In *Wintering Out*, the positive and connecting function of silence in an interpersonal context is illustrated in the first and final part of ‘The Other Side’. Heaney describes his family and their Catholic neighbours as being “both beside us and on the other side” of the dividing social lines (SS 132). While sectarian divisions of Northern Ireland were reaching their peak during the 1970s, in ‘The Other Side’ the poet looks back at the more stable bond connecting his Catholic family to their Protestant neighbours in the 1940s and presents silence as a unifying element. The first section of the poem opens to Mr. Johnny Junkin’s fast and fierce footsteps accompanied by his unkind critique of Heaney family’s management of the property, which the young poet shrugs off: “my ear swallowing / his fabulous, biblical dismissal, / that tongue of chosen people” (WO 24). While the young Heaney’s disagreement with him is evident from his ironic language, his tolerance and silence in response can be seen as an attempt to bear opposing views and to encourage a sense of community. In the final section, this attempt is made by both sides. This time the white-haired man appears very considerate of his neighbour’s private space. He approaches the Heaney household quietly, waits for them to complete their prayer and only then places a soft knock on the door. The gentle distraction is warmly welcomed by the bored youngster, who mutually desires “rapprochement” (Parker 101). Heaney stands behind the old man, in the dark, but is unable to articulate a single word or make another move. The old man, on the other hand, has reached a moment of self-awareness in which he has a feeling of closeness, empathy and unity with the person from who he was once distant. Heaney faces a dilemma. He wonders

whether he should escape the situation (“slip away”) or approach the man touching him on the shoulder (“go up and touch his shoulder”) and moderate the communication with unrelated trivial chatter (“talk about the weather // or the price of grass-seed?”) (WO 26):

But now I stand behind him
in the dark yard, in the moan of prayers.
He puts a hand in a pocket

or taps a little tune with the blackthorn
shyly, as if he were party to
lovemaking or a stranger's weeping.

Should I slip away, I wonder,
or go up and touch his shoulder
and talk about the weather

or the price of grass-seed? (WO 26)

As Parker has put it, the possibility of rapprochement, as the subject of the poem, is illustrated through the encounters between Heaney and a Protestant neighbour. ‘The Other Side’, indicates “how centuries of conflict and distrust cannot be easily brushed aside” (101-103). In the poem, Heaney ponders over the ways of bringing the two sides together. Silence, in this case, emerges as “an effective instrument for inducing profound experiences, and for lowering the barriers between the self and the Other” (Maitland 203). Robert Oliver, who was an authority on public speaking and spent several years researching communication and rhetoric, states that “it is not through speech or acts but through silence that the deepest bonds are cemented” (153). This type of silence is evoked when language fails. It is the silence of ineffability, when one is able to hear the inner voices of the other. Standing on one side of the land, the two neighbours have now crossed the borders of otherness and divisions.²²⁴

One of the other main types of silence Heaney manifests in *Wintering Out* is the silence of subordinates and minorities. A person may be silent in a social interaction, but the

²²⁴ Other examples, in Heaney’s poems, when silence is presented as a way of bonding include: ‘The Sharpening Stone’, where Heaney and his wife are described lying down on their backs, “Listening to the rain drip off the trees / And saying nothing” (SL 59). Silence, here, can be interpreted as a way of pondering, daydreaming, listening and a means of bringing the couple closer together.

source of his silence may not always be found within the silent person himself. Silence can be imposed upon individuals and communities by sociocultural codes, a dominating voice or a controlling presence (Kurzon 1676). An individual is silenced when he or she cannot speak or cannot be heard. The history of colonisation, slavery and patriarchy shows numerous instances where individuals and societies have been silenced, minority groups have been marginalised, slaves have been silenced by their masters, women have been silenced by men in patriarchal societies, children have been silenced by their parents and other adults (see also 1.2). Silence, in these contexts, is used as “a murder weapon” (Maitland 216). It is used as a way to not only suppress individual’s voices and opinions, but also annihilate their identities and personhoods. In his poetry, Heaney explores situations in which silence has been employed as a means of imposing prejudice and power. The poems ‘Servant Boy’, ‘The Last Mummer’, ‘The Tollund Man’, in the first half of the collection, as well as ‘Bye-child’, ‘A Winter’s Tale’, ‘Shore Woman’ and ‘Maighdean Mara’ in the second, explore the many subtle ways in which so-called subordinates responded to prevailing voices and noises.

According to O’Driscoll, ‘Servant Boy’ and ‘The Last Mummer’ are situated in the “shadowy area between folklore and politics”, giving the poet and his readers a glimpse of the remote past while also connecting them to the contemporary socio-political context (SS 130). Both poems critique the absence of voices, names and identities. Yet silence has several other implications in both poems. ‘Servant Boy’ draws on the tales of Ned Thompson, a small, stooped and moustached neighbour of the Heaneys, who visited the poet’s house often and talked about his life as a servant boy. Heaney writes: “[...] And from him I *did* hear talk about different masters, about sleeping in the loft, about the ones who fed him well and the ones who didn’t, about having to walk for miles home and back on a Sunday, and all that [emphasis in the original]” (SS 130). Heaney mentions that he wrote ‘Servant Boy’ after he returned from Berkeley witnessing the deteriorating circumstances of the Catholic minority in

Northern Ireland (SS 121). Vendler comments that through the figure of the servant boy, Heaney reflects the “inferior social status of Catholics in the North” (86). According to Rankin Russell, however, Heaney’s use of the term ‘boy’ in the title hints at slave societies in a broader geographical scope. In the antebellum American South, for instance, the white men commonly called the grown black men ‘boy’ in order to “emasculate them and keep them subjugated” (130). In addition to depriving the slaves of their names and identities, the ruling classes required quiet and obedience to reaffirm the contours of power in the society and feed their dreams of efficiency (M. M. Smith 23-24). In the poem, Heaney refers to this authoritative use of silence in colonial Ireland, by highlighting the young boy’s hushed manners and monotonous routines, as well as by remaining indeterminate about his name and location:²²⁵

He is wintering out
the back-end of a bad year,
swinging a hurricane-lamp
through some outhouse;

a jobber among shadows.
Old work-whore, slave-
blood, who stepped fair-hills
under each bidder’s eye [...]. (WO 7)

In the second stanza from the lines quoted above, Heaney takes the reader to the bustle of the slave market, introducing what Schafer calls the “enigma” of noise (74). In the earlier chapters, I elaborated on the concept of ‘noise’ as unfavourable sounds. In the section on biophonic sounds, for instance, we saw how Heaney alerts his readers to the impact of noise from agricultural machinery on the distribution and diversity of the bird species (3.2). In the section on vocal sounds, we saw how to the ears of the colonial British, Irish sounded loud

²²⁵ See “boy, n.1 and int.” in OED Online. See also *Racism Matters* (1998) by Wright and *Amistad’s Orphans* (2014) by Lawrance for the application of the terms ‘boy’ and ‘man’ in slave societies. The close relationship between name and identity becomes particularly relevant in the context of sectarian divisions in Ireland. In his play *Translations* (1980), the Irish playwright Friel deals with the theme of language, name and identity in 19th century rural Ireland. The play is set during the period when Gaelic names were suppressed by the Protestant bureaucracy. The playwright’s first name, Brian, for instance, was registered as Bernard (Clarkson Holstein 1)

and noisy (See 3.4). In these lines, however, the poem suggests that “noise equals power” (Schafer 74). The servant boy is silently and obediently presenting his service so as to catch the eye of bidders and masters, for whom the servant boy is merely a slave, a “jobber” of no identity and right to speak (WO 7). His voice is silenced and his identity is obliterated. Maitland likewise comments on the silencing of slaves and minorities during colonisation and writes: “slaves and toys are both possessions, have no rights, no independence, no instrumentality, no true personhood” (216). The terms – “[o]ld work-whore” and “slave-blooded” – indicate the archetypal view of the Irish revealing that the dispossession of Irish people of their voice, identity and dignity is not a recent issue.

The silence of slaves, labourers and minorities discussed above are instances of the type of silence imposed by an external force. In some other occasions, silence can be “internal to the silent person, that is to say, the decision not to speak originates within the silent person”. This type includes instances when silence is used as a way of expressing disapproval, contempt or disagreement and can be regarded as “equivalent to a speech act” (Kurzon 1676-1677). The poem ‘Servant Boy’ also manifests this – or the transition to this – type of silence by highlighting the unnamed boy’s wintering-out attitude at the onset of the poem: “He is wintering out / the back-end of a bad year” (WO 7). His hushed manner can also be indicative of the feelings of resentment and disapproval about his subservient position. Berger points out that there are transitional and overlapping phases between different types of silence (173). In the poem, the silenced boy is also intentionally using silence as a way to survive the difficult situation he is living in. Maitland writes: “in the face of oppressive power, silence is often a sound strategy, at least in the short term” (181). After describing the repressive socio-political environment in which the servant boy lives and works, Heaney brings our attention to the boy’s “patience” and “counsel” (WO 7). If voice and sound are a superior’s instruments of command, silence is the instrument of the inferior.

The servant boy is unapologetically resentful about his unfair situation, but he knows the score and decides to bide his time. Heaney confirms this interpretation, saying:

In the poem, the servant boy ‘kept his patience and his counsel’ while he was wintering out: whatever he said, he said nothing; he knew the score, bore the brunt and bided his time. But by the time of the Civil Rights marches his stoop had begun to be straightened and his walk, I would like to think, was being braced by the poem in which he appeared. (SS 130)

In his interpretation of the final lines of the poem, Tobin refers to the “implicit connection” (85) Heaney draws between his own poetic work and that of the servant boy portrayed as “[...] resentful / and impenitent, / carrying the warm eggs” (WO 7). According to Tobin, there is certainly a sense of impenitence in the poem too, “an elusiveness that neither ignores the burden of history nor succumbs to mere ideology” (85). The servant boy’s integrity and resilience are precisely the stance the poet himself wishes to maintain and encourage. Heaney is drawn into the boy’s trail and determined to follow in his footsteps: “how / you draw me into / your trail” (WO 7). Despite the wintry condition of his homeland, the poet, like the servant boy of the poem, would prefer to maintain his patience and hope for a better future. At the end of the poem, there is a faint squeak of hinges as the “back” door opens. The servant boy appears in the threshold. He is “resentful”, “impenitent” and tight-lipped but “carrying the warm eggs” (7) into a warm spring, into a new and better year. The servant boy of the poem, as Heaney indicates, is also “a portrait of a minority consciousness” (SS 130) in the socio-political situation of Ireland:

‘carrying the warm eggs’ is what a servant boy would have had to do in the morning, check the nests and bring in what the laying hens had laid; but it’s also an emblem of the human call to be more than just ‘resentful and impenitent’, even while injustices are being endured. (SS 130)

‘The Last Mummer’ is seen as “the more complex companion piece” to ‘Servant Boy’ (Parker 97). The last mummer is silent, but we are not told yet if his silence is out of resentment and resistance or compliance and conformity. In a flashback, the poet unwraps the mummer’s years of silence: “trammelled / in the taboos” of his community, the mummer has

learned to use a “whoring” tongue and “don manners” (WO 8-9). Like the servant boy, he too has lived the life of an invisible shadow “picking a nice way” among masters (8-9). Heaney himself has stated the analogy between the two characters: Like the servant boy, the last mummer too is “resentful and impenitent” (SS 130). Like the servant boy, the last mummer appears as the alter ego of the poet himself, walking through “the long toils of blood // and feuding” (WO 8-9) but avoiding to accept the situation.²²⁶ As Tobin has justly noted, the mummer can be viewed as “an exemplary figure not only for the poet, but for anyone who retains their humanity as well as their imagination in oppressive circumstances” (85).

Earlier in this section, I noted that silence can be imposed by external social norms and political rules. Yet, as Kurzon notes, silence can also be caused by “internalised” codes and norms (1678). This type of silence – or silencing – is illustrated in ‘The Tollund Man’. In his book, Glob suggests that the Tollund man was a priest who volunteered to be offered as a sacrifice to the goddess of fertility during a winter festival. He writes that the man was found with eyes “slightly closed, lips softly pursed, as if in silent prayer” (1).²²⁷ In other words, he implies that the Tollund man’s silence was internal and intentional. Even so the man’s voice was silenced. The voluntary silence and death of the Tollund man was perhaps a result of internalising religious rituals and social norms. Heaney imagines that while driving on the roads of Aarhus, “[s]omething of his [Tollund man’s] sad freedom” will reach him as familiar (WO 37). The thoughts of Tollund man remind the poet of the voices of his fellow Irish men silenced by religious and political prejudice of their time. “In the old man-killing parishes” of Jutland, the Ulster poet will feel “lost, / Unhappy and at home” (37).

²²⁶ In ‘Servant Boy’ and ‘The Last Mummer’, Heaney employs a persona to examine his position as a poet. He writes:

He carries a stone in his pocket. He beats the bars of a gate with his stick. He fires a stone up at the roof of ‘the little barons’. But he also controls his anger, fits in, his tongue goes ‘whoring / among the civil tongues’. In a sense, he’s the kind of guy who can be a spokesman, can go on a BBC panel without wrecking the decorum of the studio [...]. (SS 130)

²²⁷ Glob writes “It was on just such occasions that bloody human sacrifices reached a peak in the Iron Age” (57). However, the distinction between other discovered Iron Age bodies and that of the Tollund man was that the other victims carried signs of extremely violent deaths: “This one bore no sign of violence other than the mark of the noose” (57).

Earlier I brought up examples from the history of slavery, when silence was used as a means of imposing authority and exploiting individuals. This authoritative use of silence has also been apparent in relation to women and children, mainly for the purpose of reassuring the superior status of men (see 1.2). Isenberg remarks that, within the working class, for instance, “Irish males saw the ideal women as dutifully subordinate, submissive, and obedient to the natural authority of men. Indeed, Irish women never challenged male public hegemony” (47). In her overview of women’s condition in nineteenth century Ireland, Luddy maintains “women were also expected to acquire those virtues of gentility, sobriety, passivity, and humility” (3). Heaney’s poem ‘Docker’ provides an early example of the use of silence in power relations in domestic contexts. Critics have often viewed the poem in the light of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, leaving out Heaney’s equally prominent illustration of the oppressive masculine power in the final stanza.²²⁸ According to Crowder, for instance, the poem begins in the form of a dramatic monologue in which the speaker – a Catholic docker, an unskilled labourer, sitting in a pub and drinking with a mate – directs the attention to a Protestant shipbuilder, who, as I discussed earlier in this section, uses silence as a way of distancing himself from Catholic men (117-118). In the remaining lines of the poem, Heaney illustrates the outcome of sectarianism portraying the privileged Protestant man from the Catholic docker’s view as an uncommunicative man (“speech is clamped in the lips’ vice”), who is filled with hatred towards his Catholic fellow workers (“that fist would drop a hammer on a Catholic”), as well as a person who abuses and intimidates his wife and children when he returns home. His household is, however, prepared for and used to his demands of silence and compliance:

He sits, strong and blunt as a Celtic cross,
Clearly used to silence and an armchair:

²²⁸ The poem refers to the recruitment policies of the 50s and 60s in Belfast, according to which Catholics would be casual laborers with the exhausting, ill-paid jobs, whereas the Protestants would hold the well-paying, high-skilled jobs (Crowder 117-118). See Wilson, Vendler and Crowder (2005), for instance, for discussing sectarianism as the main theme of the poem.

Tonight the wife and children will be quiet
At slammed door and smoker's cough in the hall. (DN 28)

Despite its more “personal” and “immediate” concerns (Foster 41), part II of *Wintering Out* continues to display “history’s plague on the poet’s imagination” (Tobin 96). Heaney explains that in 1969 and 1970, before heading to California in 1971, he had composed a sequence of poems about “women in distress” (SS 124). These poems, including ‘Shore Woman’, ‘Maighdean Mara’, ‘A Winter’s Tale’, ‘Limbo’ and ‘Bye-child’ among others, portray women driven by circumstances into peripheral positions, silence, madness and ultimately suicide.

‘A Winter’s Tale’ is based on the story of a young mad girl from Ulster who would often run away unclothed from her family and village people into the wood (see 3.4). Initially, the young girl’s daily escapes into the countryside call to mind the free spirit of the little boy in ‘Oracle’. But, instead of a tranquil and delightful soundscape, the poem soon introduces the silence and darkness of a winter night. The silence and stillness of wintertime is “oppressive” (Schafer 20). It manifests the absence of sound, life and liveliness. In the stillness of winter, it is normally a relief to hear a sound, see a track of footprints and feel that there is still life around. But the girl flees further and further away precisely from the approaching sounds of men searching for her. Heaney shows that the girl is “[a] pallor” anguished by the strong light of men’s “lanterns”, “torches” and “headlights” (WO 52). She is only a faint “weeping” masked by “the searchers’ gay babble” (WO 52). Like the servant boy of the previous poem, the girl is merely a wavering existence in her village.

The young girl of the poem could, in fact, stand for every man and woman who has experienced otherness but, given the space, could promote the sense of community and solidarity in a society. In the context of the political, religious and social segregation, as Heaney suggests, the mad girl proves to be the best example to learn from. Some cold winter nights, she enters empty neighbour houses to rest by chimneys. As Tobin points out, “her

madness, like Sweeney's, enables her to transgress sectarian boundaries" without hesitation (96). The girl's "unmalicious" companionship was considered intruding or invasive by house owners, whom she warmly greeted. "After all", Heaney says, "they were neighbours" (WO, 52). Perhaps Heaney wished that one day, all Ulster would be able to steer away from estrangement and segregation as swiftly, to appear "no haunter" to one another, to cross walls of divisions, to make "all comers guests" and to be the "first" one to offer peace to their "own people" (WO 52-53).

'Shore Woman' is based on a series of incidents in Kerry, either experienced by Heaney personally or narrated by a fisherman in Dingle (SS 124).²²⁹ Earlier, I elaborated on how sounds – geophonic, biophonic and anthroponic – can reveal the relationship between the fisherman, his wife and the natural environment (see 3.1 and 3.2). Here, I consider the way the poem foregrounds the theme of women's silence over centuries. On the fisherman's boat the woman is silent, in the sense that her voice is ignored, her feelings of joy and fear are disregarded, and she is looked down upon as careless, idle and ignorant. In the fisherman's world, the woman is silenced. After returning to the shore, she resentfully remembers this "failure" of love, respect and communication between her and the husband (Foster 42):

[...] I called
 'This [catching fish] is so easy that it's hardly right,'
 But he unhooked and coped with frantic fish
 Without speaking. (WO 54)

As in 'The Wife's Tale', "the poem's central incident belongs to the male domain" (Andrews 70). The fisherman "enjoys an attitude of superiority" over his wife as over nature. Later in the journey, when she cries expressing her apprehension about the porpoises' attack and requests her husband to call it a day, the man "scathingly dismisses her pronouncement"

²²⁹ Heaney explains that these poems were written in 1969 and 1970, about the same time as 'The Tollund Man'. The poet and his wife had frequently visited the place much earlier during 1960. Therefore "the fishing scenario in 'Shore Woman' is in fact an amalgam of two Kerry occasions – one when we went out on Kenmare Bay with Sean O Riada and actually caught a heap of mackerel; another, reported to us by a man in Dingle, who told how his wife panicked when their boat was surrounded by porpoises. Anyhow, those narratives and monologues formed one segment of the contents" (SS 124).

(Andrews 70): “I knew it and I asked him to put in / But he would not, declared it was a yarn [...]” (WO 55). The fisherman brutally ignores her safety and comfort. Heaney also refers to the wider scale and more ancient roots of the split. The boatman’s declaration does not address his wife only. He thinks the woman’s opinion is “a yarn” that has fooled her and her “people” for “far too long” (WO 55). For her, the “huge” sea creature that is now slithering its “oily” back against the boat is the embodiment of the “huge” masculine egoism, pleasure-seeking and intrusive attitude of the man, which she now recalls with resentment: “Sick at their huge pleasures in the water” (WO 55). The acoustics of the marine world weighs too much on her inner freedom, safety and solitude. The woman belongs to the silence and privacy of the shore: “I have rights on this fallow avenue” (WO 55).

Like ‘Shore Woman’, ‘Maighdean Mara’ is rooted in Irish folklore and real-life predicaments surrounding women characters. The poem is dedicated to the well-known folklorist of Northern Ireland, Seán Ó hEochaidh, who was himself known to be a “committed and good listener” to the local storytellers²³⁰ and who had shared some of his stories with the poet on a number of occasions.²³¹ The reports of a real-life drowning incident in Northern Ireland prompts the Ulster poet to turn himself into a patient listener of untold stories of woman suffering. Heaney was aware of – particularly north western – Irish mythologies wherein the female selkie’s garment is stolen while she is outside the sea and hidden by a human man who takes her as a wife and mother of his children (Almqvist 16-20). The folktales say that mermaids make very good wives and mothers, but Heaney’s profound listening enables him to see the dark side of the story and give voice to silent stories and silent individuals in them. Heaney turns to the pre-historic woman’s silence to narrate

²³⁰ The Northern Irish folklorist’ name is, as Almqvist (1990) has put it, more or less synonymous with Donegal in Northern Ireland. Seán Ó hEochaidh was born and bred in Teelin and did most of his collecting in the adjoining areas of Donegal. Heaney met him when he was an undergraduate at Queen’s University in Belfast. The folklorist impressed the young poet with his “stylised and formal manner” of narration, the “unusual” and “slightly archaic” vocabulary, and the link between the “mermaid legend” and his family intrigued him (Almqvist 20).

²³¹ See www.theguardian.com/news/2002/feb/04/guardianobituaries.books1.

unending feminine “repression”, “isolation”, “exploitation” and “disenchantment” (Corcoran 30).

The silence of the woman in ‘Maighdean Mara’ closely resembles that of the fisher’s wife in the sense that the men she encounters in her earthly life expect her to be an obedient follower. In her “land” life, she lived the life of a prisoner. Deprived of her identity and unable to return to the sea, the mermaid “had no choice” but to suppress her voice and bury it in a dark silence. After this incident, Heaney says, “follow / Was all she could do” (WO 56-57). The sea creature lived “the dead hold of [men’s] bedrooms” and “suffered” labour pain and suckling. She was a stranger among other women whose “forever and uncharmed” judgemental voices further buried her in silence (57). Maighdean Mara does not belong to the land, but without her selkie skin, she cannot return to the sea either. Maitland says that, in fairy tales, “there is also the silence of renunciation, often of penance” (180), one that leads to new knowledge and more wisdom. The woman of the story is consigned to the silence of death as a consequence of masculine lust and social prejudice. She sleeps now in a cradle of sea waves.

A type of silence closely related to speechlessness is what Kurzon calls “thematic silence” (1677). While the last mummer, the servant boy, the Protestant ship-maker and his wife and children, in the examples discussed above, did not participate in a conversational exchange – voluntarily or involuntarily – in thematic silence “a person when speaking does not relate to a topic” (1677). This type of silence can occur in a dialogical context, as well as in a broader social and political context or even written texts in which the speaker/writer deliberately avoids a topic. The poems ‘A Winter’s Tale’ and ‘Maighdean Mara’ discussed previously are unequivocal examples of thematic silence in gender relations.

The opening epigraph of ‘Shore Woman’, which is the English translation of a Gaelic proverb, grounds the poem in the dominant local mentality: “man to the hills” and, as the

poem later indicates, man to the sea too, but woman to the margins, “woman to the shore” (WO 54). The man has internalised the cultural norm. The saying is, therefore, an extract from the fisherman’s “stock of proverbial wisdom” (Andrews 69). The fisherman is fearless, cold-blooded, self-absorbed and “all business in the stern” (WO 54). Like Heaney’s father, his silence seems to stem from his distrust of speech and language. But the saying suggests the presence of another type of silence. On the fisherman’s boat, there is no room for such topics as peace, delight or romance. There, the cold-blooded creatures have a doomed fate: their “[s]tiff flails of cold [are] convulsed with their first breath” (WO 54). On his boat, the woman’s calls of joy and fear are always ignored. The fisherman does not talk with her calmly and lovingly, but he does yell: “‘Count them up at your end,’ was all he said” (WO 54). The silence of the men in ‘Maighdean Mara’ is similar to the fisher’s in the sense that it is thematic, but different in the topic: men in ‘Maighdean Mara’ are hiding a “secret” – i.e. the woman’s true identity (WO 57). In most versions of the story coming out of the North West of Ireland, the mermaid’s tragic separation from her husband and return to the sea is brought about unwittingly by one of their small children.²³² Driven by their “man-love” and lust, the two men the mermaid encounters in her earthly life continue to deprive her of her independence and happiness, by hiding her “magic garment” and preventing her from returning to her original home and identity (WO 56).

The last mummer’s silence, who was “trammelled / in the taboos of the country // picking a nice way through / the long toils of blood” (8) is also an instance of thematic silence, on which Heaney further elaborates in ‘Whatever You Say Say Nothing’. Ulster has been officially a British and predominantly Protestant province since the early 17th century. The division between the Catholic nationalist minority and the Protestant unionist majority had widened – even after the civil rights movement and towards the end of the Troubles – to

²³² In southern versions, particularly from Kerry and Limerick, it is the husband himself who, in his frantic search for a farming tool, unwittingly provides his wife with an opportunity to find her hidden garment and return to the ocean (Almqvist 1-43).

the extent that pronouncing one's identity and political beliefs could lead to verbal or even physical violence. In this context, as Rankin Russell has noted, "the presence of a significant minority in Northern Ireland that suffered widespread discrimination over the course of the Stormont regime from 1921 to 1971 was occluded and often rendered silent" (165). Coming from a religiously and politically minority background, Heaney was aware of the Northern Irish reticence.²³³ In fact, his preoccupation with historically known taciturnity has been known to scholars. In his early influential book, Morrison argues that

the community Heaney came from, and which he wanted his poetry to express solidarity with, was one on which the pressure of silence weighed heavily. It was not only rural, renowned like all rural communities for its inwardness and reserve, but also Northern Catholic, with additional reasons for clamming up. (23)²³⁴

In 'Whatever You Say Say Nothing', Heaney attempts to "speak truth into the tired cliché" that had governed everyday speech in Northern Ireland (Rankin Russell 165).²³⁵ The poem is set in the political reality of the 1970s, when "bad news is no longer news" and when at the street level people exclude religious and political topics or avoid favouring a side: "‘Religion’s never mentioned here,’ of course. / ‘You know them by their eyes,’ and hold your tongue. / ‘One side’s as bad as the other,’ never worse" (N 54). Heaney condemns "[t]he famous // Northern reticence" and "the tight gag" placed on the mouth of the minority group (N 54). He believes it is time that the minority group – to which he himself belongs – speaks out its thoughts, raises its voice and resists the oppression imposed on it by the Protestant

²³³ Commenting on the relationship between politics and poetry with Seamus Deane, Heaney asserted:

Poetry is born out of the watermarks and colourings of the self. But that self in some ways takes its spiritual pulse from the inward spiritual structure of the community to which it belongs; and the community to which I belong is Catholic and nationalist. I believe that the poet's force now, and hopefully in the future, is to maintain the efficacy of his own "mythos", his own cultural and political colourings, rather than to serve any particular momentary strategy that his political leaders, his paramilitary organisation or his liberal self might want him to serve. I think that poetry and politics are, in different ways, an articulation, an ordering, a giving of form to inchoate pieties, prejudices, world-views, or whatever. And I think that my own poetry is a kind of slow, obstinate, papish burn, emanating from the ground I was brought up on. (62)

²³⁴ For other discussions on Heaney's involvement with politics see Fennell and Vendler.

²³⁵ Referring to an iconic 1970s Republican poster titled "Loose Talk", illustrated with the photo of a gunman. The text began with "Loose talk costs lives" and concluded with a line written in red: "whatever you say, say nothing!". The poster discouraged open political-religious speech particularly in Republican areas and warned about the consequences of ignoring the advice. See cain.ulster.ac.uk/images/posters/ira/index.html.

majority, yet almost immediately realises that despite possessing the powers of imagination and expression as a poet, he himself is “incapable” of doing so (N 54). Instead, like the last mummer, he must hold his tongue and save his face:

Yet for all this art and sedentary trade
I am incapable. The famous

Northern reticence, the tight gag of place
And times: yes, yes. Of the “wee six” I sing
Where to be saved you only must save face
And whatever you say, you say nothing. (N 54)

In his poignant ode to Northern Ireland, he describes it as a “land of password”, a place in which the inhabitants communicate through “smoke-signals” and “whispering morse” (N 54-55). In the poem, as Hart notes in *Poet of Contrary Progressions* (1993), Heaney celebrates Ulster’s silence to “underscore solidarity with his Irish Catholic ancestors and peers” (38) and, in doing so, he awakens their voice and presence:

Oh, land of password, handgrip, wink and nod,
Of open minds as open as a trap,

Where tongues lie coiled, as under flames lie wicks,
Where half of us, as in a wooden horse
Were cabin’d and confined like wily Greeks,
Besieged within the siege, whispering morse. (N 55) ²³⁶

4.3 I Might Tarry: Silence and Time²³⁷

The silences experienced by individuals can also be varied according to their length. In this section, I focus on the interpretation of silence as a pause (see 1.4). In everyday life, there are several short periods when a pause or a stoppage in an activity creates a little space for, among others, resting, reflecting, listening carefully or preparing to re-start. As Maitland has remarked, “language has lots of vocabulary for different small silences [...]” (185).

²³⁶ ‘A Constable Calls’ (N 61-62), in which Heaney’s father is not telling the full truth about the crops and about his feelings towards the constable, is another instance of thematic silence. ‘To George Seferis in the Underworld’ presents an instance when the poet ultimately overcomes his “contested silence” and make a public statement about the political Greek situation (DC 21).

²³⁷ The title of this section is inspired by a line from ‘The Tollund Man’ (WO 36-37).

Pause, stop, stand, rest, halt, caesura, hesitation, lacuna, delay, break, lull, interval, wait and stay are some of the terms we might use to describe our experience of small silences, moments of pause over the course of an acoustic event or in between the succession of acoustic events (see 1.4.1). In this section, I trace and interpret Heaney's manifestations of silence as a pause, and explain how it enhances our understanding of his themes.

In 'Digging', Heaney provides an early example of a very short pause when recalling the day he took a bottle of milk for his grandfather, who was working in the peat bogs and stopped for only a few minutes of break: "[...] He straightened up / To drink it, then fell to right away" (DN 1). In fact, perhaps the entire poem portrays one protracted pause: the poet now sitting at the window, probably at a desk, writing, stops suddenly – to listen to the rhythmical digging sound coming from outside, to reflect on his father aging, to dig out the memories of his fathers, to re-assess his own career choice – and then, resumes writing with even more determination and motivation. As the opening lines of the poem imply: "Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests; snug as a gun" (DN 1).

In 'A Call' too, Heaney places the entire poem in a lengthy pause. Heaney's silent wait, though not mentioned directly, is evoked by the image of the unattended phone, his envisioning of the pendulums, and the ticking of clocks, and, as noted earlier, through the recurring –ing words (i.e. "touching", "inspecting", "separating", "listening", "ticking"), which create the effect of a momentary stasis. As Kay has remarked "this eerily liminal moment" (59) provides him with the space wherein he could not only reflect on his childhood memories and the aging of his father, but also take an anachronistic leap to the medieval morality play and reflect on the shared fate of mankind:

'Hold on,' she said, 'I'll just run out and get him.

[...]

So I saw him

Down on his hands and knees beside the leek rig,

Touching, inspecting, separating one

[...]

Then found myself listening to
 The amplified grave ticking of hall clocks
 Where the phone lay unattended in a calm
 Of mirror glass and sunstruck pendulums ...

And found myself then thinking: if it were nowadays,
 This is how Death would summon Everyman. (SL 53)

In defining pause, the OED makes it clear that a pause – whether as a break or rest – is made “for effect”. The poem ‘The Blackbird of Glanmore’ opens with the scene of the aging poet driving to the Glanmore cottage (see 3.2). The sight of a much-loved blackbird calls to his mind the soundscape of his childhood and prompts the poet to stop the car:

I park, pause, take heed.
 Breathe. Just breathe and sit
 And lines I once translated
 Come back: “I want away
 To the house of death, to my father

Under the low clay roof. (DC 75)

Heaney pauses as a deliberate attempt to use silence to enhance listening, to re-imagine the soundscape of his childhood where he can see his home, his father, his young brother Christopher, but more importantly as he explicitly mentions in the lines quoted above, to reflect over his own mortality. In ‘The Makings of Music’, he advises himself and his readers to stop and stand still to celebrate the surrounding soundscape: “Stand still. You can hear / everything going on” (SI 52). In the second part of ‘The Other Side’, after approaching Heaney’s house, the old neighbour pauses out of respect to the praying voices coming from inside the kitchen and knocks on the door only after they have finished (see also 4.2). Towards the end of the poem too, Heaney intends to approach the man to welcome him in and perhaps engage in a conversation, but immediately stops because he is hesitant. In the remainder of this section, I discuss how in ‘Bog Oak’, ‘Land’, ‘The Last Mummer’ and ‘The Tollund Man’, in *Wintering Out*, Heaney uses pause as a way to create a space of silence for listening and reflecting.

The strong and rough footsteps of the farmer in 'Land' introduce a reassuring rhythm to the quiet soundscape. Not long after describing the everyday routine of farming lifestyle, the poet notifies us that the man is preparing to depart the land and start a new lifestyle (See 3.3). Yet before doing so, he seeks a moment of stillness and silence. After completing his tasks for one last time, the man stands on top of the hill to cast a "last look" at "those acres" (WO 11). Earlier, I explained that in the realm of the visible, the sound and sight could very well overlap (see 1.4.1). While, as readers, we are wondering about the poet's new destination, new land, and perhaps his new set of "habits" (WO 11), Heaney re-directs our attention back to the sights and acoustics of his "first place" (PO 18). This pause for him is not a timely break, a chance to unwind, a fumbling moment of hesitation, or a pre-arranged platform to build-up readers' curiosity. This hiatus provides the poet-traveller with an opportunity for stocking up and sealing down his memories of the land.²³⁸ Before setting out on his new journey in life, he attempts to instil his farmer's sensibility in his mind and heart.

What started as a brief caesura turns into a prolonged span of silence that stretches over the entire second section of the poem. Heaney has fixed his eyes on a vegetal effigy in front of him. This silence doesn't represent absence. This is an audible silence that the Irish poet has trained his ears to listen. The sight of his muse, "a woman of old wet leaves" (WO 11), unreels the memories of the people and the materials he knows best. The muse's tightly plaited strands speak of the old thatcher's mastery, her ribbons and bows echo the bustle of past harvest feasts, and the "open-work" of her breasts herald the arrival of new harvests and new generations. Schafer writes: "[w]hen it[silence] interrupts or follows sound, it reverberates with the tissue of that which sounded, and this state continues as long as memory holds it" (256). With the vision of a timeless effigy sculpted in his mind, the Ulster poet is ripe for any journey. Sure-footed, he says, "I was ready to go anywhere" (WO 11).

²³⁸ Referring to Heaney's 1980 interview with John Edwards, in which Heaney asserts that when he began to write, "it was that first deposit of experience [in Mossbawn farm] that was almost hermetically sealed down came up". www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yt4m2Z4Pmw (1.53 - 2.14).

‘The Tollund Man’, introduces a similar sense of suspension that briefly touches the reader in ‘Land’. Both poems follow an analogous pattern of beginning with motion and then a long pause at the sight of a stationary and silent figure. In both poems Heaney brings all the activities to an extended halt in order to provide ample space for memory digging and pondering. Heaney’s encounter with the images of Iron Age people in Glob’s *The Bog People* (1965) urges the poet to plan a journey “to see” the Iron man’s body in person: “Someday I will go to Aarhus / To see his peat-brown head [...]” (WO 36) (see also 2.2 and 4.2). But for a poet who wants to get a profound sense of history a short visit will not suffice. Heaney does not want to merely ‘see’ the man’s body, he wants to ‘listen’ to his silence. The silent and still body of the Iron man now reposing back at Aarhus has a hoard of tales in his chest (WO 36). But to make a profound listening possible he needs to be quiet himself. Heaney makes sure to stay still long enough to hear the resonance of the voices and sounds experienced by the Iron-age man: “I will stand a long time” (WO 36). Death itself is silence, but it is merely a stoppage to the sounds of cries, laughter and weeping, spoken words and soft breathings that continue to reverberate in the atmosphere. Heaney’s profound listening allows him to broaden the horizons of his auditory perception. It allows him to make sense-making possible in a space that includes “the flat country nearby” and a time passed (WO 36).

But Heaney’s imagined silence and stillness at the sight of the Tollund man’s corpse has another reason too. In the second part of the poem, Heaney continues to allow himself enough time to be in the silence of death and honour it. This time, in memory of the victims of Irish political and religious rites. Heaney reveals the association with another photograph he had encountered in Barry’s book *Guerilla Days in Ireland* (1946): “It was of a farmer’s family who had been shot in reprisals by the Black and Tans, left lying on their backs beside their open door” (SS 135). The profound silence of the Tollund man’s dead body carries the observing poet into a deep and prolonged state of contemplation. In Jutland, as in Ulster,

history repeats itself. The ritual killings in Jutland during the Iron Age provide a historical simile, a precedent, and a ground to speak about the killings in Northern Ireland:

Out here in Jutland
In the old man-killing parishes
I will feel lost,
Unhappy and at home. (WO 37)

The poem 'Bog Oak' manifests another example of silence as a pause, one that allows him to take a break from the English education system that had contributed to the shaping of the soundscape of his mind and listen to the voices of his Irish ancestors and predecessors. As a poet speaking and writing in the language of the conqueror, Heaney is inevitably part of the English literary tradition – containing Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590) and *A View on the Present State of Ireland* (1598). In Berkeley, Heaney comes into contact with Thomas Flanagan's *The Irish Novelists 1800-1850* (1959), which includes a quotation from Spenser, who, with no sympathy, describes the survivors of Irish famine as "Anatomies [of] death" and "ghosts" (1959 8). The acquaintance with Flanagan's Irish-centred thinking retunes his poetic voice. This moment of pause and reflection is illustrated in 'Bog Oak'. In his poem, Heaney digs down into the silence of the peat bogs surrounding his childhood home waiting long enough in the Irish past until his ears pick up the faint reverberations left from his subjugated and dispossessed ancestors:

I might tarry
with the moustached
dead, the creel-fillers,

or eavesdrop on
their hopeless wisdom [...]. (WO 4)

This revelation is an opportunity he would have missed, had he not sought a pause to meditate and retune his voice. Ironically, Spenser's trophy – the English language – is now in the possession of the Irish poet who encroaches upon Spenser's tranquil time at his

Kilcolman Castle in Co Cork by awakening the voices of the “anatomies of death” (WO 22):²³⁹

Perhaps I just make out
Edmund Spenser,
dreaming sunlight,
encroached upon by

geniuses who creep
‘out of every corner
of the woodes and glennes’
towards watercress and carrion. (WO 4-5)

4.4 The Vanished Music: Silence and Absence²⁴⁰

In its most conventional sense, silence is often associated with absence (Schafer 256). This is the type of silence that Heaney relates to the ruins of the ancient Roman city in ‘Dawn’ and uses to describe the void and emptiness he feels in the company of his academic friends in a Mediterranean town: “scholars / Arguing through until morning // In a Pompeian silence” (WO 65) (see also 3.4). It is also the type of silence that he associates with the extinction of the native Irish animals and the disappearance of the Irish language and identity in ‘Midnight’ when he says: The wolf has died out // In Ireland” (WO 35), or in ‘Bogland’, when he describes the unearthing of “the skeleton / Of the Great Irish Elk” (DD 43) from the peat bogs (see also 3.2). The poems ‘Traditions’, ‘The Last Mummer’, ‘The Wool Trade’, and ‘New Song’ from *Wintering Out* are some of the other poems in which Heaney uses silence to mourn the absence of a sound source and its eradication from the soundscape.

Earlier, I elaborated on how the poem ‘Traditions’ manifests the poet’s feelings towards the imperialistic presence of English language and culture in Ireland (see 3.4). While doing so, Heaney mourns the disappearance of the “guttural” sounds of Gaelic from its native

²³⁹ As Corcoran has observed, “As a poet writing in the English language, Heaney is inevitably part of the poetic tradition which contains *The Faerie Queen*; but ‘Bog Oak’ suggests how tangentially and suspiciously related to it he is when it reminds us that such literary perfections as that great Renaissance poem – written by Spenser ‘dreaming sunlight’ in Kilcolman Castle, his planter’s state in Co. Cork – were the flower of a culture whose roots lay in the brutal political realities described in the State of Ireland (31-32).

²⁴⁰ The title of this section is inspired by Heaney’s poem ‘A New Song’ (WO 23).

land and culture by indicating the silence, absence or non-functionality of the vocal organism that forge them:

Our guttural muse
 was bulled long ago
 by the alliterative tradition,
 her uvula grows

 vestigial, forgotten
 like the coccyx
 or a Brigid's Cross
 yellowing in some outhouse [...]. (WO 21)

During the 16th and 17th centuries the dominion of the English language in Ireland was still not certain and the sounds of Gaelic could still be identified as one of the main keynotes of the Irish landscape. Yet, as Heaney notes, the most idiosyncratic Irish vocal sounds – the throaty sounds of Gaelic – have disappeared from the landscape of Ireland and their memories are fading from the collective memory leading, in turn, to the atrophy of the related vocal organs. In the lines quoted above Heaney remarks that Gaelic has been brutally and savagely eradicated from its nesting ground and replaced by the “alliterative traditions” of the Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poetry. And now, her “uvula” is perishing in a forgotten outhouse of the memory. As Corcoran has commented, in ‘Traditions’, “the fate of a virtually disappeared tongue [is] commemorated in [a] poignant, glancing, allegorical elegy” (40). The absence or scarcity of Gaelic sounds in the soundscape of their native land, for Heaney, indicates an emptiness that the poet wants to inscribe in the present history so as to avoid its total disappearance from memory.

The disappearance of the Gaelic tongue is a synecdoche for the vast silence of Gaelic traditions and communities. Heaney announces that his native land has lost its name and identity, and has been reduced to an insignificant component of “the British isles” (WO 21). The sense of absence is, as the poet indicates, empty and nostalgic, because it is created by the wanton destruction of the Gaelic culture, and because it is created by the silence of the

vulnerable people who were forced to leave their homelands or smother their customs under the reign of “that ‘most / sovereign mistress’” (21). This silence indicates an absence that the poet wants the society and history to recognise and remember when, for example, hearing the terms “varsity”, “deem” or “allow” in the everyday life of the Irish. The presence of “Elizabethan English” and Shakespearean archaic words, as he explains, is the evidence of “Ireland’s traumatic colonial history, a history whose crucial moment – the ‘Elizabethan conquest and Plantation of Ulster – occurred during Shakespeare’s lifetime” (Corcoran 40). As Maitland notes, this silence “exists under the shadow of the people silenced in order to create it. The silence of oppression, the silence that does ‘wait to be broken’ and needs to be broken in the name of freedom” (257). It is the silence that the Irish poet is determined to break within the freedom of his poetic space.

The silence of Irish traditions and culture is an issue that the poet addresses in the poem ‘The Last Mummer’ as well. As the title suggests, the poem features the last survivor of the Irish tradition of mummers, who tries in vain to awaken his people and warn them about its extinction (see also 4.2).²⁴¹ The tradition was already “in its last gasp” during the poet’s young years (SS 131). In the poem, the mummer creeps out of foggy spaces of memory, for one last time, and lurks behind the residents of the electric age now mesmerised by the “luminous screen” (WO 8). His hopes turn into frustration when he realises that his people have chosen, what he considers as a superfluous entertainment in comparison with the authentic Irish tradition of mummers. Heaney brings our attention to some of the major

²⁴¹ Mummers plays date back to medieval times and were traditionally performed by all-male troupes of armature actors, known as mummers or Christmas rhymers, in Northern Ireland. John J. Marshall says:

In the north of Ireland as Christmas drew near it was customary to get up a company of Rhymers who went round the shops and private dwellings reciting their rhymes and collecting money. These were the latter day descendants of the mummers of olden times, who at times of festivity played their pranks for the amusement of their fellows as well as their own. They dressed up in such fantastic costumes as they could manage, and represented various characters, such as St. George, Oliver Cromwell. Beelzebub, Devil Doubt, the Doctor, etc. Each had a rhyme to recite about himself, which he did with such intonation and gestures as he considered appropriate.

See *Popular Rhymes and Sayings of Ireland* (1924), for a description of the scenarios and records of the rhymes at www.libraryireland.com/social-history/popular-rhymes/christmas-rhymers.php.

drawbacks of the age of electronic communication: just as the advent of print technology in the fifteenth century prepared the ground for the standardisation of most texts – “eliminating the vagaries of human handwriting” (M. M. Smith 10) – the spread of mass media throughout the twentieth century and later brought forth reproduction, uniformity and repetition, but led to the lack of authenticity of voice and auditory experience (see 1.2). Discussing the consequences of recording and stockpiling musical productions in mid-twentieth century Attali writes: “Reproduction, in a certain sense, is the death of the original, the triumph of the copy, and the forgetting of the represented foundation [...]” (Attali 89). In the poem, Heaney avers: “St. George, Beelzebub and Jack Straw // can’t be conjured from mist” (WO 8).

According to the poet, modern age entertainment will not replace and transfer the sense of authenticity and presence brought about in the live performances of St. George, Beelzebub and Jack Straw. The culture of television has, instead, rendered the mummer and other actors “redundant” (Corcoran 30) – or what in the context of sound studies could be identified as unwanted sounds, i.e. noises – for the contemporary audience.²⁴² Shrouded by anger and resolved to be heard, the quiet mummer beats the bars of the gate with a stick and hits the road with his fierce steps, but all in vain. At the end, like the servant boy, silent but “resentful / and impenitent” (WO 7) the mummer disappears as quietly as he once emerged (see also 4.2). Yet just as he does with the dying rural crafts of the 1960s, Heaney seals their memories on the pages of his poetry forever:

a line of mummers
marching out the door

as the lamp flares in the draught.
Melted snow off their feet

leaves you in peace. (WO 9)

²⁴² Mummering was often carried out as a kind of performative anarchy. It eventually led to a growing public concern and it was being regarded as “a potential threat to social order”. By the 1950s, mummers in Northern Ireland had to apply to the Royal Ulster Constabulary for a permit (Rankin Russell 167-169).

However, the silence of the mummer and decline of the Irish mummery tradition is a synecdoche for the vast silence of the Irish identity and tongue as a major legacy of colonialism, which as Parker has rightly noted, are explored in a succession of poems – ‘Traditions’, ‘Anahorish’, ‘Broagh’ and ‘Toome’, ‘A New Song’ and ‘Gifts of Rain’ (97) – discussed in great detail in the analytical chapters of the thesis.

The last survivor of the Irish mummery cannot awaken the people deafened by the clamour and glamour of modern entertainment: “The luminous screen in the corner / has them charmed in a ring” (WO 8). Even his rattling and hammering is shrugged off. Here, Heaney is referring to the silence concealed by so much noise to hint at a kind of silence prevalent in the midst of the Troubles. In the poem, the twentieth century’s invention has turned into a means of silencing the audience or, what Attali calls, “death in the heart of life” (120). Written against the backdrop of the Troubles that Northern Ireland was experiencing during the 1970s, in ‘The Last Mummer’, Heaney fears the indifference to the sectarian violence and the loss of hope for a better future. He remarks that mummery, like cockfighting, is a tradition that transcended the sectarian divide (SS 131),²⁴³ an element that Rankin Russell highlights in order to indicate mummying’s ability to bring unity amongst the Protestants and Catholics (167-169). In fact, the mummer’s insistence on being heard connotes the urge he feels for its presence in contemporary Ulster. Heaney’s poem as much projects his concerns about any insensitivity to violence as it reveals his hopes for “peace” in Ulster (WO 9): “The more I talk about those poems, the more I see that they were about the

²⁴³ Mumming in Ireland has more than 2500 years of history and was a non-sectarian practice. Although it was often carried out by Catholics, the mummers visited both Catholic and Protestant homes. In *All Silver and No Brass* (1975), Henry Glassie remarks that:

Generally, all of the mummers were Catholics, though a few Protestants might travel along with them, but they went to Protestant homes as well as Catholic ones and acted with particular politeness at houses where they had heard they were not welcome. (127)

Heaney noted:

Cockfighting and mumming, by the way, cut across the sectarian divide. All sides attended the fights. And because the fights were illegal, a special bond was created among the aficionados. My last mummer could have been a cockfighter too, ‘picking a nice way through / the long toils of blood / and feuding’. (SS 131)

need to break out of the consensus that Ulster was ‘a good wee place’, the need to get on the road to Aarhus, to acknowledge the lostness and unhappiness of ‘home’” (SS 130).

Heaney brings up the topic of silence and absence in ‘The Wool Trade’, where he laments the loss of the Irish woollen industry after the restrictions placed by English commercial policies on Irish woollen manufacture in the 17th century.²⁴⁴ Therefore, the wool trade is not just a name of an outdated industry but a keynote and a soundmark of Irish prosperity eradicated by the Anglo-Scottish invaders of 1700. The poem is constructed on the memories of a vanished trade as recalled by the unknown and unnamed Irish interlocutor (see 3.4). The sound of shearing, washing, baling, bleaching and sorting the wool, carding, spinning and weaving the yarn, or the clang and clatter of looms and spindles – that the man recalls – are audible fragments from Heaney’s “personal and Irish pieties” (PO 37). In present day Ireland, the memories of the Irish spinning machines are “fading” from their native land while the Irish “must” instead recite the vocabulary of the Scottish tweed industry. The vanished industry is also a metonymy for the loss of the Irish language and identity as a consequence of colonialism. The empty silence of Irish villages and hills that Heaney can hear today recalls the absence of the native culture and vernacular that he would like to conjure up and resonate throughout his poetry:

O all the hamlets where
Hills and flocks and streams conspired

To a language of waterwheels,
A lost syntax of looms and spindles,

How they hang
Fading, in the gallery of the tongue!” (WO 27).

Conclusion

Heaney’s stance as the earwitness of the Irish landscape can be described as that of a silent listener. As a listener and observer, as a thinker and meditator and as a poet, silence has

²⁴⁴ See celt.ucc.ie/published/E900040/text007.html.

been integral to Heaney's life and career. Yet no two states of silence are the same for him. In 'Anahorish', 'Toome', 'Broagh', 'May' and 'A New Song', the poet seeks silence to hear and internalise the familiar symphony of the local river. In 'Land', he seeks the acoustic memories of the rural life his father sought. In 'Postscript', 'Valediction', 'Lovers on Aran', 'Shore Woman' and 'Maighdean Mara' he tunes his ears with the voices of the sea. In 'The Sound of Rain' and 'Gifts of Rain' he listens to the sounds of the rain. In the Burren and bogland, he searches for the echoes of past voices and sounds. In 'Oracle', he returns to his days as an innocent little boy who escapes everyday noises and family expectations to find comfort and pleasure in the soundscape of "a pristine world full of woods and water and birdsong" (PO 181). He seeks the spaces of silence to practise listening and tune in his senses and emotions with the patterns of life.

Heaney seeks silent places to empty his mind, broaden his view, expand the limits of his identity and merge it with, what he calls, "the god in the tree" and defines as "a psychic force that is elusive [and] archaic" (PO 186). God, in traditional Christian thinking, would be the creator, the life-giver and redeemer that the practitioner of silence wants to connect with. In a more archaic sense, and for the poet, this elusive force would be a deity "shrouded in the living matrices of stones and trees, immanent in the natural world" (PO 186). Heaney's silence in much of his nature poetry is the state of mind that Maitland associates with hermits, when "one is trying to empty oneself of ego; pour oneself out, become permeable, translucent, empty, open to the transcendent" (193). Heaney states this association himself: "I'm in the tradition of the hermit poets of the early Celtic nature tradition" (see also 3.2).²⁴⁵ To listen attentively, one must be silent oneself stilling the chatter of the voices in the mind. Heaney's silence also teaches his readers not just to "listen to" but also to "listen for" (SL 1). His silence and the sense of waiting that his listening stimulates, encourages the reader too to

²⁴⁵ See Heaney's 1989 interview with the Desert Island Disc host at www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAuucSly7t8 (3:50-3:59). And, more extensively, here, where he reads his own blackbird poems and his translations from the Irish blackbird poems at www.youtube.com/watch?v=emuYwWT7s4A (1:06:02-1:06:04).

be in the now, in the present tense, and to adopt the stance that Buddhists call “mindfulness” (Maitland 159).

“The republic of conscience” (HL 14), the liminal space from which he comes back with the urge to tell, is a noiseless space. The landscape of Heaney’s imagination is endowed with the kind of silence in which his senses are most free and alert. It is a space wherein, according to the poet himself, one feels the need to become more conscious of oneself and one’s surroundings. It is a “place of silence and solitude where a person would find it hard to avoid self-awareness and self-examination” (SS 292). That statement could partly explain the reason, after returning from California, he chooses to retire to Glanmore Cottage, which he defines as “a completely silent place of writing” (SS 322). Heaney seeks silence to reach the deep well of sensory memories and to reflect upon them, but this initial movement of extraction is completed when the poet returns to the white surface of the page with a hoard of stories to tell. As Maitland writes, “[s]ilence firstly puts one in that ‘other’ place and secondly gives one an opportunity, without interruptions or comments, to retrieve and shape those memories” (240). In his introduction to the series of writings that marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which I quoted above (see 4.1), Heaney remembers that in the silence of Orkney he was able to reach a kind of “self-awareness and self-examination” that almost immediately enabled him to weave his sensory experiences and imagination, writing the poem ‘The Republic of Conscience’ (HL 14-15).²⁴⁶

Heaney, as the ambassador of “the republic of conscience” (HL 14), would necessarily need to have a voice.²⁴⁷ One cannot be a silent listener merely and at the same time be creating new words and new worlds. In ‘Personal Helicon’, he listens to the echoes of his own voice. In ‘Oracle’, he links ear to mouth, lobe to larynx, listening to speech, and silence to voice, in

²⁴⁶ The writings collected by Amnesty International Irish Section and published by the *Irish Times*. See: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/human-rights-poetic-redress-1.903757?fbclid=IwAR2VU7aYJph2dNsB8UVnU3cY0uHfX8lNjPQ08YGZnVrC5xLP9eOuk0nevVE>.

²⁴⁷ See rightsni.org/2013/08/seamus-heaney-ambassador-of-conscience/.

his own name and existence. He recalls his name being cuckooed across the fields as the “small mouth and ear” (WO 18). The far-reaching and penetrating resonance foretells that the little innocent boy lurking up in “a woody cleft” is also the voice of his pastoral places. Heaney indicates that he seeks silence to practise concentration, meditation and mindful listening, as well as to search for his own voice and identity as a poet of mossy lands. “What is the source of our first suffering?” Heaney asked, quoting the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. “It lies in the fact that we hesitated to speak”.²⁴⁸ As a poet, he sees silence as a means to find a balanced position and a way to strengthen this stance by protecting it from social and political pressures and expectations. Heaney seeks silence to establish an authentic voice in which to write – a voice that, like that of the cairn-maker, has “his own mark” on it (WO 39).

Heaney’s concerns are not merely environmental but also humanistic. Everyone can have an inner self and a voice, but not everyone is ready, willing or allowed to express it. In his poetry and prose, Heaney provides a space for listening to the silence of the people whose thoughts, feelings and presence would otherwise have gone unheard. Sometimes people are silent because they are not free to speak at all – or at least not audibly. This situation often applies to individuals and groups who have been oppressed or marginalised by society. Throughout human history, in general, and the history of the colonisation of the Irish, in particular, the experience of the oppressed is that they have been silenced, rather than freely choosing silence. Moreover, Heaney’s references to “[t]he famous // Northern reticence” hints at silence as an equally significant element as speech in shaping Irish history (N 54). There is, however, another kind of silence that allows this silence to break: the silence of a listener and a thinker.²⁴⁹ The experience of silence early on in his life – through such silent

²⁴⁸ In many occasions, Heaney referred to his poetry as “an escape from a terrible fear of silence that always haunted him”. See www.nytimes.com/2013/08/31/opinion/seamus-heaney-poet-of-the-silent-things.html.

²⁴⁹ In the second half of the twentieth century the political freedom movement, that started at the University of Berkeley, saw the right to speak freely and to be heard, as an absolutely crucial human right.

figures as his father, mother, aunt Mary, the thatcher, the navvy, the blacksmith and neighbours – fostered and shaped the poet's auditory and perceptual abilities allowing him to recognise silence as a means of not only communicating and connecting with other individuals, but also uncoding the socio-political context of his homeland.

Listening precedes speech. It prepares speech (B. R. Smith 13). In the series of poems with distressed women as their subject matter – i.e. 'Shore Woman', Maighdean Mara', 'Summer Home', 'Bye-Child', 'A Winter's Tale' and even 'Wedding Day' – Heaney creates a space wherein the female characters' monologues, songs and weeping can be heard. In many of these poems, he holds his silence, almost like a psychoanalyst, so as to create a space for his characters to freely voice their feelings and existence. In 'Servant Boy', 'Veteran', 'Navvy', 'The Wool Trade', and 'Bog Oak' he listens to the silence of the marginalised and the overlooked. As Corcoran has remarked, in his poetry, Heaney "registers a sympathy for these historically dispossessed and maltreated, and their successors" (31-32). Heaney's silence and the platform of his poetry create a warm and comfortable atmosphere for silent men and women to unwind the hoard of their untold stories and be finally heard not only by the poet, but also by the future generations.

It can be very tempting to surrender completely to the hurry and scurry of everyday life. But the poet is aware of the importance of slowing down and taking a moment to pause. Heaney's pauses are his deliberate attempts to create silence, a space for listening, memory digging, searching for the voices lost in the archive of history, reflecting over life and finding his voice. Heaney's poetry epitomises moments of resounding quietness, when the poet travels internally to enter the soundscape of his subconscious mind and to get in touch with the origin of the sounds and voices knocking at his most "buried ear" (DC 55). Heaney writes that poetry begins with "the thump in the ear" (PO 53). Digging, therefore, is not just the title of Heaney's first poem and a metaphor for poetry writing but also the indication of the poet's

solitude and meditative state, the space he seeks for retrieving the buried shards and places he would like to retrieve and bring back to life. In his 'Feeling into Words', he refers to a view of poetry "as elements of continuity, with the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds, where the buried shard has an importance that is not diminished by the importance of the buried city; poetry as a dig, a dig for finds that end up being plants" (PO 41). Moreover, his poetry encourages readers to take a pause. Heaney highlights that literature, especially poetry, is not a way of solving social and political problems but can play a role in foregrounding them: "it [poetry] creates a pause in the action, a freeze-frame moment of concentration, a focus where our power to concentrate is concentrated back upon ourselves" (SS 383). Heaney's pause in 'The Blackbird of Glanmore' and 'The Makings of Music' is not only a moment for retrieving personal memories but also an attempt to nudge his readers to take a moment and listen to the otherwise lost music of every sound. His poetry records the memory and history of the disappeared. The poems 'Bog Oak', 'Anahorish', 'Midnight', 'The Tollund Man', 'Traditions', 'The Last Mummer', 'Midnight' and 'The Wool Trade' are a reminder that the apparently empty silence exists only under the shadow of the people, languages, cultures silenced to create it.

Listen Now Again:

Conclusions²⁵⁰

In this thesis, I focused on listening as an important medium of experiencing, understanding, communicating and remembering as illustrated in the poetry of Seamus Heaney. I proposed that Heaney's poetry is saturated with references to sounds and references to the absence of sounds, and that the identification and interpretation of such references can enhance our experience and understanding of not only the poems, but also the world experienced by the poet himself.

It is widely acknowledged that poetry is an art form that foregrounds language and its auditory elements (see 1.1). Traditionally, literary scholars and critics try to account for the aural effects of poetry in a variety of ways. The aural features of a poetic language are part of its aesthetic value but can also contribute significantly to the way in which a poem communicates ideas and feelings, as well as the way it helps retain them in and retrieve them from memory. In spoken language, as Don Paterson notes, the variations in the patterning of sounds, rhythm, pitch, intonation and timbre are responsible for conveying the nuances of feelings that the mere word-sense cannot carry. Poetry, then, may introduce music into language through the careful arrangement of word-sounds, reinforcing the communication of ideas and feelings (5-8). The effect of this is twofold:

Our long-term memory encodes information semantically, our short-term memory acoustically, and these rhythmic, parallel and repetitive sound-tricks simply give the line a better chance of hooking on a single hearing; this way they can be later recalled, and their meaning more carefully dwelt upon. (Paterson 5-8)

The work of some recent critics, however, is distinguished by more novel approaches to the study of sound, noise, silence and listening in literature. In this thesis, I have benefited from the various disciplines in sound studies and literary criticism, applying a new

²⁵⁰ The title of this section is inspired by the last line of 'The Rain Stick' (SL 1).

interdisciplinary approach to the study of sounds in Heaney's *Wintering Out*. The descriptive framework offered by the ecological approach to aural perception, and the taxonomy offered by acoustic ecology and soundscape ecology have helped develop the conceptual framework of this thesis. Alongside the linguistic and literary practice of close reading, these approaches have facilitated the identification and interpretation of auditory references in his poetry (see 1.4).

An ecological approach to listening explores auditory perception along the dimensions of a sound producing source, the location and the environment rather than the basic attributes of the soundwaves per se. Studies of listening from an ecological approach have shown that, through listening to sounds, the human ear can identify such information as the material, texture, and configuration of the objects, the force and the type of the interaction involved, as well as the proximity, time and direction of the sound event (see 1.3). This descriptive approach to audible source attributes provides a suitable framework for identifying audible and non-audible references in the poems, the references that otherwise would go unnoticed or interpreted as merely visual. On many occasions, these references unravel the poet's own acoustic experiences and, ultimately, the aural responses they could trigger in the readers.

The analytical lens offered by acoustic ecology is an interdisciplinary approach that places the home territory of soundscape studies in the middle ground between science, society and the arts to study the interrelations between human beings and the changes in their acoustic environment (see 1.3). The aesthetic, social, cultural, political and ethical dimensions of auditory perception are pervasive themes in acoustic ecology, which offers a rich taxonomy of sounds – e.g. 'keynote sounds' to refer to background sounds, 'soundmarks' to refer to locally unique sounds, 'signal sounds' to refer to foreground sounds, 'archetypal sounds' to refer to symbolic sounds, and 'imperialistic sounds' to refer to sounds

that can create a large acoustic profile – to show how the acoustic environment shapes human beings’ experiences and understanding of the world.

The closely related field of soundscape ecology broadens the humanistic scope of acoustic ecology to study the inter-relations between the acoustic environment and the behaviour of all the living beings in it (see 1.3). Soundscape ecologists identify the three basic sources of sounds – ‘geophony’ to describe sounds of non-sentient natural phenomena, ‘biophony’ to describe sounds emanating from non-human sentient organisms and ‘anthrophony’ to describe all sounds produced by humans, and stationary and moving human-made objects – to examine relationships between living organisms, including humans and other terrestrial or marine organisms, and their environment across different spatial and temporal scales. Soundscape ecologists argue that the surrounding soundscape engages our aural sense, providing us with much information about many associated human ideals, such as identity and sense of place, as well as recreational, therapeutic, educational, and aesthetic values.

Reading Heaney through the lens of an ecological approach to auditory perception, acoustic ecology and soundscape ecology allows us to better understand and appreciate his poetry. Heaney spent significant portions of his life in Ulster and travelled extensively to other countries such as the Republic of Ireland, Denmark, Greece, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, England and the United States. The concept of place has been a consistent source of inspiration for his poetry. As I have shown in this thesis, place is significantly mediated by the ear in his work. Heaney concluded his essay ‘The Sense of Place’ by asserting that the sense of a place is not determined through its political and geographical territory, but through “the way the surface of the earth can be accepted into and be a steadying influence upon the quiet depth of the mind” (PO 145). Heaney’s interest in soundscapes and the role that sounds might play in shaping and reflecting the socio-cultural dynamics is evident through his prose

and poetry. In his poetic re-construction of a sense of place, Heaney brings together the various components of the soundscape – i.e. geophony, biophony and anthrophony – as well as silence. He writes of the sounds directly experienced and intimately known, providing his readers with what Schafer refers to as a “trustworthy” source of information about how various soundscapes mediated the underlying social, political, cultural and personal associations (8).²⁵¹ Heaney writes out of his own sensory experiences or as inspired by his in-depth knowledge of history and mythology. He brings forth a mixture of both personal and second-hand information. Therefore, we can trust Heaney as much for the literal accounts of auditory references rendered in his poetry and prose, as for his accounts of auditory illusions and imagined soundscapes. Throughout my thesis I did apply some degree of selectivity assembling and interpreting the important features of Heaney’s poetic soundscapes, noting differences and parallels, in order to identify the contribution of sounds – and their absence – to his themes.

Heaney’s imagination is a testimony to nature’s abundance and beauty. Listening to the sounds of the natural environment is for him a source of personal joy and delight. He seeks the spaces of silence in nature to tune in his imagination and feelings with the patterns of nature, the ceaseless rhythms of waves and streams, and the symphonies of birdsong at dawn. Heaney is a silent and attentive listener. In order to listen attentively, one must be silent, stilling the chatter of the mind in order to allow other voices to speak (Scharper and Leman-Stefanovic 166). His silence teaches his readers to listen patiently and attentively for what might happen and might become a sound, for that moment when suddenly, out of the

²⁵¹ Schafer notes, “[w]riting about other places and times usually results in counterfeit descriptions. [...]. In such ways the authenticity [and non-authenticity] of the earwitness established”. Therefore, Swift’s claim that Niagara Falls made a sudden “terrible squash” cannot be trusted because we know he never visited the place. However, we can rely on Chateaubriand’s description of the roaring fall “from eight to ten miles away”. In other words, Chateaubriand’s description of his first-hand aural experience provides us with reliable information about the ambient sound level, one that can be used as a source of reference for interpreting the ambient sound level of Niagara Falls today. However, once the authenticity of the earwitness-author is established, we can trust the author for what might even seem like an “aural illusion” or the accounts of “unusual sound events”. For instance, we can trust Remarque’s descriptions of the hissing and belching dead bodies in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and Faulkner’s accounts of noise from corpses in *As I Lay Dying* (1930) (8-9).

commotion, a sound jumps forward. He encourages his readers to listen to the surrounding world carefully, because what might happen now, might not happen again. Heaney's emphasis on the transient nature of sounds and on inner silence encourages the development of greater sensitivity to the surrounding soundscape. This type of silence and attentiveness, in fact, disciplines all of our senses. Once we become aware of the presence of something, we automatically and subconsciously look for it and listen for it in other places in life (Maitland 166). Heaney opens the space for a more universal sense of place than just Ireland, disciplines not only our ears, but all of our senses and shapes our relationship with our own natural environment.

In addition to ear awakening, acoustic ecology also aims to foster a deeper awareness of the social (including political and cultural) and the personal (including psychological) significance of surrounding soundscapes. For acoustic ecologists, mindful listening can be an act of engagement with the world. Listening becomes a metaphor for reflecting a more inclusive, focused and respectful awareness of the surroundings and of one's position in them. Heaney listens to natural soundscapes, like a soundscape analyst, to discover and record their significant features, familiar sounds, sounds important to a culture, sounds that are unique to a place or sounds that carry a specific message. Nature for him is also a source of knowledge. He is aware that background keynotes establish an imprinted connection to the sense of place and time. He identifies with his familiar locations by recalling their associated keynotes and soundmarks – from amongst the natural sounds of the ambient and biophonic sounds, to sounds of local crafts, voices and accents of local people. These are the everyday sounds that have been inscribed in his shared memory and turned into aural treasures of identity. Recalling these sounds becomes a way the poet re-connects with his land, cherishes the collective heritage and thus reinforces the sense of belonging.

Heaney's references to the biophonic sounds of the natural world open a wealth of knowledge about the relationship between humans and non-human animals. Listening to the sounds of farm animals for him is a way of returning to the soundscape of his childhood and the way of life that his father and ancestors lived. But Heaney also writes about the animals contemporary man may barely be aware of. In a man-dominated world, Heaney writes meticulously about the disappearing keynotes of the natural world, the songs of birds and the sounds of a wide variety of land and sea species. His poetry inspires his readers to celebrate the existence of animals as keynote elements of the natural soundscape without whom human life experience would be incomplete. Heaney's poetry brings to light the empowering presence of the cars, tractors and generators, trains and planes but also reminds us that the heedless spread of anthrophonic sounds can impose constraints on the acoustic environment of non-human animals.

Heaney is a careful listener to all sounds. What an unaware ear interprets as noise, for Heaney becomes a great resource for understanding the social, cultural and political dynamics in the history of human civilisation, an attitude that is aligned with the perspective of many sound scholars, who maintain that the scant attention that so-called noise has received has led to a dimmed knowledge about history and society (Attali 3). His poetry encourages his readers to listen to everyday noise attentively in order to understand not only the present time, but also the past our ancestors lived in and the future we can hope for. The reassuring footsteps of the farmer, his serene silence, the earthy grating sound of the spade, the rhythmic swish and slash of the mowing scythes, are amongst the keynotes of manual farming methods that Heaney evokes to re-orient himself towards his rural origins and reconcile with his rural roots, bridging the gap between his own profession as a poet and those of his farmer ancestors. Heaney also writes of the throaty sounds of the Gaelic language, the click and clang of the Irish wool factory, the churning of butter or the high-

pitch sound of the blacksmith's hammer, the anthrophonic keynotes and soundmarks that have long disappeared or are becoming rare. For him, writing of these sounds is a way of not only re-collecting his personal memories and returning to the soundscape of his childhood, but also collecting disappearing soundmarks and keynotes. Heaney shoulders the responsibility of recording and preserving the human sonic heritage in his poetry and of carving it in the ongoing story of human history.

In his poetry, he also lends himself to ecocritical politics of Ireland, presenting the ways in which the white noise of sectarianism has transformed the auditory texture of his homeland, offering, at times, a feeling of at-homeness. He represents the recurring history of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland through its customary noises, suggesting that violence has become an integral part of the society. Living in Northern Ireland, he can hardly avoid the choppy drone of helicopter rotors hovering over the city, the broken rhythms of machine-gun fire, the blasting of bombs, the boisterous drumming of Orangemen, the cadences of pub talks, the huffing of many car engines in each funeral and sirens, which for him have turned into the familiar keynotes of incessant army surveillance, division, insecurity and death, leaving a lasting imprint on the mind and memory of the individuals.

Heaney also encourages his readers to listen to the silence of individuals as much as to their voices. In his poetry, he shows how violence can affect people in a society, resulting often in what Lundy has identified as "a conspiracy of silence" (111). But he also reminds his readers that, as Maitland has suggested, in any repressive socio-political environment, silence can be "a sound strategy" (181). In much the same way, Heaney's illustrations of silence – as absence and emptiness – disclose the deep impact of the political situation on the social and cultural soundscape of Ireland. He directly links the Irish wood, wildlife and local industries to its language and culture. His reference to the disappearance of their acoustics provides a

means for him for talking about the legacy of colonisation and the suppression of the Irish identity.

Heaney's involvement in the socio-political climate of his homeland is also represented through his lament for the suppression of the Gaelic language and his ambivalence about the place of the English language and the English literary canon. Heaney stages language as a show of imperial force and brings our attention to the gradual decline of the sounds of Gaelic, which up until the 16th and 17th centuries could still be identified as one of the main keynotes of the Irish soundscape. He sees the Irish language as a potent symbol of national identity and independence, speculating that the feelings of absence and in-betweenness experienced by many Irish are peculiarly postcolonial predicaments. He links the Irish language to national resistance ever since the efforts to de-Gaelicise the Isles and declares his opposition to the imperialistic presence of the English language in Ireland. He indicates that even the simplest terms spoken by Irish are often freighted with political baggage. His etymological excavations of Irish place names expose the ways in which words retain cross-cultural affinities. On the other hand, however, his poetry in and by itself critiques the Irish-English dichotomy. As Foster has noted, English for him is not merely the conqueror's language, but also the native tongue of modern Ireland and a major part of the Irish literary landscape today (38).

Finally, he turns his poetry into a platform for hearing not only his own voice, but also voices obscured by louder voices in history, voices of objection, forgotten voices, silenced voices, voices that otherwise would have gone unheard. Listening is accepting the presence of a sound source. Heaney's attention to the voices of others and their evocation in his poetry brings us back to one of the most compelling aspects of acoustic ecology: its emphasis on appreciating the voice and existence of the other. For Heaney, listening to other voices is vital to his attempt to create a poetry that is not only personally satisfying but also socially and

ethically aware. His attention to listening to other voices as a way of perceiving and communicating is mediated through and placed at the heart of his life stance and poetic technique.

In 'Feeling into Words', Heaney differentiates between craft and technique in poetry. The early stages of his poetic life – particularly the university years when he mostly wrote as *Incertus* for literary magazines – were demonstrative of not so much technique. Instead, he was drawn towards craft, which he describes as "the skill of making" (PO 47). However, Heaney links a poet's technique to their "stance towards life" and the need for probing "the origins of feeling in memory and experience" (PO 47).²⁵² *Wintering Out* was born out of this poetic awareness and intellectual maturity. To achieve his technique, Heaney follows Eliot in using the concept of the "auditory imagination", which facilitates a trip deep into sub-consciousness and memory, into the origin of the long forgotten and the ordinary. He explains how Eliot's auditory intelligence has been encouraging him to exercise deep listening and to search for the music of the world within the linguistic soundscape:

Eliot's revelation of his susceptibility to such lines, the physicality of his ear, [...] confirmed a natural inclination to make myself an echo-chamber for the poem's sounds. I was encouraged to seek for the contour of meaning within the pattern of rhythm. (FK 36-37)

Heaney declares that his stance in life and the inclination at the heart of his poetic technique are but to make himself "an echo-chamber" of the sounds, which is a meditative space where the sounds of the words meet the sounds of the world: "Words themselves are doors; Janus is to a certain extent their deity, looking back to a ramification of roots and associations and

²⁵² He defines craft as "the skill of making. It wins competitions in the *Irish Times* or *The New Statesman*. It can be deployed without reference to the feelings or the self. It knows how to keep up a capable verbal athletic display [...] all voice and nothing else – but not voice as in 'finding a voice'. (PO 47). Technique, however, involves not only a poet's way with words, his management of metre, rhythm and verbal texture; it involves also a definition of his stance towards life, a definition of his own reality. It involves the discovery of ways to go out of his normal cognitive bounds and raid the inarticulate: a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience and the formal ploys that express these in a work of art. (PO 47)

forward to a clarification of sense and meaning” (PO 52). This is particularly reflected in his well-known lines from the opening of his first essay, Mossbawn:

I would begin with the Greek word, *omphalos*, meaning the navel, and hence the stone that marked the centre of the world, and repeat it, *omphalos*, *omphalos*, *omphalos*, until its blunt and falling music becomes the music of somebody pumping water outside our back door. (PO 17)

In this context, one major element that Heaney focuses on is the personal, social and historical aspects of the auditory experience and imagination, on the fact that *omphalos* conjures up the momentum of rural Irish life, the footsteps of men and women coming and going in the backyard of his childhood house, the rattling of their buckets and the clip-clopping of horses. The word places the poet in Co. Derry in the early 1940s, to also hear the hovering helicopters and groaning of bombers above their heads.

In sound studies, the concept of auditory imagination is applied in a broad sense that includes all manners of sounding events. It refers to an openness to and awareness of sounds as a crucial component of human life, culture, history and society. It is about sounds but is more concerned with the contemplative space that surrounds them. Auditory imaginations are essentially reliant on the capacity of the mind to critique and create new sonic narratives across a wide range of registers. As Stern sums it up: “sonic imaginations are necessarily plural, recursive, reflexive, driven to represent, refigure and redescribe. They are fascinated by sound but driven to fashion some new intellectual facility to make sense of some part of the sonic world” (5).

Heaney’s auditory imagination is aligned with the concerns of sound studies. It is both the anchor and the ship of his thoughts and feelings. It is as concerned with delight in the sounds of the senses as it is with the senses arising from sounds. It brings us to ordinary and familiar sounds and sonic experiences from a completely new and unexpected perspective. It ranges from the private experiences of a variety of individuals to communities from larger historical and geographical landscapes, and at every turn reproduces cultural understanding.

Heaney's poetic voice transcends spatiality and temporality. He identifies with voices from near and distant places in history and from beyond Irish borders in order to find a voice that articulates his own intentions and purposes from a new and more balanced stance. He writes in a voice that belongs to him, one that puts his own feelings and thoughts into his own words, but also one that akin to his real-life stance is inclusive and socially, culturally, historically, and environmentally aware.²⁵³

The ever-growing reputation of Heaney's poetry among the general public and the academic community derives from the intrinsic qualities of his poetry. In 1995, the Swedish Academy awarded Seamus Heaney the Nobel Prize in Literature "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth which exalt everyday miracles and the living past".²⁵⁴ Heaney recognised the borders and limits, only to push them further. In the preface to *Finders Keepers*, he reprints words from the foreword to his former critical prose, *Preoccupations*, assuring his readers that his major poetic concerns have remained unchanged: "How should a poet properly live and write? What is his relationship to be to his own voice, his own place, his literary heritage and his contemporary world?" (PO 13). Heaney's career as a poet was an intellectual response to his making sense of the landscape and soundscapes he lived in, and of continuously having to find the balance between the pulls of roots and the drive for transcendence. Throughout his poetry and criticism, Heaney strove to safeguard the principle of balance; the balance between artistic freedom and ethical responsibility, between the ordinary and the marvellous, between locality and universality, the north and the south, and between future and past.

²⁵³ Commenting about the relationship between poetic voice and a poet's real-life, in *Preoccupations* perspective he notes:

finding a voice means that you can get your own feeling into your own words and that your words have the feel of you about them; and I believe that it may not even be a metaphor, for a poetic voice is probably very intimately connected with the poet's natural voice, the voice that he hears as the ideal speaker of the lines he is making up. (PO 43)

²⁵⁴ www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1995/heaney-facts.

The other main reason behind the wide recognition of Heaney's poetry is the immediacy with which he captures the attention of his readers. This capacity is partly a result of "Heaney's ability to evoke an action or sensation in a phrase constructed out of some of the most commonly used lexical resources [which] is a very rare phenomenon in literature" (Crotty 44-45). Amongst other contributing factors to Heaney's success is his attention to the empirical and the sensory rather than the philosophical aspects of experience. Heaney's instinct delights in an evocatively sensory language with which he arrests the attention of non-specialist readers and to which he remained dedicated throughout his poetic career. Heaney's interest in the sensory and the concrete granted him what Crotty identifies as "the capacity for showing rather than merely stating" that characterises Heaney's artistic intelligence and distinguishes his poetry from the work of other twentieth century poets (44-45).

Heaney's voice has something essential to tell his readers, something that they can recognise instantly and instinctively if they lend their ears to the sounds of the words, something as "a true sounding aspect" (PO 43) of the poet's perspective and experiences. His voice takes us beyond the linguistic space and into its origin in the physical world. Heaney's poetic voice is composed of "the tangible aural sensations that create meaning almost independent from the semantics of the language, scraping down even further into the unconscious" (Morris 128). In his voice we can find a "rightness" at all levels. "Heaney's voice is true, it is readily apparent. That is enough. [...]" (128). With his onomatopoeic words, metaphors, metonymies, rhymes, rhythms and descriptions, Heaney uses his auditory imagination to locate himself in particular parts of soundscapes in the actual world and in the depths of his mind and body, in order to retrieve "the most primitive and forgotten" senses and meanings (PO 150).

Throughout his poetic career, Heaney developed a technique that entailed the essential patterns of his own perception and voice, a perception that re-imagined the sounds and silences he experienced and a voice that wove them into the texture of his lines. Heaney owed it, as he says, to the “creative effort of mind’s and body’s resources to bring the meaning of [sensory] experience within the jurisdiction of [poetic] form” (PO 47). These auditory experiences include sounds personally heard or actively engaged in the making, sounds remembered, imagined or only heard about. The concept of auditory imagination reveals the many ways in which the Irish poet turns to listening as an effective method for memory digging, discovering, sense-making and creating. Heaney uses the concept of the auditory imagination to plumb the depths of subconscious and the hidden corners of the memory, of himself and of his readers, to discover the origins and the marvels of meaning and feeling, and to come back with the power of a muse, an inspiring poetry that amidst the most darkening and silencing threats, continues to resonate.

Heaney’s poetry calls for an active practice of listening. The study of sounds in his poetry has led us to an understanding of some of the features and trends of the sounds perceived by the poet: sounds and silences that carry personal and communal implications, sounds threatened with extinction, sounds that have been indiscriminately released into the environment, sounds that have been imperialistically muffled by other sounds or rendered as noises, and sounds and voices that have been unheard, ignored or silenced. This insight has led us to a better understanding of Heaney’s poetry and his relationship with the sonic environment. It has also helped us figure out the poet’s aural sensitivity, have access to his reconstruction of the past soundscapes and imagine the ideal soundscapes he longed for.

Although the focus of this thesis has been to highlight the nuances of aural perception, I did not wish to place the ear at the top of a hierarchy of human sense receptors, nor did I want to treat hearing as an abstractable discipline. As readers, writers, critics or translators of

poetry, we are constantly engaged in the process of meaning-making and transposing our sensory experiences into language. In this thesis, I have tried to foreground the underlying relationship between what is generally known to be the abstract domain of poetry and the more practical aspect of human life, that of sounds and listening, hoping, ultimately, to broaden the readership of poetry among both academics and non-academics. The approach offered in this thesis is potentially applicable not only to *Wintering Out*, but also to other works by Heaney and to a variety of works by other poets – and also prose writers – whose work is, likewise, reflective of their interest in the empirical and the sensory. This thesis offers a new way to reading poetry. Reading with the ears instigates a trip into the auditory imagination and puts us in touch with the poet and the soundscapes he not only heard but also attentively and consciously listened to. With the heightened attention that we bring to the reading of poetry, we can identify such auditory references. These references are often made through the onomatopoeic mirroring of sounds, sound patterns in the language, action verbs, metonymies, literal and metaphorical descriptions of sound events and silences, brief insights, passing comments and suddenly ringing phrases that slip elusively between the perceptual and the imaginary. This thesis has served as a provocation to deep listening in poetry reading, hoping to also draw the attention of literary critics and translators to the relationship between poetry and the dynamics of history, society, culture and nature. We have often let our eyes quickly scan the words to comprehend the meaning. But perhaps it is about time we adjusted our senses and let our ears be engaged too. This thesis is an invitation to pay attention to not only sound devices in the poetic language, but also the everyday sounds and silences evoked through it; to read poetry, as Heaney phrases it, “with an ear to the line” (FW 31).

I

As I went down the loaning
the wind shifting in the hedge was like
an old one's whistling speech. And I knew

I was in the limbo of lost words.

[...]

II

Big voices in the womanless kitchen.
 They never lit a lamp in the summertime
 but took the twilight as it came
 like solemn trees. They sat on in the dark
 with their pipes red in their mouths, the talk come down
 to *Aye* and *Aye* again and, when the dog shifted,
 a curt *There boy!* I closed my eyes
 to make the light motes stream behind them
 and my head went airy, my chair rode
 high and low among branches and the wind
 stirred up a rookery in the next long *Aye*.

III

Stand still. You can hear
 everything going on. High-tension cables
 singing above cattle, tractors, barking dogs,
 juggernauts changing gear a mile away.
 And always the surface noise of the earth
 you didn't know you'd heard till a twig snapped
 and a blackbird's startled volubility
 stopped short.

When you are tired or terrified
 your voice slips back into its old first place
 and makes the sound your shades make there (SI 51-52)

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