Chapter-4

Seamus Heaney: Resistance and Continuity

Waterlogged trunks
of great firs, soft as pulp
our pioneers keep striking
inwards and downwards
-Heaney “Bogland” 17

As W.B. Yeats has to his own credit consolidated Irish landscape into his poetry, Seamus Heaney closely follows Yeats’ poetic tradition recording Irish rural setting in his poems. Heaney is a successful poet and like Yeats he has also received Nobel Prize for literature. His voice for Irish history and politics are the sources of attraction to many critics of the world. Heaney was born and grew up on a farm in County Derry, Northern Ireland, on the shores of Lough Beg, just north of the much larger Lough Neagh. His ancestry lies in the ancient Gaelic rural and Roman Catholic stock of Ireland, and his home is recreated in most of his poetry. Like Yeats he records in his poems the Irish mythical, political and social history of Ireland. John Cook in his editorial note in “Poetry in Theory”, while comparing Heaney with Yeats, says: “his insight and authority matches that of Yeats”(566). His genuine sentiments towards his family history, the landscape of Northern Ireland, particularly to the bog land, and the autobiographical story leading from boyhood to Heaney’s present age, are undoubtedly recognized by the world around him. Thomas Docherty sees Heaney “as a late Modernist poet, the ephebe [one approaching manhood] influenced by Yeats and by a Romantic tradition which was crucially concerned with landscape and a particular kind of eco-relation to the land” (Michael Allen 207). Yeats’ landscape poetry has been drawn on his mythopoeic skill and partly by his contemporary political and religious connections with the 19th and early 20th century Ireland as a whole. But in case of Heaney, his poetry has been built purely upon political border dividing Ireland into
North and South. Thus, “Heaney’s ‘sense of place’ is … now a sense of time”(207) and further it has been quoted from Heaney’s prose work, Preoccupation, he says:

> We are dwellers, we are namers, and we are lovers for our histories. And, when we look for the history of our sensibilities I am convinced… that it is to … the stable element, the land itself that we must look for continuity (qtd. in Michael Allen 207).

To Heaney, land is the place where action, like digging continuously takes place; tool may change as his “squat pen” replaces the spade of his fore fathers who used it for digging potatoes but digging continues.

> But I’ve no spade to follow men like them,
> Between my finger and my thumb
> The squat pen rests.
> I’ll dig with it (Digging 2).

It shows that Heaney has self-respect and understanding with the rulers and their language, which he has gained since his childhood and to Heaney, “working with words is no less dignified, no more prissy, than working with earth”(Michael Allen, 22). ‘Digging’ is part of his ancestral occupation and so part of his family history that comprises the conflict causing “the intolerable stresses” of fear, betrayals and murders (Helen Vender 2).

Hence, the present study attempts to read the possible change through a scrutiny of the three-tier symbolism of water, tree and stone. These symbols are the part of dominant Irish landscape, but how they have been absorbed and explained by Seamus Heaney is a matter of significance. Water and stone are the major symbols used by Heaney in his poems as he has been called the poet of bog land. And, through Sweeney, one of Irish legendary heroes, Heaney praises the trees of Ireland. The stone image also finds a considerable place in his poems. Water in its various forms like
sea, river, stream, rain and even flax-dam water, is treated by Heaney as the source of his poetic energy.

Those metaphors in the following poems draw parallels to historical, cultural, psychological and the spiritual consciousness of Irish tradition that continues to be inherited into future. The poems are: Digging, The Death of a Naturalist, Black Berry Picking, Personal Helicon, Thatcher, Poem, The Peninsula, Requiem for the Croppies, The Wife’s Tale, North, Funeral Rites, Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces, Act of Union, Whatever You Say Say Nothing, In Relic of Memory, Bogland, Bog Oak, Anahorish, Gifts of Rain, Broagh, A New Song, Exposure, The Tollund Man, Punishment, Summer Home, Limbo, The Station of the West, Mossbawn: Two poems in Dedication, Sandstone Keepsake, Granite Chip and The Mud Vision. These poems are selected to study the three-tier symbolism representing the continuity of Irish landscape tradition in Heaney’s poetry. They also discuss his personal history as well as Irish national history that includes various invasions over Ireland and exploitations of Irish land sources, his Celtic, pagan and catholic religious beliefs, his affinity towards bog soil, his concern for war free land, his Yeatsian seriousness to promote the Irish mythical and cultural values among the Irish people particularly the youth. In some poems water is dominant with the ethnic background; in some, tree and stone or anything of the three or all the three symbols are inter oven in some of the poems.

The title poem of his first collection (The Death of a Naturalist 1966) begins with ‘flax-dam’ setting introducing water metaphorically. In this poem, Heaney presents an actual peasant soil of Ireland. This includes the vivid picturization of frog in water and its life cycle. The “swimming tadpoles” in jam bottles reflect the childhood days of Heaney. Later, the same flax-dam seems to be, “invaded” by angry frogs disturbing the boy Heaney who was adolescent:
…angry frogs invaded the flux-dam; I ducked through hedges

To a coarse croaking that I had not heard

Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.

Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked

…

The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat

Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.

I sickened, turned, and ran (3-4).

‘The slap and plop were’ not only ‘obscene threats’ but also the sound produced due to the presence of water that induces the poet in him. At first, Heaney is inclined to speak of Irish peasant lands and then, he knows how to evolve a political note from the same soil. The poem from the same collection, “Blackberry-picking” provides a farm setting and the opening line suggests: ‘Late August, given heavy rain and sun/ for a full week; the black berries would ripen’. “The heavy rain” stands for life giving force. And, generally, fruits are the symbolic expressions of earthly desires (Dictionary Of symbols, 09). The farmers pick the blackberries ‘round hay fields, corn fields and potato-drills’ for the British marketers. ‘Fields’, in wider sense, stand for ‘spaciousness’ or ‘limitless potentialities. It is apparently a farm poem but critically voices the government policy on production and distribution; supply and demand, labour and benefit. In the harvesting season, fertility of the land is well marked by the ‘heavy’ production of fruits. The first part of the poem categorises the process involved in collecting the fruits, description of picking berries on Irish soil is followed by a note on caning them for future use.

This is also suggestive of how British still exploit the native sources and fertile lands. The natives work hard to cultivate these fruits but they are left uncared and rotten.
We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.

But when the bath was filled we found a fur,

A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.

…

the fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour. (“Blackberry Picking” 5).

It happens every year that all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot/… I hoped they’d keep, knew they would not. ‘They’, the outsider, never have a social concern for the native Irish people and the subjective pronouns, ‘We’ and ‘I’ along with the nativity described in the poem reflect the political situation of Northern Ireland in the hands of British. This simple poem on Irish agricultural fields exploited by the colonial masters reveals the fact that the native culture and tradition is also threatened as “that all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot”. Thus, from his swampy land, Heaney wets his pen to record the political imperialism experienced by his people so long. Ireland is blessed with fertility but it is spoiled by England.

In “Personal Helicon”, he goes beyond the present Ireland and falls into his racial memory. This poem is notable for the three-tier symbolism of water, tree and stone employed with the note of Celtic well worship. These metaphors, the markers of land, bring out Heaney’s concern for the continuity of traditional beliefs and his experience with native land rituals. Though the poem is an account of his childhood experience, it provides a vivid land setting that distinguishes Ireland from other European lands. The poem opens with the imagery of Wells that are ‘so deep you saw no reflection in it’. By introducing water element linked with Well, Heaney looks at the way that folkloric practices connected with holy wells. They are assumed survivals of a prehistoric (usually defined as Celtic) water cult. (Feoray NicBhride, Lecture on ‘Celtic’ water cults).
The poet attempts to experience the presence of water in the deep well; he says; “I savoured the rich crash when a bucket/plummeted down at the end of a rope/And, he further elaborates his familiarity with Pagan rituals, which he believes, Christianity can never suppress it:

A shallow one under a dry stone ditch
Fructified like any aquarium
When you dragged out long roots from the soft mulch
A white face hovered over the bottom (Personal Helicon 9).

In this phantasmagoric expression, on Yeatsian model, Heaney has interwoven the symbols of a ‘dry stone ditch’, ‘aquarium’ and ‘long roots from the soft mulch’, which are likely to mean stone, water and tree respectively. It is undoubtedly of the Celtic religious sources that influenced Heaney. ‘Fructified like any aquarium’ can be linked with Celtic fertility myth or rite of holy wells in ancient Ireland. Quoting Cuming Walters, Feoray says:

“Wherever the Celtic element is, there will be found the superstition concerning water leading to strange rite, and sometimes to appalling sacrifice”(www.sacredtext.com). It is also observed that, as the well and aquarium are merged together in the poem the spirit of the waters was often embodied in animals, usually fish (Sacred text, Chapter XII, River and Well Worship, 186). And, “many wells with sacred fish exist in Ireland, and the fish have usually some supernatural quality… they never alter in size, they become invisible, or they take the form of beautiful women”(187). ‘A white face hovered over the bottom” may be referred to the goddess dwelling in the particular well. Also, white face is related to Celtic ancestral face as Celtic race is considered a white race. Thus, Irish racial memory is explored deep into the dark “to pry into roots” … “ into some spring “ tracing “all adult dignity”,

beneath the water. And, in the end, the poet shows his high regards for his Celtic soil and asserts that his poem as a musical instrument, ‘Helicon’ would help him to see himself in such a quest, and he loves the dark drop of night of Irish past. To him, that engaging in exploration of his race means to see himself in his cultural past. So he declares that writing poetry is his mission that he has committed to know his race: “I rhyme, to see myself, to set the darkness echoing”.

The poem “Thatcher” from his collection Door into the Dark (1969) presents a man of ancient Irish profession the one who mends thatched houses. He holds in his hand rods of hazel wood, like Aengus, mythic God of Ireland who holds hazel wand. Hence, hazel tree is considered a sacred one in Ireland. There is a reference to hazel stick in his poem, “A Hazel Stick for Catherine Ann”. Heaney seems to be enlightened when he finds out the magical stick and he says, “when I poked open the grass/a tiny brightening den lit the eye/ in the blunt cut end of your stick” that is cut from Aengus’ family tree. The tree image is linked with Heaney’s ancestral landscape.

“The Thatcher” in urbanized setting foregrounds the value of natural setting of villages. The re-creation of a rustic atmosphere in his poem reveals that Heaney solely depends on his countryside for his metaphoric expression. The actual description of Thatcher’s profession and his discharging duty are unique. He came on bicycle, a vehicle of modernity, and was engaged in the traditional job of thatcher:

… He turned up some morning unexpectedly, his bicycle slung with a light ladder and a bag of knives.

…

Next, the bundled rods: hazel and willow

Were flicked for weight, twisted in case they’d snap (10).
And, he fixed the ladder; he took out ‘well-honed blades/ and snipped at straw and sharpened ends of rods/ that bent in two, made a white-pronged staple/ for pinning down his world, handful by handful’. As the poet finds in himself the ancestral man digging potatoes, so is thatcher emerges as an ancient lad and his craftsmanship has something in common with the art of writing poetry. And, it also shows Heaney’s love for his soil. Like Frost, he traces the profundity in creation through natural and everyday world. They attract the modern urbanized man of present world; Thatcher’s work is associated with other labours of the agrarian world. Mending the thatched roofs is not simply a profession for his livelihood but his life itself, keeping the countryside in rustic frame. Moreover, it seems to be an artistic performance. He is doing it not with his hand alone but with his mind and heart. When Heaney writes a poem on “Poem” he compares his mission of writing poetry with the vocation of pottery. Poetry is his brainchild:

Love, I shall perfect for you the child

Who diligently potters in my brain

Digging with heavy spade till sods were piled

Or puddling through muck in a deep drain(8).

Pottery involves both water and mud that has been used as an imagery representing Heaney’s art of poetry making; to Heaney pottery and poetry are the same. His poetic images originate from the simple rustic elements of water and soil that are the core matters of earth. In his poems, hence, there are expressions such as “old pumps with buckets and windlasses”, “a bucket plummeted down at the end of rope”, puddling through muck in a deep drain”, “clay and mush”; “dam the flowing drain” and “long roots from the soft mulch’ etc. In all these utterances, ‘water’ has its significance.

His poem “The Peninsula” is not only a text on land but on water too. It is so called because of water that surrounds the land. Heaney’s poetic spirit is
extraordinarily dynamic and there is a journey image in the poem, which encompasses the peninsula with a “just drive for a day all round”, like the Irish mythic poet, Oisin, who rowing round Irish lands. The poem begins with an ironic tone:

When you have nothing more to say, just drive
For a day all round the peninsula.
The sky is tall as over a runway
The land without marks so you will not arrive (11).

But passing along the sea-shore at dusk, the poet’s photographic eye gives the snapshots as “horizons drink down sea and hill, / the ploughed field swallows the whitewashed gable.../ the glazed foreshore and silhouetted log/That rock where breakers shredded into rags/the leggy birds stilted on their own legs/Islands riding themselves out into the fog”. It is apparently daybreak into night, but does not denote a pessimistic outlook. An elaborate visualization of space/earth imagery has been set against the time symbols like ‘dusk’, ‘night’ and ‘fog’. The poet has created a complex pattern out of these space as well as time elements. The stillness and the action merge in the poem as ‘ships log in silhouette’ on the horizon at the dark’s fall gives the vision of ‘landfall’ in the mind of the poet. “Birds stilted on their own legs” are suggestive of inaction whereas waves that hit rock like “breakers shredded into rags” stand for action and this balanced presence of stillness and action in nature is glorified in a Hopkins’ tone. In this sense, tradition can be viewed as an embodiment of change and changeless. The last stanza then ends with a philosophical note on this empirical experience of life cycle that always continues:

And drive back home, still with nothing to say
Expect that now you will uncode all landscapes,
By this things founded clean on their shapes
Water and ground in their extremity (11)
Thus, the poet seeks an inner harmony in darkness and daybreak, action and stillness and change and changeless, there is always a discipline in nature as “things founded clean on their own shapes” and there is an order on earth as “water and ground in their extremity” link together. And, in fact, water and ground are pro-active symbols always generating new vistas in Heaney’s poems.

Another poem “Requiem for the Croppies” voices Irish political as well as religious conflict affecting the social life of Ireland. The poem presents the theme of exile that is common in the poems reflecting war prevailing society. The poet visualizes the rebellion of 1798, organized by the society of united Irishmen against British rulers. It was the time when the French Revolution found the most powerful expression in Ireland. The British force drove away the native Irish men; the poem opens as:

Pockets of our greatcoats full of barley
No kitchen on the run, no striking camp-

We moved quick and sudden in our own country (12).

As if the poet were one among them, “hardly marching on the hike” he experiences the ravages of wartime on hillside. “We’d cut through reins and rider with pike/And stampede cattle into infantry” and the poet sees… ‘thousands died, shaking scythes at cannon/ the hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave/ they buried in without shroud or coffin’. By recalling the past, Heaney becomes part of his country’s political history. He passionately allows himself to be in the rite of fertility myth. Hence, the poem suggestively ends with Irish ritualistic note that ‘the barley grew up out of the grave’. Mountain and sea are the witnesses of the Irish resistance against any invasions. In this poem, ‘the Vinegar Hill’ has a special entity that has been directly referred to the rebellion of united Irish men in 1798. The poet’s voice is one of the peasantry voices heard at large. The peasantry rose in Wexford (maritime
Country, in southeastern Ireland in Leinster province, on St. George Channel) and, although insufficiently armed, made a brave fight. At one time Dublin was in danger, but the insurgents were defeated by the regular forces at Vinegar Hill. A French force of 1100 landed in Kilala Bay but was too late to render effective assistance. The British Prime Minister William Pitt, the younger, thought that the legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland together with Roman Catholic emancipation was the only remedy for Roman Catholic rebellion and Protestant tyranny in Ireland. This political situation still prevails in Northern Ireland, as Hywell Williams comments on this concept of unionism: “unionism has little man ideological appeal. Its political bite in Britain has been most marked in the Northern Irish statelet, supporting the hegemony of a Protestant ruling class” (The Hindu, op-ed, Feb-1, 2007, p.11).

The title of the poem has also a religious-political significance. ‘Requiem’ means the Roman Catholic service on dead ones. ‘Croppies’ is named so to honour the united Irishmen of 1798 Rebellion. (The croppies are an American-Irish Band based in Burlington. (Microsoft, Encarta). Thus, this poem implies the continuity of the rebel spirit through the image of sea and this resistance through the image of high mountain. The war spirit is continuously documented in Irish poetry for centuries. Hence, writing poetry on war theme is a part of Irish poetic tradition.

The same war tone against British feudalist greed for Irish peasant land is evidently seen in the poem “The Wife’s Tale”:

The hum and gulp of the thresher ran down
And the big belt slowed to a standstill
…
there was such quiet that I heard their boots
crunching the stubble twenty yards away (13).
Heaney describes such exploitation by feudal lords over the native Irish man’s land and labour and portrays them as:

They lay in the ring of their own crusts and dregs
Smoking and saying nothing, “There’s good yield,
Isn’t there?”- as proud as if he were the land itself.

Moreover, the pathetic condition is that the outsider has the control over the peasants’ work in their own land and they have been made to feel “they belonged no further to the work”. The poem ends with a desperate note that the colonizers kept their ease and ‘spread out under the tree’. ‘Tree’ is again used as a vital symbol representing the vegetative resource that offers energy and strength to Ireland. The rulers know that it’s the result of ‘good clean seed’. The seed is a complex symbol that probably includes the three tier-symbol-stone, water and tree. The seed seems to be stony but contains full of life and hope. “Seed is the symbolic of latent, non-manifest forces, or of the mysterious potentialities … the presence of which … is the justification for hope” (Dictionary of symbols 269). It is obvious that Heaney’s sense of resistance is the result of his staunch faith in his tradition and culture..

The poem “North” presents stone symbol along with the sea imagery to represent the history of Irish invasions and the poet talks about:

those fabulous raiders,
those lying in Orkney and Dublin
measured against
their long swords rusting,
those in the solid
belly of stone ships,
those hacked and glinting
in the gravel of thawed streams
were ocean-deafened voices
warning me, lifted again
in violence and epiphany (56).

Heaney recollects from his racial “memory incubating the spilled blood”. He looks back on The Vikings, a race known for their violent exploits. They invaded Ireland as well as much of Europe. The metaphor ‘the solid belly of stone ship’ can be read on par with the expression, ‘the megalithic door way’, in “Funeral Rites”, Heaney’s another poem on the Viking Ireland. It reads thus:

the procession drags its tail
out of the Gap of the North
as its head already enters
the megalithic doorway(54).

In both the expressions, Heaney tries to create Irish prehistoric landscape. Moreover, land is universally the center of war politics. In “Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces” also Heaney longs for a violence-free society and seems worried of the present troubled landscape of Northern Ireland which has many ‘sites for ambush’. Hence, he addresses his ancestors:

Old fathers, be with us
Old cunning assessors
Of feuds and of sites
for ambush or town.(61)

From prehistoric period to present day, Ireland has been witnessing warfare setting that has badly damaged Irish soil. In “Act of Union”, he could explain a suffering night under the Unionist government in Northern Ireland:
“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 (74).

The ‘first movement’ has the political reference to Civil rights demonstrations that were declared illegal and then violently suppressed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Special Constabulary. And, Catholics were regularly attacked after loyalist parades. The events that followed the August 1969 Apprentice Boys parade resulted in the Battle of Bogside. When Catholic rioters fought the police, this led to widespread civil disorder in Northern Ireland and is often dated as the starting point of the Troubles. Moreover, ‘a bog burst breking open the ferny bed’ is a striking note on politically disturbed/troubled land. Similarly, Heaney’s poem “Whatever You Say Say Nothing” reveals a bomb blast on the road side over the trees in the bog area. He expresses concern for his ethnic identities i.e bog side trees:

This morning from a dewy motorway
I saw the new camp for the internees:
A bomb had left a crater of fresh clay.
In the roadside, and over in the trees (80).

Thus, whenever Heaney presents Irish war history he introduces either stone symbol or tree or water symbol or all together and these symbols help the poet represent his native land’s history of war of Independence.

“Relic of Memory”, centers round the stone image. In this poem, Heaney attempts to relive the past and celebrates his cultural history. Relic is something like stone that has survived from the past and serves to keep memories alive. Heaney believes that tradition is also something like relic that transfers the element of past to present. To strengthen the imagery of ‘relic’ the poet has added the symbols of water,
wood and stone in the poem. They well substantiate the Celtic worship of water, wood and stone, which is still observed in Ireland. The poem begins with the note of biological metamorphosis:

   The lough waters
   Can petrify wood:
   Old oars and posts
   Over the years
   Harden their grain
   Incarcerate ghosts

The “lough” is a typical Irish lake or arm of the sea. The poem metamorphically speaks of the concept of tradition that evolves from the process of conservation and moderate change. Many geographical facts and legendary tales are linked in this poem. ‘The lough waters’ may have the reference to the ‘Lough Neagh’, which is in the center of Northern Ireland and is nearer to the birthplace of Heaney. This poem follows the Yeatsian literary tradition based on the Irish landscape connected to her legends.

   There are many tales about the formation of Lough Neagh. One of them affirms that great Fionn Ma-Coul, being in a rage one day, took up a handful of earth and flung it into the sea and the handful of such a size that where it fell formed the Isle of Man, and the hollow caused by its removal became the basin of the present Lough Neagh.

   Another legend is that a holy well once existed in the locality, blessed and sanctified by a saint with wonderful miraculous powers of healing. After having cured every patient, on leaving, should carefully close the wicket-gate that shut in the well. But once, a woman having forgotten this information, left the gate open, and at once the indignant waters sprang from their bed and pursued the offender. At last, she sank
down exhausted, then the waters closed over her, and she was no more seen. But
along the track of her flight the waters remained, and formed the great lake now
existing. It is exactly the length the women traversed in her flight from the angry spirit
of the lake. Mysterious influences still haunt the locality all round Lough Neagh; for it
is the most ancient dwelling place of the fairies, and when they pass at night, from one
island to another, soft music is heard floating by. (This excerpt of tales is taken from
Sacred Text of Celtic race- www.sacred text.com). ‘The incarcerate ghosts’ is not an
ordinary expression that emphasizes on the presence of ghosts in such places of
worship. But it shows Irish people’s staunch belief in their folk religious tradition.
The next stanza presents the venerable water cult as:

Of sap and season
The shallows lap
And give and take:
Constant ablutions,
Such drowning love
Stun a stake (Relic of Memory 16).

The word “ablutions” has a significant reference to cleansing cult; it means
ceremonial washing of hands and body. In Ireland the tree-shadowed wells of the
country were considered sacred by the Druid priests. The Druidical remains have been
found in Ireland in the vicinity-ruins of temples and pillar stones and stones with
strange carvings. It is observed that the ancient Druidic ceremonies like the symbolic
religious dances, the traditions of sun-worship, drowning the woods, burning the
stakes and other pagan rites have been preserved by the people. They were
incorporated into the Christian ritual of well-worship by the early converts, and are
still retained. Though they have lost their original significance, the Irish have great
reverence for them, as they have come down to them from their pilgrimage
experiences.
Even now there are places of great pilgrimage existing in many parts of Ireland and the pilgrims visit such places where the holy well situated and go round the well a certain number of times, either three or nine, creeping on their hands and knees, but always from east to west, following the apparent motion of the sun. At the close of each round they build up a small pile of stones, because at the last day the angels will reckon these stones, and he who has said the prayer at the most number of times will have the highest place in heaven. And, the patient then descends the broken steps to the well and kneeling down, oblation, the pain or disease he suffered from will be gradually removed. (<www.sacredtext.com/well worship>)

The next stanza categorically displays nature’s other dimensions of the solid state, The images like ‘stalagmite’, ‘dead lava’, ‘the cooling star’, ‘coal and diamond’, ‘burnt meteors are the images of solidity. Moreover the expression of ‘the dead lava’ from which the stone imagery evolved refers to the Giant’s Causeway, the landmark of Northern Ireland; according to the legend, the basalt columnns of Giants’ Causeway are ancient stepping-stones that Giants, used to cross the channel between Ireland and Scotland. Based on geological evidence scientists believed that distinct pillars formed during the cooling and contracting phase of a lava flow (Microsoft Encarta 2004). The place is still visited by many pilgrims.

The poem is thus ethnic specific; on one hand it attempts to survey the whole Northern Ireland’s mythical as well as topographical entities and on the other, it specifically relates Irish tradition to the pagan monuments. It is remarkable that Relics of this ancient ritual can still be found even in the enlightened households:

That relic stored-
A piece of stone
On the shelf at school,
Oatmeal coloured (Relic of Memory 16).
The relic, a piece of stone, oatmeal coloured stored in the self at school, is the prime imagery in the poem that implies that the school is the repository of Irish tradition.

It is also observed by the archeological theorists on their study of Celtic water cult that at many of the wells there are quantities of beautiful white stones found and these are highly esteemed by the pilgrims to keep them as their prayer monuments. Thus, this poem adds strength to the prime argument that the metaphors -water, tree and stone- combine together focusing on the landscape poetry. It also suggests that the space in any poem is the point of reference connecting the time with the culture and tradition of the country.

The “Bog land” is a literary piece that contains earth imagery referring to Northern Ireland’s boggy black soil, lake, sea and mountain. The poem is the geographical description of Northern Ireland. As the poem begins: “We have no prairies”(17), that details the physical features of Northern Ireland. It has no vast, plain grassy land, but lakes, mountains and trees. This ‘Bog land’ also presents a picturesque description of Ireland’s flora and fauna that the poet converts into a political discourse. The poetic narrative begins with first person ‘we’ and describes how “the eye concedes to encroaching horizon”. And, it further views the land, as “our unfenced country is bog”. Then, the third stanza begins with “they have the skeleton of the Great Irish Elk/out of the peat” in which the third person, ‘they’ refers to the outsiders/invaders, right from Normans and Vikings to British. The poet identifies himself with Bog land and Great Irish Elk (Elk is a kind of deer), which is a sacred animal of Celtic people.

The last stanza speaks of the “waterlogged trunks/ of great firs, soft as pulp/our pioneers keep striking/inwards and downwards” by this expression the poet tries to trace his racial memory. More over, “The Sacred Text of Celts” gives an account of Tree worship. According to this tradition, a sacred tree in Irish is ‘bile’; it
is of great age growing over a holy well or fort. Five of such ‘biles’ are described in ‘Dindsenchas’. One was an oak. Another Irish ‘bile’ was Yew tree and it may have some reference to the custom of writing divinations in ogham on the rods of Yew. The other biles were ash-trees, and one of them was the ‘Fir Bile’, (which Heaney calls ‘great fir’ in his poem) from this, ‘men of the tree’ were named. The lives of kings and chiefs appear to have been connected with these trees, probably as representatives of the spirit of vegetation embodied in the tree and under their shadow they were inaugurated. Thus this notion emerges from the symbol of “great firs, soft as pulp” and this meaningful expression marks the ever living Irish tradition, on one hand and on the other, the poem ends with the line: “the bogholes might be Atlantic seepage and the center is bottomless”. It is a view of appraisal to evaluate the strength of his country in the past and the present. He reasons out why invaders easily colonized his country; his country is ‘unfenced’ that shows the political unionism of Britain and her exercising power over the native bog land i.e. Ireland. And, the imagery of ‘Atlantic seepage in bogholes’ suggests that Irish sea shores were not so resisting against various invasions but the land allows them to “encroaching horizon”. Hence, the center of the land becomes bottomless; as now loses its own identity for the shake of ‘growing’ and existing. Thus, the poem also implies the change in political as well as social scenario in Ireland.

The other poem “Bog oak” is also an important one using the earth symbols as medium to discuss the rustic atmosphere associated with Irish glorious past, its decline and the present condition of life and the search for the lost. The poem presents the rural settings:

A carter’s trophy

Split for rafters,

A cobwebbed, black

Long-seasoned rib

Under the first thatch.
And the scene is elaborated to see the poet as a fisherman staying with the angler’s wicker basket to carry fish he catches. The fishing imagery involves water symbol and denotes the knowledge of tradition. ‘A Dictionary of Symbols’ suggests that ‘the path of the Grail was marked by a number of miracles; one of the brothers was called Brous and was also known as “the rich fisherman” because he had succeeded in catching a fish with which he had satisfied the hunger of all round him. Also, “fishing amounts to extracting the unconscious elements form deep-lying sources-the ‘elusive treasure’ of legend, or in other words, wisdom. To fish for souls is quite simply a matter of knowing how to fish in the soul. The fish is mystic and psychic being that lives in water (and water is symbolic of dissolution and, at the same time, of renovation and regeneration’(A Dictionary of Symbols, 102-103).

The next stanza is the reflection of Yeatsian regret that this is not a land for aging:

Eavesdrop on
Their hopeless wisdom
As a blow – down of smoke
Struggle over the half down
And mizzling rain
Blurs the far end
Of the cart track.
The softening ruts
Lead back to no
‘oak groves’, no
cutters of mistletoe
in the green clearings (19).
‘the cart track’ ‘blurred at the far end in the drizzling rain’ is the powerful imagery of transmutation. The modern man is continuously to transgress forgetting the tradition from which he has emerged. He could not trace his path leading to oak groves and in Celtic tree cult, Oak is considered one of the sacred trees.

There is a custom in Celtic Ireland that the tribal and personal names are in descent from tree gods or spirits. “Cutters of mistletoe” refer to the Celtic tribes, called Bituriges who perhaps had the mistletoe for their symbol, and their surname Vivisci implies that they were called “Mistletoe men”. They were the ancestors of the Milesians. They are perhaps living beliefs carried over to next generation only by literary men like Edmund Spenser “who creep out of every corner of the woods and glennes towards watercress and carrion”. Watercress is a creeping plant that grows in running water. It symbolically represents the spirit of adoptability in the changing stream of time. It is true that there is a symbolic continuity between landscape, history and cultural identity.

‘Anahorish’, another poem of Seamus Heaney from his collection Wintering out (1972), gives an account of the biography of the poet. Seamus Heaney was born and grew up in a farm in County Derry, on the shores of Lough Beg, just north of the much larger Lough Neagh. His ancestry lies in the ancient Gaelic rural and Roman Catholic Stock of Ireland. The places of his childhood-Mossbawn, Anahorish, Broagh, Castledawson - seem to have been as much sites of the imagination as localities in the real world. Indeed, he speaks about one of them, Anahorish:

My place of clear water
the first hill in the world
where springs washed into
the shiny grass (21).
Heaney attempts to introduce the Gaelic place name to English. He has personal sentiments about the place where from he grew up, claiming it as his own. His first school in Anahorish still lingers in the mind of the poet as “soft gradient of consonant, vowel-meadow” in which the land imagery, ‘meadow’ has been recorded by the cognitive process of learning the language. In the last stanza, there is a shift from the recent past of his childhood memory to the remote past of the ancestral memory:

Those mound-dwellers

Go waist-deep in mist

To break the light ice

At wells and dunghills (21).

His school in Anahorish is topographically located at the top of the hill and this time shift takes place through the landmarks, described in the first stanza that his ‘place of clear water’, ‘hill’ and ‘springs washed into the shiny grass’. Thus, these symbols of spring as water, hill as stone, grass as plant, form an inner landscape in the mind of the poet. It is like Wordsworthian nostalgia as well as Frostian poetic skill to frame the space of his familiarity into poetic expression.

In, “Gifts of Rain” there is eloquent water imagery emerged from his own native land, in the form of river Moyola. Heaney wonders at the relationship between sky and earth through rain. It is natural that the poet who belongs to agricultural sect admires and greets the rain. For, “rain has a primary and obvious symbolism as a fertilizing agent and is related to the general symbolism of life and water”(A Dictionary of Symbols, 259). Apart from this, it signifies purification so it has the religious significance also. It is believed that rain water falls from heaven. Heaney
realizes that his poetry is shaped by such landscape deeply buried in the ‘self’ of the poet. He vividly presents:

… an old chanter.

Breathing its mists

Through vowels and history

A swollen river (24).

Thus his poetry is born out of nature resources. To him, poetry writing is pro-

fertility act as well as procreative pleasure as he says “a mating call of sound, rises to

pleasure me”. Thus, the spaces in his poems are of the places of his childhood

familiarity and experience. The ‘Broagh’ from the same collection reflects the same

idea. The poet is proud of the names of his native land:

In Broag,

Its low tattoo

Among the windy boortrees

And rhubarb-blades

Ended almost

Suddenly, like that last

‘gh’ the strangers found

difficult to manage.

The poem is simply about what was present rather than what is lost. Being strange to

the stranger is the strength to the native as it helps trace native man’s cultural identity.

“A New Song” is also composed on the three tier symbolism- water, stone and

tree. It is nostalgic in tone and particularly illustrates alder trees. The poem

“Exposure” also portrays alder trees as “rain comes down through the alders/…and

each drop recalls/ the diamond absolutes”. All the three symbols are combined to

highlight the value of Irish tradition, which is represented by the precious stone

diamond. Similarly, the poem “A New Song” reads thus:
I met a girl from Derrygarve

....

Recalled the river’s long swerve

A kingfisher’s blue at dusk

And stepping-stones like black molars

Sunk in the ford, the shifty glaze

Of the whirlpool, the Moyola

Pleasing beneath alder trees.

The alder tree is considered a sacred tree in Ireland. And the Celtic Ireland is completely re-created in the second stanza with the images of ‘Stepping Stones’, river ‘Moyola’ and alder tress. “The stepping stones like black molars sunk in ford” is the imagery that refers to the Celtic “druids” Stairways”. In etymology, the term ‘druid’ comes from ‘dru-vid’ meaning ‘very visionary’ or ‘very learned’. They held high office and educated the young. These steps caused into boulder are called ‘druids’ stairways’. “These druids constituted a powerful caste, answerable only to the authority of the Celtic king”(Thierry Bordas 16). “Moyola’ is the ancient river is known for the Celtic water cult. Though the “stepping stones’ are archeologically located in the remote past of Celtic Ireland they are part of Irish land and they culturally still exist to be the identity of Irishness.

The third stanza is in a way, the poet’s reflection on the ritualistic influence of Roman Empire over Ireland. To him, Derrygarve is not simply a watermark of his native land, but a signpost of his political history and religious history:

And Derrygarve, I thought, was just:

Vanished music, twilit water-

A smooth libation of the past

Poured by this chance vestal daughter (New Song 27).
“A smooth libation” is associated with the religious act and Word Web Dictionary defines it as a ritual practice of “serving (of wine) poured out in honour of a deity”. It suggests that Celtic rituals might have absorbed the Roman paganist ceremonial practices and hence this expression ‘twilit water’ which is considered ‘a smooth libation of the past’ poured by ‘vestal daughter’, ‘vestal’ refers to ‘vestal virgin’, one of the maidens dedicated to the service of the goddess Vesta in ancient Rome. So, the Derrygarve is the representation of the Celtic Irish space that had accepted the emergence of Roman Catholic religious practices in the past and at the same time it reflects that the Roman Catholic religious tradition had readily absorbed the local Pagan rituals into its practice. But the Celtic religious tradition that had a compromise with Roman Catholics provides the rebellious spirit that later emerged as the resistance against the Protestants. This spirit adds value on support to fight against the English imperialists and feudal lords who had possessed the Irish lands. Hence, Irish war of independence has involved both religious politics and land politics:

…now our river tongue must rise

From licking deep in native haunt

To flood, with vowelling embrace,

Demesnes staked out in consonants (New Song 27).

‘Demesnes’ (Territory over which rule or control is exercised) is the direct comment on the English Feudalism, as a part of colonization, which has been forced to be spreading in Ireland. Thus, this poem is complex in diction; in one level, it is a poem about Irish political history and on another, it is about Celtic pagan cult. And, the poem can also be categorized as a text of archeological poetics; for, the last stanza speaks about ‘raths’. In county Clare, there are many old castles and abbeys, several ancient towers and numerous raths that mean earthworks of ancient Irish Chieftains.
Thus, the poem ‘A New Song’ comprises Irish cultural and political past that have been viewed in comparison with the present situation in Ireland.

Another important poem on bog land is ‘The Tollund Man’. It also helps one identify Heaney as an archeologist-poet’. The poem thematically divides into three sections and is quiet a complex one that details the poet’s pilgrimage to Jute land. In this poem, Heaney attempts to expand Irish history to mythical entity, and so is to cultural history. The major imagery, as the title suggests, “The Tollund Man” is a corpse dug out from land. The corpse and the land are inseparable. They are known as bog bodies. These bog bodies are also known as bog people who are preserved human bodies found in Northern Europe, Britain and Ireland. Unlike most ancient human remains, bog bodies have retained skin and internal organs due to the unusual conditions of preservation. Under certain conditions, the acidity of the water, the cold temperature and the lack of oxygen combine to tan the body’s skin. The skeletal preservation is very rare in these bodies, as the acid in the peat dissolves the calcium carbonate of Bone. The bodies provide very useful research material for archaeologists.

‘The Tollund Man’ is the symbolic representation of Irish bog people. This poem is very much related to earth that always preserves something of nourishing values for the humanity. Heaney has a strong belief that poetic creation is a kind of meta cognitive action transfiguring his own land into metaphors and bog body is one such metaphor:

I have always listened for poems, they come sometimes like bodies come out of a bog, almost complete, seeming to have been laid down a long time age, surfacing with a touch of mystery. They certainly involve craft and determination, but chance and instinct have a role in the thing too. … It is this feeling, asserting, equable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind,
whether that country of the mind takes its tone unconsciously from a shared oral inherited culture, or from a consciously savoured literary culture, or from both, it is this marriage that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation (Michael Allen, 168-69) (Heaney’s saying from Preoccupation, quoted by David Lloyd in “Heaney and the Poetic identity”).

In the poem, “Punishment” there is also a reference to bog body and Heaney writes:

I can see her drowned

Body in the bog,

The weighing stone,

The floating rods and boughs (71).

This stanza comprises stone, water and tree symbols and ‘the floating’ imagery which suggests fluidity of time and Irish culture space. This poem is noted for his political voice raised for a frustrated, traumatized people to violence and atrocity that his native land has been long experiencing particularly Derry of trouble days. And, he seems regretting when he says the woman bog body:

I who have stood dumb

When your betraying sisters,

Cauld in tar,

Wept by railings,

Who would connive

In civilized outrage

Yet understand the exact

And tribal, intimate revenge (72).
This unique poetic tone of Heaney forces the reader to arbitrate between “violence and epiphany” as he puts it in his poem “North”, between “beauty and atrocity”, and he tells us the same in “The Grauballe Man” another poem written on bog people. In his bogland poems, his poetic mission of digging by his squat pen continues and he could inscribe the features of farmland from his childhood memory. The landscape is decoded to reveal the history that made the Irish world and its people as his “Vowels ploughed into other, opened ground, / Each verse returning like the plough turned round”(Glanmore Sonnets II 110). The metaphors of digging, of sounding wells, of doors into darkness, became recurrent media to explore the past in order to explicate the present.

The source of Heaney’s bog poems, particularly, “The Tollund Man” owes much to P.V. Glob’s *The Bog People*, which is, David Lloyd says, “doubtless familiar”, and he reproduces Heaney’s own account of the source book:

It [Glob’s book] was chiefly concerned with preserved bodies of man and women found in the bogs of Jutland, naked, strangled or with their throats cut, disposed under the peat since early Iron Age times. The author, P.V. Glob, argues convincingly that a number of these, and in particular the Tollund Man, whose head is now preserved near Aarhus in the museum at Silkeburg, were ritual sacrifices to the Mother Goddess, the goddess of the ground who needed new bridegrooms, each winter to bed with her in her sacred place, in the bog, to ensure the renewal and fertility of the territory in the spring. Taken in relation to the tradition of Irish political martyrdom for that cause whose icon is Kathleen Ni Houlihan, this is more than an archaic barbarous rite; it is an archetypal pattern. And, the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles (Michael Allen 169-170).
Indeed, a particular landscape to the poet’s eye is different from the ordinary onlookers. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* is about what it has lost but Heaney’s bog land is about what it preserves. In poetry, land is the metaphorical expression of continuity of identity. Thus in the hands of poets with their aesthetic touch landscape turns to be the promoter of tradition and culture. Thus, Jutland provides a poetic space for Heaney’s mind like Byzantium to Yeats’ mind. Notably, Brewster offers an original and provocative reading of Heaney’s Bog poems, rejecting the current view that interprets their mythological scheme as inferring a deterministic continuity to the violence; rather, the bodies depicted therein are unsettling and undermine any assumptions that there is a "symbiotic continuity between landscape, history and cultural identity" (qtd.in Shane Alcobia-Murphy, http://www.estudiosirelandeses.org/).

The poem “Summer Home” from the same collection begins with a sour tone. Summer might be a pleasant one for the Irish but the poet feels it other way like being imprisoned in his own homeland:

Was it wind off dumps
Or something in heat
Dogging us, the summer gone sour,
A fouled nest incubating somewhere?
Whose fault, I wondered, inquisitor
Of the possessed air (34).

The expression, “inquisitor of the possessed air” is politically charged and it is their struggle of independence for which they have been wounded with burnt skin moving like refugees in their own homeland. The second part of the poem by introducing the ‘bush’ imagery and “collecting wild cherry” shows an improved situation in which the poet offers Irish landscape he believes that would heal the wounds:
The loosened flowers between as
gather in, compose
for a May altar of sorts,
these frank and falling blooms
soon taint to a sweet chrism (35).

‘Chrism’ is the holy oil helps “anoint the wound”. And he feels in the third stanza:

O we tented our wound all right
under the homely sheet.

…

more and more I postulate
thick healings, like now
as you bend in the shower

water lives down the tilting stoups of your breast.

The water image and the stone image are related to a religious practice as “water lives
down the tilting stoups of your breast”. “Stoup” is a stone basin used for keeping holy
water. ‘Water’ symbolizes life source that is viewed as a healing agent whereas
‘stoups’ stand for religious ritual that promises them hope to live beyond their
struggle and thus both natural and religious meanings are attained in the merging of
water-stone images. And this asserting voice of the native men is heard in the last
stanza that ends as:

On you and we lie stiff till dawn…

Yesterday rocks sang when we tapped
Stalactites in cave’s old, dripping dark-

Our love calls tiny as a tuning fork (36).

The resonance of hope was received from “the yesterday rock that sang” and their
faith in tradition is frozen like “stalactites, (water in solid form) in the cave’s old
dripping dark”. By this poem no doubt, Heaney has thus attempted to create political vibration among the native Irish people like a ‘tiny tuning fork.

The poem “Limbo” from Wintering Out has been composed of water and fishing imagery and the title ‘Limbo’ is the strong statement of Irish religious politics. It also presents a comment on Irish religious complexity. The poem deals with Roman Catholic theme. The Internet source, Wikipedia exactly highlights the religious issue of unbaptised children. It presents an account of Limbo of children as:

Many Roman Catholic theologians believe that unbaptized children, as well as others lacking the use of reason, go to “the limbo of children” (limbus infantium or limbus puerorum) after death. The Church, however, does not teach this concept as doctrine (Wikipedia/limbo).

And, they are also in view that if heaven is a state of supernatural happiness and a union with God, and hell is a state of torture and a separation from god, then limbo is a sort of intermediate state in which souls are denied the beatific vision, but saved from the torment of hell. St. Thomas Aquinas described the limbo of children as an eternal state of natural joy, “untempered by any sense of loss at how much greater their joy might have been had they been baptized” (www.en.wikipedia.org).

It is further stated that the foundational importance of the sacrament of baptism (using water) or baptism of blood in Roman Catholic theology gives rise to the argument that the unbaptized are not eligible for entry into heaven. ‘… The only known means through which they might receive the grace of justification required for salvation is through water baptism:

A small one thrown back
To the waters. But I’m sure
As she stood in the shallows
Ducking him tenderly (Limbo 37).
Thus, ‘water’ in the poem symbolizes both religious ritual of purification and political assertion against protestant rulers. His faith in folk ritual and Roman Catholic religion is also expressed in the following lines:

Till the frozen knobs of her wrists
Were dead as the gravel
She waded in under
The sign of her cross
He was hauled in with the fish
Now limbo will be
A cold glitter of souls
Though some far briny zone.
Even Christ’s palms, unhealed,
Smart and cannot fish there (37).

The ‘gravel’ as a stone image and fish as a divine image are known for Celtic water cult. Celts believed in water spirits and so Heaney’s expression ‘Now limbo will be/ a cold glitter of souls’. And Christ is also compared to fisherman of outside Ireland.

The poem, “The Stations of the West” shows his admiration and sentiments towards the people of Gaelic origin and language:

On my first right in the Gaeltacht the old woman
Spoke to me in English: ‘you will be all right’. I sat on
A twilit bedside listening through the wall to fluent
Irish, homesick for a speech I was to extirpate (47).

“Gaeltacht” is the Gaelic speaking region in Ireland. Sitting on “a twilit bed side listening through the wall to fluent Irish” is the socio-political situation emerged out of colonization that every colonized country today suffers from. Social groups and their language are subject to change as and when the political atmosphere and conditions change. This happens in Ireland too. While the poet records these changes he also remembers something that unchanged ever exists in Ireland. And, he says: “I
had come west to inhale the absolute weather”. The poet further reveals the truth that
the land of the country always provides the information associated with her culture
and tradition. Heaney recalls “the stations of the west, white sand, hard rock, light
definition over Rannafast and Errigal, Annaghry and Kincasslagh” and he declares,
“they are names portable as altar stones”. The poet considers the names of the places
the vestiges of the Irish past. And, he introduces the stone image representing the
stone cult of Celtic Ireland.

The poem titled “Mossbawn: two Poems in Dedication” from his collection,
North (1975), is grounded on the actual place, Mossbawn, where Heaney was born.
The first of these two poems is ‘Sunlight’ that has water imagery in its first stanza:

There was a sunlit absence.

The helmeted pump in the yard

Heated its iron,

Water honeyed.

The poem opens with the farmland setting and farmer’s affinity for honeyed “water in
the slung bucket”. And the rest of the poem draws on another rustic occupation of
bakery:

So her hands scuffled

Over the bakeboard

The reddening stove

…

here is a space

again, the scone rising

to the tick of two clocks(49-50).

Irish landscape particularly Heaney’s birthplace, Mossbawn under sunlight is
described with wordsworthian touch. The second poem on Mossbawn is “The Seed
Cutters”, which provides Irish cultural setting through their prime agricultural
occupation of potato cultivation. Heaney describes:
They are the seed cutters. The tuck and frill

Of leaf-sprout is on the seed potatoes (51).

The plant imagery in which ‘sprouting’ is a vital expression about growing. It is not simply an action seen above the soil but also something invisibly rooted below the soil; so is the growth of culture and tradition. The seed cutters are further depicted as:

They are taking their time. Each sharp knife goes

Lazily halving each root that falls apart

In the palm of the hand: a milky gleam.

And, at the center, a dark watermark.

This ‘dark watermark’ is closely connected with Irish identity. And, cutting the roots falling apart that might be Yeatsian prophecy that now stands for Irish culturo-political struggle. It suggests Heaney’s resistance to keep their mainstream culture alive and grow.

He states that seed cutting is of ‘calendar customs’ and he seems to accept the change with in a timeframe repeated as season that is metaphorically expressed in the line as “under the broom yellowing over them”, -the dry leaves in the autumn spread over the soil- which is aesthetically felt by the poet. Hence, it appears to the poet as ‘frieze’. Thus, the poem relates land to season or vice-versa. In fact, it proves that time and space are inseparable in landscape poetry as space is the time-marker and time is the space-maker.

The appearance of the space changes according to the change of time.

From Heaney’s popular collection, Station Island, (1984), “Sandstone Keepsake”, “Granite Chip” etc. primarily deal with stone symbol.

“The Mud Vision” is the poem written on Irish landscape of modern times and it reads as:

Statues with exposed hearts and barbed-wire crowns

Still stood in alcoves, hares flitted beneath

The dozing bellies of jets, our menu-writers

And punks with aerosol sprays held their own

With the best of them (238).

Heaney, by this poem, attempts to portray the late twentieth century media world with global setting where “satellite link-ups wafted over us the blessings of popes, heliports
maintained a charmed circle of idols on tour/And casualties on their stretchers”. He finds men dissipated in news and they forgot their vision and he seems to be desperate to say about ‘the clarified place’ failed to retain ‘neither us nor itself’ and so the whole world has become demoralized. Hence, Heaney realizing his social responsibilities as a poet, gains Yeatsian vision to watch humanity at a distance. It is his mud vision ‘for the eyes of the world’ with this phrase the poem ends. But it can be linked to the opening lines of the poem, ‘Statues with exposed hearts and barbed –wire crowns still stood in alcoves’ which provide a water imagery; also, present Christ figure and faith in both life and death. Thus his ‘Mud Vision’ evolves from the bogland.

Thus, Heaney asserts through his use of land symbols – water, stone and tree – in his poems that he can not cut away from his Irish roots though he compromises himself with modernity. Generally, time provides the element of history and politics for writing poetry, but land provides the core element of tradition. The land and its associated elements are suggestive of never transcending identities of one’s country. The identities are derived from land that includes flora and fauna, rivers, mountains and rituals associated with myths and legends. Such pagan rituals bind man, nature and faith in the presence of God of small but vital things.

And, Heaney’s poems point out that even in the long run Christianity could not take away the earmarks of the Irish Christianity which distinguishes Ireland from other Christian countries. Moreover, right from Heaney’s “Digging” to “The Mud Vision” poems so far discussed with reference to water, stone and tree symbols focus on Heaney’s attachments to his ‘swamp land’ or bogland or farmland. His land in his poems simply of water dominant stands not only for vegetative act but also for his individual psyche interacting with his community. In his poems, Heaney never attempts to give forest imagery, which stands for separation and alienation, but farmlands that represent society and community living. In the next chapter, the same paradigm has been used to study the landscape tradition in Paul Muldoon’s poems through these metaphors- Water, Stone and Tree.
Chapter 4

Notes and References

Books and Nonperiodical Publications


Electronic Sources


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