Towards a Poetics of Civil War

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The Roman origins of the term ‘civil war’ convey its ‘paradoxical, even oxymoronic, nature’.[[1]](#endnote-1) *Bellum civile* denoted a just war (*bellum*) against citizens (*cives*); but, for the Romans, a just war could by definition only be waged against external enemies (*hostes*). The notion of a just war against Roman citizens was therefore a contradiction in terms, to be regarded with horror as unnatural and grotesque: the Romans dreaded civil war above all wars and called it ‘intestine’.[[2]](#endnote-2) They perceived it as a rupture within the *civitas* which brought bestial violence behind the city walls. The opening lines of Lucan’s first-century epic about the civil wars between Julius Caesar and the Senate, the *Bellum Civile*, convey such horror. Here, in Thomas May’s translation of 1627:

Wars more than civil, on Emathian plains

We sing, rage licensed; where great Rome distains

In her own bowels her victorious swords;

Where kindred hosts encounter, all accords

Of empire broke; where armed to impious war

The strength of all the shaken world from far

Is met: known ensigns ensigns do defy,

Piles against piles, ’gainst eagles eagles fly.[[3]](#endnote-3)

‘Wars more than civil’ (*Bella* . . . *plus quam civilia*) draws attention immediately to the contradiction inherent in the idea of a war between citizens, a war therefore against civility itself. Rome stabs the sword ‘in her own bowels’; or as another translation from 1614 more powerfully has it, the Roman’s ‘conquering hand enrag’d rebounds / On his owne bowels with deepe wounds’.[[4]](#endnote-4) ‘Kindred hosts’, who should be welcoming each other into their households, instead ‘encounter’ each other on the battlefield; the repetitions of the final lines illustrate how the allies-become-enemies are reflections of each other: ensigns face ensigns, piles face piles, eagles face eagles. A ‘pile’, as May’s own note informs us, is a specifically Roman term for a javelin -- ‘Dart or Javelin is a word too generall, and cannot intimate a civill warre: for darts had fought against darts, though a Roman Army had fought against barbarous, and forreigne Nations. But *Pilum* was a peculiar name to the Roman darts, and so meant by *Lucan*’ -- while the eagle is the symbol of the Roman army: the mighty imperial army has turned in upon itself.[[5]](#endnote-5) The unnatural presence of battlefield violence within the city walls seemingly concentrates its brutality: notoriously, the *Bellum Civile* features grotesque and multiple images of extreme and gratuitous violence, particularly severing of heads and dismemberment. In Lucan’s poem, ‘civil war [is] a state of being which has invaded every level of things, from the cosmos, to the individual, to the poet and his language’.[[6]](#endnote-6)

The Roman legacy of civil war was thus not ‘solely definitional’, in the words of one commentator: ‘it was also literary and historical’, transmitted through Virgil, Horace, and Lucan as well as the histories of Tacitus, Appian, and Sallust.[[7]](#endnote-7) Classicists have written of a ‘poetics of civil war’ in Latin literature, finding the theme of internal discord embodied not only in the imagery but also in the narrative procedures of poets such as Lucan and Statius, often reworking, or reacting against, Virgilian motifs.[[8]](#endnote-8) Poets of the British Civil Wars of the seventeenth century learnt directly from Lucan’s imagery of identity and division about how to represent their own experience of war within the state.[[9]](#endnote-9) For instance, the celebrated image of Oliver Cromwell near the beginning of Andrew Marvell’s ‘An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland’ (*c*. 1650) as a bolt of lightning flashing from the clouds alludes to Lucan’s description of the moment that Caesar drives across the Rubicon and begins the war with the Senate: ‘As lightening by the wind forc’d from the cloude / Breaks through the wounded aire with thunder loud’. But Marvell extends the image from Lucan into something more disorientating and paradoxical:

And like the three-fork’d lightning, first

Breaking the clouds where it was nurst,

         Did thorough his own side

         His fiery way divide.[[10]](#endnote-10)

(ll. 13-16)

Does Cromwell cut through the ‘side’ that he is supposed to be on, and so pose a threat to the republic that he himself has helped to establish? Or is the sense more literal, and therefore more fantastical: does Cromwell somehow give birth to himself, untimely ripped out of his own side in a kind of self-delivering Caesarean section? (That would be appropriate, given the echoes of Lucan’s representation of Caesar.) As the ancient Romans recognized, civil war is a force that rips open the body politic from within, and Marvell’s peculiar image turns Cromwell into a personification of a violent energy that is at once self-generated and self-dividing.

The experience of civil war in mid-seventeenth century Britain and twentieth century Ireland happens to correspond with peaks of poetic achievement in the English language, which may or may not be a coincidence; but while there have been many detailed and enlightening critical accounts dedicated discretely to poetry written in Britain during the 1640s and 1650s, or in Ireland during the early 1920s and in Northern Ireland during the ‘Troubles’, there has never been any concerted argument for a category of ‘civil war poetry’ in English that crosses temporal boundaries.[[11]](#endnote-11) Poems written during civil war in both the seventeenth and twentieth centuries have rather been subsumed in cross-period anthologies and critical studies under the larger category of ‘war poetry’.[[12]](#endnote-12) Much has been written about the debt of modern Irish verse to poetry of the First World War; but almost nothing has been said about possible relationships with verse of the seventeenth century that also explores the experience of war specifically *within* the state, rather than between states.[[13]](#endnote-13) Comparative study of English poetry of the 1640s and 1650s with poetry of the Irish Civil War and Northern Ireland Troubles has neither been attempted at any length nor with any seriousness - with the notable exception of an essay by Christopher Ricks from 1978, to which I shall return. David Armitage has recently argued that civil war should be treated as ‘both a historical and cumulative concept: that is, that whenever the spectre of civil war arose, it did so in forms that recalled previous conflicts’.[[14]](#endnote-14) If that is indeed the case, then it will be as true of poetry as of any other mode of representation; and I want to suggest here that the poetry of civil war should be recognized as a distinctive literary phenomenon in English, with its own characteristic and recurrent figures of speech, images, and themes.

There are obvious reasons why Irish poets writing during both twentieth century conflicts might look back specifically to the events of the seventeenth century civil wars, and poetic responses to them, in seeking to represent and understand the conflicts of their own time. The Irish War of Independence and Civil War of 1919-23 and the Northern Ireland Troubles of roughly 1969-94 are directly connected historically to the events of the seventeenth century civil wars, or ‘Wars of the Three Kingdoms’, as historians now often refer to them in recognition of their Scottish and Irish dimensions. The crucial historical event is the military expedition to Ireland led by Cromwell in the summer of 1649, with its notorious massacres at Drogheda and Wessex, the return of which is commemorated by Marvell’s ‘Horatian Ode’: ‘And now the Irish are ashamed / To see themselves in one year tamed’ (ll. 73-4). The Cromwellian conquest, which suppressed the violent resistance to English rule that had been more or less constant since Elizabethan efforts to settle the country, is one of the flashpoints of Anglo-Irish history.

Seamus Deane’s ‘Reading *Paradise Lost* in Protestant Ulster 1984’ is an example of a poem which self-consciously addresses the relation between Anglo-Irish political history and English literary tradition. The poet observes the historical irony for an Irish nationalist reader of *Paradise Lost* in late twentieth century Ulster of the description by Milton, a salaried propagandist for the state that sent Cromwell to Ireland, of God as ‘sovran Planter’. The phrase appears in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost* in describing the domestic paradise created for Adam and Eve in Eden before their Fall into sin:

Thus talking hand in hand alone they pass’d
On to thir blissful Bower; it was a place
Chos’n by the sovran Planter, when he fram’d
All things to mans delightful use; the roofe
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade
Laurel and Mirtle, and what higher grew
Of firm and fragrant leaf[.][[15]](#endnote-15)

In Deane’s poem, the ‘sovran Planter’ is a parody of this divine authority, personifying rather the legacy of Protestant plantation and Cromwellian conquest, which has been to turn the idyllic pastoral landscape of Ulster into the hell of civil war:

 Our ‘sovran Planter’ beats

Upon his breast, dyadic evil rules;

A syncope that stammers in our guns,

That forms and reforms itself in schools

And in our daughters’ couplings and our sons’!

We feel the fire’s heat, Belial’s doze;

A maiden city’s burning on the plain;

Rebels surround us, Lord. Ah, whence arose

This dark damnation, this hot unrainbowed rain?[[16]](#endnote-16)

Deane is from the fortified city of Derry / Londonderry in the west of Northern Ireland, traditionally been known as the ‘maiden city’ because its walls were never breached during three major seventeenth century sieges, including in 1649, when it was held by the English Parliamentarian army against a combined force of Catholic Irish, English royalists and, ironically enough, Scottish Presbyterians. In his brief polemical prose work on the political situation in Ireland, his first publication in his role as an employee of the Commonwealth government, Milton himself comments on how, as he writes, the Parliamentary forces ‘are beseig’d in *London-Derry*’ by ‘the Irish Rebels’.[[17]](#endnote-17) The original ‘dyadic’ evil of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* divides Adam from Eve, man from God, and destroys the ‘Blissful Bower’ of Eden. In Deane’s poem, this ‘dyadic evil’ has penetrated the walls of the supposedly unbreachable ‘maiden city’, where Catholic fights Protestant, nationalist fights loyalist, turning the city into a version of the hell to which Satan and the rebel angels fall in *Paradise Lost*. It is an evil that has been passed on through generations, like original sin; but for Deane it also has a source in the seventeenth century colonization of Ireland, and so it is an evil in which Milton himself and his poem are implicated. ‘Reading *Paradise Lost* in Protestant Ulster 1984’ suggests the potential for a literary history that would directly connect the moments of civil war in Britain and Ireland; and in its Lucanian imagery of division from within, of chaos behind the city walls, and of grotesque, unnatural disorder become everyday experience, the poem also points to a larger possibility -- a comparativeliterary history of civil war that does not depend only upon such explicit and specific historical connections.

Another modern Irish poem which connects the historical and literary moments of civil war in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries is Peter McDonald’s ‘Sunday in Great Tew. 8th November 1987’. Here the conflict in Ulster becomes part of a historical continuum with both the First World War and the British Civil Wars through the coincidence of the poet’s visit to Great Tew in Oxfordshire on the Remembrance Sunday on which the IRA set off a bomb at the cenotaph in Enniskillen, one of the more notorious atrocities of the Troubles. Great Tew, site of the manor house where poets and intellectuals gathered under the patronage of Lucius Carey, Lord Falkland (*c*. 1610-43), for free discussion in the years before the Civil Wars erupted, is conventionally remembered as a symbol of the tolerant exchange of opinion that was violently suppressed by the partisanship of the Civil Wars - Falkland himself was killed in battle on the king’s side early on in the conflict. In McDonald’s poem, the house becomes a reminder of how no-one, even and especially the poet, can seclude themselves from a conflict that occurs within their country and that necessarily encompasses all who live in, or who come from, that place. Indeed the poet is as liable to become the voice of intransigent partisanship as artistic detachment, as Milton once more exemplifies:

The manor house, concealed behind thick trees and hedges,

might well be home now for some eccentric millionaire

who seldom shows his face; from the road going uphill

to the church, you can see through gaps down to the house itself,

heavy and strong, like the brash history it suggests,

having and holding so much; was it here since the Civil War,

when the bookish man who owned the place, Lord Falkland,

was a loyalist who found himself outmanoeuvred?

Once he played patron here to the poet Abraham Cowley

--outmanoeuvred himself, in his way, by Parliament’s

staunch worker Milton, true to different lights, but blind

po-faced, pig-headed and holy, almost an Ulsterman.[[18]](#endnote-18)

The manor house of Great Tew embodies not refuge from civil war but its inescapability, whether for Falkland and his circle, or for the exiled Ulsterman on a Sunday sight-seeing trip in Oxfordshire. There is no escape from internal conflict in either pastoral seclusion or exile, or even in friendly conversation of the sort cultivated by the Great Tew circle and that is the occasion of the poet’s visit. He travels to the village with his friend in ‘an act of remembrance’, to recall ‘when we sat here drinking, and swapped our random gossip’ (ll. 13, 15); but this image finds its darker reflection in that of a British television news team, sent to cover the bombing, relaxing in Enniskillen’s best-known hotel: ‘so tonight in the Killyhevlin / Hotel the team from ITN will be ordering champagne’ (ll. 59-60). If the British journalists can blot out their experience of civil war in a land in which they feel that they have no stake, for the poet, afflicted by the guilt of the exile, the conflict can never be left behind through physical distance (‘Even in the middle of winter, the sky is everywhere’ (l. 73)). The pastoral attraction of the ‘picture-postcard’ Oxfordshire village is finally ‘swept away’ in the poet’s mind, like one-dimensional scenery (‘snug and expensive and empty’), by the history and contemporary reality of civil war -- a self-generated violence by which even the peaceful, ordered rural landscape of Oxfordshire was itself once enveloped in the seventeenth century (ll. 65, 81, 83).

In their sense of the inexorable invasiveness of civil war, of an internal division that cannot be resisted by physical structures or mental defences, or indeed transcended by the poetic imagination, these poems by Deane and McDonald have elements in common with two of the greatest and most complex English poems written in reaction to civil war. Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’ (*c*. 1651) and Yeats’s ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ (1923) between them suggest the outline of what a comparative poetics of civil war might look like. . Unlike his older friend Milton, Marvell found himself caught between various forms of allegiance during the Civil Wars; between, for example, his friendship with royalists and poets who stayed loyal to the king, and his need, as someone from a modest background, to establish a career for himself in the service of the Cromwellian state.[[19]](#endnote-19) Marvell’s poems of the 1640s and early 1650s are the most interesting examples of civil war verse in the seventeenth century precisely because Marvell himself is divided in his loyalties, caught between equally strong currents of allegiance to an established cultural order and to an exciting, apocalyptic renovation which sought to turn that old order upside down. Marvell was in London during the later 1640s in mainly royalist company and, given the moving depiction of Charles I on the scaffold in the ‘Horatian Ode’, may have witnessed the regicide. In 1651 he moved back from republican London to his native Yorkshire, to work as tutor to the daughter of Sir Thomas Fairfax at the Fairfax country estate in Nun Appleton. Fairfax had led the Parliamentarian New Model Army during the Civil Wars, alongside Cromwell as his second-in-command; but he was upset by the execution of the king, an act that went further than he had wanted, and he finally retired his command in disagreement with Cromwell’s military expedition to Scotland in 1650. The return to Appleton House, then, was a form of retirement from public life but also an attempt to escape a turn of historical events for which Fairfax was partly responsible but that he regarded as having become excessive. The job as tutor at Appleton House also represented a form of escape for Marvell from the politics of London, where he seems to have been searching for a patron, or for a job; later in the mid-1650s he would become tutor to Cromwell’s nephew and a civil servant in the Cromwellian government. In ‘Upon Appleton House’, likely written on the estate in 1651, Marvell adopts the mode of the country house poem to debate with himself, and perhaps with his employer Fairfax, to whom the poem is addressed, whether the idyllic life of seclusion and contemplation in the house and gardens of the country estate can ever really offer refuge from the external world of civil war.

The answer is that there can be no escape, for the ‘dyadic evil’ of civil war is within - inside the walls of the great house, inside its natural landscape, inside the minds of those who have experienced the conflict. The speaker initially greets the house as embodying the values of that ‘more sober age and mind’ (l. 28) in which it was constructed, and gives a lengthy account of its foundation by Fairfax’s ancestors in place of a nunnery that was dissolved during the English Reformation. But immediately we see that Appleton House, for all its order and sobriety, only exists because of an earlier violent religious division within England. The speaker then takes us on a guided tour of the estate, and it is clear that he wishes to see Appleton as a second Eden, a place from a time before the apple was eaten, offering refuge from a fallen world through a union of the self with nature:

But I, retiring from the flood,

Take sanctuary in the wood;

And while it lasts, my self imbark

In this yet green, yet growing ark[.]

(ll. 481-4)

Thus I, easy philosopher

Among the birds and trees confer:

And little now to make me, wants

Or of the fowls, or of the plants.

Give me but wings as they, and I

Straight floating on the air shall fly.

Or turn me but, and you shall see

I was but an inverted tree.

(ll. 561-8)

Yet the speaker’s descriptions of place are constantly pulling us back to the outside world of civil war, division, and death. Fairfax, it is revealed, cannot help but continue planning military campaigns even in his flowerbeds:

Who, when retirèd here to peace,

His warlike studies could not cease;

But laid these figures out in sport

In the just figure of a fort[.]

(ll. 283-8)

The natural world itself is described in martial terms: ‘The bee through these known allies hums, / beating the *dian* with its drums’ (ll. 291-2; a ‘dian’ is a military drumroll). In a characteristic self-echo, Marvell chooses the same rhyme to describe Fairfax’s inability to cease his ‘warlike studies’ as he had employed the previous year in the ‘Horatian Ode’ to depict Cromwell’s inability to remain remote from the wars: ‘So restless Cromwell could not cease / In the inglorious arts of peace’ (ll. 9-10). The shared rhyme is a reminder that the linked history of the two men, which is at once personal and national, cannot be separated or forgotten, regardless of Fairfax’s decision to walk away from the public world.

As the speaker moves outside the planned gardens into the rest of the estate, violence and death are found everywhere in the natural world, with the grass of the estate’s meadow ‘massacre[d]’ by the ‘whistling scythe’ of the mower, who, ‘unknowing’, also carves through a corncrake (ll. 393-5). Tom Paulin has described the ‘war-like’ imagery of ‘Upon Appleton House’ as ‘a metaphor for the political consciousness during a time of revolution, [and] Marvell shows how such a consciousness see politics everywhere’; but the imagery is more specifically a metaphor for such a consciousness during a time of civil war rather than revolution.[[20]](#endnote-20) The flooding of the meadow by an overflowing river is described in terms of a series of paradoxes that recall the etymological origin of the term *bellum civile* in paradox:

The river in it self is drowned,

And isles th’astonished cattle round.

Let others tell the paradox,

How eels now bellow in the ox;

How horses at their tails do kick,

Turned as they hang to leeches quick;

How boats can over bridges sail;

And fishes do the stables scale.

How salmons trespassing are found;

And pikes are taken in the pound.

(ll. 471-80)

These lines have found their way into *The Chatto Book of Nonsense Poetry*, although to treat them as nonsense risks obscuring the extent to which they distil the classical literary tradition of civil war as a horrifying inversion of the proper order of things, a turning inside-out of the body politic.[[21]](#endnote-21) The flood is also a specifically Lucanian image of civil war: in the *Bellum Civile*, Lucan greatly exaggerates previous accounts of the scale of the flood that resulted from the bursting of the banks of the river Sicoris, and that left Caesar’s armies stranded on a peninsula, to evoke ‘imagery of cosmic dissolution’, of ‘pressure on boundaries whose collapse is imminent’.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Over the 776 lines in which the poet walks around the estate and then back to the house, over the course of a day, he comes to an understanding that his dream of perfect order and unity in the estate is a fantasy, even if the values of decency established by the Fairfax dynasty within Appleton House, and embodied by Marvell’s pupil, Mary Fairfax, do offer some hope of shelter from the chaos of the public world:

’Tis not, what once it was, the World;

But a rude heap together hurled:

All negligently overthrown,

Gulfs, deserts, precipices, stone.

Your lesser world contains the same,

But in more decent order tame.

(ll. 761-66)

 The poet makes clear his admiration for the moral and domestic values of his patron; but Fairfax’s attempts to retire completely from the public world of division and conflict are shown to be as naive as the poet’s own dream of erasing his experience and memory of division through some sort of ecstatic, mystical unity with nature. The divisions cannot be shut out by the walls of the estate because they arose from within, from the history of the land and from the passions of the men who inhabit both house and nation.

Yeats was, like Marvell, divided in his allegiances. He looked both to an older cultural order, that of the Protestant Anglo-Irish ascendancy which had dominated political and cultural life in Ireland since the late seventeenth century; and to the new Irish nationalism of the early twentieth century, which Yeats sympathized with intellectually and emotionally but that he also recognized as a destructive, violent force, tearing down much of what he admired in Anglo-Irish society. Prime among the targets of the IRA during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War were the so-called ‘big houses’, the country estates established by Anglo-Irish landowners on land that in most cases had been confiscated from the native Catholic inhabitants during the Cromwellian conquest and later in the Restoration. The first part of Yeats’s sequence ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ considers the origins of such ‘Ancestral Houses’ in the vision, patronage, and skill of ‘bitter and violent’ men:

Some violent bitter man, some powerful man

Called architect and artist in, that they,

Bitter and violent men, might rear in stone

The sweetness that all longed for night and day.[[23]](#endnote-23)

(ll. 17-20)

The poet is entranced by the ordered, classical beauty, the ‘sweetness’, embodied by the ‘big houses’ even while he acknowledges their origin in barbarism:

O what if gardens where the peacock strays

With delicate feet upon old terraces,

Or else all Juno from an urn displays

Before the indifferent garden deities;

O what if levelled lawns and gravelled ways

Where slippered Contemplation finds his ease

And Childhood a delight for every sense,

But take our greatness with our violence?

 (ll. 25-32)

This language is notably Marvellian -- ‘Where slippered Contemplation finds his ease’ recalls Marvell’s ‘easy philosopher’ -- and both ‘Upon Appleton House’ and ‘Ancestral Houses’ have an eight-line stanza form, although Yeats employs *ottava rima*, whereas Marvell uses his trademark rhyming couplets in iambic tetrameter.

Majorie Perloff argued almost half a century ago that Yeats’s fusion of the conventions of the country house poem with those of the *débat* tradition in ‘Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931’ likely has its model not in the straightforward panegyric to aristocratic patronage of Ben Jonson’s ‘To Penshurst’ (*c*. 1611), but in the anxious meditation upon the vulnerability of that patronage tradition in ‘Upon Appleton House’. Perloff observes that ‘both estate poems have as their backdrop the menacing shadow of civil war’, comparing the flooding of the meadow in ‘Upon Appleton House’ to the ‘darkening flood’ which threatens to envelop Coole Park in the final moment of Yeats’s poem (l. 48).[[24]](#endnote-24) ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ was composed closer to the experience of civil war than ‘Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931’, and ‘Ancestral Houses’ shares with Marvell’s interrogation of the country house genre an urgent concern with the capacity of the achievements of aristocratic patronage to endure in the aftermath of a bloody internal conflict that may not, in fact, yet have concluded. In this context, the final line of the fourth stanza of ‘Ancestral Houses’ -- ‘But take our greatness with our violence?’ -- turns the thought of the poet in an unexpected direction: after evoking the classical splendour of the big house, the poet wonders if such aesthetic achievement actually works to diminish the ‘greatness’ of the ‘bitter and violent men’ of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries who first built the houses. The ‘greatness’ of men is measured, it would seem, in their engagement in the public world of conflict, not in retirement to the brittle beauty of their estates. The poet debates with himself whether the nationalist violence against the big houses, many of which were burnt down in the 1920s, is a painful but necessary stage in the historical and cultural renovation of Ireland, in the renewal of its ‘greatness’. There is also an implicit analogy, as there is in Marvell, between the structure of the big house and the form of the poem which describes it - the ordered classicism of ‘Ancestral Houses’, and of the sort of poetry conventionally written under aristocratic patronage, appears, in the context of the rest of ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’, about as responsive to the modern world of violent political change as a classical urn in the estate garden.

In the second part of ‘Meditations’, entitled simply ‘My House’, the poet retreats to his own version of the big house, in Yeats’s case the Norman Tower at Ballylee, part of the Coole Park estate. Yeats spent his summers at the Coole Park estate under the patronage of Lady Gregory, wife of a wealthy Anglo-Irish landowner, and eventually purchased the Ballylee tower from her and lived in it from 1921-9. Thoor Ballylee is presented initially as an escape for the poet from the fury and noise of public life into the ascetic life of contemplation and poetic inspiration:

A winding stair, a chamber arched with stone,

A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,

A candle and a written page.

*Il Penseroso*’s Platonist toiled on

In some like chamber, shadowing forth

How the daemonic rage

Imagined everything.

(ll. 11-17)

Milton’s *Il Penseroso* (*c*. 1631), in which the speaker hopes to ‘attain / To something like prophetic strain’ by shutting himself away from the public world in ‘peaceful hermitage’, in isolated study and contemplation, was a lyric which exerted an important influence on Marvell’s poetry of meditative retreat, supplying him with an example of how to adapt the rapid, marching beat of the tetrameter line to profound, self-contemplative subject matter.[[25]](#endnote-25) Yeats’s choice of Milton’s poem to exemplify the figure of the poet shutting himself off from the outside world -- Yeats had earlier written, in ‘The Phases of the Moon’ in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), of choosing to live and write in Thoor Ballylee, ‘Because, it may be, of the candle-light / From the far tower where Milton’s Platonist / Sat late’ (ll. 14-16) -- seems either misplaced or dramatically ironic, given that Milton went on to become the chief propagandist for the victorious side in the English Civil Wars: if any great poet was engaged with the public world, it was Milton.

By the sixth section of ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’, ‘The Stare’s Nest by My Window’, the speaker has come to acknowledge the impossibility of the artist removing himself from the public world of conflict, as Thoor Ballylee itself begins to loosen and crumble, its walls unable to withstand the violent processes of revolution at work in history:

The bees build in the crevices

Of loosening masonry, and there

The mother birds bring grubs and flies.

My wall is loosening; honey-bees,

Come build in the empty house of the stare.

We are closed in, and the key is turned

On our uncertainty; somewhere

A man is killed, or a house burned,

Yet no clear fact to be discerned:

Come build in the empty house of the stare.

A barricade of stone or of wood;

Some fourteen days of civil war;

Last night they trundled down the road

That dead young soldier in his blood:

Come build in the empty house of the stare.

(ll. 1-15)

The crumbling Norman tower is contrasted with the hurriedly constructed, but apparently solid, ‘barricade of stone or wood’: the barricade created by Caesar at Brundisium is a key image in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* of the poet’s sense of his own epic as a creation not of literary tradition but of the rupture of civil war.[[26]](#endnote-26) In the movement of ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’, we might recall the progressive disillusionment of the ingenuous speaker in ‘Upon Appleton House’, yearning to leave the public world of war outside the gates of the estate and become an ‘easie Philosopher / Among the Birds and Trees’; but there is no trace here of the nimble ironies of Marvell. Yeats’s sequence, though, is comparable to Marvell’s turning inside-out of the country house genre, in that it enacts the realization of the speaker that the contemplative life of the artist in the big house or the tower can never be sealed off from the external world of bitterness and violence: the big houses are themselves founded on bitterness and violence. The internal divisions of civil war seem likely to sweep them away, and with them the aristocratic patronage culture that they embody, and that Yeats so admired.

Before the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War, Yeats had a vision of the true poet as transcendent of sectarian and party allegiance, and it is a vision that in 1907 he apparently found embodied in Marvell’s ‘Horatian Ode’:

The verses may make [the poet’s] mistress famous as Helen or give a victory to his cause, not because he has been either’s servant, but because men delight to honour and to remember all that have served contemplation. It had been easier to fight, to die even, for Charles’ house with Marvell’s poem in the memory, but there is no zeal of service that had not been an impurity in the pure soil where the marvel grew.[[27]](#endnote-27)

Marvell could not have written the ‘Ode’ as he did if he had been directed by party allegiance, Yeats contends, even if others chose to read his poem as partisan. (Yeats assumes the poem would have appealed to the royalist, whereas most modern critics assume it to be emphatically Cromwellian in allegiance.) By the time that he composed the poems collected in *The Tower*, Yeats, having lived through the experience of civil war, had changed his mind about the transcendence of poetic art and come to the same conclusion as Marvell’s speaker in ‘Upon Appleton House’. Those that serve contemplation are unable to rise above, or keep external, the divisions of their country, and ‘Meditations’ is a grim admission that Yeats had found no refuge in poetic creativity, or in retreat to his tower. By the end, the poet is, rather, ‘closed in’ in his tower, trapped and claustrophobic, not soaring free in spiritual contemplation like ‘*Il Penseroso*’s Platonist’. And yet, the structure and form of the poem, with which first the big house and then the tower are analogous, remains intact, if only just and only for now. In what Helen Vendler has called the ‘pleading refrain of choral effect’ at the end of each stanza in ‘The Stare’s Nest’ (‘Come build in the empty house of the stare’), the poet prays for renewal in the symbolic shape of the bees, who stand for wise eloquence in the Western cultural tradition -- the infant Plato, abandoned on the slopes of Mount Hymettus, was said to have had honey fed to him by bees -- and whose presence will ensure the crumbling form continues to produce sweetness.[[28]](#endnote-28) As Pope asks in the *Essay on Man* (1734): ‘In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true / From poisonous herbs extracts the healing dew?’[[29]](#endnote-29) At least, that would be the optimistic reading of the poem.

Irish poets have responded to ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ in many ways: it is perhaps the key work in the Northern Irish poetic imagination of civil war.[[30]](#endnote-30) In ‘Beyond Howth Head’ (first published in 1970), one of the finest early poems by Derek Mahon, the Yeatsian mythology of the public poet is viewed at once through Marvell’s ironic lens and in the grey light of the mundane reality of the Troubles. In contemplating Ireland as a small, declining colonial outpost in the west, Mahon invokes the seventeenth century cultural origins of that colonial identity, adopting the stanza form used in ‘Upon Appleton House’, of four rhyming couplets in iambic tetrameter -- Mahon uses this same Marvellian form in his more explicit engagements of the 1970s with the genre of the country house poem, ‘Ford Manor’ and ‘Penshurst Place’ -- and recalling the classical grandeur ascribed to the Irish Sea in Milton’s ‘Lycidas’ (1637):

I woke this morning (March) to hear

church bells of Monkstown through the roar

of waves around the Martello tower

and thought of the lost swans of Lir

when Kemoc rang the Christian bell

to crack the fourth-dimensional

world picture of a vanished aeon,

making them human once again.

It calls as oddly through the wild

Eviscerations of the troubled

waters between us and North Wales

Where Lycid’s ghost for ever sails

(unbosomings of seaweed, wrack,

industrial bile, a boot from Blackpool,

contraceptives deftly tied

with best regards from Merseyside)

[. . . ]

Meanwhile, for a word’s sake, the plastic

Bombs go off around Belfast[.][[31]](#endnote-31)

The legacy of a divisive colonial history in which poets such as Milton and Marvell are bound up has contributed to the current state of Ireland as a moribund, philistine place, wracked by meaningless violence and drained of its own once-rich mythology, a disjunction that Mahon plays with in the ironic mode that was anathema to Yeats. As Mahon nicely put it: ‘no one could accuse Yeats of being ironical (sarcastic sometimes, never ironical); indeed it was always part of his public persona . . . that he was, if anything, too much in earnest’.[[32]](#endnote-32) It is through this ironic deployment of ‘a criss-cross of literary references, Irish, English and others’, as Seamus Deane has observed, that Mahon ‘just manages’ to preserve decorum in a work that might otherwise risk the charge of glibness. In ‘Beyond Howth Head’, both the cultural splendour of the English Renaissance civilization that colonized Ireland and the favourite Yeatsian tropes of towers, swans (emblematic for Yeats of the culture of the big house in his Coole Park poems), and the mythic Celtic past are juxtaposed with the modern reality of a country devastated by violence from within and geographically cut off from the cultural life of Europe on one side, and of North America on the other.[[33]](#endnote-33)

A similarly bathetic juxtaposition of lush Marvellian pastoral and grand Yeatsian mythology with the banal reality of civil war in 1970s Ulster occurs in Mahon’s ‘Going Home’ (initially entitled “The Return” in *Poems 1962-78* (1979)). The pastoral imagery of the English countryside which opens the poem recalls Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’ and ‘The Garden’ (*c*. 1652?), as well as ‘The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers’ (*c*. 1652) -- ‘I have watched girls walking / And children playing under / Lilac and rhododendron’ (ll. 7-9); ‘if I lived / Long enough in this house / I would turn into a tree’ (ll. 19-21) -- and is contrasted with the arid place to which the poet is returning, where “[t]here are no nymphs to be seen” (l. 36):

Out there you would look in vain

For a rose-bush; but find

Rooted in stony ground,

A last stubborn growth

Battered by constant rain

And twisted by the sea wind[.]

(ll. 37-42)

Mahon responds to Yeats’s ‘My Tower’, in which the poet retreats from civil war to the apparent artistic security of Thoor Ballylee, surrounded by ‘An acre of stony ground, / Where the symbolic rose can break in flower’ (ll. 3-4).[[34]](#endnote-34) In Mahon’s Ulster, there is no prospect of seclusion, symbolic or otherwise, from the continual storm of civil war.

The more optimistic reading of Yeats’s ‘Meditations’ is exemplified by Seamus Heaney’s 1995 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, ‘Crediting Poetry’, in which he concludes with a discussion of ‘The Stare’s Nest by my Window’. Heaney says of Yeats’s poem that it

satisfies the contradictory needs which consciousness experiences at times of extreme crisis, the need on the one hand for a truth-telling that will be hard and retributive, and on the other hand the need not to harden the mind to a point where it denies its own yearnings for sweetness and trust. It is a proof that poetry can be equal to *and* true at the same time.

And he goes on to describe his own sense of purpose as an artist:

as a poet I am in fact straining towards a strain, in the sense that the effort is to repose in the stability conferred by a musically satisfying order of sounds. As if the ripple at its widest desired to be verified by a thorough reformation of itself, to be drawn in and drawn out through its point of origin.[[35]](#endnote-35)

‘[V]erified by a thorough reformation of itself’: the self-reflexive figure is the linguistic embodiment of this strain to repose in stability imposed on poets by the self-divisive crisis of civil war. The figure carries an inherent resilience that is lacking from Mahon’s comparable, yet pessimistically dissoluble, metaphor in ‘Rage for Order’ (first published in *Lives* (1972)) for the resistance of poetic form amid the inundation of civil war -- that Lucanian image again -- in Northern Ireland: ‘An eddy of semantic scruple / In an unstructurable sea’ (ll. 9-10).

In 1978, seventeen years prior to Heaney’s speech, Christopher Ricks traced the presence of a particular form of self-reflexive imagery in Marvell and several other mid-seventeenth-century poets, elaborating upon a couplet from Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: ‘The mind, that ocean where each kind / Does straight its own resemblance find’ (ll. 43-4). Ricks made some brief but richly suggestive comparisons with what he called the ‘gifted group of recent Ulster poets’. The specific self-reflexive figure that Ricks locates in both Marvell and Northern Irish poetry is the ‘self-inwoven simile’, a term that he takes from a discussion of Shelley in William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930). The self-inwoven, or self-infolded, simile ‘describes something both as itself and as something external to it which it could not possibly be’. This shared figure of speech is not, as Ricks observes, ‘likely to have arisen from narrowly literary influence, let alone a single literary influence. It is more likely that there is at least some relevance in the deep affinity between Marvell’s England and these poets’ Ulster, racked by civil war that both is and is not religious’. Both groups of poets ‘write out of an imagination of civil war’: the self-inwoven simile offers ‘a language for civil war (desolatingly two and one), but also, in its strange self-conflict, a civil war of language’.[[36]](#endnote-36)

The self-inwoven simile as ‘a language for civil war’ has its origins in the Roman paradox of *concordia discors*, ‘ceaselessly’ present in Lucan’s Latin through a ‘preponderance of *con*- and *dis*- compounds’, which represent internal conflict ‘as both *divisive* and *conjunctive*’.[[37]](#endnote-37) The Lucanian influence is apparent in Marvell’s self-dividing Cromwell, who ‘Did thorough his own side / His fiery way divide’. A striking use of the figure occurs in Heaney’s ‘The Grauballe Man’, one of the several poems in *North* (1975) about the bodies of sacrificial victims from the Iron Age dug up perfectly preserved from bogs in Denmark.

As if he had been poured

in tar, he lies

on a pillow of turf

and seems to weep

the black river of himself.

[. . .]

but now he lies

perfected in my memory,

down to the red horn

of his nails,

hung in the scales

with beauty and atrocity:

with the Dying Gaul

too strictly compassed

on his shield,

with the actual weight

of each hooded victim,

slashed and dumped.

(ll. 1-5, 37-48)

As Ricks notes, ‘and seems to weep / the black river of himself’ may be ‘creatively grateful to Marvell’, recalling ‘The river in itself is drowned’ from ‘Upon Appleton House’ ( p. 128). Another of the ‘bog’ poems in *North*, the sonnet ‘Strange Fruit’, recalls the depiction of Charles I as martyr on the scaffold in the ‘Horatian Ode’ -- ‘But with his keener eye / The axe’s edge did try’ (ll. 59-60) -- with its pun on the Latin *acies*, meaning both ‘keen eyesight’ and ‘blade’: ‘Beheaded girl, outstaring axe / And beatification, outstaring / What had begun to feel like reverence’ (ll. 12-14). In the series of interviews with Dennis O’Driscoll collected as *Stepping Stones* (2009), Heaney attests to ‘the sudden powerful admiration’ that he felt for Marvell while teaching English at a further education college in the early and mid-1970s and writing the poems that were collected in *North*, citing specifically the ‘Horatian Ode’ and ‘A Nymph Complaining for the Loss of her Fawn’ (*c*. 1649). Heaney links his reading of Marvell to a new appreciation both of Yeats’s style (in ‘Marvell and Yeats, I was very attracted to a plain style’) and the complexities of Yeats’s political verse (‘the way his affections and disaffections as a citizen and controversialist could get included and transformed’.) This ‘sudden powerful admiration’ for Marvell and ‘serious reading’ of Yeats in the mid-1970s are related to Heaney’s own working out ‘of a position or a stance in relation to the place and times we were inhabiting’.[[38]](#endnote-38)

‘[S]lashed and dumped’ jolts us to the present of the 1970s and the so-called ‘disappeared’ of the Troubles, whose bodies were in several cases buried in peat bogs. The self-inwoven simile is a figure suited in its paradoxical balance to a poem in which the speaker claims to hang beauty and atrocity in the balance, although the final impact of ‘slashed and dumped’ seems to bring us down, with a sickening slam, on the side of atrocity. Yet it is apparently the beauty of the poem itself, and images such as its opening self-inwoven simile, which lift the scales back up -- ‘a morally dubious weighing’, according to John Wilson Foster, which makes ‘art out of suffering’.[[39]](#endnote-39) But the spirit level of art can also redress the balance between the hope of unity and the reality of division, and in so doing embody the possibility of reconciliation. In the fraught *concordia discors* of civil war, the bonds of war may have replaced the bonds of love, but they are bonds nonetheless. The ‘peculiar attraction’ of the self-inwoven simile, writes Ricks, ‘is that while it acknowledges (as truth must) such a civil war, it can yet at the same time conceive (as hope must) a healing of such strife . . . the reflexive image simultaneously acknowledges the opposing forces and yearns to reconcile them’ (p. 129). This balancing act is what Heaney claims for poetry, and in particular for Yeats’s ‘Meditations’, in ‘Crediting Poetry’.

 In the seventh and final part of Yeats’s ‘Meditations’, ‘I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart’s Fullness, and of the Coming Emptiness’, the poet turns to the self-inwoven simile to convey his baroque vision of the poetic muses from the top of Thoor Ballylee:

Their long legs, delicate and slender, aquamarine their eyes,

Magical unicorns bear ladies on their backs.

The ladies close their musing eyes.

[. . . ]

 their minds are but a pool

Where even longing drowns under its own excess;

Nothing but stillness can remain when hearts are full

Of their own sweetness, bodies of their loveliness.

(ll. 17-19, 22-4)

The speaker in Yeats’s poem now realizes there can never be a complete escape for the artist from the reality of internal conflict, and the visions dissolve immediately into ‘brazen hawks’ and the ‘grip of claw’ (ll. 29, 31). But the self-reflexive imagery that constitutes his vision of sweetness is itself already a reminder of the opposing forces within, even as the poet yearns to reconcile them in ‘nothing but stillness’: ‘Their minds are but a pool / Where even longing drowns under its own excess’. That image returns us the poet strolling through the grounds of Appleton House in late summer 1652; but still in the paradoxical poetic world of civil war, the distinctiveness of which in English, as in Latin, should be more fully appreciated: ‘The river in it self is drowned, / And isles th’astonished cattle round. / Let others tell the paradox, / How eels now bellow in the ox’.

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1. NOTES

*This essay is based on an inaugural lecture given at the University of Exeter on 28 May, 2014.*

 David Armitage, ‘What’s the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the *Longue Durée*’, *History of European Ideas* 38, 4 (2012), 493-507: 501. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Robert Brown, ‘The Terms *Bellum Sociale* and *Bellum Civile* in the Latin Republic’, in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 11 (2003), 94-120; Brian Breed, Cynthia Damon, and Andreola Rossi (eds.), *Citizens of Discord: Rome and its Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2010), *passim*. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *Lucan’s Pharsalia: or The civill warres of Rome . . . Englished by Thomas May, Esquire* (1627), sigs. A1r-A1v, ll. 1-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Lucans Pharsalia containing the civill warres betweene Caesar and Pompey . . . Translated into English verse by Sir Arthur Gorges Knight* (1614), 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. May (trans.), *Lucan’s Pharsalia*, sig. B3v. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. James Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan’s* Bellum Civile (Cambridge, 1992), 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. David Armitage, ‘Ideas of Civil War in 17th-Century England’, *Annals of the Japanese Association for the Study of Puritanism* 4 (2009), 4-18: 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See Charles McNelis, *Statius’* Thebaid *and the Poetics of Civil War* (Cambridge, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The argument for Lucan’s influence on *Paradise Lost* is made at length in David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge, 1999), chap. 10, although with an emphasis on the *Bellum Civile* as offering an example of a specifically pro-republican epic rather than a representation of the divisions and horrors of civil war. For Milton and Lucan, see also David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, N.J., 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. May, *Lucan’s Pharsalia*, sig. A3v (I, ll. 151-2); all references to Marvell’s poetry are to Andrew Marvell, *Poems*, ed. Nigel Smith, rev. edn. (2003; Harlow, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. There is some dispute over whether the situation in Northern Ireland from 1969-94 should be described as a ‘civil war’; but the definition is generally accepted in academic study. See e.g. Armitage, ‘What’s the Big Idea?’, 505; Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, 2006), *passim*. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Among more recent work, see e.g. *The New Oxford Book of War Poetry*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (Oxford, 2014); Kate McLoughlin (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing* (Cambridge, 2010); James Anderson Winn, *The Poetry of War* (Cambridge, 2008); Tim Kendall (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry* (Oxford, 2006). One brief but ambitious exception, which seeks to make connections between representations of civil war from classical Rome and seventeenth-century England to the American Civil War and the lyrics of Bob Dylan, is Richard Thomas, ‘“My Brother Got Killed in the War”: Internecine Intertextuality’, in Breed et al., *Citizens of Discord*, 293-307. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. The exemplary study is Fran Brearton, *The Great War in Irish Poetry: W. B. Yeats to Michael Longley* (Oxford, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Armitage, ‘Ideas of Civil War’, 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 1998), 4. 689-95. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Seamus Deane, ‘Reading *Paradise Lost* in Protestant Ulster 1984’, in *A Rage for Order: Poetry of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, ed. Frank Ormsby (Belfast, 1992), lines 29-37. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. *Observations Upon the Articles of Peace Made and Concluded with the Irish Rebels* (1649), in *The Complete Works of John Milton. Volume VI: Vernacular Regicide and Republican Writings*, ed. N. H. Keeble and Nicholas McDowell (Oxford, 2013), 242. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Peter McDonald, ‘Sunday in Great Tew. 8th November 1987’, in Ormsby (ed.), *A Rage for Order*, ll. 25-36. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. See Nicholas McDowell, *Poetry and Allegiance in the English Civil Wars: Marvell and the Cause of Wit* (Oxford, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Tom Paulin, ‘Political Verse’, in *Writing to the Moment: Selected Critical Essays 1980-1996* (1996), 101-39: 121. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. *The Chatto Book of Nonsense Poetry*, ed. Hugh Haughton (London, 1988), 110. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Michael Lapidge, “Lucan’s Imagery of Cosmic Dissolution,” *Hermes* 107 (1979), 344-70: 364-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. W. B. Yeats, *Selected Poems*, ed. Timothy Webb (Harmondsworth, 2000). All references to Yeats’s poems are to this edition. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Marjorie Perloff, ‘“Another Emblem There”: Theme and Convention in Yeats’s “Coole Park and Ballylee 1931”’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970), 223-40: 235. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 1998), ll. 168, 173-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan’s* Bellum Civile, 29-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. ‘Poetry and Tradition’ (1907), in *W. B. Yeats: A Critical Anthology*, ed. William H. Pritchard (Harmondsworth, 1972), 59. Michael Wood has recently compared ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen’, the poem that immediately follows ‘Meditations’ in *The Tower*, to Marvell’s ‘Horatian Ode’ as poems that at once impose aesthetic form upon the chaotic violence of civil war and yet authentically convey the experience of that chaos; but he does not argue for influence (*Yeats and Violence* (Oxford, 2010), 142-54, 168). Murray Pittock argues for the influence of the ‘Horatian Ode’ upon ‘The Second Coming’ in ‘Falcon and Falconer: “The Second Coming” and Marvell’s “Horatian Ode”’, *Irish University Review* 16, 2 (1986), 175-81. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Oxford, 2007), 263. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Pope, *The Major Works*, ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford, 2008), ll. 219-20. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. See e.g. ‘Yeats as an Example?’, in Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (1980), 98-114. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Derek Mahon, *New Collected Poems* (Oldcastle, Co. Meath, 2011), ll. 49-56; 57-64; 71-2. All references to Mahon’s poems are to this edition. Hugh Haughton’s recent book on Mahon points to various, and otherwise unexplored, formal debts to Marvell (*The Poetry of Derek Mahon* (Oxford, 2007), 73-5, 128-9, 161-2, 205-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. ‘Yeats and the Lights of Dublin’, in Derek Mahon, *Selected Prose* (Oldcastle, Co. Meath, 2012), 64-75: 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Seamus Deane, ‘Derek Mahon, Freedom from History’, in Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature* (1985), 156-65: 157-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. The allusion to Yeats is noted by Haughton, *Poetry of Derek Mahon*, 131. My thanks to Tim Kendall for drawing it to my attention. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. ‘Crediting Poetry’ is appended to Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996* (1996), 445-68: 464, 466. References to Heaney’s poems are to this edition. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Christopher Ricks, ‘“Its own resemblance”’, in C. A Patrides (ed.), *Approaches to Marvell* (London, 1978), 108-35: 109, 125, 129-30. The essay is included in Ricks, *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford, 1984). [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan’s* Bellum Civile, 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Dennis O’Driscoll, *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (2008), 192-3, 448. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. John Wilson Foster, ‘Crediting Marvels: Heaney after 50’, in Bernard O’Donoghue (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney* (Cambridge, 2009), 206-23: 217 [↑](#endnote-ref-39)