Analysis Of The Poem The Cure Of Troy By Seamus Heaney

The poem “The Cure of Troy” by Seamus Heaney was written in 1991 from the play “Philoctetes” by Sophocles. The poem has themes of the Trojan war that is relevant to the Northern Ireland Troubles (1968AD – 1998AD) and the South African apartheid (1948AD – 1994AD). The poem coincided with the date of both conflicts. The poem also has strong themes of religion throughout the poem, this coinciding with the Northern Ireland Troubles, that started with the IRA striving for Ireland to be united and separate from the United Kingdom as well as the Protestants (unionists) trying to end the discrimination against the Catholics (Nationalists) due to the crumbling civil rights against the Catholics in Northern Ireland.

The structure of the poem could be represented as the five stages of grief throughout the war as the poem is split into five stanzas. This is because of the language Heaney uses in the stanzas themselves. For example, in the first stanza, there is a lot of language that is the denial of what human nature is seen to be, loving and caring. In the second stanza, there is a lot of angry words, “Don’t hope” is an example of this, as well as the lines “The longed-for tidal wave Of justice can rise up” that signify anger and violence.

In the poem, there does not seem to be a repeating rhyming scheme present. Some stanzas have more rhyming words than others. This portrays how wars often make people forget what they are fighting for, the poem shows this by having a single rhyming couplet in the first two stanzas but there is none in the third, this represents forgetting the meaning of the war, this also repeats with the fourth and fifth stanzas as in the fourth stanza there is three lines that rhyme and then the fifth stanza does not have any lines that rhyme, showing that there are times that people remember, for a brief moment, what they are at war for.

There is also a semantic field of religion in the poem as in some of the stanzas there is the religious language used. Such as “And a god speaks from the sky” which does have an implication of religion but does not go into specifics. The word “god” does not have a capital letter at the beginning which leaves it open to be interpreted into many different religions. It also denigrates the idea of God as it does not identify the idea as any kind of person.

There is also an anaphora of “And hope and history rhyme.” showing that sometimes, during or after the war, history does repeat itself when hope has been lost. However, the line does also give hope, as it portrays Heaney’s aspiration to see the world without war and conflict.

In conclusion, the poem shows that there are many significant themes revolving around war, such as religion, death, and grief, to name a few, depicting them in many ways throughout the poem. It also portrays that literature has no effect on helping right the wrongs during the war.