Chapter 8
Conclusion

The present thesis was an attempt to trace the continuity of Irish literary tradition in the writings of Heaney and Muldoon, who happen to be on the line of WB Yeats. And the quotients of tradition have been figured out as a three-tier nature symbolism, Water-stone-tree. The tradition what set by Yeats is centrifugal in function influencing his successors of twentieth century modern Irish poetry in general, and Heaney and Muldoon, in particular.

The findings of the present study may comprehensively be classified as follows:

1. The study confirms the assertion that W. B. Yeats is the chief among the 20th century Irish poets to revive a unique tradition from Irish Literature, Irish religion and Irish politics. And the three-tier symbolism is available in his works.

2. Yeats, Heaney and Muldoon belong to different periods of modern poetry and yet they continue to explore both temporal and spatial elements of Ireland for their poetic substances that mark the legacy of tradition in their poetry revealing a commonality.

3. The prime metaphors, stone, tree and water, in their poetry are drawn from nature imagery with a distinct stamp of Irish landscape. Also, these space symbols are sought as signposts to indicate Irish culture time that comprises legends, myths, history, politics and religion of non-Christian / Irish paganism or Catholic Christianity or the blend of both.
The present chapter figures out the connecting line among Yeats, Heaney and Paul Muldoon. The study highlights the elemental archetypes and other ethnic elements that are unique to the tradition from select poems of the poets under scrutiny. These symbols are derived from Irish geo-centered elements that constitute the continuity of her tradition. Tradition is a unifying element, for it supports and endorses Irish people’s well being, community feeling, emotional sharing, apart from their beliefs, habits and customs, rituals and cults. As Yeats points out in one of his prose works Hodos Chameliontos, “Irish literature would seem the work of a single mind, and turn our places of beauty or legendary association into holy symbols, though it has been made by many minds” (qtd in Jeffares, 1964 90). The study reveals that there is a singleness of purpose among these poets to float Irish tradition through their creative expression. This however does not mean that there is no difference among the poets. The involvement in tradition emerges as the inevitable technique irrespective of the fact that Yeats is a modernist, Heaney is late modernist and Muldoon a postmodernist (as has been viewed by many critics like Charles McGrath, Richard Eder).

W. B. Yeats, with all his creative skill has revived the unique Irish literary tradition, which continues through these present day poets also. While lecturing on Yeats’ symbols, “gyre” in particular, Paul Muldoon quotes from Yeats’ ‘A vision’:

Each age unwinds the thread another age had wound and it amuses me to remember that before Phidias, and his westward moving art, Persia fell and that when full moon … came round again, amid eastward moving thought, and brought Byzantine glory. Rome fell; and that at the outset of our westward moving Renaissance Byzantium fell; all things dying each other’s life, living each other’s death. (qtd. in Paul Muldoon, 2006 17)
Yeats vision of Irish new birth is echoed in his poetry. History reveals to him the loss of his land and his poetry reveals to his successors the Irish-psyche of desire for their land. To regain what they have lost Yeats thinks of Celtic revival under political pressure. Hence, as a poet he believes in tracing his own tradition, though he has been canonized a great figure of modern English Literature. This is why; Edward Said sees the spirit of decolonization in Yeats. To him, Yeats is a “great modern Irish poet deeply affiliated and interacting with his native traditions, the historical and political context of his times, and the complex situation of being a poet writing in English in a turbulently nationalist Ireland” (220). Because of his poetic attempt of revival of Irish tradition with a sense of history, Yeats becomes father figure guiding his fellow as well as later poets of Ireland.

The study of his poems now confirm that Yeats is much conscious about Irish time and space. While Irish time is linked with Irish racial history, mythical stories, political history, IRA’s commitment to Irish Independence, Irish space ascertains the Irishness that evolves from Irish land and mind. This Irishness is understood by the figurative discourse of the major symbols, stone, tree and water, which Yeats has widely employed in his poems, and they have provided a pattern, based on landscape, for Irish poetry. This also indicates that this tradition continues to exist even in future through the poets like Heaney and Paul Muldoon. The three-tier symbolism is the way of an expression of this tradition. The symbols relate Irish past with present and distinguishes the literature of Ireland from that of other European nations. They also spring from religious, cultural and political places of Ireland. And, above all, they give a voice to Irishness and assure the continuity of it.

Yeats’s poems, right from, “The Wandering of Oisin”(1889) to, “The Circus Animals’ Desertion”(1939) are centered round the popular Irish hero, Oisin, of Finian
cycle. This reveals his devotion to Celtic material. In fact, Yeats was under political pressure to establish Irish nationalism. The mythical heroes, especially Oisin, are figured as the bearers of Irish identity and tradition. As Yeats says: “we were to forge in Ireland a new sword on our old traditional anvil for that great battle that must in the end reestablish the old, confident joyous world” (qtd. in Tomothy Webb xxxiii).

Yeats’ political voice is heard in the poem “The Statues” while he recalls ‘Cuchulain’, one of the sea warriors of Irish past, along with Pearse:

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side,
What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,
What calculation, number, measurement replied,
We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless, spawning, fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face, (215)

Yeats’ praise for his contemporary Irish poet and playwright, Patrick Pearce and Irish legendary hero Cuchulain reveals his concern for continuity of Irishness. And, Yeats had a personal interest in Pearce’s school, St. Enda’s, that was run to provide Irish education. Pearce is referred to in the poems “Easter 1916” and “Sixteen Dead Man” also. Yeats has listed him among other rebels of Ireland like Thomas McDonagh, poet, playwright and teacher at St Enda’s University, Major John MacBride and James Connolly, the popular labour leader of Ireland, and he asserts his political stand through the elemental archetype, stone in “Easter 1916” as “Minute by minute they live:/the stone’s in the midst of all” (121). Here, the stone functions like metaphor as well as the substance of
traditional rite. As a metaphor, it voices the concrete, ever prevailing rebellious spirit of Irish warriors of past and present and as a matter of Celtic cult it exists as a Stonehenge erected in memory of the dead. In ‘Sixteen Dead Man’ Yeats in a tone of rhetoric asks:

…who is there to argue that
Now Pearse is deaf and dumb?
And is their logic to out weigh
MacDonagh’s bony thumb?
…
or meddle with our give and take
that converse bone to bone?(122)

Bone is, like stone, a symbol of solidarity and by using it Yeats records the voice of protest of Irish people that has been promoted by many a generation. History reveals to him how “two long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart”(Easter 1916).

This power of endurance, as Yeats believes, can alone make Ireland a perpetual place. In “A Prayer for my Daughter” Yeats wishes that his daughter might live like some green laurel rooted in one dear perpetual place. The poem appears to be personal but in wider aspect, it is a prayer for his future Irish generation. Hence, he ends the poem with a tone of an Irish nationalist: “Ceremony’s a name for the rich horn/And custom for the spreading laurel tree” (127). He names custom as spreading laurel tree, that is rooted in dear perpetual place, which may be what the poet describes about Lady Gregory’s estate in the beginning of the poem as”:

…Gregory’s wood and one bare hill
Where by the haystack-and-root-leveling wind,
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And under the arches of the bride, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea (125).

It is an exact geographical description of Lady Gregory’s estate at Coole Parke, one of the favourite places to W. B. Yeats. Broadly speaking, the Land-Season (time) description denotes the political disturbance faced by the people of Ireland and the discomfort in the poet’s mind. Moreover, through nature imagery like ‘the sea-wind screaming upon the tower’, ‘flooded stream under the arches of the bride’ Yeats reflects on war situation and they well merge with the symbols of ‘laurel tree’ in the final stanzas of the poem. Laurel tree is the symbol of success and associated with classicism and tradition. For, it is believed to resemble the earliest flowering plants in their woody nature and has a long fossil history, with specimens similar to plants of several living genera having been found in rocks more than 65 million years old. (Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2004/ ‘Laurel plant’). Thus, the meaning of the poem is culturally, politically and historically multi-layered arising from the native setting and its natural elements, rock (stone), sea (water) and tree (laurel tree).
The same tone is heard in the poem “The Tower”; Yeats recollects his boyhood days, “I climbed Bel Bulben’s back”, which is a mountain range in the county Sligo and asserts his political voice as:

I pace upon the battlements and stare
On the foundation of a house, or where
Tree, like sooty finger, starts from the earth;
And send imagination forth
Under the day’s declining beam, and call
Images and memories
From ruin or from ancient trees, (129).

‘The tower’ in the poem is the Norman tower, Thoor Ballylee, which Yeats had owned in 1917. It was close to Coole Parke. It is a concrete image derived from a real object. Timothy Webb points out quoting Yeats who told his friend Sturge Moore about the composition of the poem: “I like to think of that building [The tower] as a permanent symbol of my work plainly visible to the passer-by. As you know all my art theories depend upon just this-rooting of mythology in the earth”(267/Emphasis added). It is echoed in his major poems like “The Wild Swans at Coole”, “In Memory of Major Robert Gregory”, “An Irish Airman Foresees his Death”, “In the Seven Woods”, “Red Hanrahan’s Song about Ireland”, “The Man who Dreamed of Faery land”, “On a Political Prisoner”, “Ego Dominus”. Yeats gives prime importance to his land and dream. Also, the pagan elements in the poems like “Second Coming” are sublimated and Yeats believes that they are not alien to Roman Catholic Church. In fact, he knows the art of conversing ‘the mythology in the earth’ into poetry, which marks the continuity from
the Celtic Druidic literary tradition. Thus, this consistency in using Irish myths and his native nature elements primarily provided a model to his successors.

Seamus Heaney, one of the successors of W. B. Yeats is closely following the literary tradition what Yeats has left behind him. In a lecture given at the Royal Society of Literature in October 1974, Heaney declared his view of poetry: “Poetry as divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself; poems as elements of continuity, … poetry as a dig, a dig for finds that end up being plants” (Preoccupation 41). Like “Digging”, most of his poems are associated with his own earth and its other elements. His poems are centered round the national history, the racial memory of culture and traditions, the religious consciousness, myths, and the topographical features of his native Ireland. These larger entities constitute the identity of Heaney as an Irish person. What is unique in Heaney’s poems is that he is able to make myths out of his bog land, which continues to provide him a poetic energy and life. Paul Muldoon, in his lecture on Heaney’s poem “Keeping Going” from the collection *The Spirit Level* (1996), observes that Heaney’s very best poems have come out of ‘a muddy ground’ (*The End of the Poem* 394).

This muddy ground is Irish bog land with water, stone and tree elements, which not only sets a concrete base for Heaney’s poetry but also represents the whole of Ireland.

“Digging”, the first poem in Heaney’s first collection “*Death of a Naturalist*” announces the world his mission of penning graphical description of rural Ireland and his ancestral occupation of farming as:

> My grandfather cut more in a day

> Than any other man on Toner’s bog.

> …then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heavily sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf, Digging (1).

Heaney describes his grandfather at work on the farm, “the old man could handle a spade. /Just like his old man”. But Heaney says; “I have no spade to follow men like them”. Yet, he resolves his guilt by saying: “Between my finger and thumb/ The squat pen rests. I’ll dig with it” to continue to pen the rural traditions of Ireland in his poetry. Also, Heaney asserts that the bog land with ‘the cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap of soggy peat and curt of an edge awakens in his head through living roots’. The senses - touching, smelling, hearing, seeing and feeling - are involved in creating a living very sensible on such a land. Hence, Heaney finds his blood, flesh, vein and mind emerging from the land. Thus, the act of digging is in Yeatsian words, ‘rooting of mythology in the earth’.

As it has been detailed in chapter four digging continues in his poems like “At a Potato Digging”, “Poem”, “the Divines”, “Death of a Naturalist”, “Blackberry Picking”, “Follower”, “Personal Helicon”, “Thatcher”, “The Wife’s Tale”, “Mossbawn: Two poems in Dedication”, “The Mud Vision” and so on. In these poems, Heaney does what he promised in “Digging”. He paints vivid, sensuous and descriptive pictures of rural Irish life and traditional practices. Through his poetry, he hopes that he would keep these dying traditions alive, though the blackberries “would turn sour”, yet the poem suggests that the “sweet flesh” is forever preserved. Digging also traces life sources and his poem “Personal Helicon” shows wells and old pumps that bring the water from underground to the surface. Water symbolizes life and so to him, earth is Mother, the life giver. Though
the horror of Great Famine makes the ground appear “faithless” and unreliable, it undoubtedly preserves life. While commenting on “Digging” Heaney says:

I now believe that the “Digging” poem had for the force of an initiation; the confidence I mentioned arose from a sense that perhaps I could do this poetry thing too, and having experienced the excitement and, released of it once, I was doomed to look for it again and again (Preoccupation 42-43).

In his, ‘Bogland’ Heaney explores the Irish bogs. The bog land is vegetative in nature and describes the ground as black butter and the poem further reads:

Melting and opening underfoot,
Missing its last definition
By millions of years.
They’ll never dig coal here
Only the water trunks
Of great firs, soft as pulp.
Our pioneers keep striking
Inwards and downwards,
...
The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage
The wet center is bottomless (17-18).

The poet invites the reader to explore the past, showing how the bog can preserve things for “millions of years”. The bogs come to represent deep areas of memory and history, exposing the cycles of nature. For, nature starts and finishes in the bog. In this poem, Heaney takes the role of an archaeologist digging through the bog and finding many things: “the great Irish Elk”, “Waterlogged trunks/of great firs”. It suggests that the search
is infinite and increasingly rich and valuable wealth will be discovered. The men who dig for turf are also digging through history, mythology and folklore.

In continuation of “Bogland”, Heaney has written bogbody poems; indeed, the bog has kept even greater secrets perfectly preserved. The ‘bog bodies’ help Heaney trace Irish conflicts as he looks into the past to understand the future.

In “Requiem for the Croppies” Heaney states: “They buried us without shroud or coffin/And in August the barley grew up out of the grave”(12). The poem presents both fertility myth and the event of past of the rebellion of 1798 in which Catholic rebels fought with English soldiers in the Battle of Vinegar Hill and as the poem reads:

We’d cut through reins and rider with the pike
And stampede cattle into infantry,
Then retreat through hedger where Cavalry must be thrown.

Until, on Vinegar Hill, the fatal conclave (12).

Therefore, in this poem, Heaney refers specifically to a particular political event from Irish history. It also suggests the cyclical nature of violence just as crops grow naturally. Thus, Heaney anticipates another Catholic uprising. He witnesses the Catholic defiance at Vinegar Hill as the seed for future rebellion. Moreover, Heaney shows explicit support for the nationalist cause. The events of the past are linked with the present day. The poem “Punishment” reveals a sacrificial Iron Age killing that leads Heaney to reflect on violent reprisals enacted in his own society. The poem reads thus:

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;(71).

Heaney tries to explain how vegetative myth evolves from the imagery “body in the bog”, “barked sapling” and “Oak-bone” - Celts considered Oak a sacred tree. And, the “weighing stone” stands for an age-old cult in which a stone is erected for the dead. This practice has been endorsed in “Easter 1916” by W. B. Yeats: “The stone’s in the midst of all” marking the sacrifice of Irish leaders of ‘Rising’. Heaney’s digging with pen continues in his different bog body poems like “The Grauballe Man”, “The Tollund Man” and “Strange Fruit”. In all these bog body poems, Heaney refers to the events from European history to draw comparison with the political situation in Northern Ireland and to try to make a sense of sympathy with the war spirit that prevails in the Irish soil.

In “Gifts of Rain” Heaney imagines the voices of his ancestors to be heard in the flowing water:

When rains were gathering
there would be an all-right
roaring off the ford.

Their world-schooled ear
could monitor the usual
confabulations, the race

slabbering past the gable,
the Moyola harping on
I cock my ear
at an absence-
in the shared calling of blood
arrives my need
for antediluvian love
Soft voices of the dead
are whispering by the shore. (24-25)

As the river Moyola symbolizes the flow of time and Irish history, it carries the cultural heritage of Ireland “whispering” the same to the future generation. Moyola is a nature source offering a mythical texture to the poems of not only Heaney but also of W. B. Yeats and Paul Muldoon.

The poem “North” also hints at the invasions have been challenged by Ireland since her ancient time. “While talking about the powers of the Atlantic thundering,” Heaney writes 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 (56)
Heaney, this time, looks into Viking past; Viking is race known for violence. They invaded Scotland, England, Ireland as well as much of Europe. Heaney links the struggles of the Vikings with those of his own world. He also refers to the Vikings in “Funeral Rites”, “Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces”. There is a reference to Gunnar, the hero of a Norse, and in the poem Heaney records his nation’s historical experience of invasion. And, the gravel in the form of stone, with ‘thawed streams’ emerges from his Irish landscape exposure.

By these historical experience and landscape exposure, Heaney also traces the Irishness in the names of places, which is undoubtedly political. For instance, the poem “Broagh” is a description of the images and memories conjured by the place name, which is Gaelic and so makes Heaney think about Ireland’s Gaelic past. ‘Broagh’ that has been pronounced as ‘Bruach’ is an attempt to celebrate the oral tradition of Irish lingua franca. The poem begins with a description of typical Irish shallow place in a river where it is possible to walk across:

Riverbank, the long rigs
ending in broad docken
and a canopied pad
down to the ford.

The words, ‘rigs’ ‘docken’ and ‘pad’ are dialectal in tone meaning furrows, docks and path respectively. Here, the words and the land are merged emphasizing political reference. When Neil Concoran comments on Heaney’s use of this Gaelic name he quotes:

Heaney says that the word Broagh ‘is a sound native to Ireland, common to Unionist and Nationalist, but unavailable to an English person’. This
community of pronunciation is an implicit emblem for some new political community… it acts as a linguistic paradigm of reconciliation beyond sectarian division. (Student’s Guide to Seamus Heaney, 1986 90).

And, in “Anahorish”, another poem titled of Gaelic, Heaney points out:

My ‘place of clear water’,
the first hill in the world
where springs washed into
the shiny grass.

Hear, he recalls the first inhabitants of his childhood town and the place name is also Gaelic. To Heaney Anahorish is his ‘place of clear water’ and he continues to say “Anahorish, a soft gradient/of consonant, vowel-meadow”(21). Ronald Tamplin is in view that in celebrating it Heaney celebrates his Irish roots, his origins (41).

Thus, Heaney is keen in the poetic mission to document his ‘social and historical experience that purely indicates his Irish identity, especially of Northern Ireland, He asserts his principle of writing poetry in his prose work, “The Frontier of Writing” which also gives a personal commentary on his poem, “From the Frontier of writing” and he writes:

My own image for this entry into writerly bliss is symptomatic of a Northern Irish Catholic background, but no less interesting for that, I hope. A poet, after all, is born out of the social as well as the psychic conditions. At any rate, it often seems to me that the crossing of the lyric barrier bears a certain resemblance to the experience (Common in Ulster) of getting through a roadblock or a border checkpoint manned by the British army. These are thresholds that you approach with a slight mounting anxiety and
that you get through with a primitive delight in being set free. Perhaps the neurosis is peculiar to the minority in Northern Ireland, but in those casually military conditions, one’s freedom and self-confidence are under threat and the inclination to confine oneself to a minimal, conventional speech is instinctive (Jacqueline Genet 5).

The poem, “From the Frontier of Writing” depicts how Irish man’s “freedom and self-confidence” have been under threat since the invasions of remote past. Heaney narrates the roadblock with reference to the present military condition in Ireland:

The tightness and nilness round that space
when the car stops in the road, the troops inspect
its make and number and, as one bends his face
towards the window, you catch sight of more
on a hill beyond, eyeing with intent
down cradled guns that hold you under cover (216).

This situation is the result of, as Heaney explains, constricting forces that “can represent the repressions and self-censorings which hamper a writer and keep him or her stalled at the barrier of composition” (Jacqueline Jenet 6). So, it is obvious that the frontier state is nevertheless common to every Irish poet writing under these constrictions. This is the very reason that Yeats committed his poetic career to Celtic Revival and Heaney digs it with his ‘squat pen’ and Heaney says:

I began to connect this earthy sign which I’d imagined in the Irish air with de Valera’s dream of transforming the local customs and folk Catholicism of rural Ireland in the middle of the twentieth century … his dream of founding a culturally distinct and spiritually resistant Irish republic (12).
This dream has been born as “The Mud Vision”, which he explains: “as our mud vision, as if a rose window of mud/had invented itself out of the glittery damp”(238). And Heaney calls it “national consciousness” emerged from the “memory of the landscape” which the bog land represents. And, he always locates his self in his socio-cultural space and in historical time or vice versa. Then he claims to be in the position of frontier to write his poems. He wishes that he would be recognized “by another consciousness” who would have the ‘migrant solitude’ (Jacqueline Jenet 8).

As Paul Muldoon’s attitude towards transition and tradition has been discussed in chapter 5, the “another consciousness” that Heaney anticipated may be found in Paul Muldoon. Paul Muldoon is not only the successful student of Heaney but also as his successor who takes the role of frontier writing. Though his critics find him as a writer of postmodern techniques, he never claims that he is a postmodern writer. Paul Muldoon is “one of the very best” and thus Heaney writes in his article “the Mixed Marriage” (Preoccupation 213) and Edna Longley’s view is that his poetry is generally composed on postmodernist collage much than anything by Heaney and also comments on Muldoon’s poem “The More a Man Has the More a Man wants”, which:

alludes to works of art and literature from different periods and countries. However, the poem does not carry collage so far, as to collapse history and linguistic sequence. Muldoon’s cultural relativism is not there for its own sake but serves more absolute purpose (102-103).

Postmodernism provides Muldoon just with the technique but his poetic contents always reflect his search for Irish identity. His transition to have a Global out look is the result of his political stand in achieving cultural decolonization. The poem “The Reporters’
Quartet” written in continuation of his “Immrama” poems reflects the journey motif or migration theme from the point of view of going down to history; the poem reads thus:

When all’s said and done we’d like to know
If Amundsen had reached the pole.
Has he been struck some cruel blow?
In he eaten by a whale?
Has he stumbled through a hole?
Is he lying at the bottom of the sea?
Going down
going down
going down in history (141).

Paul Muldoon attempts to imply the impact of colonial experience on his consciousness of a history of dislocation. The series of interrogations assert that he has been caught up in the conditions of the Diaspora. Hence, this transatlantic travel metaphorically reveals his search for self in the global context as well as exploration into Irish history. The sea image as part of Irish landscape stands for the war history of the land and helps the poet establish the resistant attitude as gained from such invasions challenged in the past.

“The Chef’s Aria” has been on the mode of 18th century Opera concert, which voices mythical, biological, political, religious and social dispositions of the poet. His emotional relationship with these identities, the poet believes, would get completed when he takes the journey in historical time. The poem is in subjective, assertive and decolonising tone and comprises fourteen individual declarative sentences:

I am a breast without a nipple.
I am a watch-tower without a beacon.
I am the gall in an Oak-apple.
I am a birch stripped of its bark.
I am a raven swooping over the squadron.
I am a hang-nail on a finger.
I am the eye that looks askance.
I am a half-moon-shaped gold torc.
I am a sponge steeped in vinegar.
I am the hart. I am the hind.
I am the green and burning tree.
I am the cloud no bigger than a hand.
I will go down in history (143).

Here, it would be apt to quote Edward Said’s comment on Yeats’ poetry and as he says in his article “Yeats and Decolonization”:

Yeats’ poetry is not only about Ireland, but about Irishness- there is a good deal of promise in getting beyond them, not remaining trapped in the emotional self-indulgence of celebrating one’s own identity. That is first of all the possibility of discovering a world not constructed out warring essences. Second, there is the possibility of a universalism that is not limited or coercive, which believing that all people have only one single identity is – that all the Irish are only Irish… (229).

As a true bearer of Yeatsian legacy Paul Muldoon in “The Chef’s Aria” associates himself with “Oak-apple”, that primarily not only suggests the tree worship practiced by Celts but also represents Celtic Druid tradition. For, Celts considered Oak, venerable. By using the images of “birch stripped of its bark”, “hart”, “and hind” “raven swooping over
the squadron”, “the green” and “burning tree” the poet tries to re-inhabit the land. Thus, he locates his self in the native space and begins to explore the land through the history of time. This is what Heaney probes deeper in his ‘bog land’ poems’, and Yeats in his landscape poetry which set in the background of ‘Sligo’, Benbulben mountain, “Moyola river bank”, the surroundings of Coole and so on. To all the land symbolically makes the poet aware of the political situation or their contemporary political time. Thus, Paul Muldoon’s claims in the poem are the claims of the native intellectual and as Edward Said says that they find necessity in any coherent programme (238). Hence, history offers these poets the source and serves them as the medium to liberate them from the burdens of colonial afflictions and thus from his collection “the Prince of the Quotidian”, Paul Muldoon writes:

After two days grading papers from the seminar taught
On Swift, Yeats, Sterne
Joyce and Beckett,
I break my sword across my iron knee:
in the long Sonata of The Deed
ceremony’s a name for the rich horn-
these images fresh images beget-
and custom for the hardy laurel tree.
...
and embarked on Immram Curaig Mael Duin,(147).

To him, Irish history is an extension of Irish literary tradition, myth (it refers to the journey myth engaged by Mael Duin), and political and religious events. Muldoon’s attempt of “going into history” is like Yeats’ “Wandering Oisin” or “Sailing to
Byzantium” or Heaney’s Sweeney journey or the pilgrimage on “Station Island”. Thus this thesis points out that they are the record of continuity spanning over more than hundred years starting from Yeats to Paul Muldoon, though poetry on “journey motif” is as oldest as that of Greek *Odyssey, Ramayana, Mahabaratha* and *Silappathikaram*. The Story of Anklet, the most popular Tamil epic of ancient Tamilnadu. Thus, these poets through their poems establish a literary space as the center for the Celt world. It is the result of Irish mindset against the imperialist mindset of English rulers. Yeats, Heaney and Muldoon have faced the challenges imposed by their colonial masters who made them feel that Irish culture and tradition is under threat. It is obvious that all the three poets use history to connect the Irish present with Irish past or vice versa. As John Kerrigan points out that it is because of a history of expropriation and insecurity. They present it in their poems as living situation that emerges from the land of unchanging nature elements like stone, water and tree. And, their poems explain how the life in Ireland has been crystallized by Irish literary, cultural, political and religious traditions. Their poems have also documented the gathering moments towards encounter, revivals, resilience, transitions, acceptance and finally resolutions. All the contradictions and conflicts are submerged in practice, especially in the ‘literary practice’.

There is a common resolution that evolves from evoking dream and finding a land for landless, rootless and culture less. Another commonality found in their poems is that the frequent use of Gaelic names, marking the loss of Irish language. The poets began to write in different time –Yeats belongs to modernist period, Heaney to late modernist and Paul Muldoon to postmodernist time- and in different style and language that depends on each poet’s individuality, emotions, experiences, despair, dreams, passions and above all British politics. Yet, what the tradition Yeats revived for his successors still continues
through Heaney and Muldoon and the prime one is that the pagan elements are sublimated and the Irish catholic religion and rituals have been made to be distinguished from the Christianity of rest of the world.

The Irish war of independence and the struggle for its economic growth makes them love the land, there increases their bonding with nation. The ‘decolonizing programme’ that Yeats had started is still vibrant in the writings of Heaney and Muldoon. Thus, both Irish Christianity and Irish politics have the traditional value and writing about it the native intellectuals like Yeats, Heaney and Muldoon have created a literary tradition promoting the Irish nationalism among the people. And, thus, what is continued in their writings is that the landscape tradition attributed by the recurrent use of nature archetypes like different forms of water sources, trees and stones and mountains and the flora and fauna of Ireland. These genealogical and ethnic identities make one realize each nation has her culture space and culture time and no nation is inferior to any nation. Particularly, reading of poems in such Irish context would help one understand the greatness of Irish literature, culture and tradition. Also, this study provides a better understanding of the essentials of literary tradition of English poetry from Ireland.
Chapter 8

Notes and References

Books and Nonperiodicals publications:


