Abstract

Continuity and resistance are issues of concern for sensitive writers who live in countries that are possessed and are in the throes of repossession. Seamus Heaney, a poet from Northern Ireland had his share of questions to encounter and resolve. As a Catholic poet who belongs to Ulster, which has a Protestant majority, Heaney is necessitated to seek his identity through the complex web of consciousness that assimilates contrary forces of tradition. The two elements of continuity and resistance are closely related to the growth of his poetic consciousness, the emergence of his creative identity. In such a context, the two factors, continuity and resistance appear evolutionary. The study is limited to the growth of Heaney's poetic self and the key words, "continuity" and "resistance" are used in this context.

The nine volumes of poetry which have been published so far are taken into consideration and the poet's works, his introductions and notes to his poems, his interviews and the critical opinions of reviewers are used to understand Heaney's mindset and to justify the findings. Jungian theories on ego and Neumann's expositions of
Hero myth are applied to substantiate the presence of continuity and resistance in the developmental process of a person.

"Continuity" is seen as establishing an uninterrupted contact with an entity. Heaney seeks to establish a continuity with the social and literary past because the divisive factors were not at work then. As he matures, he relates himself with the poets of other nations and times like Dante and Milosz because they have gone through the dilemma of where to belong. "Resistance" is the retarding force that counteracts or withstands. In Heaney, resistance is found contending the political power occasionally but generally it is towards all intimidating forces. As the poet in him becomes full-fledged, the artistic text itself becomes a form of resistance for he has successfully defied all forces that try to mould him into a faceless singularity.

The thesis is divided according to the developmental phases, and his volumes of poetry, in their chronological order of appearance, correspond to the respective stages. The introductory chapter places Heaney in line with the "filid", the poets of the Celtic past, tracing some of their threads that run through the tapestry of his poetry. The second and third chapters deal with the first phase of association and show how in the first five volumes of poetry Heaney gets in touch with his personal and communal past. The
fourth chapter is devoted to an exposition of how the regressing self of the poet takes a final look at the past before going forward. This is the time of resolution and the religious image of a pilgrimage is made use of in his sixth volume. In this crucial time the spirits of his past help him to analyse and assimilate. The fifth chapter shows the culmination of the individuation process and how Heaney crosses the frontiers to become a mature artist. It exemplifies how he accepts himself as a "dual citizen" and finds freedom in being "ourselves", "free-willed" and being able to "to make a new beginning." In this phase of reintegration he overcomes the forces that consider a hybrid identity as degrading, and is able to merge the past and the present. He identifies himself with the community while asserting his individual self. The concluding chapter summarises the findings, showing the poet enjoying the distance and the proximity.

Key terms : Twentieth Century Poetry; Irish Writing in English; Resistance and Continuity; Identity and Creative self.