Fear of affection made her affect
Inadequacy whenever it came to
Pronouncing words ‘beyond her’...

Clearances IV, The Haw Lantern.

Chapter III

Fear of affection: farm, familiar, filial.
**Introduction**

Heaney frequently looks back at childhood and at the concept of a sacral pastoral world which according to him always retains 'some vestigial sense of place as it was experienced in older dispensation'. With his umbilical cord still attached to the traditional rural world and Celtic Christianity, the poetic consciousness of Heaney seems deeply embedded in nostalgia. He laments the losses and subsequent changes and he longs for a peaceful Ireland. He deals with thousands of people and is sensitive to each one. The canvas of his poetry is crowded with people from different strata of life and society. He writes poems, about rural Ireland peopled by peasants, forgers, blacksmiths, and priests, and also about the modern world inhabited by singers, soldiers, and youths in discotheque. Heaney 'peoples' his poetry. This credit earlier been given to Plato, Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Memory and imagination, for Heaney, are compensatory faculties through which he converts absence into presence, cultural vacuum and fragmented selves into consolidated identities. He sees himself as the custodian and the celebrant of a lost culture, forgotten history and diminishing heritage. He makes imaginary rendezvous with the familiar and filial in the anthologies analyzed in the present chapter.

This chapter will analyze the anthologies published between 1975 and 1987. The chapter will unravel Heaney's negotiations with the hegemony and the compromises and compensations which he makes in the process. It will try to explore Heaney's quest for reclaiming his original Irish identity which is profoundly embedded in the native culture. The desire and need of a single reliable version of the past and the need to revise the documentation of the past to counter certain historical circumstances are among the strategies employed by Heaney to scrutinize the misrepresentations of Irish culture and traditions in hegemonic records. Heaney's efforts at dismantling the hegemony and deconstructing colonialism will also be dealt with.
Stations (1975)

This anthology uses a writing style popularized in the late twentieth century. Heaney was in California, teaching in an America university while he was writing the anthology. In 1971, an American poet, Geoffrey Hill published a collection of poetry called Mercian Hymns, which contained prose poems. In the preface to his anthology, Heaney admitted that what he had regarded as 'stolen marches' in a form new to him had been commanded by a work of 'complete' authority. Upon his return to Ireland, he completed and published Stations in 1975. The poems were first published as a pamphlet by Honest Ulsterman Press in Belfast and several of the poems were published in his Selected Poems 1996-1987 and Opened Ground Selected Poems 1966-1996.

The title of the anthology refers to the Catholic Stations of Cross which is a series of fourteen images that represent different events that took place on Christ’s journey to the place where he was crucified. The prose-poems of the anthology recollect Heaney’s childhood. In the poem ‘Nesting-Ground’, the speaker stands alone with the desire to listen to the silence beneath the ground.

As he stood sentry, gazing, waiting, he thought of putting his ear to one of the abandoned holes and listening for the silence under the ground.

(ll 10-12, Nesting-Ground, Stations)

The description is evocative of the contemporary condition of Ireland. Nesting are fledglings who have yet not acquired flight feathers and are therefore unable to fly and leave the nest. Ironically the speaker finds no birds in ‘abandoned holes’. The implication here is that the nesting have been caught, killed or forced to leave their nests. The condition can be equated to that of Irish people who, too, have been caught, killed or forced to leave their homes and belongings because of colonial carnage.

The narrator is stunned into being a mute listener and a silent victim. The position is somewhat a compromised one with almost no endeavour for compensations. The compromised attitude is carried forward in other poems of the anthology. The poem ‘July’ describes the 12th July march of Orangemen. The Orange Order was born in
Armagh in 1795 as part of the colonial tactic of the armed terror campaign to deny full citizenship rights to Catholics. This was in the context of struggles between landlords and tenants in the area.

The sectarian attacks that accompany the Orange marches today date back to its genesis. In 1795, thousands of Catholics were made roofless and driven out of Armagh by Orangemen. Indeed the Orange Order played a key role in ensuring the failure of the 1798 rebellion. The march often sparks riots between the two communities. Right from the start the parades have been accompanied by violence as they attempt to force their way through the Catholic dominated areas. Reuter reported in *The Epoch Times*, 11 July 2006:

> Each year thousands of Orangemen march through Northern Irish Streets to booming accompaniment of drums and pipes wearing colourful regalia to celebrate the 1690 defeat in battle of Catholic King James II by Protestant William of Orange.²

Drew Nelson, the Grand Secretary of Orange Order Protestant fraternity formed in 1795, commented on the issue ‘The marches are celebration of our continued survival as a community in this island and a celebration of our freedom to express our culture in this way’.³

For Protestants, the July march might be a way to express their culture but for Catholics, it is an insignia of cultural subjugation which harks back to the memory of the defeat. The strategy is simple. In order to prevent Protestants from identifying with their Catholic neighbours, the order created an anti-Catholic society, headed by the wealthy Protestants, which offered all Protestants a place in its ranks, with promises of promotion and privilege. The beating of the drums is a symphony of fun and frolic for the Orangemen but for the Catholics, it is cacophony. The poem is written from the Catholic point of view. The ecclesiastical elements heighten the suggestion of a poetic pilgrimage undertaken to uncover the long neglected national consciousness. Heaney integrates the religious and national impluses. The very remote Celtic past is excavated and submerged memory produces contemporary knowledge and a vision of the future.
Through red seas of July the Orange drummers led a chosen people through their dream. Dilations and engorgings, contrapuntal; slashers in shirt-sleeves, collared in the sunset, policemen flanking them like anthracite.

The air grew dark, cloud barred, a butcher’s apron. The night hushed like a white-mothed reach of water, miles down-stream from the battle, a skein of blood still lazing in the channel.

The march is held every year on 12th July and it reminds the poet of the colonial divisions between the two communities. The original inhabitants of Northern Ireland are Catholics. The Protestant came as colonizers. The British Empire controlled Ireland through military and political compulsions. They operated the classical colonial divide and rule policy in Ireland using partition into Six and Twenty-six counties where the Empire claimed jurisdiction over Six counties.

The Orange Order demand their inherited right to march on the Queen’s highway, as their forefathers before them have done, in commemoration of the victory of King William of Orange at the battle of the Boyne - a victory for religious and civil liberty. Nationalists, on the other hand, see the Orange Parades as nothing more than an exercise designed to remind the Catholic population of their marginalized position and to forward the message that Northern Ireland is an Orange state and that nationalists are and will always remain subjugated and marginalized in that state. The process of the march and its psychological impact on the Catholic community is narrated in the poem. However no compensation is asked. It exhibits a stoical and compromised attitude. The reasons might be the weakness on the political as well as the social front. The Catholics belong to a minority community in Northern Ireland.

WELCOME HOME YE LADS OF THE EIGHTY ARMY. There had to be some defiance in it because it was painted along the demesne wall, a banner headline over the old news of REMEMBER 1690 and NO SURRENDER, a great wingspan of lettering I hurried under with this message.

(ll 10-17, July, Stations)
The 1690 defeat was a landmark in the colonial history of Ireland. The Catholics were deprived and suppressed at almost all levels. Heaney in the poem 'Trial Runs' is forced to think about the historical subjugation when he sees 'a banner headline over the old news of REMEMBER 1690 and NO SURRENDER' which was put up probably to psychologically pressurize the Catholic community and remind them of their second-class existence in the country. The defeat* reminds him of cultural subjugation.

In 'England’s Difficulty', Heaney talks about his ambivalent position. Majority of the population in Northern Ireland identifies with two ideologies, unionist (those who want the region to remain the part of U.K) and nationalist (those who want a united Ireland). Unionists are mainly Protestant, most of who belong to the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Nationalists are predominantly Roman Catholics. His poetry represents a kind of linguistic digging and ploughing of experience to recover the truth.

The political and topographical divisions of the country are too much for Heaney who originally is a poet of agrarian sentiments.

I moved like a double agent among the big concept

(II 1, England’s Difficulty, Stations)

The dilemma to choose his strand makes him stand between the “big concepts” of colonial politics. On one hand he laments the loss of Irish culture as a consequence of English colonization but on the other hand he owes a great debt to English language which made him famous and took his works across the globe. Globalization has made

* King William III (1689-1694) landed in Ireland and defeated King James's (1685-1688) army at the River Boyne. King James (1685-1688) left Ireland for France a few days later never to return. The Irish Protestant parliament over the next fifty years passed laws to prevent Catholics from becoming members of parliament, becoming lawyers, going to university, joining the navy or taking public posts. Catholics are not allowed to own a horse valued over five pounds. Catholic schools are forbidden. Sons who became Protestant could take over their parent's property and use it as they want. Pope Alexander VIII (189-1691) condemned the Jesuit belief that denied the necessity of an explicit act of love for God after attainment of reason. Also condemned is the Jesuit belief that no sin is involved if committed without knowledge or thought. He also condemned 31 Jansenist propositions.*
English a link language for the world. Heaney uses English not to speak for the colonizers but to speak against them. The concept of a concrete linguistic identity places him as ‘a double agent’ caught between the inherited Irish language and the adopted English language. The poem is littered with the debris of imagery of World War II. The policy of Irish neutrality was adopted by the Parliament of Ireland. It refrained from joining either the Allies or the Axis powers. The strained relations with the Empire after the partial independence were the major cause of the neutrality. Heaney, then, was still a child. He recollects the German bombing on Belfast.

‘When the Germans bombed Belfast it was the bitterest Orange parts were hit the worst.’

I was on somebody’s shoulder, conveyed through the starlit yard to see the sky glowing over Anahorish. Grown-ups lowered their voices and resettled in kitchen as if tired out after an excursion.

(II 5-10, England’s Difficulty, Stations)

Although, the Republic of Ireland declared its neutral stand, Northern Ireland, being a part of United Kingdom, was at war. The Germans Luftwaffe bombers attacked Belfast, killing more than a thousand. More were injured. The houses were destroyed. The bombing is recorded as the greatest loss of life in a single night raid during the Belfast Blitz.

The military imagery continues in ‘Visitant’, where Heaney deals with a ‘foreigner’ soldier of the war. For the unlettered peasants, he was a curious personality who came to their field ‘awkwardly smiling’ and he was ‘awkwardly received’ by them. He would spend ‘the long Sunday afternoon just by sitting with us [them]’. The soldier seems to find solace and comfort in the company of the peasants. He would get rid of his ‘fatigues’ of the war in their company. In the rural environment, he found a compensatory spiritual relief from the psychological pressures of the war.

Where are you now, real visitant, who vivified ‘parole’ and ‘POW’?

(II 6-7, Visitant, Stations)
Heaney paints a humane picture of a rural world where the peasants are busy in their agrarian activities, enjoying their leisure in the fields. They are almost oblivious of the scenario outside their green world until the soldier arrives. They belong to two completely different worlds yet the peasants discuss the crucial concepts of war with the soldier. Through him, they become acquainted with warfare-terminology such as ‘parole’, conditional release of the prisoners, and ‘POW’, the prisoner of war concept. The soldier leaves them to decide ‘the particular judgements of captor and harbourer’.

The poem makes an attempt to understand and contrast the two binary opposite worlds. The peasants and the soldier made few adjustments to understand each others. The implication is that one has to make some adjustments and compromises to understand and adapt to others.

‘The Wanderer’ deals with Heaney’s departure from his first school. The poem is a recollection of a childhood incident of ‘winning the scholarship’ and moving ‘away to Derry’ for higher studies. Since then, there was no looking back for the poet. He has ‘wandered far…and would not renegue on …migrant solitude’. His educational achievements have made him a renowned poet. He, now, has the powers over words with which he can articulate the pathetic condition of his country.

That day I was rich youngman, who could tell you now of flittings, night-vigils, let-downs, women’s cried out eyes.

(II 11-13, The Wanderer, Stations)

The lines are evocative of the condition of Northern Ireland. ‘Famous Seamus’ has reached a position where the whole literary circle is waiting to hear from him. He wants to utilize this platform to present truthfully the psychological traumas, tensions and miserable condition of his people. He would ‘now’ write about the turmoil that resulted in moving house, police patrolling, and the sad tears of the women of his country. Heaney is the poet of the people and the community. He narrates the sufferings of the Irish and other marginalized communities of the world.
Heaney feels nostalgic for the old Irish tongue in the poem ‘The Stations of the West’. He went to Gaeltacht, a region where Gaelic is spoken by the majority of people, to ‘inhale the absolute weather’. In Gaeltacht, the old women spoke to Heaney in English. Old people are always associated with traditions and culture. The old woman’s address in English creates a sense of loss and a cultural void in the poet’s mind. Heaney sat on bedside and listened ‘through the wall to the fluent Irish’. The linguistic colonization suppressed the original Gaelic language of Ireland. Irish or Irish Gaelic is the oldest of Goidelic group of Celtic languages. It is chiefly spoken in the western and southwestern parts of Ireland, where it is an official language, and to some extent in Northern Ireland. In the past century, the number of Irish-speaking people has declined from 50 percent of the population of Ireland to less than 20 percent. The ‘fluent Irish’ makes him ‘homesick’. He feels like an ‘extirpate’ to the language. In his own country, his native language is under threat. The loss is however compensated, to some extent, through memory of some favourite locations in Ireland delineated in sharp detail.

But still
I would recall the stations of the west, white sand, hard rock,
light ascending like its definition over Rannafast and Errigal,
Annaghry and Kincasslagh

(ll 12-16, The Stations of the West, Stations)

Heaney in his early writing used the pseudonym ‘Incertus’, which was also his school nickname. He ‘disguised in it’. He was probably uncertain of the success of his writings as he belonged to a rural family and no intention of profiting from writing poetry. He compensated with the use of a pseudonym. He claims that he ‘crept before I [he] walked’. The institution that introduced ‘Famous Seamus’ to the literary circle, was the London publishing house Faber and Faber, which published his first anthology when the poet was twenty-seven. In a career of more than forty years, Heaney has become a poet who needs no introduction in the contemporary literary world and his ‘pseudonym lies … like a mouldering tegument’.

75
Field Work (1979)

Field Work (1979) is a miscellaneous anthology that pieces together a wide spectrum of political and pastoral poems, love poems, elegies and translations. Field Work is a product of the years in the 'hedge school' as Heaney writes in the Glanmore Sonnets. A number of poems in the anthology are marked with the awareness of the relationships between the personal, the political and the historical. In an interview with Frank Kinahan, Seamus Heaney remarked:

Field Work was an attempt to try to do something deliberately: to change the note and to lengthen the line, and to bring elements of my social self, element of my usual nature.... In Field Work, I was hoping I could get a technique to fortify the quotidian into work.... I gave Field Work that title partly because there's an element of different sampling in it.

In the anthology's opening poem, 'Oysters', the act of relishing food reminds Heaney of colonial domination and of subjugation of Irish culture. These oysters, 'Alive and Violated' and 'ripped and shucked and scattered' brings back the memories of the Romans and also the savagery of European Colonial history.

Over the Alps, packed deep in hay and snow,
The Romans hauled their oysters south to Rome

(ll 16-17, Oysters, FW)

Time stands as a mute testimony to the gluttony of man. For the satisfaction of greed and gluttony, human beings have intruded upon and violated the harmony of the natural world. The secret underground world of oceans in the same way was encroached upon. The oysters have suffered such human oppressions for centuries.

From ancient Roman culture to contemporary days, oysters have been regarded as an expensive delicacy. The oyster culture of ancient Rome is often alluded to in the Roman Classics. The oysters were cultivated artificially and transported to other places. Relishing oysters was a status symbol for the Romans who are described as incorrigible
gluttons over the millennia. It is said that some of their lavish feasts lasted for hours. Food is an essential component of our lives and a means of survival but it also carries loads of political and social ideologies. It is a marker of identity, culture and values. The eating habits are intrinsic to a culture. Food and drink contribute to the construction of cultural narratives. For postcolonial writers, it becomes a means to write back against the dominant discourses. Gluttony, one of the seven cardinal sins, be it for food, lust or wealth is responsible for oppressions. The colonizers, seen from postcolonial lens, prove themselves to be gluttons and out of their lust for power and wealth, they ruined the perfectly synchronized rural Irish culture. The eating of oysters, for Heaney, triggers colonial expansionism on Ireland. They are seen as ‘Frond-lipped, brine-stung’ indulging in the ‘Glut of privilege’.

The major crop of Ireland is the potato and it is the ‘common man’s food’. Heaney regards it as a part of the cultural heritage of Ireland and links to rural identity. With the advent of contemporary theories in the field of literary and cultural studies, the concept of identity has gained importance. The theories of Freud and Lacan have given impetus to psychoanalytic studies. Identity is evolved in relation to the surroundings which include parents, family and friends. In the process of imitation the one’s identity is also formed. As a process, ‘Identity is located in the core of individual, in the core of his or her communal culture-hence making a connection between community and individual’.

Michael Foucault’s observations that individuals possess interwoven multiple identities has given new dimensions to identity formation. The implication is that multiple identities exist in relation to a range of social practices that are linked to larger structures like race, ethics and community. Potatoes symbolize the poet’s family tradition, the agricultural economy of his country and remind him of the Irish famine. The delicacy of eating oysters in ‘cool thatch and crockery’ is apparently civilized act. To the poet however, it reeks of colonial divisions and senseless pride. The poem ends with anger which grows from deep seated resentment. The poet’s anger incorporates universal elements.
And was angry that my trust could not repose
In the clear light

(ll 21-22, Oysters, FW)

The shadows of old colonial conflicts surround the poems of the sequence 'Triptych', which follows 'Oysters'. Triptych is a painting or carving that has three panels especially one over an altar in a church. The sequence 'Triptych' euphemistically depicts the violence of the Northern Irish 'Troubles'. The first poem, 'After a Killing', was written after the murder of Christopher Ewart-Beggs, the British ambassador to Ireland, in July 1976. The poem mirrors the resultant turbulence and violence. The fearful representation strikes notes of terror. The so-called 'saviors' frighten and subdue.

... the unquiet founders walked again:
Two young men with rifles on hills,
Profane and bracing as their instrument

(ll 2-4, 'After a Killing', Triptych, FW)

The 'unquiet founders' refers to the members of I.R.A (Irish Republican Army). Heaney supported the mission of freedom but he is against the ways in which the mission is carried out by I.R.A. He aims at combating colonial forces through negotiations rather than violence. The violent and chaotic mood of the poem is softened through the images of natural beauty. 'Broad window light' and the girl walking with 'basket full of new potato' brings relief to the dark militarily imagery and turbulent atmosphere of the poem.

In 'Sibyl', Heaney shows concern for his people and questions 'what will become of us?' The people, indifferent to the plight of the local, are classed as mercenaries abandoning a bleeding country. The image of 'bleeding tree' captures the injury and pain of a people destroyed by the colonizer.

...My people think money
And talk weather. Oil rigs lull their future.

(ll 13-14, Sibyl, FW)
The concluding lines of the poem are an ironical modification of Caliban’s speech from Shakespeare’s *Tempest*.

Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet air, that gives delight, and hurt not.  

Heaney’s modification ‘Our island is full of comfortless noises’ aptly depicts the contemporary situation of Ireland. Like Caliban’s isle, Ireland too is full of noises and sounds but they are not sweet and delightful. ‘Comfortlessness creates nostalgia for the peaceful past and also implies the gravity of current problems. The sounds of gun-shots and explosions echoes in every corner of the country. In the concluding poem of the sequence, ‘At the Water’s Edge’, Heaney’s locale is Lough Erne which is one of the oldest inhabited sites in Ireland. He stands there and witnesses the commotion.

I watched the sky beyond the open chimney  
And listened to the thick rotations,  
Of an army helicopter patrolling.  

(ll 10-12, At the Water’s Edge, *FW*)

Heaney, as an apostle of peace, has a religious desire to bow before the Almighty. He recommends the supreme Christian virtues of forgiveness and peace. He yearns to heal the conflicts and divisions of the earth and makes it a better place to live in. He desires that ‘forgiveness finds its nerve and voice’.

...Everything in me  
Wanted to bow down, to offer up,  
To go bare foot, foetal and penitential,  
And pray at the Water’s Edge.  

(ll 14-17, At the Water’s Edge, *FW*)
The concluding lines ‘The helicopter shadowing our march at Newry’ refers to the British helicopter march at Newry which followed as a protest against Bloody Sunday which took place on 30th of January in 1972. A march was organized by NICRA (Northern Ireland Civil Right Association) formed in 1967 against the interment, which was introduced in 1971, and the ban on marches was imposed in Derry. I.R.A (Irish Republican Army) had promised to stay away to make the march peaceful. In order to prevent the marchers from entering the city centre square, British soldiers had put barricades. Few marchers and some observers confronted the soldiers manning the barricade. As a result British troopers opened fire killing fourteen and injuring thirteen others.

The resistance to colonial marginalization results in possessiveness of their belongings by the natives. Heaney registers intimacy with ‘The Toome Road’. The intimacy develops into possessiveness as a result of the native’s challenge to the British soldiers:

How long were they approaching down my roads
As if they owned them?

(ll 5-6, The Toome Road, FW)

Heaney emphasizes that as the original inhabitant of Ireland he has ‘right-of-way, fields, cattle in my [his] keeping’. Heaney is not ready to surrender and compromise with the colonial oppressions but his plight is that he has nobody to share his burden with and to support his nationalistic consciousness.

His country men are fast asleep ‘with their back doors on the latch’. The sleep is literal as well as metaphorical. Devoid of the nationalistic feeling the people are frightened, subjugated and indifferent to their own resources. The Toome Road, with its association with the rebellion of 1798, is a place that epitomizes the Irish nationalism and the ‘untoppled omphalos’, which is a navel-stone at Delphi, the oracular shrine of Apollo, and which serves as a signifier of nationalistic feeling with its defiant opposition to the
colonial dominations. Heaney believes in peaceful compromises rather than hateful
revenges and antagonism. In the elegies which he wrote for the people who were killed in
the contemporary violence, his attitude is sympathetic and caring towards the victims.

‘The Strand at Lough Beg’ was written as an elegy in the memory of Heaney’s
cousin Colum McCartney who was shot dead in 1975. The elegy confronts the true
circumstances of sectarian murder. The cousin, victim of a random sectarian shooting, is
a gory sight ‘with blood and roadside muck in your [his] hair and eyes’. Heaney gives
historical and mythical dimensions to his cousin’s story by alluding to Sweeney, a
character from Irish mythology, flying over ‘bloodied heads’. Heaney acknowledges that
they are calm and peaceful people who are incapable of standing up against the sectarian
forces.

For you and yours and yours and mine fought shy,
Spoke an old language of conspirators
And could not crack the whip or seize the day:

(ll 23-25, The Strand at Lough Beg, FW)

Casting himself and his cousin in the figures of Dante and Virgil from Canto I of
Purgatorio, Heaney prepares the dead man for the burial. As Virgil washed away the filth
and dust of Hell from Dante’s face, so Heaney does from his cousin’s face. The
archetypal washing releases his cousin from all worldly bondage.

And gather up cold handful of the dew
To wash you, cousin. I dab you clean with moss
Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud.
I lift you under the arms and lay you flat
With rushes that shoot green again, I plait
Green scapulars to wear over your shroud.

(ll 39-44, The Strand at Lough Beg, FW)

Preparing the dead for a dignified burial is the greatest respect which a living man
can impart. Heaney humanism reaches a philanthropist peak. The shrouding of the dead
cousin can be read as the binary opposition and as a compensation for the colonizer’s
practice of depriving the dead natives of shrouds. The rebel Croppies Boys in 'Requiem for Croppies' were buried sans shrouds. The demeaning strategies were extended even to the dead.

In the elegy 'In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge', Heaney remembers Francis Ledwidge (19th August 1887- 31st July 1917), an Irish poet who was also named 'The poet of blackbirds', who was killed in France on 31 July 1917. He was a dedicated patriot and a nationalist. The Irish people were divided into two groups by World War I in 1914. The first group was of those volunteers who wished to fight in the war and the other group was of those who were against fighting in the war. Francis belonged to the former group but later went to the war as he was not ready to compromise with the silent ideologies of the former group. On 31st July, Ledwidge was repairing the road along with the other members of battalion where a shell exploded killing Ledwidge and five other members. Heaney recalls his 'Tommy’s uniform' and 'Catholic haunted face, pallid and brave'. Heaney laments his fate on account of the political divisions that created a gap. Francis Ledwidge becomes the 'dead enigma'.

‘To be called a British soldier while my country
Has no place among nations…’

(ll 37-38, In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge, FW)

Heaney condemns the hypocrisy of British Empire. The 'common funeral' of the thirteen dead of the Bloody Sunday is the focal action of the elegy, 'Casualty'. The elegy is written in the memory of Louis O’ Neill and the victims of reprisal killing by British Army. O’Neill was blown up in the bombing when he broke the curfew imposed by I.R.A.

He was blown to bits
Out drinking in a curfew

(ll 38-39, Casualty, FW)

The constant confinement in his own home proved too much for the simple man who broke the 'tribe’s complicity'. Heaney contemplates on O’Neill’s decision of going out and breaking the curfew. He asks himself: ‘How culpable was he / That last night
when he broke / Our tribe’s complicity?’. The series of questions points at a series of atrocities. When one member of the community is blown to bits, other becomes victims of fear psychosis. They are terrified of even routine activities. It becomes difficult for the poet to gauge who suffered the worst fate- the dead or the living. Heaney describes the funeral day as ‘a day of cold / Raw silence’. In a nightmarish rendering, coffins after coffins were taken to the burial ground. O’Neill was dear to Heaney who ‘loved his [O’Neill] whole manner’. Yet the elegy talks of no plan for revenge or retaliation towards the worst atrocities of the British Army. Heaney is trying to propagate that violence and wars beget more violence and wars. He advocates peaceful compromises and suggests combating violence through non-violence, as done by the apostles of peace like M.K Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela.

Jahan Ramzani comments on the differences between the traditional elegy and the modern one:

If the traditional elegy was an art of saving, the modern elegy is what Elizabeth Bishop calls an ‘art of losing’. Instead of resurrecting the dead in some substitute, instead of curing them through displacement, modern elegist ‘practice farther, losing faster’ so that the ‘One Art’ of the modern elegy is not transcendence or redemption of loss but immersion in it. ^

Robert Lowell, who has been an inspiration for Heaney, is recalled with filial respect in ‘Elegy’, ‘you found the child in me / when you took farewells / under the full bay tree / by the gate in Glanmore’. Heaney constantly appeals to mankind to protect children. Through the elegies Heaney brings home the hatred and horror of the sectarian violence. The poet dreams of a peaceful future where, society is not divided by narrow, sectarian walls, where the dew drops are not used to clean the dust from the faces of murdered Irishmen but to quench the thirst of humanity, where he brings clothes not to use as shrouds but to cover the bodies of the poor and needy. The contrast between the real and the implied shocks the readers out of apathy.

The sequence of ten ‘Glanmore Sonnets’ marks his move from violence-ridden Belfast to the serene and calm environment of Co. Wicklow. Heaney moved away from
the concrete jungles and the hustle-bustle of the urban to the ‘redolence / Of farmland’. The poet always longed for the countryside where he felt revived and nourishes his thought processes. His moving can be interpreted as a compensation. It symbolizes a return to the roots.

Heaney’s colonial consciousness and concern for his country is reflected in the Glanmore Sonnets as well. Amidst the serene and calm scenes, there emerge descriptions of colonial exploitations. In the first sonnet of the sequence, the phrase ‘opened ground’ is used which refers back to ‘Act of Union’ of North, where it symbolized the wound inflicted by the ‘Male’ England on female Ireland. The metaphor of rape is used to communicate the brutality, savagery and total inhumanity that is involved in the colonizing processes. The patriarchy excommunicated women who were the victims of sexual violence. The criminal role of the man was never highlighted. Similarly the conquered people are subjugated by the colonizers.

Writing poetry, for Heaney, means plunging into the depths of reality which otherwise remains unfathomable. The ‘ground’ symbolizes the hidden reality which is ‘ploughed’ by the ‘vowels’ through the tongue of poetry. The poet realized the colonial arbitrariness and motivations. As a result, he chooses to be a ‘digger’, who digs down the layers of history, culture and identity to reveal historical amnesia. These subversive strategies are employed by the postcolonial writers to dismantle the hegemonic configurations of the dominant. Writers such as George Lamming, Chinua Achebe, Wilson Harris and V.S Naipaul have attacked the hegemony of the Empire. Yet Heaney schools himself at ‘hedge-school of Glanmore’, to ‘dispel’ hatred and ‘hold’ and spread human values which he imbibed in the ‘hedge-school’.

Then I landed in the hedge-school of Glanmore
And from the backs of ditches hoped to raise...

(II 9-10, Glanmore Sonnets II, FW)

Glanmore Sonnets are Heaney’s acknowledgement of the English lyrical tradition and of the influence of Wordsworth with whom he shares the dilemma of political

suffered a dislocation which corresponded to much that still happens in the Irish situation. Here was the revolutionary sympathizer whose political ideals were French but whose nation was England. And, of course, the poem in which Wordsworth reports the trauma is the very poem whose composition was part of the process of healing the trauma. *The Prelude* is about a conscious coming together through the effort of articulating the conflict and crisis. And same could be said of much poetry from Northern Ireland.10

Heaney alludes to Wordsworth in the sonnet II.

Sensing, mountings, from the hiding places,  
Words entering almost the sense of touch

(ll 1-2, Glanmore Sonnets II, *FW*)

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth talks of the ‘hiding place of my power’ and ‘enshrine the spirit of the past / For future restoration’. In ‘Glanmore Sonnets’, Heaney, in the traditions of Romantic, recollects the past. Following in the footsteps of Wordsworth, Heaney recollects the simple and ordinary pleasures of rural life. The past embalms perfect values. Through a poetic return Heaney desires to resurrect them and thus reform the modern world. The ‘Glanmore Sonnets’ are cluttered with Wordsworthian influence. Anne Stevenson comments:

Heaney ... could not and would not have written quite as he has, had it not been for the example of Wordsworth....For Wordsworth we have the first instance in Britain of a poet in retreat of a corrupting society and a doubtful religion, digging in and fortifying the bastions of his own psyche.11

In Sonnet III, Heaney is about to make direct comparison between himself and his wife in ‘strange loneliness’ to William and Dorothy but his comparison is terminated.
unfinished with his wife's interruption. Sonnet IV recollects the universal childhood game of listening to the sound of an approaching train by bending close to the railway track. The child in Heaney's sonnet misses the 'iron tune' of the train when he puts his ears on the railway line. The incident is recollected and written in poetry by the adult. The adult invasion of the childhood world is a recurrent theme in Heaney's poetry.

Apart from Wordsworth, other allusions to the English literary tradition, in 'Glanmore Sonnets', includes Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* in sonnet X, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in Sonnet X, and Wyatt's 'They flee from me'.

In 'The Singer's House', Heaney brings together the salt-mining culture of the seaport Carrickfergus and the singer's house in Gweebarra implying a harmony between the divisions of the North and the South. The poem was written as an appeal to another artist, his singer friend, David Hammond, when he canceled his recording session because of a bombing. Heaney wishes to persuade his friend not to give up as his voice could inspire and encourage his people.

When I came here first you were always singing,
a hint of the clip of the pick
in your winnowing climb and attack.
Raise it again, man. We still believe what we hear.

(II 29-32, The Singer's House, FW)

The poem carries silent emblems of hope and possibility. The singer's voice would inspire and compensate for the human loss. The loss of human values has always been Heaney's primary concern. Modernization has brought the world to a position where human ethics hold no value and are always at the receiving end. In 'The Guttural Muse', Heaney laments the loss of genuine love which has been replaced by lust. Heaney feels sad after he 'watched a young crowd leave the discotheque'. The young crowd indifferent to their culture and traditions are busy merry making. They indulge in sex which has simply become a mechanical entertainment.
A girl in white dress
Was being courted out among the cars:
As her voice swarmed and puddle into laughs

(ll 11-13, The Guttural Muse, FW)

Heaney, witnessing the cultural degeneration of the younger generation, ‘feels like some old pike all badged with sores’. He belongs to an older generation whose morals and manners are treated as a burden by the young. Generation gap is a universal truth. There seems to be no compensation for the loss of human values except for the compromises with the ‘sores’ inflicted upon the old traditions and culture and a compensatory desire for ‘soft-mouth life’.

The theme of the last poem ‘Ugolino’ is taken from Dante’s Inferno (canto XXXII, XXXIII). Ugolino is one of the damned whom Dante placed in the ninth circle of hell. Ugolino is an epitome of man’s capacity for evil and brutality. Ugolino’s lust for power made him treacherous. In Dante’s version, Ugolino makes no efforts to exonerate himself of the betrayal of his country. Instead he is presented as a cannibal chewing on the skull of his enemy Ruggiero, the Archbishop of Pisa. Heaney alludes to Dante and re-situates Ugolino in hell. Through the narrative of Ugolino, the poet voices a moral and political critique of violence and the everlasting series of hatred, revenge and violence in Ireland. The allusions mirror the sectarian violence of the Northern Ireland of 1970s in particular and Irish genocide from the Saxon oppressors, famine victims and the political divisions of Northern Ireland in general. For Heaney, Ugolino’s cannibalism and hell seems to fit the Irish context. In Heaney’s version Dante addresses Ugolino in a series of questions.

‘You,’ I shouted, ‘you on top, what hate
Makes you so ravenous and insatiable?
What keeps you so monstrously at rut?
Is there any story I can tell
For you, in the world above, against him?
If my tongue by then’s not withered in my throat
I will report the truth and clear your name!’

(ll 10-16, Ugolino, FW)
The series of questions hint towards the initiative of negotiations. Since compromises are based on negotiation, Heaney portrays Ugolino as the colonial power, full of hatred and brutality and Heaney wishes to know the reason behind the cruelty. He narrates the injustices doled out by Ugolino to his own children. The poet localizes and historicizes the narrative to suit the Irish historical situations.

Gnawing at him where the neck and head
Are grafted to the sweet fruit of the brain,
Like a famine victim at a loaf of bread.

(ll 4-6, Ugolino, FW)

The reference is to the Irish famine of 1845 in which the potato crop was infected with a disease and half the crop failed. The other agricultural products such as wheat and oats and the other resources such as beef, mutton, pork and poultry were taken and shipped out of the country by the British landowners for profit. The economic condition of the Irish peasant went from bad to worse in the years 1846 and 1847 leaving the people starving. The British Empire turned a deaf ear to the plight and refused to help the starving people and continued to ship the produce abroad. In the dreadful event many people migrated to other countries and more than one and a half million starved to death. Heaney strikes a parallel between the colonizer’s unresponsive attitude towards the Irish and Ugolino’s failure as a father and his neglect of moral responsibilities. The historical Count Ugolino had two sons and two grandsons who went along with him to prison. The starvation and deaths occur before the eyes of the emotionally barren Ugolino. Instead of protecting and supporting the imprisoned children, Ugolino remains indifferent. This is a betrayal of great enormity – father betraying his sons:

Shut, far down in the nightmare tower.
I stared in my sons’s face and spoke no word
My eyes were dry and my heart was stony.

(ll 63-65, Ugolino, FW)
But I shed no tears, I made no reply
All through that day, all through the night that followed
Until another sun blushed in the sky

(ll 68-70, Ugolino, FW)

The colonizers ruled Ireland and morally it was their duty to take care of the needs of the Irish people but the truth was that the exploitation reached its peak during the famine years. In the words of John Freccero, Ugolino’s ‘tragedy is a failure of interpretation, as well as an inability to accept the suffering of his children’¹². Heaney holds Ugolino responsible for the death of his children. The theme of paternal rejection is earlier taken up by Heaney in the poem ‘Limbo’ and ‘Bye child’. The fabric of any society is woven with the thread of responsibilities. In fact neither compromises can be made nor will any compensation work when it comes to the question of fulfilling responsibilities. Heaney wishes for a reformation which would work when people would understand and judge the moral and political damage done to the generations by the hostility of fathers.

You and your population. For the sins
Of Ugolino, who betrayed your forts,
Should never have been visited on his sons.

(ll 100-103, Ugolino, FW)

Heaney desires to terminate the unending cycle of revenge and hatred. He negociates in order to make the people understand the result of violence. The opening poem of the anthology ‘Oysters’ begins with the eating of meal but the ‘Ugolino’ ends with hunger and starvation. The poem serves as a link with the next anthology ‘Station Island’, which is structured upon Dante’s Commedia.

Station Island (1984)

The conceptual model of Heaney’s anthology Station Island is loosely structured on Dante’s The Divine Comedy. In the previous anthology Field Work (1978), Heaney
translated a section from cantos xxxii and xxxiii of Dante’s Inferno. From the very beginning of his career, Heaney used different Christian and pre-Christian, Greek, Irish and European myths in his poetry to reflect the politics, history and personal plight of the Irish people. In Stations Island, he follows Dante’s technique of using of myths as embodiments of personal experiences. In an interview he comments:

Poetry, lets us say, whether it belongs to an old political dispensation or aspires to express a new one, has to be a working model of inclusive consciousness. It should not simplify. Its projections and inventions should be a match for the complex reality which surrounds it and out of which it is generated. The Divine Comedy is a great example of this total adequacy...

The anthology is divided into three sections. The first section consists of poems of significant moments, and memoirs and portraits of acquaintances. The second section, the title sequence itself, deals with encounters with the dead. The last section ‘Sweeney Redivivus’ is an amalgamation of the two as the seventh-century king transforms into a bird and surveys and meditates over the philosophies of love, art and war. Despite the divisions of different modes and moods, the presence of Sweeney provides unity to different sections of the anthology.

The first poem of the opening section is ‘The Underground’ suggesting the entrance to the inferno. He talks of the political reality, of his own self being the political outsider, in the poem ‘Sandstone Keepsake’. The stone picked up at the beach at Inishowen, located on the northern tip of the Co. Donegal, in the opposite direction of Lough Foyle from Magilligan internment camp, gains mythological dimensions.

It was ruddier, with an underwater hint of contusion, when I lifted it, wading a shingle beach on Inishowen, Across the estuary light after light came on silently round the perimeter of the camp. A stone from Phlegethon, bloodied on the bed of hell’s hot river?
Evening frost and the salt water

(Il 5-12, Sandstone Keepsake, SI)

The Lough separates the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland. The description of Lough implies topographical as well as political divisions. The hostile image of the concentration ‘camp’ and the myth of ‘hell’s hot river’, Phlegethon, reflects the barbarity of the wars. The poet being a political outsider can not undo the political victimization. His own inactivity and mental vacuum makes him aware of his inability to bring about major changes. He blames the ‘free state’ of Ireland for prompting the civil war. He is not against the freedom of Ireland but denounces barbarity of wars. The poem underlines the marginalized position of the political victim.

In order to escape the savagery and bloodthirstiness of the wars, Heaney makes a ritualistic ‘morning offering’ to absolve the world of the curse of war.

...I make morning offering again:
that I may escape the miasma of spilled blood,
govern the tongue, fear hybris, fear the god

(Il 3-5, Stone from Delphi, SI)

His prayer is for a peaceful society where the world is not choked with blood, gore and decaying dead bodies. In each incident and occurrence he is conscious of the plight of Ireland. A badly injured wild duck in the poem ‘Widgeon’ triggers the memory of the killing of the Irish in sectarian violence. The bird is ‘badly shot’ and the poet laments for its damaged ‘voice box’. The voice of the poet serves as a compensation for the loss of innocent creature.

The impact of violence is seen everywhere in divided Ireland, which is torn apart by colonial forces. Heaney takes up the theme of deprived childhood, which is another marginal group, in the poem ‘The Railway Children’. The thread bare existence of Irish children indulging in unsupervised, undesirable activities is earlier dealt with in the poem ‘Blackberry-Picking’ in the first anthology ‘Death of a Naturalist’. Education and
supervision play a vital role in the bringing up of children but the underprivileged Irish children were neglected on account of the constant turbulence. They simply played near the railway tracks. The railway was an invention that connected the world. In the violence-infested Northern Ireland it provided the children with a training ground for the worst of activities. Deep in their hearts the children desired to learn and the electric wires reminded them of the four-ruled exercise books.

Like lovely freehand they curved for miles
East and miles west beyond us...

(II 4-5, The Railway Children, SF)

In the small rain drops suspended from the wires the children could see the whole universe.

In the shiny pouches of rain drops,

Each one seeded full with the light
Of the sky, the gleam of the lines, and ourselves

(II 9-11, The Railway Children, SF)

The poem is about the innocent world of childhood but it is written through the lens of a scrutinical adult vision. Heaney re-enters his childhood days and re-lives the painful and deprived past. The turmoil in Northern Ireland resulted in the disturbance of the routine of Irish life. The schools were closed most of the time. The poem puts on record the denial of the basic human rights to the Irish children.

In ‘Making Strange’, Heaney talks of class mobility which results from education. The binary opposition between the ‘unshorn and bewildered’ rural peasant ‘in the tubs of his wellingtons’ and the sophisticated ‘stranger’ with ‘his traveled intelligence’ is the consequence of education. The visitors have to be introduced to the old familiar world of ‘puddles and stones’. Heaney borrows the title from Russian Formalist Victor Scklovsky’s concept of ‘defamiliarisation’ or ‘ostranenie’. Schlovsky claimed that it is
impossible to retain for long the freshness of vision of objects perceived. In ‘Art as Technique’ (1917), Schlovsky stated:

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived, and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make the objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.* (Schlovsky’s emphasis)\(^{15}\)

‘Making Strange’ is a poetic process of enlarging and reshaping experience from known world. The Muse, referred to as ‘a cunning voice’, persuades the stranger to explain the natural world. The simplicities of the rural world of large lavish stretching green ‘field across the road’, of the smell of ‘wind coming past the zinc hut’, and of the pleasant beauty of ‘sweetbriar after the rain’ and the loveliness of ‘snowberries cooled in the fog’ has to be translated for the stranger:

Then a cunning middle voice
came out of the field across the road
saying, ‘Be adept and be dialect,
tell of this wind coming past the zinc hut

(II 9-12, Making Strange, SI)

The sophistication and education of urbanity has always been contemptuous of the unsophisticated and unlettered rural existence. Rural life has its own unrivaled and mesmerizing charisma but its magic and hypnotizing beauty has to be brought forward before the world. Heaney’s poem serves to compensate for the unsung and exotic beauty of country life.

The second section is the title sequence named after a place of pilgrimage of Irish Catholics. Station Island or St. Patrick’s Purgatory is a small rocky isle in the middle of Lough Derg in Co. Donegal. It has been a destination of pilgrimage since medieval times. The ‘stations’ or ‘beds’ are believed to be the remains of ancient monastic cells. ‘Station
Island’ associates with the religion, traditions and culture of Irish Catholics. The twelve sections of the sequence are around the stations in which Heaney makes his journey. Dante’s rendezvous with the ghosts in *Purgatorio* serves as a model for Heaney’s poem. Heaney learned from Dante how to take advantage of what could otherwise be regarded as a disadvantage. Heaney, in the sequence, makes an imaginary pilgrimage to the Stations where he encounters a number of ghosts like Dante does in *Purgatorio*, a track about the resurgence of art. Heaney praised Dante in one of his essays:

The way in which Dante could place himself in an historical world yet submit that world to scrutiny from a perspective beyond history, the way he could accommodate the political and the transcendent, this too encouraged my attempt at a sequence of poems which would explore the typical strains which the consciousness labours under in this country. The main tension is between two often contradictory commands: to be faithful to the collective historical experience and to be true to the recognitions of the emerging self. I hoped that I could dramatize these strains by meeting shades from my own dream-life who had also been inhabitants of actual Irish world. They could perhaps voice the claims of orthodoxy and the necessity to recognize those claims.

‘Station Island’ is peopled with the ghosts of ‘inhabitants of actual Irish world’ known to Heaney personally or writers through their works. There is a journey through Irish literature, through the poetry of Sweeney to the prose of William Carleton to James Joyce and finally to Heaney himself. Dante is exemplary for Heaney as both of them reanalyzed and re-imagined traditions. They never compromised with the prevailing traditions and compensated them by standing for their individual beliefs. Like Dante, Heaney has also been made into an exile by the colonial divisions of the country.

Heaven is a place of blessings, glad tidings and the rewards and compensation for the sufferings in the earthly life whereas hell is a place of punishment and sufferings where there are no compromises. Purgatory is a place where there is some possibility of transformation through repentance. Heaney is the noble poet concerned with the betterment of his people. Hence he provides them with a glimpse of purgatory.
In the curtain raiser of the sequence, a prelude to the pilgrimage itself, Simon Sweeney is encountered on Sunday. He is a figure from Heaney’s childhood. For the child Heaney, he was an anxiety generating figure. At the very outset of the pilgrimage Heaney receives advice from him:

As I drew behind them
I was a fasted pilgrim,
light-headed, leaving home
to face into my station.
‘Stay clear of all processions!’

(IL 61-65, Station Island I, SI)

Sweeney’s advise is for the ‘crowd of shawled women’ but ‘the murmur of the crowd / and their feet slushing’ opens ‘a drugged path’ for Heaney. In section II, the poltergeist is of William Carleton, the writer of sectarian prose, who renounced Catholicism after visiting Station Island in his youth. The ‘aggravated man’ or Carleton encounters Heaney on the road.

someone walking fast in an overcoat
and boots, bareheaded, big, determined
in his sure haste along the crown of the road

(IL 4-6, Station Island II , SI)

Carleton wrote *Lough Derg Pilgrim*, a prose account of the superstitions and barbarism of the pilgrimage as the three-day affair involves a self-punitive routine of prayers, fasting and walking barefoot on the stones of the remains of monastic cells. In the prose, Carleton mocked these rituals and called them unnecessary and futile. Heaney, in his imaginary encounter, acts in response:

I said, as the thing came clear. ‘Your *Lough Derg Pilgrim*
haunts me every time I cross this mountain-

(IL 15-16, Station Island II , SI)
Carleton justifies his stand:

hard-mouthed Ribbonmen and Orange bigots
made me into the old fork-tongued turncoat
who mucked the byre of their politics.

(ll 31-33, Station Island II, SI)

The hardships of the pilgrimage were not the only reason for renouncement of Catholicism by Carleton. The more important factor was the contemporary political scenario. The Orangism, the Protestant colonizer’s policy of giving preferences to their own sect had influenced Carleton. He writes:

If times were hard. I could be hard too.
I made the traitor in me sink the knife.
And maybe there’s a lesson there for you,

(ll 34-36, Station Island I, SI)

Everybody on this planet has some weaknesses. Carleton was no exception. Heaney, on the one hand, tries to dilute the charges on Carleton by explaining the circumstances under which Carleton committed the blasphemous deed of writing against Catholicism and on the other hand he compensates for the injured sentiments of Irish Catholics. Carleton sounds apologetic when he advises Heaney to learn a lesson from his mistake. Carleton is repentant of his faux pas desires to remain untarnished by his sins. He wishes for ‘another life that cleans our element’. Heaney by placing Carleton in purgatory for cleansing his soul raises himself to saintly status.

In Section III of the sequence, the ghost of Agnes, sister of Heaney’s father, who died of consumption when Heaney was still a child, is encountered. Heaney compensates for the loss of filial relations with his imaginary rendezvous with the deceased aunt. Heaney has always been close to his family. He grew up in the farmhouse at Mossbawm along with his nine siblings. The only books in the farmhouse belonged to his Aunt who was a trained typist. He celebrated festivals such as St. Patrick’s Day with his family.
members and other people from his community. Time passed and he became ‘Famous Seamus’, yet he continued longing for the singing, recreation and festivals of his united family.

In Segment IV, Heaney encounters the spirit of a ‘young priest, glossy as blackbird’ who died on a foreign mission soon after his ordination. Heaney knew him since he was ‘a clerical student’. The clerics in Catholicism are responsible for the ratification of the society. The people ‘would be ratified when they saw you [the priest] at the door in your [his] black suit’. In this section Heaney mediates over the religious responsibilities of the priest in the Irish society. Section V introduces Heaney’s school teacher ‘Master Murphy’. With the figure of Barney Murphy, Heaney recollects the locale of his bygone days. He recreates his own old school at Anahorish, which he regards as ‘purgatory enough for any man’, and his uncle’s farm at Toome. He travels down the memory lane and recollects the advice:

When you’re on the road
Give lifts to the people, you’ll always learn something.

(ll 54-55, Station Island V, SI)

In a healthy society, everybody has an individual and imperative function to perform. In these sections Heaney, through his imaginary meetings, contemplates the role of supervision. Sexual curiosity is referred to in the following confessional segment:

Until the night I saw her honey-skinned
Shoulder blades and the wheatlands of her back
Through the wide keyhole of her keyhole dress

(ll 32-34, Station Island VI, SI)

The fulfillment of erotic desires by looking through the keyhole highlight the repressions within the old society and hint at complex and nasty psychological compensations of a curious young boy. Heaney lays bare the skeleton in the closet.
The next encounter is with the ghost of an ‘unthinkable victim’, of a sectarian murder in Northern Ireland, in section VII. The wounds were still fresh on his body, ‘His brow / was blown open above the eye and blood / had dried on his neck and cheek’. The victim yearns for a healing touch. He needs no medical assistance but compensation from Heaney. He is none other than William Strathearn who played football with Heaney in his youth. He was murdered by two policemen in Co. Antrim. Heaney develops ambivalent feelings. His portrayal of Strathearn’s appearance is rendered painfully:

Through life and death he had hardly aged
There always was an athlete’s cleanliness
shining off him, and except for the ravage
forehead and the blood, he was still that same
rangy midfielder in a blue jersey
and starched pants, the one stylist on the team.

(II 70-75, Station Island VII, SI)

Heaney blames his own compromises and ‘timid circumspect involvement’ in politics and apologizes as a compensation.

‘Forgive the way I have lived indifferent-
forgive my timid circumspect involvement,’

(II 77-78, Station Island VII, SI)

The rendezvous with filial and familiar continues in the section VIII of the sequence. He comes across Tom Delaney, his archeologist friend with ‘face smiling its straight-lipped smile’, who died at the age of thirty two and Colum McCartney, his murdered cousin a ‘bleeding, pale-faced boy’, the subject of his poem ‘The Strand at Lough Beg’. Heaney is haunted with a sense of ‘guilt and empty[ness]’ as a result of compromises he has to make with the political situation. He feels that he ‘had somehow broken / covenants and failed an obligation’. He seems to fall short of any kind of compensation for them. McCartney reprimands him for his failed obligations:
‘... You were there with poets when you got the word
and stayed there with them, while your own flesh and blood
was carted to Bellaghy from the Fews.
They showed more agitation at the news
than you did.’

(Il 56-60, Station Island VIII, SI)

Heaney tries to absolve himself from the blame by giving excuses:

I was dumb, encountering was destined.

(Il 64, Station Island VIII, SI)

However no justification could compensate for the trauma of Heaney’s cousin. He
accused Heaney of ‘confused evasion with artistic tact’. The cousin looks upon Heaney’s
political stand as one of the reasons behind his ‘sectarian assassination’.

The protestant who shot me through the head
I accuse directly, but indirectly, you.

(Il 71-72, Station Island VIII, SI)

The poet is cast in the role of the people’s protector. Like Christ he suffers for the
mankind. Heaney makes the assassinated victims speak. He returns their voices but the
words belong to Heaney himself. The confessional self-reflexive writing of Heaney
shows that deep in his heart he is conscious of the guilt of his dumbness and wants to
provide compensations through his poetry. These confessions communicate the
compromises which he makes to unburden his heart, to compensate for the losses and to
 cleanse his soul in the hypothetical purgatory.

The IX segment begins with the spirit of Francis Hughes, one of the ten IRA
hunger-strikers who died in Long Kesh prison. The political suicide was one of the tactics
of the IRA to free their country from the colonial divisions. The last words of tragic
suffering invoke empathy.
When the police yielded my coffin, I was light
As my head when I took the aim.

(ll 13-14, Station Island IX, SI)

The ‘lightness’ of the ‘coffin’ and the ‘head’ can be read literally as well as metaphorically. For the colonizers, the lives of the natives are worthless. For a colonized person who wishes to sacrifice for his motherland, the aim of life becomes focused and other burdens become light. The horrifying images such as ‘blood on wet grass’, ‘shrouded feet’, ‘mucky, glittering flood’, ‘rose in a cobwebbed space’ and stone ‘eroding in bed’ hints towards a decaying society but these are to be purified in the purgatory through repentance:

And I cried among night waters, ‘I repent
My unweaned life that kept me competent
To sleepwalk with connivance and mistrust.’

(ll 35-37, Station Island IX, SI)

Heaney desires to be purged of ‘connivance and mistrust’. The repentance is a psychological as well as spiritual compensation for his soul. As a result of repentance his ‘feet touched bottom’ and his ‘heart revived’. The aspect of servitude of fills him with hatred. He begins to ‘hate where I was born, hate everything / That made me biddable and unforthcoming’. The association with the native land is not to establish identity with a particular community or country, which is celebrated very often as an asset in his poetry. The hatred is a part of his confessions and rejections of certain morals and norms of the society which are responsible for Heaney’s dumbness.

In section X, the spirit encountered is anonymous. Heaney’s drinking mug is taken away from his childhood home by the actors to use as a ‘prop’ in a play and later the child Heaney is compensated through the miraculous return of the mug in the same way as ‘Ronan’s pslater’ is ‘miraculously’ returned by an ‘otter’ in Sweeney Astray.
The emblem of sin and redemption is central to section XI of the sequence. In the next encounter, Heaney meets the apparition of a monk with whom he had 'spoken years ago'. Heaney made some confessions ‘from behind the grille’ about ‘the need and chance’ of his sin. As a compensation and penance for his sin, the monk requires him to ‘Read poems as prayers’ and to translate ‘something by Juan de la Cruz’, or St. John’s of the cross, who was a sixteenth-century mystic from Spain. The poet compensates for his sins in purgatory by translating a version of ‘Cantar del alma que se huelga de conocer Dios por fe’, or ‘Song of the soul which delights to know God by faith.’ The hymn glorifies the ‘fountains’ of the Christianity- the Trinitarian existence of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, the sacraments of the church, the sacrament of the Eucharist which is the insignia of believing in the harmony of the religion and a way ‘to know God by faith’.

Section XII ushers in James Joyce’s spirit. Heaney meets him on the mainland. He holds ‘the hand / stretched down from the jetty’ and sensed ‘an alien comfort’ in the company of the ‘helping hand’. Joyce counsels him to do things ‘on your [Heaney] own’.

   Lets go, let fly, forget.  
   You've listened long enough. Now strike your note.

   (l 29-30, Station Island XII, SI)

Heaney, now purged, can strike his own note. Heaney possibly now needs no ‘helping hands’. Hence Joyce’s phantom leaves him and ‘moved off quickly’.

The presence of Sweeney can be felt intensely in the concluding section ‘Sweeney Redivivus’. Heaney translated the Irish legend of Sweeney, the Ulster king, who is transformed into a bird as a curse for offending St. Ronan. Driven mad after being transformed into a bird, he flies, exiled from family and tribe, over Ireland. Heaney’s association with Sweeney can be traced in their rhyming names and also in the exile image. Heaney’s exile, unlike Sweeney was not a forced political exile. Heaney’s exile was a compromising and compensating move against the pressures of the divided Irish society. It was a compromise to retain the sovereignty of his poetic voice. The exile removed him from the sectarian politics.
Heaney’s exile was essential for his work and his intellectual poetic freedom. Edward Said writes in his article ‘Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginal’:

Exile is a model for the intellectual who is tempted, and even beset and overwhelmed, by the rewards of accommodation, yea-saying, setting in. Even if one is not actual immigrant or expatriate, it is still possible to think as one to imagine and investigate in spite of barriers, and always to move away from the centralizing authorities towards the margins, where you see things that are usually lost on minds that have never traveled beyond the conventional and the comfortable.

Sweeney in ‘Sweeney Redivivus’, is the alter ego of Seamus Heaney. In one of his interviews, he confessed that in the figure of Sweeney, he struck a chord which led to the discovery of new feelings. These feelings came like a dream of possibility across the swirl of private feelings. Heaney amalgamates the myth of Sweeney with his own schema.

The poem ‘The First Gloss’, recollect Heaney’s poem ‘Digging’, from the anthology, Death of a Naturalist. Heaney ‘Take[s] hold of the shaft of the pen’ to subscribe ‘to the first step taken’. The title poem ‘Sweeney Redivivus’ narrates people’s indifferent attitude towards Sweeney:

And there I was, incredible to myself, among people far too eager to believe me and my story, even if it happened to be true.

(11 13-15, Sweeney Redivivus, SI)

In the process of integrating a myth, Heaney never looses sight of nature which has always nourished and fostered his imagination. In fact, Sweeney lived in unison with nature. In this section he has written a number of poems which can be termed very aptly as tree-poems. The immigrant Sweeney wanders amidst the trees, in the poem ‘In the Beech’, he sees tanks and planes of World War II. The unambiguous reference is to the planes, tanks and the air force bases of Northern Ireland. The poem ‘Holly’ is about a natural world with domestic sensibility. ‘In the Chestnut Tree’, celebrates a resilient old
tree. In his collection of essays, Heaney includes ruminative essay entitled ‘The God in the Tree’ on Irish nature poetry.

‘The First Flight’ celebrates Heaney’s outmaneuvering of harsh criticism. They pronounced him as ‘a feeder off battlefields’ and Heaney recompenses and ‘mastered new rungs of air / to survey out of reach’. The flight, which connotes his move from Belfast to Glanmore, was to save him from the adversaries. In the poem ‘The Scribes’, Heaney shows a sense of awkwardness in the company of his critics, who in his absence ‘perfect[ed] themselves against me [Heaney] page by page’. Heaney believes that his work will speak for itself but he is not prepared to turn ignore the adverse criticism. He compensates, in the guise of Sweeney, by challenging them with the poem:

Let them remember this is not inconsiderable contribution to their jealous art.

(II 23-24, The Scribes, Sf)

The ecclesiastical supremacy of Catholicism is reflected in the poem ‘The Cleric’ who ‘overbore / with his unction and orders’. For a devout Catholic, the individual freedom is judged through the yardsticks of the church which sometime leave the people ‘skulking and whingeing’. The voice of still-pagan Sweeney compensates for the skulking and whingeing:

Give him his due, in the end
he opened my path to a kingdom
of such scope and neuter allegiance
my emptiness reigns at its whim.

(II 24-27, The Cleric, Sf)

Heaney envisages Catholicism as a language that has lost the power to speak in the poem ‘In lato Tempore’, and it ‘hardly tempts me [him]’ to credit it. The last poem of the section is ‘On the Road’, which symbolize the road to salvation. A rich young man asks a question:
Master, what must I
do to be saved?

(ll 17-18, On the Road, SF)

The reply comes from Christ:

Sell all you have
And give to the poor.

(ll 26-27, On the Road, SF)

For attaining salvation, the young rich man has to sacrifice the luxuries of his life and compromise with his status and as compensation he will be saved. Heaney's poetic pilgrimage has given him insight, inspiration and confidence. The poet now stands with a clearly defined road ahead of him. The reply that comes from Christ provides the poet with direction.

_The Haw Lantern (1987)_

Heaney's preoccupation with the role of language in the construction of social and political identity is a significant issue which he considers in the anthology _The Haw Lantern_. Helen Vendler claims that _The Haw Lantern_ is a book of strict, even stiff, second thoughts. Heaney embellishes the book with parables, allegories and satires on the social, political and religious aspects of Irish life. He deploys these strategies to define the marginal status of Northern Ireland as within the colonial divisions created by the rules of the British Empire and the Protestant Church. To repair the fractured identity of Irish people, the poet uses his poetry as a medium to provide compromises and compensations.

The opening poem 'Alphabets' traces the metamorphosis of Heaney from a small boy 'when he goes to school' to a proficient professor who 'stands in a wooden O' and
‘alludes to Shakespeare’ and ‘Graves’. It traces the poetic journey of his life from the
rural primary school to the top university where he studied and worked in later in his life.
The poem was written as the Phi Beta Kappa Poem, (an academic honour society of
American college and university students showing high academic achievement. It was
founded in 1776) at Harvard in 1984.

The poem hints at the educational system of Northern Ireland, in which the child
is exposed to the different scripts, diction and intonations of English, Latin and Irish. As
the child grows, the languages broaden his comprehension of place and culture and
expand his linguistic and literary abilities. Heaney penetrates into the psyche of a child
and projects all the confusions and curiosities:

There he draws smoke with the chalk the whole first week,
Then draws the forked stick that they call a Y
This is writing. A swan’s neck and swan’s back
Make the 2 he can see now as well as say

The two rafters and a cross-tie on the slate
Are the letter some call ah, some call ay.
There are charts, there are headlines, there is a right
Way to hold the pen and a wrong way.

(11 5-12, Alphabets, HL)

Grasping ‘Elementa Latina’ in the ‘stricter school’, the child ‘learns... other writing’
and masters the language when he grows up and functions as a poet and a teacher,
delivering lectures on the legends of literary traditions and researching their primeval,
mysterious origins:

The globe has spun. He stands in a wooden O.
He alludes to Shakespeare. He alludes to Graves.

(11 41-42, Alphabets, HL)
Neil Corcoran is of the view that the 'wooden O' refers to a large lecture hall, such as Globe Theater. Corcoran, further, suggests that Heaney's thought-process has undergone transformation as a result of his altered position in life. The letters become signifiers of reality. The reference to 'the necromancer / Who would hang from the doomed ceiling of his house' and 'The astronaut' who tries to figure out the globe 'from his small window' raises the poet's hopes for a unified global vision. Tobin writes that Heaney 'is driven to pursue a unified vision of the world. The hope of such global vision is embodied by the two exemplary figures that end the poem.' Heaney has always stood for universal brotherhood and for a free and independent world which is not fragmented by the evil force of caste, creed, and colour. Through his vision, he compensates for hatred and lends a helping hand in breaking down the wall that divides the world. He, thus, struggles for bringing global harmony.

The poem can also be read as an elegy upon the diminishing rural life and on the extinction of the Irish language, thus denying to the Irish people, a concrete, linguistic and cultural identity. Another concern which is central to the poem shows is the role which supervision and education play in a child's life. Heaney earlier took up the theme of ruined childhood in poems such as 'Blackberry-Picking' in *Death of a Naturalist* and 'The Railway Children' in *Station Island*. He claims the lack of supervision and education damages the potential of the children which, otherwise, can be utilized in creative tasks.

Unlike those deprived and neglected children, the properly supervised and educated children can utilize their caliber in re-structuring and re-shaping the world. It was the concern for the importance of education that made Heaney join hand with Ted Hughes to bring out works such as *The Rattle Bag* and *The School Bag*. Thus, Heaney compensates for the failure of the society in shaping the lives of the deprived Irish children.

The colonial divisions of the Irish society placed Heaney where he is unable to make compromises with either. He 'grew up in between', as he writes in the poem.
‘Terminus’. He ‘is still parleying’ with the colonizers for some compromises and compensations. The colonizers left no stone unturned in the exploitation of the Irish people. Covering their devilish desires under the veil of development, they introduced the railway ‘engine’ and the ‘factory chimney’ in the place where large, green farms and fields had once been. Fanon, while explaining the ways in which colonialism operates, stated:

When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives’ heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality.  

The natives became alien to their own culture. Industrialization stripped them not only of their rural inheritance but also of identity. Postcolonial theory analyses representations and identity formation of the colonized in the literary and cultural text. It also examines various stages, strategies and exploitations employed by the dominant. Identity is a product of culture and history and it can be divided into three phases: The pre-colonial identities, the colonial identities and the postcolonial identities. The pre-colonial identities are created independently. They are free from the impact of the colonizers. The divisions in pre-colonial identities are based not only on ancestry and visible traits such as colour of the skin and facial features. It is also based on linguistic, cultural and regional differences. The colonial identities are results of colonial divisions.

During the Enlightenment, the ‘races’ were the base of the division. The non-white races were regarded as inferior and thus best fitted for the lives of toil under White supervision. The colonizations of Africa and Indian subcontinents were based on the dialectics of White / Black. One significant feature about the Irish colonization was that both the colonizer and the colonized were White. It was not based on the binary oppositions of colours. In this case the dominant were not colour conscious. The post colonial identities are formed through negotiations and by rejecting the dominance of colonial identity.
Industrialization was brought at the expense of rural life. The colonizers stripped the natives of their lands, belongings, and freedom. They spoke of 'prudent squirrel's hoard' and 'mammon of iniquity' when the natives were left with just few 'coins'. This reveals their double-standards. The 'mammon' and 'coins' are in binary opposition and there is a large difference between them there is in between the rich and the poor or between the colonizer and the colonized. This reflects the financial position of the 'Masters' who have reached this position by depriving the 'Slaves'.

The simile of squirrel's hoard very aptly echoes the rural attitude. The squirrel is an innocent rodent that saves its food for the rainy season. The rustic Irish people saved their hard-laboured earning to secure their future but the colonizer confiscated that too and gave just a fraction to them. The fraction of the profit 'shone like gifts at a Nativity'. Heaney attempts hard to negotiate with the colonizers.

Baronies, parishes met where I was born.
When I stood on the central stepping stone.

(II 19-20, Terminus, HL)

Heaney does not desire a compromise where he would stand 'on the central stepping stone'. He wants to move away from the peripheral existence. Ireland is his own place where he 'was born' and has every right to claim his land and to ask for compensations for himself as well as for his whole country. Hart claimed:

Heaney's early allegories subvert Britain's patriarchal powers so that the silenced, matriarchal voices of his heritage can speak. In The Haw Lantern, Heaney again summons the British power brokers to the debating table, and although the talk is perhaps more metaphysical in tone and subject, the underlying political and linguistic issues are similar to earlier ones. 24

Ireland belongs to Irish people, yet they lived there on the periphery, subject to the whims of the administration. They have almost no role in governing their country. The colonial irony was that even in their own land they are looked at with suspicion.
Heaney captures the dilemma when he is stopped and questioned in an army roadblock. He says that 'everything is pure interrogation' and at last after the interrogation, the poet is 'arraigned yet free'. The incident is significant. The 'roadblocks' suggest the hurdles of conscience and consciousness which a poet has to encounter in the journey of his writing 'where it happens again'.

So you drive on to frontier of writing
where it happens again. The guns on tripods;
the sergeant with his on-off mike repeating

data about you…

(ll 13-16, From the Frontier of writing, HL)

Heaney gives second thoughts to the poetic liberties in the act of writing. Whatever freedom sanctions, a poet has to subjugate to ethical definitions. He has to compromise with moral and ethical responsibilities. The poem also regards the act of writing as a shelter, where the poet can find refuge and compensate for the atrocities of political subjugation and crisis. The conceit of 'polished widescreen' reflects the sectarian divisions of the state. The delineation of ethical responsibility of a poet is the theme of the poem 'from the Republic of Conscience', where he makes an allegorical journey to the republic of conscience. He crosses the political, linguistic and geographical boundaries and finds that the republic is 'noiseless'. The vigilantes order him ‘to declare / the words of our traditional cures and charms / to heal dumbness and avert the evil eye’. Every society has its own traditional beliefs and rituals which the people inherit. Heaney emphasizes the fact that magic, tradition and faith combine to produce significant archetypes.

The poem concludes with the return journey where he is asked to ‘consider’ himself ‘a representative / to speak on their behalf in my own tongue’. Having been to the republic, Heaney fulfils the ethical and moral responsibility by speaking against the entire political crisis and against the ‘Troubles’. His responsibilities demand more than just being a mute witness to their calamity. His conscience desires him to speak out against
the prevailing colonial divisions. It pleads with him to be a vociferous speaker and
discourages him from confining his writings. It needs a healing touch and a soothing
compensatory voice from the poet.

Heaney is exiled to the realm of speechlessness in the poem ‘From the Land of
Unspoken’. He is unclear in his mind about how and ‘when or why our exile began /
among speech-ridden, but solidarity comes flooding up in us / when we hear their
legends’. He is restless and wants to verbalize to the marginal status of writers and their
writings in affluent and capitalist speech-oriented society.

I have heard of a bar of platinum
kept by a logical and talkative nation
as their standard of measurement,
the throne room and the burial chamber
of every calculation and prediction.
I could feel at home inside that metal core
slumbering at the very hub of systems

(ll 1-7, From the Land of Unspoken, HL)

Heaney feels ‘at home’ and comfortable in the logocentric ‘hub of system’. He
longs for one standard system of measurement as the ‘bar of platinum’ kept by the
International Bureau of Weights and Measurement near Paris. The enticement of the
‘slumbering’ reverie is shaken with the realization that in this multicultural, multi-lingual
and diverse world, a single standard will be of no use and may even serve as an emblem
of the dictatorial society in which Heaney himself holds no faith. Heaney considers the
openly political poet responsible for the linguistic corruption of language. He admits:

Our unspoken assumptions have the force of revelation. How else could
we know that whoever is the first of us to seek assent and votes in a rich
democracy will be the last of us and have killed our language? Meanwhile,
if we miss the sight of a fish we heard jumping and then see its ripples,
that means one more of us is dying somewhere.

Heaney attempts to define the position of the modern poet caught in the
destabilizing pressures of a political wasteland and a hounding media. He desires a proper
position for the poet whose status and voice has been drowned in the deafening noises all around. Heaney’s demand is a compensatory yearning for the original dignified status of the poet.

As a resistance and reparation to the colonizers denials, the natives demonstrate that their culture exists. The colonial theory confronted the natives’ mind with the theory of pre-colonial barbarity which results in the obsessive search for a national culture of the pre-colonial era. This is done, also, for the sake of shielding themselves from the colonizer’s culture. Heaney reclaims his culture and cultural identity in the poem ‘From the Canton of Expectation’:

Once in the year we gathered in a field
of dance platforms and tents where children sang
songs they had learned by rote in the old language.

(ll 6-8, From the Canton of Expectation, HL)

Identities are deeply rooted in culture. They emerge out of the cultural history of the natives. In the postcolonial era, the role of culture in construction of identity has become significant. Colonialism is responsible for manipulating, fracturing, imposing and re-constructing the identities of the natives. The cultural art form of dance and the traditionally inherited ‘songs...in old language’ are the emotional cords which the natives of Ireland are attached to their culture. The shadow of colonialism blurred their ethnic identity. For the colonizers, the national song of the natives becomes a ‘rebel anthem’. This highlights the differences in the attitudes of the victim and the victimizer. Heaney tries to salvage the ethnicity of Irish traditions. It serves to recompense, redefine and rehabilitate the fading national culture. Fanon claims in his essay ‘On National Culture’:

The claim in the national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native...colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted
logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.  

The age old period of colonialism and the colonial discourse deprived the natives of their right to construct their own identities. There has always been a big difference in the point of view of the colonized and the colonizers. Thus, there are different versions of histories. One is written by the masters and other by the slaves. Post colonialism gives preference to the re-writing of history by the natives.

Heaney is a postmodern poet who believes in the power of education. Educational empowerment will furnish the ‘Young heads’ with resistance for combating their crisis. Heaney paints a touching picture of young Irish children busy in their studies, which he believes ‘would banish the condition for ever’:

Books open in the newly wired kitchens.
young heads that might have dozed a life away
against the flanks of milking cows were busy
paving and penciling their first causeways
across the prescribed texts. The paving stones
of quadrangles came next and a grammar
of imperatives, the new age of demands.

(ll 19-25, From the Canton of Expectation, HL)

Armed with the tools of education, which is the fundamental requirement of the ‘new age’, the future generation of Ireland will banish their ghastly circumstances. Heaney’s hope can be looked upon as a compensation for the deprived Irish children. The image of the children studying in ‘kitchens’ implies that unlike earlier times, the Irish people will not compromise with the future of their children. If needed, they will educate them at home. They seem to have understood losses associated with the lack of literacy and proper supervision. This is one of the campaigns initiated by Heaney.

The first stanza of the poem talks about the attachment to traditional native culture and the second stanza discuss native resistance through educational
empowerment. The implication here is that while pursuing modernity one must not compromise and let go of cultural traditions. Heaney hopes for a compensation in the resurrection of a traditional society through education which will result in the unification of tradition and modernity. The attitude of Irish people preparing for future resistance can be traced to wood-kerne, rebels from Irish history, who on their defeat took shelter in woods to prepare for the future. Heaney refers to them in the poem ‘Exposure’ in North.

Heaney’s hopes grow in the concluding stanza, where he refers to the reversal of the power of colonialism.

*What looks the strongest has outlived its term.*
*The future lies with what’s affirmed from under.*

(II 32-33, From the Canton of Expectation, *HL*)

The reversal of power- from margin to center, from strong to weak is a postcolonial compensation for colonized Irish people. According to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back*:

The alienating process which initially served to relegate the post-colonial world to the ‘margin’ turned upon itself and acted to push that world through a kind of mental barrier into a position from which a experience could be viewed as uncentred, pluralistic and multifarious.

In the title poem ‘The Haw lantern’, Heaney takes up the role of ‘Diogenes* with his lantern’ searching for ‘one just man’. The quest for justice and truth is undertaken by Heaney and his countrymen. The colonial governance has distorted reality and blurred social, historical and political vision. Heaney transforms the haw into an ethical lantern and sets off on an expedition to hunt for historical, political and social reality that will change the colonial fabrications. His lantern is ‘a small light for small people’ and the

---

*Diogenes of Sinope on the Euxine (4th c. B.C), the principal representative of the Cynic school of philosophy. He lived at Athens and Corinth, and his extravagantly simple mode of life and repudiation of civilized customs made him the subject of many anecdotes.*
little wish it makes is to protect its 'wick of self-respect from dying out'. Heaney wishes his people to perceive the truth. He does not want them to compromise with their self-respect. Heaney's quest is a compensatory quest.

The dreadful childhood experience of the classroom, in 'Hailstones' is representative of colonial cruelty. 'My cheek was hit and hit', Heaney narrates. He is hit again with a 'ruler across the knuckle'. The strikes descend like hailstones of colonial suppression, historical misrepresentations, cultural repressions and linguistic domination. The infliction of punishment is one of the tactics of the colonizers to cow down the natives and to impress upon them their marginal position and to transmit the values of colonial subjugation:

and left me there with my chances.
I made a small hard ball
of burning water running from my hand

(ll 7-9, Hailstones, HL)

The implication in these lines is that Heaney, as a compensatory counter attack, will redeem, re-write and re-use something that has been used to oppress him and his people. He will invert the strategies of the victimizer. This refers to Heaney's use of language and writings for re-writing and deconstructing the hegemony of the Empire. He speaks in Caliban's voice. His poem serve as a postcolonial compensation for literary compensation for literary misrepresentations and as a protest against linguistic hegemony.

Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin express a similar idea:

Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which concepts of 'truth', 'order', 'reality' become established. Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice. 29

Heaney's concern for a peaceful and harmonious society attracts attention in the poem 'Parable Ireland', where he destabilizes the nostalgia for a homogeneous culture by
recognizing the differences in diversity. He mocks the divisions which 'subversives and collaborators' have created with their version of Ireland. Heaney is aware of the existing divisions in his country.

The religious differences between Celts and Christians, or the ideological differences between Protestants and Catholics, remind him of diversity but for the sectarian, they are indispensable. They are always indulged 'with a fierce possessiveness / for the right to set 'the island story' straight'. Heaney appeals to his people to set aside the differences and make them understand the need to compromise with unnecessary issues to facilitate a peaceful reconciliation.

The poem concludes with the story of a man who 'died / convinced / that the cutting of Panama Canal / would mean the ocean would all drain away / and the island disappear by aggrandizement.' The useless blood-shed will not serve their purpose. They may belong to different ethnic groups but to the same species of human beings. Various colonizations, globalization and mass migrations and of people has resulted in construction of different ethnic groups. Ethnicity emphasizes upon the relation of an individual to a perceived past and culture. According to Northern Ireland Census 2001, the population of Ireland constitutes various ethnic groups including Whites, emigrants from Indians, Pakistanis, Africans, Chinese, and Black Caribbeans. Much of the civil violence in Northern Ireland is because of the differences and divisions in the country. Heaney, as a philanthropist, advocates mutual love and understanding. He suggests that certain compromises are essential for love and harmony.

Heaney has always remained emotionally involved with the familiar and filial. Family bonds are vital in his life. In the elegies of this anthology he combines the concreteness of living in the shadows of familial loss. As filial compensations he recollects and commemorates his relatives in the elegies. His young niece Rachel’s death in an accident and her soul’s departure to heaven is remembered in ‘The Wishing Tree’, his father’s death is memorialized in ‘The Stone Verdict’ and in a sequence of sonnets; in ‘Clearances’ he tenderly remembers his departed mother.
‘The Stone Verdict’ gives mythical dimensions to his father’s death. It recollects Heaney’s introvert father, who ‘relied on through a lifetime’s speechlessness’, on ‘judgement place’.

Let it be like the judgement of Hermes,  
God of the stone of heap, where the stones were verdicts  
Cast solidly at his feet, piling around him  
Until he stood waist-deep in the cairn  
Of his absolution...

(ll 8-12, The Stone Verdict, HL)

His father’s prayer is that he be given the ‘judgement of Hermes’. Hermes, a figure from Greek mythology was a son of Zeus and Maia. He was summoned for killing the dogs of Agros. He faced a silent verdict in which gods silently cast their voting-pebbles at his feet and left him encased in a heap of stones. Heaney, in his poetry, often returns the missing voices to the owners. His father’s speechlessness suggests the silence of a colonized native. This is the silence of either compromising with the powerful Masters or of resistance against the Masters. Heaney hopes for a heavenly compensation of ‘absolution’ for him. Heaney coins a religious philosophy of compensation for the noble, rendered in heaven to atone for the difficulties of this life. Such compensation for Heaney’s father will serve as an emotional compensation for the poet tortured by the trauma of separation.

In the elegiac sequence of eight sonnets ‘Clearances’, Heaney articulates his intimate relationship with his mother, who died in 1984, in uncomplicated and childlike terms. He warmheartedly recollects the domestic chores of folding bed sheets, peeling potatoes and attending mass with his mother.

The cool that came off sheets just off the line  
Made me think the damp must still be in them  
But I took my corners of linen  
And pulled against her, first straight down the hem  
And diagonally, then flapped and shook

(ll 1-5, Clearances V, HL)
Heaney universalizes the emotional bond between son and mother with such affectionate delineations. The simple domestic task of peeling potatoes together becomes the emblem of strong bonds.

When all others were away at Mass
I was hers as we peeled potatoes.

(II 1-2, Clearances III, HL)

Heaney attributes his life’s success to his mother. He claims that she was always a motivating factor. He acknowledges the contribution of his mother in the lines with which he has prefaced the sequence. He admits that his mother ‘taught’ him ‘what her uncle once taught her’. She taught him everything—from mechanical skills to ‘face[ing] the music’. Heaney years to be taught by her once again:

... Teach me now to listen,
To strike it rich behind the linear black

(II 8-9, Clearances, HL)

Heaney, with touching vividness, recalls ordinary household items that bond him with his mother. The recollection of goods like ‘polished linoleum...Brass taps...The china cups...sugar bowl and jug’ and the whistle of ‘kettle...Sandwich and tea scone’ becomes the motifs of a childhood full of love. The moments of love are contrasted with the awareness of the turmoil going on outside the house. The carnage of the outside world is compensated by the ‘cool comfort’ of the house. Heaney’s relationship with his mother which he describes as his ‘Sons and Lovers phase’ touches an Oedipal vein.

The loss of his mother inflicts a permanent wound in the poet’s heart. No panacea can dull the pangs of longings. The emotional emptiness is depicted in the following lines:

The space we stood around had been emptied
Into us to keep, it penetrated
Clearance that suddenly stood open

(ll 11-13, Clearances VII, HL)

So while the parish at her bedside
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying
And some were responding and some crying
I remembered her head bent towards my head,
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives-
Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

(ll 9-14, Clearances III, HL)

The void drives the poet to the act of writing. Recollections serve as psychological and emotional compromises. Heaney recollects moments spent with his mother and turns them into poignant poetry to compromise with the lacerating pain of loss.

The poem ‘Wolfe Tone’ is the portrait of a Protestant Irish revolutionary, Tone (1763-1798), who strove hard for the harmonious existence of Catholics and Protestants. His vision of union was aimed at diluting the sectarian dividing policies of the colonizers. He had to pay for his revolutionary vision. The colonizer compensated by capturing him and sentenced him for disloyalty. In fact Tone was loyal, if not to his ideological sect, but to his vision and his conscience with which he never made compromises. Ultimately, he committed suicide in the prison.

I was the shouldered oar that ended up
far from the brine and whiff of venture,

like a scratching-post or a crossroads flagpole,
out of my element among small farmers-

(ll 7-10, Wolfe Tone, HL)

The political parable of Tone is an epitome of dedication to a visionary. Vision is the foundation of some of the concrete realities of the world. M.K Gandhi had a vision of
free India, Parnell had a vision of free Ireland and beside them there are thousand of unsung heroes, who remained anonymous, but who were endowed with visions to make the society a better place. Heaney too, joins the bandwagon, with his vision of a better Ireland. In the poem ‘The Mud Vision’, Heaney paints a picture of an anonymous country. The territory displays deserted rural barrenness and ‘casualties on their stretchers’. The people maintain a safe distance and watch the commotion:

Watching ourselves at a distance, advantaged
And airy as a man on a springboard
Who keeps limbering up because the man cannot dive.

(ll 11-13, The Mud Vision, HL)

The compromised outlook and the vision of the people yield an impotent nation which needs to be renewed with a compensatory vision. The poem concludes with the recognition of ‘folly’:

Just like that, we forgot that the vision was ours,
Our one chance to know the incomparable
And dive to future...

(ll 52-54, The Mud Vision, HL)

The poem expresses anger against the compromised survival and ‘convinced and estranged’ existence. The survival seems to be the least accomplishment of the Irish people offering no compensation for the vanished vision. The vanished vision is also lamented in the poem ‘The Disappearing Island’. The poem has a discussion about the remote past as suggest by the use of ‘Once’. The implication is that Ireland has been subjected to oppression for a very long time, so much so that even the poet is unable to identify the exact time:

Once we had gathered driftwood, made a hearth
And hung a cauldron in its firmament

(ll 4-5, The Disappearing Island, HL)
Colonization had shattered the culture and the cultural identity of the people. Their original culture taught them to be united. The humane image of the people working harmoniously—gathering, making the hearth, and hanging cauldrons, probably for a cultural feast reflects Heaney’s deep concern for the re-unification against the ubiquitous colonial divisions. The long-lost harmony was a result of a vision which has become somewhat smudged:

All I believe that happened there was a vision

(II 9, The Disappearing Island, HL)

For a better tomorrow, the old distorted ethics have to be discarded and redundant values have to be forsaken. In the poem ‘The Riddle’, Heaney addresses the issue of ethics through the story of a man ‘who carried water in a riddle’. The central image is of a sieve, that separates the wheat from chaff, which others have ‘never … used’:

You never saw it used but still can hear
The sift and fall of stuff hopped on the mesh

(II 1-2, The Riddle, HL)

Heaney uses an old world instrument and related processes to communicate a poetic ideology. With the advent of industrialization, the traditional rural skills faded away. Machines substituted the labourers and grain polishers replaced traditional sieves. Heaney uses such images to lament for the extinction of the cultural identity of the rural Irish people.

Heaney tells the story of the man, who discovered, that he was bullied, with false information about the wheat. Confused he kept the chaff and threw away the wheat. The story sounds like the saga of colonialism. The natives were bullied and culturally confused. The manners and morals of natives were condemned as miserable, pathetic and full of errors by colonizer. They were forcefully burdened with an alien culture. The natives were just left with the ‘chaff’ where as colonizers relished the ‘wheat’. This
defines the colonial economic exploitation where the profit was taken by the victimizers and the victims were left with a very small portion of the profit. In the concluding lines, Heaney questions:

Was it culpable ignorance, or was it rather
A via negative through drops and let-downs?

(II 11-12, The Riddle, HL)

Heaney investigates into the cultural, political, economical issues of colonial exploitation. Until and unless the truth is brought to the forefront, the poet will not be able to provide the compensations.

**Conclusion**

In the four anthologies analyzed in this chapter, Heaney deals with a wide spectrum of themes. His poems are marked with the awareness of relationships between the personal, the political and the historical. He evokes his Irish identity with different strategies and writes back against the dominant discourse. The allusion to myths and history and local Irish places are some of the overpowering concerns of his poetry. He registers intimacy with Irish people and places. The familiar and filial occupy special places in his poetry. The historical events like ‘The Great Irish Famine of 1845’, ‘Bloody Sunday of 1972’, ‘Battle of Boyne’ and ‘Belfast Blitz’ are referred to thorough elegies, allegories, parables and mythology.

Heaney regards Dante as exemplary and structures the anthologies such as *Field Work* and *Station Island* on Dante’s *Inferno*. Heaney finds the concept of hell fitting to the Irish context. In the poem ‘The Strand at Lough Beg’, He casts himself and his dead cousin in the figures of Dante and Virgil. The intertextuality with Dante, allusions to Wordsworth and other poets are persistent techniques used by Heaney. The anthologies such as *Field Work* and *Station Island* are crowded with the ghosts of people known to Heaney personally or through their works. In the essay ‘Envies and Identifications: Dante and the Modern poet’, Heaney stated:
When poets turn to the great masters of the past, they turn to an image of their own creation, one which is likely to be a reflection of their own needs, their own artistic inclinations and procedures.\textsuperscript{31}

One can identify the influences of 'the great masters of the past' such as Dante, Wordsworth, Eliot and Larkin in Heaney's work. The Glanmore sonnets are Heaney's acknowledgement of the English Lyrical tradition and the influence of Wordsworth. Heaney presents his critical work in the form of autobiography, saying that the poets he discusses have become part of his memory.\textsuperscript{32} In particular, he sees his relationship with the poets he writes about as a form of immersion, where their work, over a period of time, comes to bear on his poetics.\textsuperscript{33} He adopts and adapts their works to suit his contexts.

Heaney belongs to the minority Catholic community of Ireland. His portrayal of his Catholic consciousness in his poetry has provoked mixed responses. Haffenden claims 'Heaney is not what you'd call a pious Catholic'\textsuperscript{34} whereas James Booth remarks Heaney's 'emblems are Jungian as much as Christian, his poetry still aims at the natural spirituality of the past age when it was believed that God had hidden hieroglyphics and riddles in his creation for his creature to seek out'.\textsuperscript{35} It can be pointed out that Ireland, from the beginning, was not a Christian country. Celts, about 350 B.C, introduced a new culture to Ireland. It was Christianized by St. Patrick in fifth century A.D. However, many Celtic converts retained aspects of their Druidic religious practices, and Ireland became the center of a distinctive form of Celtic Christianity. Heaney's version of Christianity can be traced back to its Celtic origin. Thus, he cannot be judged with the parameter of piousness. He paints the picture of totemistic, hieratic, legendary landscapes with archetypal, magical and folkloric beliefs. This sense of place, Heaney suggested, is 'foundation for a marvelous or magical view of the world, a foundation that sustained diminished structure of love and superstition and half pagan, half Christian thought and practice'.\textsuperscript{36} His poetry is marked by awareness of loss and rapidly changing, disorienting and deeply unwelcoming colonial modernity. Thus, his poetry is retrospective. Heaney returns to his roots as a stratagem against the hegemony.
The educational empowerment of Irish people attracts Heaney’s attention. He believes that the power of education will change the condition of Ireland. He emphasizes on proper supervision for the children. The theme of ruined childhood and its compensation through education and supervision is dealt with thoroughly in his works. The related theme of paternal rejection is also dealt with in the poem such as ‘Ugolino’.

In the anthology, *The Haw Lantern*, Heaney identifies himself with Diogenes. He explores ‘contradictory dimension of reality’. In the poem ‘Alphabets’, He traces his poetic journey and in ‘From the Frontier of Writing’, he gives second thought to the poetic liberties in the act of writing. He talks of poetry not as a simple act of writing but he believes in the poetry of responsibility. The distance from politics can be seen as an act of self-restrain in Heaney’s poetics of exile. His poetic exile is a compensation from the harsh atrocities of his country.

Heaney’s poetry is the ‘poetry of visions’. He believes that vision is the foundation of some of the concrete realities of the world. He has visions of a better Ireland and a healthy world. He believes in humanism as a necessary component. He returns to his roots to revive society. Heaney subsumes the immortality of the soul and hopes for celestial compensations. His poetry crosses the boundary of death. He never contemplates his own death. His own death never seems to trouble him in the elegies he writes. The loss of the family bonds is compensated for by resurrecting and creating imaginary rendezvous with dead family members in the poems ‘The Stone Verdict’, ‘The Wishing Tree’ and in the poems of ‘Clearances’ sequence.

Heaney dismantles hegemonic strategies. He celebrates his Irish culture and traditions in ‘From the Canton of Expectation’. He uses language and writings as a compensatory counter for deconstructing colonialism. In ‘Terminus’, he negotiates with the hegemony. He redeems, re-writes and inverts colonial tactics. The demeaning strategies are extended even to the dead. The dialectics of the colonial divisions are evoked to state the marginalized position of Irish people as the other. The compromises
made, and the compensations demanded, are psychological, geographical, sociological, spiritual and heavenly in nature. The implication is that Heaney desires a perfect world.
References

3. Ibid.
5. All the quotations are from Stations. (Ulsterman Publications, 1975) cited here as S.
13. All the quotations are from Seamus Heaney’s Field Work (London: Faber, 1979) cited here as FW
18. All the quotations of the poems are from Seamus Heaney's *Station Island* (London: Faber, 1987) cited here as *SI*.


30. All the quotations of the poems are from Seamus Heaney’s *The Haw Lantern*, cited here as *HL*.


33. ibid. Heaney says: “The only way I can write with any conviction is out of love. Not necessarily from my long immersion in the poet, but the poet’s long immersion in me.” His “criticism,” says the poet, is a “communing with a previously excited self,” a “resuscitation of what has been already settled” in relation to that poet.


