

## A Psychoanalytical Analysis of Scopophilia in Seamus Heaney's Selected Poems

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**Abstract:** Seamus Heaney is widely seen as one of the significant Irish writers of the twentieth century who authored and edited a number of well-known books and collections. Heaney's work reflected concepts of political violence, sexual desire, landscape, childhood memories and myths. Research has been conducted on the mentioned concepts. However, research about Heaney's concept of scopophilia is scarce, despite its wide depiction in Heaney's poetry. Therefore, this study investigates Heaney's stance as an Irish scopophilic in his poems. To explore this, the present research views Heaney's work from a psychoanalytical perspective. To examine the texts, this study employed a critical qualitative approach that entailed a close reading of Heaney's selected poems. The analysis was supported by background research of the context of the poems. This study mainly found that sex and power manifested through scopophilia are recurrent phenomena which motivate human ambitions and lead to world problems and suffering.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalytical Theory, Scopophilia, Politics and Seamus Heaney

### 1. Introduction

On April 13, 1939, a Roman Catholic farming family welcomed Seamus Justin Heaney into the world in Mossbawn, County Derry, Northern Ireland. Heaney was raised in the southern city of Derry and was a member of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. As an Irish poet, Heaney employed a variety of themes in his poems that were relevant to his Irish background, including political violence, sexual desire, landscape, childhood memories and myths. His poems deal with universal themes, but there are a few that are thematically distinct. They are related to Irishmen and Irish society (Hart, 1993). Pictures of the countryside and nature are reflected in Heaney's poetry. In addition, he describes the psyche of a wise mind in detail, akin to a psychologist. The most important side of Heaney's poetry is that, as he was a history major, he enjoyed writing about history. He depicts the political history, particularly that of Irishmen and their great tales and is aware of their pains and grievances (McCarthy, 2008). Moreover, he, like the other Irish people, experienced hardships and he does not shy away from portraying such sorrows and sufferings.

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Therefore, Heaney's identity is largely linked to his historical and cultural background. As a result, Heaney places a high priority on sustaining and seeking a feeling of continuity. Customs, traditions and family appear in his poems as bitter and sweet memories, comforting and reassuring him amongst the uncertainty and mayhem of daily horrors in his hometown. (Kennedy, 2000) characterized Heaney's method as a poetic notion that combines psychic investigation with a historical inquiry. According to (Welch, 1993), Heaney is involved in a tribal and cultural investigation and is trying to test his cultural legacy to determine where the significant moments are situated, but he is neither involved nor part of mindless devotion to the ancient tradition of the religious beliefs. The poetry of Seamus Heaney is both sensitive and empathetic, as he recognizes and comprehends others. His poetry is centered on connections, including his interactions with loved ones, family, and crucial places like Mossbawn and subsequently Glanmore. He appreciates and enjoys the positive aspects of life; he is capable of astonishment and delight in his poems and the mundane becomes extraordinary with such moments being described with appreciation, humility and awe.

Thus, among the mentioned themes emerging from Heaney's poems, for example, *Blackberry Picking* and *Death of a Naturalist*, among others, demonstrate his great description of political and sexual violence as a poet (Bernard, 2017). It can be noted that Heaney has an "exceptional gift" for "freshly realizing the physical universe with the robust accurate economy". Heaney's imagery is both recognition and revelation since he can bring commonplace natural phenomena to the readers' attention, mind and eyes with such an accurate depiction (Brown, 2010).

In addition, poems like *Broagh*, *The Tollund Man*, *Punishment Strange Fruit Bog Queen* have a remarkable freshness to them, alluding to the Irish poet's alleged connection to the country at a period when tribal loyalties had solidified into murder. *North* collection introduces a new dimension, as the poet's plight takes the center stage. Much of the controversy surrounding *North* was centered on the extent of Heaney's remaining Republican inclinations (Bugan, 2017). The poet's role as a speaker is much more political and sexual observing, while the second half of *North* collection is dominated by concerns about "what is spoken behind closed doors" and the weight of public expectations. In his later collection, *Door into the Dark* collection, he becomes the silent speaker for his people. He identifies with the 'bog' and accepts the implied insult of identifying as a bog person. To him, the bog, with all its ramifications, becomes a type of subliminal sexual, violent and racial memory, inspiring him to write poems.

Pant (2006) , in a study entitled "*Voyeurism and Violence in Seamus Heaney's Poetry*" analyzed fifteen poems of Seamus Heaney via applying gaze through a feminist, post-colonialist and narratological lens. Pant perceived Heaney's bog poems via applying *gaze* with gender differential roles and myth-related violence and sacrifice. So, this very voyeuristic attitude leads to violence in Seamus Heaney's poetry. This enables the researcher to categorize Jeremy Hawthorn's extension of the concept in three ways through the application of the concept *gaze* developed from a range of different sources of feminism, Narratology and Post-colonialism.

In 2015, similarly, Mahmood (2015) in her study entitled "*Mythology in Seamus Heaney's Selected Poems*" explored the sources of Heaney's myth and the significant use of myth in his poetry in the light of the postcolonial approach. She illustrated that Heaney's use of myth is poetic and thematic-poetic in the sense that it contributes to creating his oeuvre that is authentically written in English, yet it is uniquely

Irish. Moreover, she highlights that Heaney, through the use of myth, makes a parallel between ancient and modern Ireland to make peace between the South and the North of Ireland.

Another research project by Angelopulo (1987) explored “*The development of Seamus Heaney's poetry from Death of a Naturalist to North*”. Several careful readings of a few poems from Heaney's first four volumes are used to analyze his poetic growth. His main objective was to determine the phases that Heaney experiences in his attempt and desire to develop a poetic frame and style that simultaneously responds to the concerns of the private self and addresses the general political and cultural contexts of Northern Ireland.

Turkey and Goulam (2013) examined the role of childhood memories in Seamus Heaney's poetry in their article, “*The Importance of Childhood Memories in Re-shaping the Poetic Experience in Seamus Heaney: A Study of Selected Poems.*” To do this, the poems “Digging,” “Sonnet Four of Glanmore Sonnets,” and “A Drink of Water” were selected. They contend that Heaney's early experiences had a significant impact on his career. The poet's hidden and dormant literary potential can be awoken by these psychological stimuli. The way Heaney remembers his interactions with his family, himself as a person, and the neighbors is fascinating to observe.

However, this study investigates Seamus Heaney's selected poems from a scopophilic perspective. The poems include *LeToilete*, *The Forge*, *Sheelagh na Gig* and *Rite of Spring*. Through the investigation of Seamus Heaney's poetry, this work attempts to justify and establish its status as a scopophilic toward violence which reveals Heaney's scopophilic attitude when observing his surroundings in terms of political and sexual cues. It examines literary depictions of characters in the selected poems as they are sexually exploited due to the historical English and Irish political conflicts. To do so, a psychological approach is employed based on the Freudian concept of scopophilia. In this context, the study poses the following questions:

1. How is scopophilia reflected in Seamus Heaney's poems?
2. How does Heaney present the role of Ireland and the role of England through eroticizing the image of the former and the brutality of the latter?
3. To what extent the historical facts, events and accidents have influenced Heaney? And how does this influence appear and affect the meaning of the poems?

## **2. Methodology and Data Collection**

After doing a thorough reading and observation of a large number of Heaney's poems, 4 poems from different collections were selected for analysis. The selected poems were written from the end of the 1960s to the end of the 1990s which is the period that Heaney wrote his best and most effective and most widely accepted poems. The reason for selecting these poems is the thematic arrangement that the study follows. Another reason the study wants to select a poem from different times and eras is to find out any possible similarities, dissimilarities, contradictions and substantial changes.

The poems are analyzed line by line. The key diction and phrases are highlighted to help understand the scopophilic notions in the poems. The poems are mostly analyzed and discussed stanza by stanza and an overall explanation is provided for the whole poem to combine all the parts of the analysis. Also, the

research provides further discussion within or at the end of each poem's analysis to support the arguments with the related literature.

Regarding the adopted approach, the investigation of this study employs a critical qualitative approach as it deals with poems. The use of this approach is feasible for applying psychoanalytical theory to those poems since it allows the researcher to have an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data about scopophilia to demonstrate how Irish people are politically and sexually disempowered. Concerning the analytical method, a critical qualitative approach is used for the analysis part. This is because such an approach is very suitable for dealing with poems, especially poems like those of Seamus Heaney.

### **3. Psychoanalysis and the Pleasure Principle**

This study is conducted through the lenses of psychoanalytic criticism, which originates from Freudian theories of psychology as a general classification. Referring to the main psychologists' theories and assumptions can be conducive to understanding the overall idea. Therefore, providing a general overview is highly significant to learn about the dimensions of psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Freud began his psychoanalytic work in the 1880s, as he sought to address "behavioral anomalies" in his Vienna patients. He recognized the patients by listening to their stories and accounts of their problems, then labelled the situations as "hysteria" and started tending to the patients. Based on his experimental studies with real individuals, Freud said that people's behavior is directly impacted by the unconscious desires they feel, and today's normal people can readily verify this assertion (Tyson, 2006). According to Freud's theories, people's unconscious minds are influenced by their life experiences and formative years.

He offers patterns to reorganize these experiences into improving steps consisting of relationships with the surrounding people and psychological drives of desire and pleasure where children can focus. Jung highlights that the developmental stages are based upon "different parts of the body...starting with the mouth...shifting to the stages mentioned above reflect the basic levels of desire, but fear of loss also appears in it, death and repression." On the other hand, Heaney reminds the reader that repression does not eliminate unpleasant feelings and sensations. Instead, it grants them authority over our present experience, enabling us to unintentionally behave in ways that would allow us to "play out," without our agreement, our contradictory thoughts and feelings about the horrible memories and emotions we conceal (Tyson, critical theory today A User-Friendly Guide, 2006).

Freud assumes that a lot of memories and emotions from childhood are buried in the unconscious mind and these memories have an indirect impact on our daily conscious decisions. Generally, the main goal of psychoanalytic studies is to reveal psychological encounters and learn from them. However, the matter is not much different in psychoanalytic criticism. A critical study of Heaney's works, in general, demands broad knowledge of the background in psychoanalytic criticism, which is directly connected to psychology and its developing theories including the valuable contributions, besides Sigmund Freud, of Jacques Lacan, and Laura Mulvey.

Additionally, as stated by Mahroof Hossain (2017), in his article, Psychoanalytic Theory Used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study, to analyze a work of literature using the psychoanalytic approach, it is imperative to comprehend the conceptual framework; the Oedipus complex, the unconscious, the tripartite

model, the mirror stage by Lacan, and object relation theory. The interpretation of dreams, the slips of the tongue or pen, and jokes are some mechanisms that the unconscious mind uses by the ego to balance the id and the super-ego. Moreover, Freud contends that people acquire defense mechanisms like selective memory, selective perception, denial, displacement, projection, regression, dread of intimacy, and fear of death, among others.

Concerning the tripartite model, the id is the part where our primitive desires lie, such as happiness, hunger, and thirst, that part needs to be fulfilled instantly regardless of the cost or consequence, because it is where our pleasure principle is based, and that is what helps newborns get their basic needs met. Superego is where the conscience is governed by morals and ethical restraints developed through a person's upbringing. It is what helps us differentiate between right and wrong by creating a form of punishment through fear and guilt, thrusting back any desires and instincts forbidden by society to the unconscious mind. The ego is the rational and logical part which helps create a balance between the id and superego. It deals with the direct reality of having to fulfil the id's desires while taking into consideration the social restraints represented in the superego. Resulting in a nondestructive release of desires (Westen, 1998).

In Review of Freud's Psychoanalysis Approach to Literary Studies, Azadkhan Niaz (2019) discussed a question about Freud's theories that have major roles in interpreting the hidden meanings in a literary work. It suggested that personality is made of three parts, the tripartite psyche helps analyze the personality of the characters on their behavior and actions. If the id of a person or a character is stronger than the other two parts, the person tends to engage in "self-pleasure". If the superego is the powerful part, the individual will be strict and hide all his desires to the unconscious part, resulting in repressed desires, and creating a character with problematic issues. While the individual who holds a strong ego is considered mentally healthy since it maintains a balance between the two parts. Finally, knowing the defense mechanisms that a character uses and interpreting the dreams of a character are also successful methods to analyze literary work (38-40).

Accordingly, literary critics look for suppressed ideas, thoughts and desires of the characters that may lead to taking certain actions or possessing certain feelings. Moreover, critics can find the author's suppressed desires and feelings in their literary work. Considering, these literary works as dreams or imaginations have roots in reality and real life that can also be analyzed in the same ways dreams are interpreted. Critics can also consider a story as a source and start examining its hidden trends through analysis. As a school of literary criticism, the theories assist in discovering the unconscious mind of many characters and authors, which in the end will enrich the psychoanalytic process by a pattern of the reflections of suppressing desires in the unconscious mind.

The intersection of psychology and literature is that literary works are regarded as another form or path for the emergence of the suppressed thoughts of the unconscious mind, which in turn can reveal an enormous amount of detail and add insights to any literary work. Drew Westen (1998) in his book the scientific legacy of Sigmund Freud: Toward a psychodynamically informed psychological science argued that Freud focuses on the unconscious mind and believes that most of the things that a human being desires or does are from the unconscious mind and an unknown position. The Freudians almost always bring up the question "so tell me about your childhood" or "How was your childhood?" Freud also defined the terms id, ego, and superego alongside the unconscious mind:

Finally, the basic interest of psychoanalytical criticism is the human's inner side, seeking to interpret a literary work through the psychoanalytic analysis drawing on the author's personality. Delving into a writer's id, superego, and ego can lead to the revelation of the hidden and mysterious thoughts of the unconscious mind, which are manifested in the form of characters, symbols, or events in any given literary work. Moreover, psychoanalytical criticism often concerns itself with the analysis of the unconscious mind of any given character, justifying certain actions that can only be comprehended through psychoanalysis. Freuds' revelations and studies have paved the way for psychoanalytical criticism to be applied to literature and to be the only school of criticism concerned with the mysteries of individuals' life which examines every word said or action taken, to extract a moral lesson and unveil more dimensions of human personality and nature.

### **3.1 The Scopophilic Gaze**

In 1905, Freud published *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. He formed scopophilia by objectifying other people and gazing at them with a "controlling and curious gaze"; this is known as the Freudian notion of scopophilia. Scopophilia is also known as the pleasure of watching or gazing. Psychologically, the concept was first introduced by Freud as the positive feeling/pleasure, which is derived either by looking at or being looked at. In his work, Freud concentrated his actual examples on children's voyeuristic actions, and their immature drive to hunt for and verify what is concealed and limited. Curiosity for the primordial scene concerns the physiological and genital functions of others as well as the presence of phallus. Thus, scopophilia as defined in this settlement is a very active mode of gazing.

Freud developed his idea of scopophilia by linking it to pre-genital autoeroticism in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*. As a result, through resemblance, the joy of the sight is shared with others. The main interaction is the convenient link between functional instinct and narcissistic growth. The instinct is altered by the way the ego is built, yet it nonetheless provides the sensual underpinning for the pleasure of objectifying others.

Therefore, in psychology, the concept of scopophilia is taken from the 'anal stage' the development of the child as recommended by Freud. Furthermore, Freud stated that people go through stages of oral and anal fixation before they reach the genital stage in adulthood, so scopophilia is the joy of being able to observe. Whereas during the 'oral stage,' children are obsessed with activities involving the mouth, such as biting, sucking, and eating. However, during the 'anal stage,' children are engaged in toilet training, and they are taught that some bodily functions should be kept private because culturally and socially they are not allowed to be shown. In Freudian theory, these early obsessions might carry over into adulthood, resulting in complexes in personality. Thus, scopophilia is the urge of an adult to view and observe things that are culturally or socially banned.

As John Berger (1972) questioned the hidden ideologies in the European oil paintings from the 15th century to the end of the 19th century in his 1972 book *Ways of Seeing*, which served as a companion to the same-named 1972 BBC television series, scopophilia can also be seen in paintings and on television screens. This is a result of the prevalence of depictions of women in advertisements and oil paintings at the same time as feminist interpretations of popular culture were developing.

The study of visual culture and the history of art is said to need a thorough understanding of the human vision. The proverb "Seeing before talking," which implies that a child must first see and recognize something before speaking, erroneously emphasizes the visual aspect of civilization. A child perceives things first through hearing and feeling. According to John Berger, photographs and images can depict both the current state of gender inequality and the history of class-based authority. This is true, in addition to the notion that our knowledge and beliefs shape how we view the world (Berger, 1972). The modernized contributions of the French psychologist Jacques Lacan (1901 - 1981) have significance in this study; providing an overview of his contributions is essential. First of all, he is universally recognized for his original contributions and re-interpretations of Sigmund Freud's works and theories. Second, the publication of his essays and lectures in *Écrits* in 1966 earned him a high intellectual and scientific reputation. From 1964 to 1980, he founded and directed the Freudian School of Paris, which he eventually dissolved. Furthermore, he fully articulated his perspective on gaze as it relates to the creation of conceptions (Lacan, 1991). In terms of the mirror stage, where the subject gains a sense of mastery by considering oneself a typical ego, gazing was always significant in his theories (Campbell, 2015).

Similarly, Lacan deliberately joined the sphere of cultural and literary studies by having himself reflected on the stage. He did this by creating his subjectivity through the idealized self-image that the subject aspires to throughout his life. In other words, the mirror stage represents the self in a consistent, logical way that does not match the chaotic desires of our actual physical bodies. That narcissistic ideal image is realized in the imagined order as soon as the subject reaches the symbolic order. As stated in the Lacan module on the creation and construction of the psyche, others can provide that fictitious representation of oneself in more detail, anyone could be used as a mirror for the self in what is, at its core, a narcissistic relationship if they are those that adults can copy. Lacanian psychoanalysis can be considered a component of a larger movement that persisted throughout the 20th century (Lacan, 1991).

### **3.2 Jacques Lacan's Perspective**

Lacan believed that returning to Freud is highly significant and his advice to all psychoanalysts was that "we can do no better than return to Freud's work" (2006, p. 228). Such a revisit to Freud had been thought to be related to language changes to keep up with the times, but instead of simply repeating Freud's works without adding anything new, he advocated reading between the lines. This interpretation of Freud's theoretical framework was specifically constructed to meet his conception of psychoanalysis. A return to Freud has the same meaning as a return to his meaning. Because of the manner, in which Freud addressed everyone in the public, the meaning of what he said is maybe understood by everybody. There is no one who is not personally interested in truth, and Freud's revelation throws truth into question (Lacan, 1991). Therefore, in psychology, the concept of scopophilia is concerned greatly with the question of truth through why even if not verbally.

Lacan coined the term "gaze" to depict the anxious condition that comes with the consciousness of being seen and observed (McGowan, 2003). According to Evans, Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological analysis of "the look" was the basis of Lacan's early study of the gaze in his first year of a seminar. Jacques Lacan had not yet released his theory on gaze when Object Petit was first introduced in 1964. In his class on the gaze, *Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a*, Jacques Lacan describes the gaze as a split. In this split, the subject, or the "I" of the equation, can "see only from one point." The other side of the equation, though, is that "I am

looked at from all sides." The gaze is not necessarily connected to the eye in Lacan's world, despite what may be expected (Krips, 2010). In 2010, Krips asserts that "the eye observing the object is on the side of the subject, whereas the gaze is on the side of the object. Everything I glance at is already staring back at me from a distance that prevents me from seeing it" (Krips, 2010).

Being watched, especially from a place where one cannot see it, should be disconcerting since "I," the subject, am being seen from all sides. Being observed, nevertheless, can also be rather satisfying. In *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Krips provides an example of how "this all-seeing trait is to be found in the delight of woman who knows that she is being looked at, on the condition that one does not show her that one knows that she knows" (Krips, 2010, p.75). On the other hand, the gaze may be a terrible and aggressive action. Think about the woman who feels uncomfortable when a man is staring at her. His appearance makes her feel threatened when he starts to make her uneasy. When Žižek states that in *The Gaze Theory* in George Orwell's 1984, "There is something immensely terrible and obscene in this feeling of our gaze as already Rosa the gaze of the other" Serious difficulties may result from this perversion.

Thus, the evident powers of the gaze may be influenced by a variety of factors. These factors include whether the person is the gaze's subject or object, i.e., who is gazing and who is being gazed at; it is possible to tell whether two people are gazing at each other equally or with hierarchical distinction, and whether their gaze is active or inert. Understanding how the gaze can be both powerful and disempowering could be made easier by looking at these components when poetry is taken into account. According to Laura Mulvey and John Berger, feminist thought has connected being the center of attention to the impact of the male gaze. They discuss the relationship between the gaze-authority holders and the objectification of women (Krips, 2010).

Moreover, an active gaze is connected to its subject, but a passive gaze is related to its object. The characteristics of a hierarchical gaze and the ones with an active or passive exchange of gazes are strongly correlated. The top-down arrangement of a network of gazes is required by the hierarchical gaze structure. The upper class, which is represented by a few numbers of powerful people at the top of the hierarchical structure, is the source of the majority of the network of gazes that observes those in lower positions. The hierarchical observing gaze is recognized as the supervisory gaze in surveillance.

In circumstances when there is an uneven relationship between the subject and the object, the hierarchical gaze contributes to the creation of a power relation. This power dynamic will give one party more power and take that of the other. There is reciprocity between the look and the glanced at, whose final gaze is illusory, in *Reading Pleasure: Light in August* and the idea of the gendered gaze (Irene Visser, 1997). Irene Visser argued that the Lacanian gaze theory, on the other hand, assumes that the gaze always operates in situations of uneven power relations. According to what she says, the possibility of equality is perceived as illusory in Lacan's gaze theory: "the point of ultimate gaze is where being seen by a peer might offer empowerment to both the subject and the object of the gaze" (Visser, 1997).

Additionally, the egalitarian gaze is characterized by eye contact where both people appear to be on an equal level. In a society where everyone is seen as equal, this exchange of gaze is empowering. Through the power structures, these gazes produce both empowerment and disempowerment. There is another dimension for gaze which is the ability and power of expressing the feeling of desire for objects and people

and that is known as the desiring gaze. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault (1975) analyses how observing and being observed influences the behavior of people. Despite that, as Jonathan Schroeder points out, "Film has been called an instrument of the male gaze, producing representations of women, the good life, and sexual fantasy from a male point of view" (Schroeder. J, in Barbara B Stern, 1998).

### **3.3 Laura Mulvey's Perspective**

Laura Mulvey adopted scopophilia from psychoanalytical approaches as a political weapon, especially from Sigmund Freud's notion of scopophilia in the time of development of childhood, and Jacques Lacan's modifying concept and interpretation of the child's 'mirror stage.' The male gaze is a concept that depicts how media portrays women in such a style that they are presented as nothing, except for being objects for the pleasure of heterosexual male viewers. Laura Mulvey invented the term in 1975 in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. It has since been hailed by literary critics as an idea that transcends all forms of media. Mulvey points out that female characters in films are occasionally used for scopophilia purposes, which Freud defined as a person's delight in watching the human form and the viewer's perception of bodies as erotic objects. As a result, scopophilia has come to be considered the foundation of the male gaze. The patriarchal form of society gives rise to the idea of a male observer and a woman as the object of his gaze. According to Tyson (2015), objectification refers not only to the woman as a sexual object but also to the woman as an object that is to be regarded through the lens of the male gaze.

These advertisements depict a female that becomes an object to be sexually admired and sought after whether that is a male attempting to win the female over within a frame or the viewer of the advertisement being won over by the woman within the frame (Tyson, *Critical Theory Today : A User-Friendly Guide*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, 2015). Mulvey, too, described how she sees women as "the bearer of meaning, not the originator of meaning" (Mulvey, 1975), where women are utilized to communicate a message in media written by men and are unable to tell their own stories. The term "male gaze" is used throughout the article to represent the analyses' final view, in which the aspects of narration, stereotypes, and objectifying language combine to form a complete picture of a male gaze example.

In discussing Laura Mulvey's discourse, Sarah E. Chinn stated that feminist activists looked into and combated the objectification of women through the visual representation of their bodies and sexual pleasures in the middle of the 1970s, as Laura Mulvey was developing her psychoanalytic theory of 'the gaze,' which is the psychological mechanism that alters male fear of castration by objectifying women on the screen. This conceptual tool has had a significant impact on feminist theory and film theory in particular. Mulvey's universe was created specifically for her, with "the gaze of the audience, that of the male characters in the movie, and, by extension, that of the camera" (Chinn, 2003). The highly visual medium of film affords this "joy in staring," especially when combined with masculine mastery of the equipment of filmmaking.

### **3.4 Heaney and Scopophilia**

Heaney is also known as an observer like personas (images) in his poems as they are typically perceived as onlookers. Heaney is portrayed as a passive but aesthetic spectator, a mute witness without emotion of the occurrences around him through his personas' pattern of perceiving the atmosphere. Therefore, the

gazer once again connotes a male observer who is speechless, perplexed and takes the awkward dominance for granted (Alsyouf, 2019). (Barry, 2017) states that Heaney has become scopophilic through his meek and polite acceptance of a forced dilemma and the cultivation of a mindset that demonstrates forbearance in the face of violence and brutality. At the same time, his persona is that of a 'Peeping Tom' who enjoys observing private or objectionable behaviors. As a result, he is unconcerned with other people's awkward situations. Heaney follows Irish Catholic traditions and mythological beliefs. That is why he lacks nonconformist tendencies. He is indecisive due to his conformist mindset, and he observes his environment but does not draw any conclusions.

Bilczewski, (2015), Similarly, his identity in poetry as scopophilic are formed by his predisposition to create picturesque visions of cruelty and not acting on down-to-earth realities, thereby abdicating responsibility. Heaney is also scopophilic since he is unconcerned about the socio-political situation and lacks confidence in a solution to the British-Irish political dispute (Bilczewski, 2015). (Spruce, 2016) argued that in Heaney's work, women characters and more or less abstract conceptions of females play a significant role. The significance of women figures is difficult to express and interpret. For example, Patricia Coughlan observes Heaney's perplexing attitude toward women and asks, "How might this centrality of the feminine be interpreted?" Is it to be interpreted as a celebration, as it generally announces itself? Or, as has been said about Mathew Arnold's potentially equivalent exaltation of claimed Celtic virtues, does it flatter to desire? It's a story about desire, sensuality, and non-rational insight.

Perhaps Spruce's ideas are sourced from Parker (2013), who also discussed that women are seen as a conduit for male desire in Heaney's poems. However, when one considers the poem's link between stone age fertility goddess sacrifices and Irish political assassinations in the 1970s, one's greater awareness of the erotic, artistic fission will become all the more fragile and difficult to accept. Still, Heaney's cherished moments and fear-inducing settings are frequently mixed in such a way that it is impossible to tell where he is heading. A slight but related view on this is Plumwood's who pointed out that in Heaney's poetry, there are always conflicting connections between Catholic traditional ethics and aesthetic literary trends. His paradoxical worldview is the result of his apprehension about collective identity becoming increasingly prominent in the artistic practice of writing.

Ahmed (2019) mentioned that Seamus Heaney's poetry is always written amid chaos. In his poems, the beautiful part of art is linked to society's politics and public features. This inclination toward the arts is to show private, sacred, and natural tendencies, whilst his dealing with public and violent aspects is to address the degraded modern politics of Northern Ireland, which began in the 1970s. Besides, the so-called bog poems represent this tension metaphorically within the context of Northern European mythology of atonement and sacrifice. Heaney links the protestant Catholics slaughtered in Northern Ireland to ancient remains found in Scandinavian bogs. The victims of pagan ceremonies and punishments are explored in these bog poetic texts. They are detailed with the exactitude that Heaney's style is known for (Bilczewski, 2015).

Both historical and contemporary Irish writing frequently deals with violence. As a result, Heaney is a poet who uses poetry to perpetuate his history and experience. Alexander (2016) explains that Conor Cruise O'Brien compares Seamus Heaney to W.B. Yeats when it comes to whether he plays an active or passive role in the current violence. Heaney, he says, is more puzzled by it. His voyeuristic attitude toward

violence-related issues is reflected in his poetry. "Heaney's relation to a larger tragedy is emancipated and preordained," writes Conor Cruise O'Brien, "the poet is on close terms with fate and speaks language incorrectly and succinctly".

According to Thomas Docherty's analysis of Seamus Heaney's "Government of the Tongue," "On the one hand, there is a major concern with ethics, with the question of how to relate "I" to "Thou," and the poet is in a pickle between the requirements of what Heaney portrays as two pieces of music, one of celebration and another of suffering. Docherty emphasizes the tension between aestheticizing action and moral responsibility to prevent violence. If Heaney's poetry career is regarded through the lens of post-structuralist theory, the tension between identity and difference is his difficulty (Barry, 2017). He aestheticizes the violence and remains a silent observer; therefore, he is hesitant to speak out against Celtic culture's tribal violence. In "Casualty," he narrates the funeral of a comrade who was blown to shreds by the cops, juxtaposing the terrible act of murder with an aesthetic ideal that required him to remain meek and quite unspoken (Coughlan, 1997). It is to draw attention to a flaw in the poetic form that allows Heaney to show moral dilemmas that are imaginary but are contradictions between the selected base for his poetry and the idea of identity. Since this idea undermines the aesthetic and ethical presumptions that his poetry identifies as challenging, while also deeply influencing his work, he is unable to even address the relationship between these two assumptions. Others view his conflicts and contradictions as chances for integration. In his poems, individuation for distinction and assimilation for identity have been in a perpetual conflict (Alsyouf, 2019). Heaney's basically bourgeois poetic has chosen to describe that integration as a perpetual crisis of interest between the want to full individuation and the desire for assimilation," argued Williams, Kirsty (2003) in *Structures of belonging: the poetry of Seamus Heaney* referring to the concept of confusion creating "identity" and "difference" (Williams, 2003). "Unveiling or unwilling to reconcile ... individuation to societal absorption much of Heaney's poetry can only find resolution of the conflict within the notional closure given by the well-produced poem," Kirkland maintained, focusing the "identity" and "different" even more (Multani, 2020). Thus, Seamus Heaney appears to have had a conflicted position. Such a dual perspective causes confusion, which leads to political Irish trouble and scopophilia when the misunderstanding becomes too hazy (Alsyouf, 2019).

#### **4. The Selected Poems Analysis and Discussion**

##### **4.1 Le Toilette**

"Le Toilette" written in 1984 is the last poem of Heaney's collection *Station Island*. *Station Island* is a collection of poems concerned with the artistic work of Heaney himself, in which Heaney contemplates his art and its influence on society. Moreover, the collection represents Ulster as well as what the poet faces. It also contains an elegy for victims of violence, laments of death, and sexual female pictures as highlighted in "Le Toilette", and the poem includes sexual images of his wife. In this poem, Heaney is erotic when he recalls his wife and relishes the language of desire.

Heaney remembered and pictured his wife, even though the death has been cast, Marie is still a sacred body for Heaney. Through his personas' trend of observing the atmosphere, Heaney is illustrated and substantiated as a passive but aesthetic spectator and a silent observer of the phenomena occurring around him with the same scopophilic perspective. In his imagination, Heaney brings back his wife into life again

and gazes at her as a sexual object (Davis, 1990). He carries his exquisite memories with her as the trophy in his palm.

Heaney's sensual contact emphasized the "night wear" and a body of a woman. He engaged with Marie "Toilette". As Heaney stated in the poem:

"The white towelling bathrobe  
ungirdled, the hair still wet,  
first coldness of the underbreast  
like a ciborium in the palm"

(Heaney, Station Island, 1984).

In the above lines, Heaney is scopophilic and portrayed the scene using sensual words such as: "Bathrobe, ungirdled, coldness of the under breast". He enjoyed and touched "like a ciborium in the palm". The female character becomes attractive after coming out of the bathroom, especially with wet hair, more specifically when she unbelts her bathrobe; he likens her to a bud that turns into a flower. Normally, the human body turns cold after taking a shower akin to a "ciborium". That is to say, her waist is cold only before touching and catching her in his hands. He uses a simile to compare her body to a ciborium, in other words, he wants to say that her body is like the holy grail, providing him with eternity. Furthermore, in the second part of the poem, Heaney stands as a sad scopophilic as he focuses on the word "remember" to address the God "Holy Ghost" and presently, he is an erotic and remembering religious piety that makes him sad and scopophilic.

Therefore, his sexual experience is contradicted by his Catholic beliefs, which manifest themselves as an overwhelming desire to pray. He shakes his head at the coldly dismissive attitude towards physical closeness, allure, and sexuality he experienced as half of a loving couple. They are each other's bodies, not Gods.

"Our Bodies are the temples  
Of the Holy Ghost. Remember?  
And the title, fitted, deep-slit drapes  
on and off the holy vessels"

(Heaney, Station Island, 1984).

In the second part of the poem, Heaney uses the religious symbols of "vestments and vessels" in a playful, seductive fashion; swaths are split and the priest is "hoisted" with great skill. He has left behind the world in which words and the way they were used possessed a special significance: Heaney's 'wife is the "new" mouthpiece with whom he has had sexual experiences because of her 'vast self, the world you taught me.'

The trappings of the official church cannot compete with her non-secular, sensual world of 'slub silk,' which she wears.

“regularly? And the chasuble  
so deftly hoisted? But vest yourself  
in the world you taught me  
and the stuff I love: slub silk”  
(Heaney, Station Island, 1984).

Eventually, Heaney appeared as a scopophilic speaker by using these sensual words “But vest yourself / in the word you taught me / and the stuff I love: slub silk”. It can be seen that the language of "underwear" and nightclothes is full of erotic invitations. The erotic imagery of the poet merged with the erotic pleasure he expresses through sexual language.

#### **4.2 The Forge**

In 1969, “The Forge” was published in Heaney’s second volume of poetry, named *Door into the Dark*. In this collection, he again writes poems about past times combined with the present. "The Forge", as it can be seen from the very first line, is a good example of Heaney's investigation position in which the speaker seeks to find and see what lies beyond or within the outside world.

He represents a blacksmith in the country who works in his forge and strikes his hammer against the anvil to create fresh hoops. Heaney compares sexual activity and blacksmithing, using both metaphor and literary allusion. The hammer symbolically depicts the male sexual organ in the second and third lines of the poem, while "the anvil" and "the altar" stand for the feminine genitalia. The lyrics "expands himself in shape" and the words "slam" and "flick" in music refer to the masculine action that occurs during sexual contact, and the anvil and altar in the middle are symbols for female body parts. The sounds created by the horseshoe cooling in water are referenced by the word "hiss" in the fourth and fifth lines. An altar aids in an intimate connection with the metal, just as the anvil is the individual's tool for doing so. Lines seven, eight, and nine's usage of the word "alter" draws an interesting parallel since in both activities, you expend a lot of energy trying to connect, but you also have a tool or object at your disposal to assist you to achieve your objective. Heaney prefers to imagine the sexual encounter as a blacksmith.

The blacksmith produces sound while using the hammer “the hammered anvil’s short-pitched ring” with force and violence to hit on the anvil for the purpose of getting new hoops as he states in the poem “The anvil must be somewhere in the center, Horned as a unicorn,”. In the same way, the man needs strength to use his phallus on the female sexual organs to have new offspring. Thus, the blacksmith represents the man and the womb of the woman is just like the forgery for new production. As the blacksmith feels happy to see his new products in the same way the man enjoys seeing his children.

“All I know is a door into the dark.

Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting;  
Inside, the hammered anvil's short-pitched ring,  
The unpredictable fantail of sparks  
Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water.  
The anvil must be somewhere in the center,  
Horned as a unicorn, at one end and square,  
Set there immoveable: an altar  
Where he expends himself in shape and music.  
Sometimes, leather-aproned, hairs in his nose,  
He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter  
Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows;  
Then grunts and goes in, with a slam and flick  
To beat real iron out, to work the bellows"

(Fawbert, Fawbie.info, 2013).

Heaney asserts that the creative process is predominantly a masculine activity in "The Forge," where the violence of the action and the protagonist's stereotypical maleness led to the conclusion that the truth of art is forged out of violence and sheer power (Rambles, 2022). Heaney, as scopophilic, expresses his ideas about the precision of life in the universe through sexual imagery in this second collection of poems (Dixon, 1991).

Eventually, in the last three lines of the second part of the poem, Heaney identifies the act of creation in erotic words, sexual taboos and rites surrounding the blacksmiths and the miners' calling trade in parts of the world and their tools-picks, anvils, hammers, hoops and that are shaped living by being eroticized. For Heaney, the forge becomes a womb and a temple at the same time, it is a "horned" and "sacred anvil" playing the same roles as in human sexual intercourse.

### **4.3 Sheelagh na Gig**

In 1975, "Sheelagh na Gig" was published in Heaney's Station Island collection. The stone block Sheelagh na Gig, one of many that protrude from beneath the eaves of the 12th-century Norman Romanesque church at Kilpeck in the English city of Hereford, is celebrated in three poems by Seamus Heaney. A mysterious medieval stone carving of a female figure with open genitalia is called a Sheela-na-gig. Heaney revised the archetypal girls in North's collection using this poem (Fawbert, 2013).

In this poem, the aspects of unrequited love can be perceived. The male speaker openly observes the sexual organs of the opposite side and describes them precisely. The inanimate passive female statue creates the erotic desire of the man; in other words, the statue arouses the libido of the speaker. Thus, he wishes that she responds to his oratory and persuades her to engage in sexual intercourse. This is the very reason to personify the female statue “saying push, push hard, push harder”, as seen in the first part of the poem:

“We look up to her,  
hunkered into her angle  
under the eaves.  
She bears the whole stone burden  
on the small of her back and shoulder  
and pinioned elbows,  
the astute mouth, the gripping fingers  
saying push, push hard, push harder.  
As the hips go high  
her big tadpole forehead  
is rounded out in sunlight?”  
(Heaney, Station Island, 1984).

In the first part of the poem, Heaney figuratively creates an erotic picture and gazes at her body as stated in the context of the poem. Here, Heaney attempts to portray the statue of the woman to symbolize Ireland and to depict the male gazer as England that wishes to ravish or subdue her. In *The Representation of Women in the poetry of John Montague and Seamus Heaney* Patricia Coughlan (1997) highlighted how women are represented in Seamus Heaney's poetry. Generally, women are subjected to excessive brutality, stereotypical portrayal, or sexual exploitation.

Moreover, Coughlan points out that scopophilia is evident in Heaney's poetry through his stereotypical portrayal of women, in which they are seen as passive and obedient objects in their narratives, while males are the actors plundering the land and the bodies of women. Despite Heaney's apparent careful writing, she observes, "it remains very difficult for men, when they imagine self-formation as a battle, to avoid conceiving that as opposed to the feminine." Men's literature, according to Coughlan, occasionally indicates a rejection of feminine aspects in character development. Stephanie Alexander, when confronted with Heaney's North's female portrayal and the vocabulary employed to depict it, wonders, "is there something subversive in such imagery?" Is this imagery a room for radical resistance, or is it merely Heaney as a male poet, rehashing an old male/female trope" (Alexander, 2016, pp. 54-56)? Coughlan and Alexander disagree over whether Heaney's poems are just lyrical. They discuss women's authority and

agency, as well as his writing, as written by a man, revealing traces of the male gaze. At the same time, in the second part of the poem, Heaney takes a scopophilic stance concerning an engraved female figure:

“Her hands holding herself  
are like hands in an old barn  
holding a bag open.  
I was outside looking in  
at its lapped and supple mouth  
running grain.  
I looked up under the thatch  
at the dark mouth and eye  
of a bird's nest or a rat hole,  
smelling the rose on the wall,  
mildew, an earthen floor,  
the warm depth of the eaves,  
and then one night in the yard  
I stood still under heavy rain  
wearing the bag like a caul”

(Heaney, Station Island, 1984).

Heaney depicts the specific part of the statue while the woman holds herself and opens her vagina. The mouth of the hole becomes the nest of the birds and rats. Metaphorically, Heaney employs phallogocentric elements to investigate imperial politics where England acts as a sadist masculine character and Ireland plays the role of a submissive feminine one. Heaney examines the critical state of defenseless Irish identity, through this sexual revelation. The narrator is a male that metaphorically stands for England and fulfills his sexual desire for feminine Ireland, an allegory for a helpless female victim. In this case, in the main simile of the poem, he likens the open mouth of the lady's vagina to an open bag by a person in a barn to be filled with grain by another man. Thus, the lady is in need to be filled with sperm to quench her sexual desire. Similarly, Irish people are dependent on their occupiers to fulfill their needs. The outcome of this sexual intercourse is the woman giving birth to "a caul" under heavy rain or a difficult atmosphere.

#### 4.4 Rite of Spring

In 1969, “Rite of Spring” was published in the collection of *Door into the Dark*. In this poem, Heaney recalls the work required of his family on the rural mid-Ulster farm to face the hardships of winter. The text of the poem deals with the procedure of opening a frozen water pump in a cattle yard. The coldness of the weather in Mossbawn has frozen up the family’s manual water pump that left them without fresh water (Angelopulo, 1987).

Nevertheless, when the readers dig deep into the context of the poem, they find the representation of both genders male and female, and the dominant active character who occupies the scene is a female figure. In such a text, Heaney has got “two forms of representation for 'gender interaction': one paradigms an explicitly dominant masculine persona” that depicts, desires and empathizes with a passive woman. The other asserts that a woman who guides a man to self-discovery while ruining, dooming, encompassing, and confounding him is the stereotypical mother who intriguingly compounds with the spouse (Williams, 2003).

As the title and part, one of the poems demonstrates that water freezing was an annual phenomenon during the winter. Heaney opens his poem by personifying the winter season that closed “its fist” or hand to cause “a lump” in the “throat” of the pump. The handle of the pump is stuck or jammed and cannot be moved up and down. Then, “wheat straws” were brought around the pump and burnt to melt the ice. The flowing of water after melting the ice made the family happy.

“And got it stuck in the pump.  
The plunger froze up a lump  
In its throat, ice founding itself  
Upon iron. The handle  
Paralysed at an angle.  
Then the twisting of wheat straw”.  
(Heaney, *Door into the Dark*, 1969).

Further, it is noticed that in this part Heaney celebrated this process; he feminizes the water pump in sensual terms. He portrays the situation as sexual intercourse. The pump is the body of the woman, and the rope of straw stands for the hand of a man who hugs the lady in his arms and starts with some kind of touches of the body of the woman that burns up her desire. Eventually, her orgasm causes the flow of water. Additionally, the rope of the straw symbolizes the phallus and the “wet entrance” of the pump stands for the mouth of the vagina. Additionally, the female is cold and passive, whereas the male phallus represents the man which turns the woman to be active and hot. In the second half of the poem when the straw rounds up on the body of the pump. The rope of the straw refers to the famous Biblical story in the Old Testament of the snake and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, Heaney as a participant and

witness of the process of melting the frost with his family members finds pleasure in this practice; in other words, he is engaged in scopophilia in this allegorical story.

into ropes, lapping them tight  
Round stem and snout, then a light  
That sent the pump up in a flame  
It cooled, we lifted her latch,  
Her entrance was wet, and she came”

(Heaney, *Door into the Dark*, 1969).

aney's rural experience which is centered and ingrained in the image of the pump—was the source of inspiration for these verses and Heaney's other poems. The pump gets its power from underground sources to maintain life, just like his poetry does. The center of family and social life is also the center of the poets' imagined universe. Finally, Heaney depicts women's degradation as an erotic figure followed in this poem and women are portrayed as explicit erotic objects. Male irresistibility and female passivity are noted throughout the poem, male phallus is strongly operative. The language is suggestive more of the primitive instinct of sex and libidinous.

## 5. Conclusion

Heaney was confused about whether to be compliant with traditional customs or to accept social responsibility to achieve a socio-political situation. In this case, it was hard for Heaney to be an active observer publicly, so he chose to be a mute gazer in social and political situations. Hence, the text analysis of the poems confirms that he gazes upon mythical and familial performance. Heaney's personas in his poems embody silent observers of sexual and political violence activities. The characters observed in his poems are almost always unaware that they are being watched. As examined in the theoretical paradigm, the observed ones are unable to return their gazes. As a result, they are in a position of passivity. The characters in Heaney's poems do not have any way to express their visions as they are uncommunicative. At the same time, they just watch and gaze at each other without communicating. As a result, the personas are unable to contemplate what to do in such situations.

Moreover, the poetry of Seamus Heaney includes gender-based role differences. Females are represented as sexual objects. Hence, the masculine gaze weakens the power of females and the male characters stand as scopophilic. On the other hand, the masculine characters are empowered by the gazes. Heaney aestheticizes and represents symbolic female characters as cold and dead objects. The female personas in Heaney's poems are eroticized by male gazers. As a result, Heaney beautifies uncomfortable situations and sexualizes typical circumstances. In the selected poems in this study, the female characters are being watched sensually by the male gazers, however, the female characters stay voiceless and senseless. In Heaney's texts, the aspects of unrequited love. In addition, Heaney attempts to portray women to symbolize Ireland and to depict the male gazer as England that wishes to ravish or subdue her. That sense of penetration is so central to the "phallic" archaeology of many of the "Bog-poems".

To sum up, Seamus Heaney's selected poems emphasize that he stands as scopophilic. He was, therefore, a silent observer of the voiceless female characters. Heaney highlights the observant messages in a mute manner and presents himself in the position of the passive observer to portray the sectarian violence of Irish people and metaphorically the sexual characters of his poems as a comparison to the Irish people.

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