

A micro-ebook reformatted from

Symbiosis: a Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations

Volume 6.2

Michael Parker

**Changing Skies: the Roles of Native and
American Narratives in the Politicisation
of Seamus Heaney's Early Poetry**

<http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk>

FOR GUIDANCE ON USE OF THIS EBOOK PLEASE SCROLL TO PAGE 2

PUBLICATION DATA

© Symbiosis 2002, 2007 all rights reserved

The Author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this Work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in SYMBIOSIS, 6.2, October 2002, pp.133–58

2nd electronic edition published in 2007 by Humanities-Ebooks LLP

<http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk>

Tirril Hall, Tirril, Penrith CA10 2JE

Essays published in Symbiosis are subsequently digitized for the benefit of the author (80%) and the Journal (20%)

READING OPTIONS

To use the toolbar this Ebook should be read in default view.

To navigate use the hyperlinked 'Bookmarks' or thumbnails at the left of the screen.

To search, click on the binocular symbol in the toolbar.

Use <CTRL+L> to enlarge the page to full screen.

LICENCE AND PERMISSIONS

This ebook is licensed for reading on a particular computer.

The original purchaser may license the same work for a second computer by applying to support@humanities-ebooks.co.uk with proof of purchase.

It is permissible to print a watermarked copy of the book for your own use.

ISSN: 1362-7902

A cumulative index of Symbiosis essays and reviews is online at

<http://www.symbiosisonline.org.uk>

Michael Parker

Changing Skies: The Roles of Native and American Narratives in the Politicisation of Seamus Heaney's Early Poetry

*Skies change, not cares for those who cross the seas.*¹

That Seamus Heaney's poetry underwent fundamental changes at the close of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s has been widely acknowledged, though some of the key literary and political factors behind these changes have yet to receive the attention they deserve. Undoubtedly the most telling factor in the politicisation of Heaney's poetry was the local political narrative, such events as the Derry civil rights march of October 1968, the Burntollet march in January 1969, the street killings in Derry and Belfast in August 1969, the Falls curfew of July 1970 and the introduction of internment without trial in August 1971. However, 'foreign' cultural influences also played a significant role in this process, not least as a source of analogues through which Heaney could address the painful native text. In the period in which the poems of *Death of a Naturalist* (1965), *Door into the Dark* (1969) and *Wintering Out* (1972) were composed, political and cultural developments in the United States made a significant impact on his literary project, interacting with influences closer to home.

Despite the common tendency to regard 1969 as the starting-point of Northern Ireland's descent into violence and thus *the* turning point in its recent history, there is a strong case for conferring on 1966 that dubious distinction. That year saw two intensely emotive commemorative events—the fiftieth anniversary of

1. Seamus Heaney, *The Spirit Level* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 24.