**Seamus Heaney - Requiem for the Croppies**

The pockets of our greatcoats full of barley---

No kitchens on the run, no striking camp---

We moved quick and sudden in our own country.

The priest lay behind ditches with the tramp.

A people, hardly marching---on the hike---

We found new tactics happening each day:

We’d cut through reins and rider with the pike

And stampede cattle into infantry,

Then retreat through hedges where cavalry must be thrown.

Until, on Vinegar Hill, the fatal conclave.

Terraced thousands died, shaking scythes at cannon.

The hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave.

They buried us without shroud or coffin

And in August the barley grew up out of the grave.

**Act of Union**

**I**

Tonight, a first movement, a pulse,

As if the rain in bogland gathered head

To slip and flood: a bog-burst,

A gash breaking open the ferny bed.

Your back is a firm line of eastern coast

And arms and legs are thrown

Beyond your gradual hills. I caress

The heaving province where our past has grown.

I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder

That you would neither cajole nor ignore.

Conquest is a lie. I grow older

Conceding your half-independent shore

Within whose borders now my legacy

Culminates inexorably.

**II**

And I am still imperially

Male, leaving you with the pain,

The rending process in the colony,

The battering ram, the boom burst from within.

The act sprouted an obstinate fifth column

Whose stance is growing unilateral.

His heart beneath your heart is a war drum

Mustering force. His parasitical

And ignorant little fists already

Beat at your borders and I know they’re cocked

At me across the water. No treaty

I foresee will salve completely your tracked

And stretchmarked body, the big pain

That leaves you raw, like opened ground, again.

**Mid-Term Break**

I sat all morning in the college sick bay  
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.  
At two o'clock our neighbors drove me home.  
  
In the porch I met my father crying--  
He had always taken funerals in his stride--  
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.  
  
The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram  
When I came in, and I was embarrassed  
By old men standing up to shake my hand  
  
And tell me they were "sorry for my trouble,"  
Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,  
Away at school, as my mother held my hand  
  
In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.  
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived  
With the corpse, stanched and bandaged by the nurses.  
  
Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops  
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him  
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,  
  
Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,  
He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.  
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.  
  
A four foot box, a foot for every year.

**Punishment by Seamus Heaney**

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

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

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

Under which at first  
she was a barked sapling  
that is dug up  
oak-bone, brain-firkin:

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

to store  
the memories of love.  
Little adulteress,  
before they punished you

you were flaxen-haired,  
undernourished, and your  
tar-black face was beautiful.  
My poor scapegoat,

I almost love you  
but would have cast, I know,  
the stones of silence.  
I am the artful voyeuur

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

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

who would connive  
in civilized outrage  
yet understand the exact  
and tribal, intimate revenge.

**The Bog Queen - Seamus Heaney**

.I lay waiting  
between turf-face and demesne wall,  
between heathery levels  
and glass-toothed stone.  
  
My body was braille  
for the creeping influences:  
dawn suns groped over my head  
and cooled at my feet,  
  
through my fabrics and skins  
the seeps of winter  
digested me,  
the illiterate roots  
  
pondered and died  
in the cavings  
of stomach and socket.  
I lay waiting  
  
on the gravel bottom,  
my brain darkening.  
a jar of spawn  
fermenting underground  
  
dreams of Baltic amber.  
Bruised berries under my nails,  
the vital hoard reducing  
in the crock of the pelvis.  
  
My diadem grew carious,  
gemstones dropped  
in the peat floe  
like the bearings of history.  
  
My sash was a black glacier  
wrinkling, dyed weaves  
and Phoenician stitchwork  
retted on my breasts'  
  
soft moraines.  
I knew winter cold  
like the nuzzle of fjords  
at my thighs––  
  
the soaked fledge, the heavy  
swaddle of hides.  
My skull hibernated  
in the wet nest of my hair.  
  
Which they robbed.  
I was barbered  
and stripped  
by a turfcutter's spade  
  
who veiled me again  
and packed coomb softly  
between the stone jambs  
at my head and my feet.  
  
Till a peer's wife bribed him.  
The plait of my hair  
a slimy birth-cord  
of bog, had been cut  
  
and I rose from the dark,  
hacked bone, skull-ware,  
frayed stitches, tufts,  
small gleams on the bank.