



“The Nest Kept Warm”: Heaney and the Irish Soldier-Poets

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INTRODUCTION

Those who live between wars may not know
But we who die between peaces
Whether we die or not.¹

Thomas MacGreevy’s ambiguous summary of the plight of his benighted generation, in “De Civitate Hominum,” bequeaths the Irish canon more than a landmark in early modernist war poetry. The prescience of these lines is remarkable for its articulation of a felt condition, on the part of the poet, which was to accumulate resonance throughout the twentieth century and have a peculiarly pointed bearing upon the poetry of his homeland. Suggested, here, is an innate condition of recurrent conflict and perpetual loss: peacetime is always parenthesized by wars and vice versa. The notion of a historical distinction between “those who live between wars” and “we who die between peaces” is a significant one, since, as an explicit result of the example set by the soldier-poets of the First World War, issues of direct and indirect witness were to become something of a poetic *cause célèbre* in the century that followed. This state of affairs is encapsulated by Seamus Heaney in his introductory essay to *The Government of the Tongue*:

Wilfred Owen, and others like him in the trenches of Flanders, are among the first of a type of poet who increasingly appears in the annals of twentieth-century

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literature, and who looms as a shadowy judging figure above every poet who has written subsequently. The shorthand name we have evolved for this figure is the ‘poet as witness’.²

Indeed, the subject of witness and a requirement on the part of the poet to bring into congruence the often-competing needs of the lyric impulse and social responsibility—“beyond the frontier of writing where ‘the imagination presses back against the pressure of reality’”³—were issues that exercised Heaney throughout his very public career. Whilst the exemplars used for developing this discussion were often Eastern European poets such as Mandelstam, Akhmatova, and Milosz, it is significant that Heaney returned frequently to the “kind of challenge” posed by the soldier-poets of the Great War. Indeed, when the question is most frankly put, he tends to look towards Wilfred Owen in particular:

What, Owen asks even more savagely, does the twentieth-century poet mean who repeats this kind of consoling and mystifying rhetoric at a safe distance from the front where the actual dying takes place?⁴

The influence of the soldier-poets upon that generation of writers who published their first collections around the time of the Great War’s 50th anniversary was, indeed, significant. However, in respect of Heaney and his Irish contemporaries, the 1914–1918 period is freighted with quite different notions of significance than for English poets; accordingly, their treatment of Great War material is slanted in an altogether different way. Here, Irish exceptionalism abounds, as dissenting mythologies compete across both multiple and, seemingly, synchronic time frames: Republican Ireland’s problematized relationship with the last Great War of the British Empire is offset by the eternal present of the Somme’s blood sacrifice in northern Unionist mythology; the south’s deeply ambivalent attitude towards its own Great War veterans existed for almost a century alongside the extraordinary cultural privilege afforded to their comrades in the UK, and the Irish Republic’s very origins in the Easter Rising of 1916 were yet seen in some quarters as “a stab in the back.” Significantly, Ireland was commemorating its own 50th anniversary—that of the Easter Rising—in 1966, the year which also saw publication of Heaney’s first collection. These are but a few of the complicating factors that confront Irish poets of a mind to explore the First World War as a subject. Yet, and perhaps *because* of the attendant complications, Irish poetry has persistently returned to the Great War as a resonant context for meditating upon current events. In the two full-length studies of the subject so far written, Fran Brearton’s *The Great War in Irish Poetry* (2000) and Jim Haughey’s *The First World War in Irish Poetry* (2002), much analysis is devoted to the influence of the conflict upon the development of poets such as Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, and Seamus Heaney, in particular, and to how far it shaped modern memories of war and the politics of remembrance both north and south of the

border. Indeed, with the advent of the Troubles, it might be said that the 1914–1918 conflict functioned as an imaginative “proxy war,” a metaphorical means by which contemporary events could be explored ironically and askance. Broadly concurring with Brearton’s thesis, Haughey observes:

Looking back to the soldier poets of the Great War as literary precursors has also provided contemporary Irish poets with a field of reference with which to respond to the ongoing “war” in their own backyard. Indeed, excavating contemporary Irish war poems for their overt and oblique commentaries on contemporary Irish politics provides a wealth of interpretive possibilities. The most overt form of appropriation of the Great War has been its adoption as a framework drama through which to explore the ongoing complexities of the Irish situation.⁵

Much the same argument has been made for the Northern Irish poets’ frequent use of Ancient Greek drama to similar ends, and both do, indeed, appear to function as oblique settings for current discourse. Heaney himself confirms something of the view that he and his peers were being required to respond to contemporary events in his “Frontiers of Writing” lecture from *The Redress of Poetry*:

Among poets of my own generation in the 1960s there was a general feeling of being socially called upon which grew as the polarization grew and the pressure mounted upon the writers not only to render images of the Ulster predicament, but also perhaps to show solidarity with one or other side in the quarrel.⁶

Heaney’s own struggles with this dilemma, at the level of public utterance, have been the matter of much analysis and debate, as well as criticism from many quarters: from Carson’s famously barbed response to *North*, to Haughey’s repeated suggestion that Heaney succumbs to “a fairly narrow definition of Irish ethnicity”⁷ in “his love affair with romantic nationalism.”⁸ It is Brearton, however, in her chapter “The End of Art: Seamus Heaney’s Apology for Poetry,” who properly engages with the subject at the level of intrapoetic influence and practice, though even here she notes that, “on the whole, the implications of the proliferation of Great War imagery in Heaney’s poetry have not been explored.”⁹ The influence of Ted Hughes’s Great War–inflected early work upon Heaney’s first collection has been noted by critics such as Neil Corcoran; however, Brearton’s next observation dictates the terms of discourse for what needs to be explored here. Reiterating her remark in canonical terms, she attempts to explain this dearth of focus upon the abundance of Great War imagery in Heaney’s poetry:

One reason why the references to the First World War, the indebtedness to Owen, Hughes, and an English tradition of war writing are elided or overlooked in Heaney’s work is, understandably, that he stems from a community with a highly problematical relationship to the First World War. But the pantheon of father figures—Yeats, Joyce, Kavanagh, Montague—which Heaney suggests liberated

his own voice should not obscure connections with an English literary tradition—the work of Hughes, Hill, the Great War poets, Keith Douglas—that also effected some kind of liberation.¹⁰

In teasing out these strands of influence, Brearton concludes that such exercises in canonical debt are ultimately superfluous to our appreciation of Heaney. As a line of critical inquiry, however, Brearton's point is incomplete and so still offers something of potential value to our understanding of Heaney's poetical inheritance and his exploration of the poet's condition. In the final analysis, Brearton and Haughey actually overstate the levels of indebtedness on Heaney's part. Much of his poetry discussed in this context has a more equivocal relationship to the Great War than they suggest. And, contrary to Brearton's canonical point, where there is a discernible impact, what Heaney draws upon is not necessarily an English tradition but a peculiarly Irish one, rooted in the kind of poetic ambiguity that Heaney himself came to rely on. It also draws somewhat less upon the Irish "pantheon of father figures" than it does upon the Irish soldier-poets themselves. This is to neither dismiss nor exaggerate Heaney's indebtedness to the First World War poets; rather, it is a view which encourages us to take a closer look. His most overt expression of sympathy for a Great War subject is, of course, "In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge," which, as Gerald Dawe observes:

[...] is itself an important historical marker, since it has only really been from that time, in the early 1980s, to quote George Boyce, that 'rightly, if belatedly, the Great War' has been seen 'as central to the forging of Irish identities'.¹¹

This question of Irish identity is, of course, inextricably linked to Heaney's early emergence on the Northern Irish poetry scene at the very moment when the Troubles were beginning to demand their own forms of poetic witness and exert pressure "to show solidarity with one or other side in the quarrel." Years later, he was to characterize this in terms of "the Irish writer responsive to two cultural milieu," as a Catholic member of a community:

adept in the mystery of living in two places at one time. Like all human beings, of course, they [the Northern Irish population] 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.¹²

It is these very notions of self-division and resolved contradiction that need to be examined here, since Heaney found mentors for his own resolutions far closer to home than the writers with whom he more conspicuously aligned himself. Beyond the Anglo-Irish pantheon identified by Brearton, and nearer than the Eastern European role models championed by himself, Heaney had the example of poets like Francis Ledwidge, Patrick McGill, Tom Kettle, and

Thomas MacGreevy. These Irish soldier-poets of the Great War represent under-explored examples of the way in which their descendants might themselves “survive amphibiously in ‘the realm of the times’.”¹³ It is my contention that Heaney, in particular, was aware of such possibilities and that the Irish soldier-poets gifted him a discretely observed inheritance that found expression in his work and which was, in its way, as helpful to him as Mandelstam et al. in finding an adequate response to his own historical predicament.

Particularly in figures such as Francis Ledwidge, Heaney finds a compatriot ancestry—distinct from the English tradition—which occupied similarly problematized terrain that, in turn, demanded complex allegiance and nuanced articulation. The clearest evidence for this comes, of course, with that elegy for Ledwidge from Heaney’s 1979 collection *Field Work*, but perhaps a more telling moment is to be found in his 1992 introduction to an Irish issue of Ledwidge’s *Selected Poems*. In reclaiming the poetry from general neglect and domestic appropriation as “a safe bet for the convent library and school prize,” Heaney is at pains to point out that “Ledwidge’s fate had been more complex and more modern than that.” It is clear that he sees contemporary parallels between an Irish Republican poet in the uniform of the British Empire and his own predicament living amid the Troubles as a Northern Irish Catholic whose passport is green but whose mother tongue is English:

Ledwidge lived through a similar period of historical transition when political, cultural and constitutional crises put into question values which had previously appeared as ratified and immutable as the contours of the landscape itself.¹⁴

Like the Irish soldier-poet, he also “stems from a community with a highly problematized relationship with the First World War.”¹⁵ Perhaps, therefore, with a ruefulness which recalls his own uneasy reception around the time of *North*, Heaney concedes that “[a]s a political phenomenon, he represents conflicting elements in the Irish inheritance which continue to be repressed or unresolved.”¹⁶ As an act of rehabilitation, then, both the elegy and the introduction achieve something of their goal, but it is in his appropriation of Owen’s “seared conscience” for Ledwidge’s “agonised consciousness” that “all the strains” truly start to criss-cross and things get interesting in terms of Heaney’s poetic inheritance from the Great War. For, in the problematized legacy of the Irish soldier-poets, Heaney found a discretely Hibernicized version of the “comparandum” I have discussed elsewhere in relation to Hughes, Larkin, and Hill. The tribal, intimate neglect of the Ledwidge-McGill-Kettle generation of Irish patriots Heaney understood all too well, yet he does not stand dumb in terms of recognizing their true value as poetic *exempla* of a complex and modern fate akin to that of the Eastern European poets with whom he also identified. The Troubles suddenly shifted Heaney to a less “safe distance from the front,” prompting a new and personal urgency to Owen’s savage questioning of the twentieth-century poet’s meaning, since “the actual dying” was now taking place on the streets of his own country. Unwontedly, Heaney could now

attempt an effective fulfilment of Owen's imperatives of witness with some of the authority of experience he ascribes to the soldier-poets. Looking back from the year 2000, he historicizes the moment in terms of a generational poetics that glosses over, somewhat, the genuine discomfort and expediencies of the time:

I think the writers of my generation saw themselves as part of the heaven. The fact that literary action was afoot was itself a new political condition, and the poets did not feel the need to address themselves to the specifics of politics because they assumed that the tolerances and subtleties of their art were precisely what they had to set against the repetitive intolerances of public life. When Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, James Simmons and myself were having our first book published, Paisley was already in full sectarian cry and Northern Ireland's cabinet ministers regularly massaged the atavisms of the Orange-men on the Twelfth of July. Hair-raising bigotries were propounded and reported in the press as a matter of course and not a matter for comment. Nothing in the situation needed to be exposed since it was all entirely barefaced. It seemed, rather, that conditions had to be outstripped and it is tempting to view the whole syndrome in the light of Jung's thesis that an insoluble conflict is overcome by outgrowing it, developing in the process 'a new level of consciousness'.¹⁷

In practice, Heaney's response, as we have seen, drew much criticism for the manner in which his "new level of consciousness" appeared to some as obfuscation, though this appears to be more to do with the high-running emotions of the day and the "improper expectations"¹⁸ placed upon his shoulders. As a child of the Cold War, his adoption of Eastern Bloc role models for amphibious survival in both the realm of the times and that of "moral and artistic self-respect"¹⁹ is also understandable: like MacGreevy, Heaney looked beyond the mainland to Europe for examples of adequate responses to extraordinary times. And the notion of an "adequate response" on the part of the poet—a search for "images and symbols adequate to our predicament"²⁰—was clearly something that exercised him. In his final lecture as the Oxford Professor of Poetry, "Frontiers of Writing," Heaney goes so far as to position the Northern Irish poets alongside his East European *exempla* in this respect:

To be a source of truth and at the same time a vehicle of harmony: this expresses what we would like poetry to be and it takes me back to the kinds of pressure which poets from Northern Ireland are subject to. These poets feel with special force a need to be true to the negative nature of the evidence and at the same time to show an affirming flame, the need to be both socially responsible and creatively free.²¹

Significantly, the tenor of this discussion is not so very far from that to be found in Heaney's appreciation of Ledwidge:

[...] the combination of vulnerability and adequacy which Ledwidge displayed in facing the life of his times remains admirable and as people in Ireland today

prepare to encounter the dilemma of their own times—moral, constitutional, domestic, international—his example constitutes a challenge to act with solitary resolve and to expect neither consensus nor certitude.²²

This “life of the times” is, of course, as close to Mandelstam’s “realm of “the times”” as Owen’s “seared conscience” is to Ledwidge’s “agonized consciousness,” the point here being less to do with Heaney’s idiolect than with a shared conception of those qualities he looks to in a poet functioning under pressure. More significant, however, is Heaney’s take on Ledwidge’s *poetic* capacity for honesty and hard-won ambiguity. It is here that we begin to detect his true debt to the soldier-poets:

[...] this “bird-hearted singer” keeps the nest warm and the lines open for a different poetry, one that might combine tendermindedness towards the predicaments of others with an ethically unsparing attitude towards the self. Indeed, it is because of this scruple, this incapacity for grand and overbearing certainties, and not because of the uniform he wore, it is for this reason that Ledwidge can be counted as a ‘war poet’ in the company of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon.²³

Not only does this view claim for Ledwidge his place among the Great War canon, but it also links him to Heaney’s process, in terms of how he dealt poetically with his own public dilemma of polarized expectation and creative self-determination. Indeed, it might not be entirely disingenuous to read into this introduction a modicum of self-justification, on Heaney’s part, for the methods and means he used back in the late 1960s and early 1970s amid “the Northern Writers’ crisis of conscience.”²⁴ The criticism he drew then and subsequently, for a poetry which, like Ledwidge, eschewed the “grand and overbearing certainties” of sectarianism is, therefore, telling. Ironically, it ferries part of Heaney’s indebtedness back across the Irish Sea, thereby keeping the lines open for a different reading of the “Great War debris”²⁵ which reputedly litters his early collections. Whilst it has been common to link the “shadowy judging figure” of Owen to Heaney’s engagement with the poetics of responsibility, the nest kept warm by Ledwidge “for a different poetry” also represents a discreet part of the same process. As Fran Brearton observes, “Heaney does not stand or fall according to the word of English history and tradition.”²⁶ Neil Corcoran, too, reminds us of this when noting that “as a poet who considers himself Irish, Heaney lies at an oblique angle to the English poetic tradition, and must labour to create his own personally sustaining ‘tradition’ of sought-out exemplars.”²⁷

The core text for this discussion is, of course, *Field Work’s* “In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge,” culturally and historically important in all the ways previously described. The poem opens with two quatrains that clearly position its source within the distancing milieu of a casually encountered war memorial: a “bronze soldier hitches a bronze cape” in a synecdochic first line that buries Ledwidge’s human particularity in the collective act of commemoration and public edifice. This distance is maintained by the contrasting of “real” and

“imagined” winds in lines two and three. Heaney is at pains, here, to establish for himself a level of detachment from a tradition of historical commemoration to which he has ambivalent access: the figure at this point has no name, the signifiers are staples of Great War memorialization and, as the speaker confirms, “It all meant little” to him in the moment the poem recalls. What we are witnessing at this point is actually a performative memory of the poet’s failure to interact with a symbol of collective memorialization: it is, in a sense, a moment of thwarted cultural transcendence, an examination of which the poem goes on to develop as its central theme. The verse begins to enact its own process of rapprochement, however, with the introduction of the lyric “I” in line seven, when Heaney eases himself into the ambivalent territory of the Great War legacy via his own childhood memories of walking along the Portstewart prom with his Aunt Mary “in nineteen forty-six or seven.” From here, the quotidian details of the fourth stanza begin to recall something of Ledwidge’s own propensity for redirecting the Big Word energies engendered by Great War-related material into something of a more human scale:

The pilot from Coleraine sailed the coal-boat.
 Courting couples rose out of the scooped dunes.
 A farmer stripped to his studs and shiny waistcoat
 Rolled the trousers down on his timid shins.

This coy nod to Irish soldier poetry enables Heaney to home in on his subject and give him a contemporaneous locale similar enough for him to be invoked by name in stanza five: “Frances Ledwidge, you courted at the seaside | Beyond Drogheda one Sunday afternoon.” Once Ledwidge has been imaginatively reclaimed in this way, from the generalized edifice of Great War memorialization, we get a lyrical re-examination of his life, remarkable for the dexterity of appropriation on the part of Heaney. His faith is invoked before the famous “haunted Catholic face” of stanza seven, in the unmistakable signifiers interwoven into the previous stanza. These establish cultural identity without the grandstanding to which Heaney is averse. The “May altar of wild flowers, | Easter water” and even “Mass-rocks” suggest Ledwidge’s religious and political affinities in a manner similar to Heaney’s own self-revelation elsewhere. They also serve, by their very subtlety, to increase the impact of the following six stanzas, when Heaney moves closer to a less equivocal statement of sympathies:

I think of you in your Tommy’s uniform,
 A haunted Catholic face, pallid and brave,
 Ghosting the trenches like a bloom of hawthorn
 Or silence cored from a Boyne passage-grave.

Here, the language is intimately caught up in the sort of fine-spun web of intractable allusion distinctive of Heaney when he finds himself in such open

ground: the directness of “Catholic” is both underscored by the hawthorn simile and destabilized by the equivocality of the “Boyne passage-grave,” which is as biographically accurate as it is culturally up for grabs. The next three stanzas consolidate both the poem’s historical biography and Heaney’s personal route into the material, via his young aunt. There are jump-cuts between the bucolic rural Ireland that Ledwidge has signed up to fight for and the realities of that fight, registered by spliced-in quotes from his own troubled reasoning. It is the final two stanzas which demand most scrutiny, however, and I am not sure they are as harsh upon Ledwidge as they may initially seem. An uneasy and complicated inheritance is being quietly claimed here on behalf of Catholic Ireland: Ledwidge is “our dead enigma,” whose motivations “Criss-cross in useless equilibrium” and whose implication in the portent of “this vigilante bronze” forces Heaney to “hear again the sure confusing drum.” These are the poem’s most well-known tropes and can be taken as paradigms for a community’s troubled relationship with the legacy of Irish soldiers fighting for Britain in the Great War. But, look again at that word “useless” and, coming from a poet who chose his words even more carefully than most, we sense another reading confidentially bound up in the very qualities most admired by Heaney: Ledwidge’s “incapacity for grand and overbearing certainties.” That “combination of vulnerability and adequacy” in his position—and, by extension, the other Irish soldier-poets—constituted an equilibrium which was just as Heaney has it here: *use-less*, and, therefore, beyond the co-option of sectarian interest. In terms of his own aesthetic resistance to improper expectation, it is not difficult to see what Heaney might find appealing about such linguistic decommissioning. This position is, of course, both shored-up and undermined in the poem’s resolve, which is at pains to separate Ledwidge from Loyalist tradition whilst levelling out all such notions in the face of death: “You were not keyed or pitched like these true-blue ones, | Though all of you consort now underground.” In the final analysis, what is being celebrated in the Ledwidge elegy are precisely those qualities of ambiguity and resistance to the expected default position which Heaney himself practised in a quest for artistic self-determination. If, as Bernard O’Donoghue has it, “Heaney’s poetry is always to be seen within the context of ‘present use’,”²⁸ the similarly troubled legacy of Irish soldier-poets presented him with certain aesthetic and philosophical opportunities in the face of polarized sectarian expectation.

Heaney’s debt to the soldier-poets of the Great War clearly shares something, then, with the highly problematical relationship of Republican Ireland to those of its own citizens who donned the British uniform in the First World War, whose complicated motivations were themselves elided for the best part of a century. In this scenario, the possible influences of “tenderminded” poets like Ledwidge represent fascinating voices-off, distantly articulate behind the “father figures” of two more recognized traditions: those of the mainstream Irish and English canons. After all, if we want a truly dangerous example of “improper expectations” then surely those heaped upon Redmond’s Irish Nationalist Party soldier-volunteers trump any ascribed to the Northern Writers

of the 1960s. Even an erstwhile Irish volunteer such as Ledwidge sets himself the unenviable task of freeing Mother Ireland by shedding his own blood in the cause of the British Empire at the same time that northern Unionists were simultaneously laying down their lives for the opposite purpose. The events of Easter 1916 and the complicated fallout which led to the founding of the Irish Free State effectively beached this cohort on the shoals of history and accounts for their neglect. Neglect was never something that threatened Heaney, but it is fascinating that one of the key things he shares with the Irish soldier-poets is the nature of the criticism often levelled at them. In an *Irish Times* article (May 5, 2015), Gerald Dawe observes that:

[...] unlike their more famous English soldier-poet contemporaries—Owen, Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, David Jones—the Irish poets who fought seemed to have preferred not to depict the gruesome realities of war in any detail whatsoever. The Irish pastoralist poet, Francis Ledwidge, who, like Owen, died in action, is a good example of this elision, even though he took part in some of the bloodiest battles of the war and would have witnessed some horrible sights.

The parallel does not stop with Ledwidge:

So too with those who survived the war, such as Monk Gibbon, Patrick McGill, CS Lewis—their war poems are more general, etherealised impressions of waiting to go over the top or making it through, although, as their memoirs and autobiographies make plain, they were personally traumatised by their war experiences.²⁹

Also widespread in the Haughey book, the criticism implied here is one of a decorative avoidance not dissimilar to Desmond Fennell's attack upon Heaney's poetry for its "nothing saying and its poverty of meaning."³⁰ Even if one does not subscribe to this view, the supplementary criticism of Heaney's "love affair with romantic nationalism" is certainly one the Irish soldier-poets might recognize. Discussing "In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge," Jim Haughey manages to fuse the nature of the two poets' responses whilst claiming for Heaney sectarian leanings others found lacking:

Heaney's language reveals historical and cultural references endemic to Irish nationalist ideology [...] Heaney's elegy, then, subscribes to a fairly narrow definition of Irish ethnicity, for we see Ledwidge's "Celtic/Catholic" pastoralism favourably contrasted to non-Celtic presence which threatens the "native" order. Judging by the way Heaney's poem associates Irishness with landscape and Catholicity, we see further evidence of his love affair with romantic nationalism.³¹

Tellingly, it is a charge that Heaney might refute via his own reading of Ledwidge:

To see him as the uncomplicated voice of romantic nationalism misrepresents the agonized consciousness which held in balance and ultimately decided between

the command to act upon the dictates of a morality he took to be both objective and universally applicable, and the desire to keep faith with a politically resistant and particularly contentious Irish line.³²

It is, indeed, this Owen-like “agonized consciousness” and sense of balanced contradiction, claimed by Heaney on behalf of Ledwidge, that represents a large part of his own specific debt to the Irish soldier-poets. And whilst it is true that connections with an English literary tradition represented by Hughes, Hill, and the Great War poets should not be obscured, it *is* possible to see “a different poetry” at work which owes something to an Irish comparandum. The distinction might appear ingenuous, but it is an important one since, ultimately, Heaney eschews Owen’s sponsorship of “an art which seems to rebuke beauty in favour of truth”³³ in favour of Mandelstam’s attainment of a new kind of beauty in transcendence. Fran Brearton describes, thus, the gradual process which led to this:

Effectively, Heaney reaches a point—the creative misreading of Owen and the lauding of Mandelstam form part of the progression towards this point—where the early question ‘What do I say if they wheel out their dead?’ is not so much answered as found to be unnecessary. Through a somewhat convoluted argument, he reaches the conclusion that the ‘artistic endeavour [...] is not obliged to have any intention beyond its own proper completion’. In such a formula, it is possible to be a war poet without writing about or from a position of conflict.³⁴

Brearton also references the “nest kept warm” passage from the Introduction at this point. This is striking, since it reminds us that Ledwidge and, by extension, his cohort, had to be part of Heaney’s core thinking about poetry’s “adequate” response to public catastrophe. It is worth noting, then, that even if just at the level of philosophical scratching post, the attempt on the part of poets such as Ledwidge and Kettle to personally reconcile “conflicting elements of the Irish inheritance” did represent a model of which Heaney was aware and clearly valued.

When reading Heaney’s work with the Great War in mind, one is aware of a complex cycle of interconnected moral motivation and poetic influence: the creative misreading of Wilfred Owen, suggested by Brearton, leads on to that lauding of Mandelstam en route to a position where Heaney feels comfortable with his own particular role as witness. Even then, it is a form of accord that demands the sort of “ethically unstinting attitude towards the self” with which he was later to credit Ledwidge as he famously confesses in “Punishment”:

I who have stood dumb
 when your betraying sisters
 cauled in tar,
 wept by the railings,

 who would connive
 in civilized outrage

yet understood the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge.³⁵

This work, of course, is one of those “threshold poems” from *North* which prompted Edna Longley to ask if the poet can run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, and it is significant that both she *and* Heaney trace a Great War dimension to such striving after satisfactory ethical positions. Longley, expressing her overall problem with the collection, observes: “If *North* doesn’t cater for ‘liberal lamentation’, neither does it offer a universal, Wilfred Owen–style image of human suffering.”³⁶ And whilst meditating upon the nature of poetic witness, Heaney memorably described Owen as having “connived in what he deplored so that he could deplore what he connived in.”³⁷ None of which would have rung false with those of Heaney’s own countrymen who opted to connive with the hounds of the British Empire in order to set free the hare of Ireland. Such ambiguity is apparent in the explanations offered by poets such as Tom Kettle and Francis Ledwidge for joining up in 1914. Kettle, like MacGreevy (and latterly Heaney himself), looked to a wider European context as the means of expressing Ireland’s predicament (“My only counsel to Ireland is, that to become deeply Irish, she must become European”³⁸), whilst his motives for joining the British Army proffer a somewhat Pyrrhic explanation: “I hope to come back. If not, I believe that to sleep here in the France that I have loved is no harsh fate, and that so passing out into silence, I shall help towards the Irish settlement.”³⁹ Ledwidge, more pointedly, offered a bloody-minded pragmatism symptomatic of the man of action he saw himself to be:

I joined the British Army because she stood between Ireland and an enemy common to our civilization and I would not have her say that she defended us while we did nothing at home but pass resolutions.⁴⁰

Actually, this is a trope distinctive to Irish soldier poetry of the Great War. For all their borrowing from traditional English forms, what often sets their work apart is their attempt to explain why they, as Irishmen, volunteered to fight. We can see this in poems like Ledwidge’s “The Irish in Gallipoli,” which apes the English public school classical comparandum in phrases such as “Lighted by Troy’s last shadow” but is, nonetheless, clear in its political pragmatism:

Neither for lust of glory nor new throne
This thunder and this lightning of our wrath
Waken these frantic echoes, not for these
Our Cross with England’s mingle; we but war when war
Serves Liberty and Justice, Love and Peace.⁴¹

It is a position we see more poignantly expressed in Kettle’s “To My Daughter Betty, The Gift of God”:

Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead,
 Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
 But for a dream, born in a herdsman’s shed,
 And for the secret Scripture of the poor.⁴²

Of course, the role of poets such as Kettle and Ledwidge in Irish history’s enigmatic narrative is, as we have seen, precisely the ground reopened by Heaney in *Field Work*’s “In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge,” with its “useless equilibrium.” This equilibrium is inclined, however, to be performatively “useless” in the verse but otherwise instructive in the prose. Heaney’s praise for Ledwidge’s “combination of vulnerability and adequacy” in “facing the life of his times” comes from a fine appreciation of his own challenge to act with solitary resolve and emulate the example of poets like Mandelstam and Owen. In this respect, the Irish soldier-poets appear to be, at least, implicated in his thinking. The main point here, however, is the fact that this unease at their involvement in the fighting fostered a quality of obliqueness in the matter of expressing the conflict in verse. Whilst the letters and novels of a poet such as Patrick McGill avoid little in their realistic depictions of life at the front, Irish soldier poetry of the Great War is generally characterized by its evasion of grim reality in favour of a flight into pastoral modes of escape, akin to those apparent in the verse of an overwhelming majority of their English comrades. Viewing this phenomenon as part of the English acculturation of Great War poetry, Jim Haughey points out that “One would look hard to find the kind of antiwar bitterness of a Sassoon or Owen in Irish soldier poetry.”⁴³ It is a view echoed by Gerald Dawe in his *Irish Times* article:

We notice retrospectively that, comparatively speaking, these men did not render the shocking physical impact on the human body or psyche of this industrialised carnage, as in Wilfred Owen’s gruesome re-enactment of gas attacks, for example.⁴⁴

In other words, it does not offer “a universal, Wilfred Owen–style image of human suffering.” Charges of omission or “extreme selection”⁴⁵ on the part of the Irish soldier-poets are, however, predicated upon a narrow and somewhat Anglo-centric definition of what constitutes an appropriate vernacular for “War Poetry”: a determination based largely upon the output of an English canon represented by the “realism” of Owen et al. Edna Longley reminds us, however, that transcendence and historicity are not as mutually exclusive of the classic wartime binaries as some critical theories might make out. The sort of faith in the poet’s gift to detect rare moments of beauty which transcend the horrors of the battlefield—as modelled by the likes of Ledwidge, or MacGreevy—is, therefore, more than the mere “sanative framework” I’ve talked about elsewhere; it is also an extension of war poetry’s idiom. There is, too, another reading of this phenomenon that goes beyond an English acculturation of the canon: for Irish soldier-poets, their Home Front *was* a war zone

which, for complicated reasons, they were extending to Flanders or Salonika. In the thinking of British writers like Thomas and Gurney, the physical reality of Gloucestershire was *casus belli* enough for them to enlist. Why, then, should we be resistant to the notion that “a herdsman’s shed” or Ledwidge’s black-birds are any less part of Great War poetry’s warp and weft, particularly when the latter sing over ground that is itself contested? In the mind of its author, a poem such as Ledwidge’s “Thomas McDonagh” is simply an elegy for one fallen on a different front of the same war. The link back to Seamus Heaney is not difficult to spot here, since the kinship of “bird-hearted singers” like Ledwidge with Edward Thomas is entirely congruent with Heaney’s own aesthetic inclinations and poetic milieu. Indeed, here are to be found the roots of that “different poetry” Heaney is talking about with regard to Ledwidge’s right to be counted “as a ‘war poet’ in the company of Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon.” It is a poetry which redirects their grandstanding rage for truth and pity towards a more effective relocation in the quotidian.

In his essay “Englands of the Mind,” Heaney addresses the subject of three British poets—Ted Hughes, Geoffrey Hill and Philip Larkin—each of whom exerted varying degrees of influence over him. The piece focuses upon what Heaney calls the context of “auditory imagination” and observes of this group that: “All of them return to an origin and bring something back, all three live off the hump of the English poetic achievement, all three, here and now, in England, imply a continuity with another England, there and then.”⁴⁶ A poet’s musings upon other poets are, more often than not, discreet reflections upon their own aspirations and practice, so I’d not be the first to suggest that Heaney’s output, particularly during that fraught decade of the 1970s, represented some form of attempt to create an equivalent “Ireland of the Mind.” During that time, he too lived off the hump of English poetic achievement but very self-consciously added to it the quern of Irish poetry. We see this in all those language and place name poems which “politicize the terrain and the imagery of the first two books”⁴⁷ and which are taken a step further in *Wintering Out*, *North*, and *Field Work*. In respect of the auditory imagination, however, we see a definite working through of the Gaelic dimensions of past poetic achievement, a process that Heaney again linked to Ledwidge: “His new command of the Gaelic techniques of assonance and internal rhyme constituted an oblique declaration of loyalty to a complex of feelings not represented by the uniform in which he fought.”⁴⁸ This is quite a big claim to make on behalf of indigenous technique, but it is one which bled through into Heaney’s own poetics, even if only as an attitude towards the prospects for “oblique declaration” held within his prosody. Clearly, the example Heaney is thinking of is that short Ledwidge elegy for his friend Thomas McDonagh, one of the Easter Rebels executed at Mountjoy Prison on May 3, 1916. In it, those internal rhymes of “cry/sky,” “blows/snows,” “moor/poor,” and “morn/horn,” alongside the assonance inherent in phrases like “the wailing of the rain” and “pastures poor with greedy weeds,” demonstrate exactly those techniques which Heaney flags up. That he goes on to equate them with an oblique dec-

laration of loyalty is something which ought to alert us to possibilities that Heaney must have seen for his own practice, in a situation not without its own “complex of feelings” or, indeed, share of uniforms. And it is significant that he identifies the innovation as being both synonymous with Ledwidge and consistent with the notion of coded protest. This same tendency to prioritize complex patterns of assonance and consonance over metrical regularity is apparent in Heaney’s own work, therefore, most particularly in those short-lined poems of *North’s* Part I:

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

It blows her nipples
to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs.

I can see her drowned
body in the bog,
the weighing stone,
the floating rods and boughs.⁴⁹

The subtle vowel music of “Punishment” along with the tugging consonance of repeated patterns like the “h”s and “n”s of that first stanza propel the verse beyond its own short lines, in a manner much closer to the rhythmic insistence of the alliterative tradition than the harshly severed pentameters spoken of by Edna Longley in *Poetry in the Wars*. Heaney uses this shortness of line to constrict, “in a sense, the breadth of your movement,”⁵⁰ creating, thereby, a sort of formal consonance with the subject matter at hand. He described these thin small quatrain poems as “kind of drills or augurs for turning in” which might be an apt description for the earthward direction in which he was heading at the time of *North*. Perhaps, for the purposes of this discussion, however, it is worth recalling that Ledwidge too favoured the short line, and in a poem such as “Autumn Evening in Serbia” we see a not dissimilar aggregation of assonant and consonantal effects, though less cut free from the full rhymes of Edwardian style:

ALL the thin shadows
Have closed on the grass,
With the drone on their dark wings
The night beetles pass.
Folded her eyelids,
A maiden asleep,
Day sees in her chamber
The pallid moon peep.

From the bend of the briar
 The roses are torn,
 And the folds of the wood tops
 Are faded and worn.
 A strange bird is singing
 Sweet notes of the sun,
 Tho' song time is over
 And Autumn begun.⁵¹

A more significant mannerism suggested by this poem, however—one Ledwidge shared with Edward Thomas—is in his representation of landscapes which communicate the pain and suffering of war indirectly. Here the familiar elegiac moment of sunset is rendered in a manner faithful enough to pastoral convention—the “thin shadows,” “the night beetles,” the “maiden asleep”—until, in the second stanza, the inescapable dark matter of warfare is manifest in the underlying tension exerted upon the scene by the negation of each detail: “The roses are torn,” the folds of the wood tops “Are faded and worn,” Ledwidge’s totemic bird is for once “strange” and singing “Tho’ song time is over.” It’s something we see elsewhere in Ledwidge’s war poetry: in the disrupted faery tale of “At Currabwee,” where the fates of the executed Joseph Plunkett and Patrick Pearse suddenly intervene to haul down stanzas two and three, and in the thwarted transcendence that closes the dream of “The Dead Kings: “A bomb burst near me where I lay. | I woke, ‘twas day in Picardy.”⁵² This is a Ledwidge trait that Haughey describes as “connotative disturbance,” in which pastoral or mythical congruities are ironically undercut by the constant intrusion of details that betray an inescapable consciousness of wartime. It is also a feature which reminds us of E.A. Marsland’s observation that “First World War poetry is unusual, for the context had and still has a significant effect on the reader’s expectations and response.”⁵³ The truth of this remark, in connection with poets like Ledwidge and Thomas ought, in turn, to remind us of the similarities of inescapable context faced by the Northern Writers once the Troubles were under way. Such disruptions to the natural order, their violent intrusion into the poet’s aesthetic field of vision, do, of course, necessitate the moral imperatives of witness that Heaney located in Owen and extrapolated for “every poet who has written subsequently.” Given that he ultimately chose the “Mandelstam route” of sponsoring an art in which “lyric action constituted radical witness,”⁵⁴ as opposed to Owen’s “messianic and socially redemptive message,” one might reasonably expect to encounter greater alignment of Heaney’s lyric action with the “different poetry” of witness to be found in the work of his own countrymen, such as Ledwidge.

Whenever Heaney is called upon to witness events in Northern Ireland, we do, indeed, see a paucity of outrage and definitive statement in favour of something more nuanced and “tenderminded”: one thinks of the compassionate rituals aspired to in “The Strand at Lough Berg” when dealing with the sectarian murder of a cousin. There is, of course, a good degree of Heaney’s self-

conscious effort to “outgrow” an insoluble conflict in this, but on the page this can—depending upon one’s point of view—look like the elision with which he is charged, or a following of the lines kept open by *both* Mandelstam and Ledwidge. We get a hint, for example, of Heaney’s dextrous variation upon “connotative disturbance” in a couple of poems from *Wintering Out*: “Bog Oak” and “Broagh.” In the first poem, a paean to that most Irish of *objets trouvés* is disturbed and its significance stretched in the final two stanzas, with the sudden introduction of Edmund Spenser’s ambivalent legacy to Ireland: his gift to the English language in *The Faerie Queen* offset by an involvement in the suppression of the Second Desmond Rebellion that culminated in the massacre at Ard na Caithe in 1580. Here the subtle significance of Spenser’s name is underscored by the poem’s hefted sign-off on the word “carrion.” Similarly, the loaded trove of Hiberno-English subtlety, which Heaney was to excavate further, is quietly maximized in “Broagh.” The simple lyric celebration of a Derry township turns upon the “heelmark” of “the black O | in *Broagh*,”⁵⁵ when suddenly the mere pronunciation of that word becomes a tribal “tattoo”, its final *gh* a calling card of native or stranger. As Bernard O’Donoghue points out in *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry*, the poet of “Broagh” self-consciously addresses the matter of linguistic fidelity to locale. In such moments, the ironic patterning of Ledwidge’s “connotative disturbance” is also never far away. Of course, these are quieter moments within an oblique linguistic declaration of loyalty to a complex of feelings that Heaney was to develop and handle more overtly in *North* and *Field Work*, but in themselves, both “Bog Oak” and “Broagh” say every bit as much about the tribal “Northern reticence” explored later in a poem like “Whatever You Say Say Nothing.” Indeed, not unlike much of Geoffrey Hill’s poetry, these poems involve a language intimately bound up in what it is conveying.

Against a bigger canvas, however, Heaney’s bespoke solution to the problems of bearing witness to Northern Ireland’s predicament was to explode the historical context, setting present-day conflict against the vaster backdrop of ancient time where he can “stand at the edge of centuries,” as we find him doing in “Kinship.” The best-known manifestations of this trait are, of course, the body-in-the-bog poems beginning with *Wintering Out*’s “The Tollund Man”: another threshold poem for Heaney and one that, along with “Punishment,” was to become “a *locus classicus* of Heaney criticism.”⁵⁶ Whilst removing Heaney’s framework drama for the Troubles to the safer distances of the Iron Age, these poems also have some imaginative affinity with Thomas MacGreevy’s “earth voices whispering” from the Great War battlefield. Indeed, there is a fascinating generational (if also purely conjectural) correspondence to be spotted between MacGreevy’s “young uncles”⁵⁷ who returned from the First World War and Heaney’s moustached “old uncles”⁵⁸ of whom “The Tollund Man” reminds him. What the poems represent as a group, however, is a means by which Heaney can better function as a war poet. The historical remoteness of the bog bodies is offset by the uncomfortable similarities they share with many sectarian killings, and this spans the credibility gap of his refus-

ing to serve a specific ideology beyond that of the lyric poet. In that role, Heaney finds, in subjects like “Bog Queen,” “Grauballe Man,” and the young girls of “Punishment” and “Strange Fruit,” a poetic means, in the here and now, in Ireland, of implying continuity with another Ireland, there and then. In doing so, he goes some way to constructing his Hibernian equivalent to Hughes, Larkin, and Hill’s “Englands of the Mind.” The body-in-the-bog poems function, too, like MacGreevy’s “De Civitate Hominum,” as reminders of the strange contradictory beauty of what is taking place amid the violence of a battlefield or primitive rite. Just as the latter poem gets beyond the horror of what is being witnessed—the “fearful death” of an airman—to the “fleece-white flowers of death” culminating in “A stroke of orange in the morning’s dress,” a poem like “The Grauballe Man” achieves a similar aesthetic transcendence of the subject matter:

As if he had been poured
in tar, he lies
on a pillow of turf
and seems to weep

the black river of himself.
The grain of his wrists
is like bog oak,
the ball of his heel

like a basalt egg.⁵⁹

Here, the trigger word “tar,” like the cauled tar of “Punishment’s” “betraying sisters,” carries a contemporary resonance that is to end the poem with “each hooded victim, | slashed and dumped.” Yet, overwhelmingly, the language here consciously serves the greater aesthetic purposes of the poem, as evinced by metaphors such as “the black river of himself” and similes “like bog oak” or “like a basalt egg.” Heaney is attempting to answer his own question from “Feeling into Words,” “How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea?” while retaining his grasp upon the truth-telling responsibilities of witness. In his case, this state of “agonized consciousness,” along with the moral and poetic process it appears to require, strikes one as belonging as clearly to the legacy of Francis Ledwidge and Irish soldier poetry as to that of Wilfred Owen’s challenge which has “haunted the back of the literary mind”⁶⁰ since Blunden’s 1931 *Memoir*.

CONCLUSION

In matters such as these, none of the lines of creative energy run straight. Consequently, the purpose of this discussion has not been to reclaim for Seamus Heaney a profound and all-pervasive debt to Great War poetry. There *is* a literary indebtedness, however, though where I have sensed it I have also sensed a

slight misalignment of Heaney's canonical dues. It is a misalignment certainly encouraged by his own prose utterances, which tend to privilege the legacy of Wilfred Owen as a role model to the Northern Irish poets' analogous crisis of representation at the onset of the Troubles. And there is no doubt that Owen's obliteration of the line between art and life—what Heaney calls "his sanctity"⁶¹—played a crucial part in the earlier stages of a process whereby Heaney arrived at his own workable definition of the role of poet as witness. The positions and perceptions involved in this process did alter through time, though, and just as Mandelstam emerged to become Heaney's totemic influence, I believe that the domestically closer affinities between a Northern Irish Catholic writer and the "seared consciousness" of those Irish soldier-poets who went off to fight in a British uniform, allowed for other examples and influences, harmonious to Heaney's view of the poet's role and whatever nationalist sympathies he may have harboured. His take on the Northern Irish Troubles as "the tail end of a struggle in a province between territorial piety and imperial power"⁶² is certainly one which would have appreciated the fact that the opening shots of this struggle's last chapter were fired during the Great War and not only from the Post Office in Dublin. Equally, his image from "In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge," of "the worried pet I was in nineteen forty-six or seven" is just too close to the atavistic source of retrospective self-examination at work in Heaney's early collections for him not to have grown aware of Ledwidge's cultural proximity to his own tribal *omphalos*. That Heaney came to see in Ledwidge and his ilk adequate symbols for himself and his own pressurized poetic circle should come as no great surprise, therefore.

Perhaps I, too, overstate the case at this point. Maybe what is really being honoured by Heaney is no more than that transgressive urge which drives a poet away from the expected default position (rebel nationalism in the case of Ledwidge; militant republicanism in the case of Heaney himself). This would certainly be consistent with the notion of Heaney's political elusiveness in the eyes of certain critics. As O'Donoghue points out, "few poets signal the choices they are making at every juncture as explicitly as Heaney does,"⁶³ and maybe his choices in this area just are not explicit enough. However, "the complex set of imperatives"⁶⁴ that O'Donoghue also sees as having dominated Heaney's conception of himself as an Irish poet surely include a sensitivity to the exemplary possibilities offered by compatriot soldier-poets such as Ledwidge. At the very least, he finds in Ledwidge a contrarian whose position was to be aspired to by a Catholic nationalist during the Troubles, who resists the role of mouth-piece that Republicanism would have him assume. Within the terms of my Great War-centred discussion, however, what turns out to be most significant is the sheer ambiguity of Ledwidge's *historical* predicament which fostered in him and his enlisted peers that "combination of vulnerability and adequacy" that endured beyond Owen's "messianic" message; a message Heaney ultimately rejected as a model for his own acts of poetic witness. However discrete the seeking, the Irish soldier-poets represented "sought-out exemplars" better suited to the inconclusiveness of both human memory and Irish history. And,

as Heaney grew to understand the poet's role as witness in the expanded sense which took it beyond mere expressions of the pity of war towards a much broader aesthetic vision, Ledwidge's value became, too, more multivalent. Fittingly, then, his valediction to Francis Ledwidge concludes with the deliberately impressive claim that "his status as a combatant is finally not as important as his membership of the company of walking wounded, wherever they are to be found at a given time."⁶⁵

NOTES

1. Thomas MacGreevy, "De Civitate Hominum," ll 16–18. In *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914–1945*, edited by Gerald Dawe (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2008), 91.
2. Seamus Heaney, "Nero, Chekhov's Cognac and a Knocker," In *The Government of the Tongue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), xvi.
3. Seamus Heaney quoting Wallace Stevens in "Frontiers of Writing," from *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 190.
4. Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, xiii.
5. Jim Haughey, *The First World War in Irish Poetry* (USA: Bucknell University Press, 2002), 246.
6. Heaney, "Frontiers of Writing," 193.
7. Haughey, 254.
8. This is only the broadest survey of such criticism. Brearton points out that, "Heaney has been castigated, variously, for being too political, or not political enough, praised on the one hand for finding a 'befitting emblems of adversity', for crossing boundaries, damned on the other for writing poetry at once 'damagingly gendered', disingenuous, dangerously emotive, and finally tendentious." She goes on to provide a good round-up of such criticism in a lengthy footnote on page 218 of her book.
9. Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish Poetry: W.B. Yeats to Michael Longley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 222.
10. Brearton, 222–223.
11. Gerald Dawe, *Of War And War's Alarms: Reflections on Modern Irish Writing*, "All the strains criss-cross" (Cork: Cork University Press, 2015), 59.
12. Heaney, "Frontiers of Writing," 190.
13. Heaney, "Nero, Chekhov's Cognac and a Knocker," from *The Government of the Tongue*, xxi.
14. Seamus Heaney, "Introduction" *Francis Ledwidge: Selected Poems* (Dublin; New Island Books, 1992), 11.
15. Brearton, 222.
16. Heaney, "Introduction" *Francis Ledwidge: Selected Poems*, 19.
17. Heaney, "Nero, Chekhov's Cognac and a Knocker," from *The Government of the Tongue*, xxii.
18. Edna Longley, *Poetry in the Wars* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1986), 185.
19. Heaney, "Nero, Chekhov's Cognac and a Knocker," from *The Government of the Tongue*, xx.
20. Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968–1978* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981), 56.

21. Heaney, “Frontiers of Writing,” 193.
22. Heaney, “Introduction,” 20.
23. Ibid.
24. See Eavan Boland’s series of *Irish Times* articles on the subject from August 1970.
25. Brearton, 225.
26. Brearton, 226.
27. Neil Corcoran, “Seamus Heaney and the Art of the Exemplary” (*Yearbook of English Studies*, 17, 1987), 120.
28. Bernard O’Donoghue, Introduction, *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry* (Hemel Hempstead; Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 1.
29. Gerald Dawe, “Delayed Honour: the Irish war poets,” *Irish Times*, May 5, 2015.
30. Desmond Fennell, *Whatever You Say, Say Nothing: Why Seamus Heaney is No. 1* (Dublin: ELO Publications, 1991).
31. Haughey, 254.
32. Heaney, “Introduction,” 12.
33. Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, xx.
34. Brearton, 229.
35. Seamus Heaney, “Punishment,” *North* (1992, rpt; London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 30–31.
36. Edna Longley, “Inner Émigré” or “Artful Voyeur?” Seamus Heaney’s *North*, from *Poetry in the Wars*, 154.
37. Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, xv.
38. *The Ways of War*, Tom Kettle & Mary (Sheehy) Kettle, 3–4.
39. Letter to Joseph Devlin, *The Ways of War*, Tom Kettle & Mary (Sheehy) Kettle, 34.
40. Ledwidge, Letter to Lewis Chase, June 6, 1917.
41. Francis Ledwidge, “The Irish in Gallipoli,” Gerald Dawe, ed. *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914–1945* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2008), 83.
42. Thomas Kettle, “To my Daughter, Betty, the Gift of God,” Gerald Dawe, ed. *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914–1945* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2008), 55.
43. Haughey, 73.
44. Gerald Dawe, *Irish Times*, May 5, 2015.
45. Haughey, speaking of McGill’s poetry, 110.
46. “Englands of the Mind,” from *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971–2000*, 77.
47. James Randall, “An Interview with Seamus Heaney,” *Ploughshares* 5, no. 3 (1979), 17.
48. Heaney, “Introduction,” 19.
49. Seamus Heaney, “Punishment,” *North*, 30–31.
50. *Ploughshares*, 16.
51. Francis Ledwidge, “Autumn Evening in Serbia,” *Complete Poems*. Liam O’Meara, ed. (Newbridge, Ireland: Goldsmith, 1997).
52. Francis Ledwidge, “The Dead Kings,” *Selected Poems*, 70–71.
53. Elizabeth A. Marsland, *The Nation’s Cause: French, English and German Poetry of the First World War* (1991; rpt. London: Routledge Revivals, 2013).
54. Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, xix–xx.

55. Seamus Heaney, "Broagh," *Wintering Out* (1993, rpt; London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 17.
56. Michael Allen, ed. "Introduction," *Seamus Heaney* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 17.
57. Thomas Macgreevy, in *Richard Aldington: An Englishman* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931).
58. *Ploughshares*, 18. "The Tollund Man' seemed to me like an ancestor almost, one of my old uncles, one of those moustached archaic faces you used to meet all over the Irish countryside."
59. Seamus Heaney, "The Grauballe Man," *North*, 28–29.
60. Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, xiii.
61. Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, xiv.
62. Heaney, "Feeling into Words," from *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971–2000*, 24.
63. Bernard O'Donoghue, "Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry," 25.
64. Bernard O'Donoghue, 18.
65. Heaney, "Introduction," 20.

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