Chapter VI

Sacrificing is the Naval of the Bog Land

Marshy lands and seashores form the background of many of Heaney’s poems. Professor R. Viswanathan calls him a “poet of the bog land” (Chatuppunilangalude Kavi). The earth-mother motif, seen in earlier chapters, in different forms, is found here also. The bog land or the earth mother is the goddess, who receives sacrifices. There were deep peats or pits in ancient European countries and marshes, where capital offerings were performed. Heaney’s bog land poems like “Tollund Man” and “Kinship” (Clark, ed. Arnold 1525-1530) combines the concepts of Irish mother goddess, sacrifices at pits and the fertility earth goddess of traditional agricultural epoch.

Tollund is a place in Denmark where bodies of ancient sacrificial victims preserved in peat were found. For thousands of years the bodies have been kept un-decomposed in peats. The bodies of victims had been embalmed/embrocated with various plant juices. It was believed that their presence in peats had the power to preserve fertility, abundance and replenishment as far as the entire area surrounding the peats. Peat was supposed to be the naval of the land. It is like the belief in ancient India during the Vedic period.
that the fire-pit or homakundam or the sacred fire hearth was the
naval of the universe. Sacrificial offerings were performed into the
pit.

Heaney finds that he is related to the bog, peat and the
sacrificial victim seen in a peat. As part of the sacrificial fertility
ritual of early agricultural time, men were strangled to death and
offered to the Earth Goddess. For such early agricultural
communities peat was the naval of their universe. It was out of
love, not out of hatred, capital immolations were done. Sacrifices
into peat were fertility oriented. Such fertility-oriented rites, it was
believed, account for the existence and continuum of all biotic
things including the poet. The sight of a peat inspires the poet to
initiate a recollection/return to the ancient times:

I step through origins
Like a dog turning
its memories of wilderness
on the kitchen mat. (1525)

A domesticated dog, which enjoys the modern facilities like lying
comfortably on a cozy kitchen-mat, cannot go back into the
wilderness where its forefathers had lived. But, it can make an
imaginary journey into the remote past. If the dog or the modern
white European wants to travel into the past, most of the present assumptions/ideology/world view has to be shed. Heath, for the modern, is "an extensive area of rather level open uncultivated land usually with poor coarse soil, inferior drainage, and a surface rich in peat or peaty humus" (Webster's Dictionary). It is "uncultivated", only in the sense that the moderns of the post-industrial revolution period do not cultivate in it. Nature does cultivate and conserves the biodiversity. Neytal or small water Lilly and such plants, fish, crabs and crores and crores of microbes take birth, thrive, enjoy life and die in heath, in marshes, in morass and the like, and thus keeping alive the web of life, while joining themselves as the different strands of the vast and varied drama of cosmic life. The super soils of the man-centric modern world-view and its innumerable layers or levels have to be removed, if one wants to reach the past and establish kinship. Then the peat, bog, farm field or wetland is not something inanimate;

The bog floor shakes

water cheeps and lisps

as I walk down

rushes and heather.(1526)
The poet loves the turf-face of the land, its dark wounds, confined secrets and its ritual 'ike processes:

I love this turf face,

its black incisions,

the cooped secrets

of process and ritual;

I love the spring

off the ground,

each bank a gallows drop,

each open pool

the unstopped month

Of an earn, a moon drinker,

not to be sounded

by the naked eye.(1526)

The boggy land of different kinds like quagmire, swampland, morass and slime appear to be full of mud and dirty eggs. But to the poet it is soft, the backdrop of silent windless rain. It is the ruminating ground where mollusk-digested seedpod and pollen are stored. It is the Mother Earth's pantry from where numerous microbes, plants and animals got their allotted food shares. Bones are heaped there being permitted to make their own models of
arcs, towers and vaults. It the sun's/sunlight's bank — bank in both the senses of the word, sun takes rest utilizing the bog as a shore and much sunlight is absorbed by the leaves of the boggy plants. By their own natural modes and mores, aromatic or sweet smelling produces are together embalming the benign volitions of all biotic and abiotic things. Killed fugitives, insatiable brides, sword-swallowers, refuse heaps, kitchen wastes, icy historical dirt and such items find a dormant resting place in boggy land and they are embalmed and well-kept by the land.

But bog
meaning soft,
the fall of windless rain,
pupil of amber
Ruminant ground,
digestion of mollusc
and seed-pod,
deep pollen bin.
Earth-pantry, bone-vault,
sun bank, embalmer
of voliva goods
and sabred fugitives. (1526)

It is a resting ground as well as a nesting ground for the poet. The darkness is only the one side of it. The other side is life or light. Resting or nesting or hibernation is for reproduction or rebirth or reawakening.

Ground that will stip
its dark side,

nesting ground,

outback of my mind. (1526-27)

Out of the six parts of this lengthy poem, of twenty-four lines each, two parts have been analysed. In the first two parts the poet watches the bog and imaginatively thinks over its diverse aspects; life-preserving and life-producing resources. In the third part the poet is actually "entering into" the bog and its biotic field:

I found a turf-spade
hidden under bracken,
laid flat, and overgrown

with a green fog. (1526-27)

A superficial look will reveal only plant life on the bog. Turf, fern and green fag can be seen. But when the poet unveils the covering
little plant growth, the passionate life - producing resource of the land or boggy ecosystem.

As I raised it
the soft lips of the growth
muttered and split,
a tawny rut
opening at my feet. (1527)

The passion of the spade, its rut, for digging/infusing life into the soil is hidden from superficial view. The poet takes the spade and steams it in the hot sunlight. When he drops it under a heap of stones/landmark, he is interfering into the system of land. A love-nest is disturbed. The creepers there twined the spade. Small plants there tremble. Even for slight disturbance to the biotic system--plant and animal lives, there is response from Mother Nature. Nobody is allowed to peep into the secrets and mysteries of the biotic system.

A love-nest is disturbed
catkin and bog-cotton tremble
as they raise up
the cloven oak-limb. (1527)
The land or earth is a living organism. This concept has been reinforced recently by James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, according to which "Earth's living matter, air, oceans, and land surface form a complex system which can be seen as a single organism" (Anderson, 155). Plants that appear to be as useless to the human-centric utility-oriented view are useful to certain other beings. Mother Nature has Her own scheme of protecting/preserving the myriad and diverse layers of the biotic things. As Coleridge describes in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (Clark, ed. Arnold 699-717) this utility-oriented human-centric view gets its own retributions. The wicked action of the Ancient Mariner, that is, the killing of the innocent and good-omened Albatross lands the whole ship-full of mariners into a pathetic plight without the sight of a single living creature or even a drop of drinkable/edible water. Though expiated and exonerated the Ancient Mariner is destined to live for ever and tell his horrible experiences to all probable listeners like the Wedding Guest: Even at the time of the passionate advancement of Renaissance Humanism and its man-centred vision holding the slogans like "knowledge is power" Coleridge quotes Thomas Burnet's excerpt as the motto-piece of the poem which indirectly advises everybody to respect the wisdom of Mother
Earth/Nature. Coleridge gives this as the precept foregrounded by the Ancient Mariner in lines 612-617 of the poem:

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. (Arnold 716)

In the poem "Kinship", such a deep ecological vision is embedded. Heaney feels that he stands at the edge of centuries, facing a goddess. When he tries to peep into the scheme of earth by unveiling the cover of fern, he finds that plants respond. He feels himself a culprit or sinner, facing the trial by the Mother Goddess. If such an act had happened centuries ago when matri-central early agricultural set-up had been prevalent, he would have been strangled to death as a part of sacred punishment of ancient sacrificial fertility rite. It is this centre, which is fertility or productivity oriented rite, which holds the entire area. It spreads sump and seedbed. Husk and leaf and other fallen materials ferment and melt here deepening the colour and smell of autumn. Valuable minerals or nutrients for the future growth of plants are
stored and prepared here. As it is a vowel that forms the nucleus or centre of a syllable, the poet in the bog is the vowel of earth. The place dreams the root-cause of the continuation of life on earth. It dreams of its flowers, snow and changing seasons. The poet recognizes and confirms his kinship with the bog and all its biotic and abiotic things:

I grew out at all this

like a weeping willow

inclined to

the appetites of gravity. (1528)

This relatedness to the land, the gravitational pull with which the land always attracts him, all are presented through the metaphor of a willow tree that bows its head at its Mother Earth's feet. It does grow out of the land and as years go by it sheds its leaves into the poet. Blooming out of Her naval it dissolves back into Her. The poet considers himself to be like the tree. As he grows higher and higher, he inclines his head more and more towards the Mother Earth. The bowing of his head at the Mother's feet is a return to Her golden times also. She had been undisturbed and un-interfered before the advent of Industrial Revolution. Of course, Her sons had made metal tools but those were made with the hands given to
them by the Mother, not by machines. In this fourth part of the poem, the poet deifies the man who does not question the matriarchal authority/intensity of Mother Earth. The poet finds hand carved rims of cartwheels, which have been buried under the cover of a half-decayed layer of leaves and fern. Man-made animal-traps and cupid's bows are seen.

I deified the man
who rode there,
god of the wagon,
the hearth-feeder
I was his privileged
attendant, a bearer
of bread and drink,
the squire of his circuits. (1528)

The poet imagines that when the lord of the wagon and his attendant, the poet, during their sight-seeing and sedentary circuit tour through to a neighboring countryside, people there salute them and give them the privilege of the central part of village roads. The blood-red shine hawthorn fruits light the hedges on the path sides. The poet enjoys with manly pride the sights and sounds of the Irish countrysides of the epoch of sedentary agriculture.
In the last part, that is the fifth one (1529) the poet invites the human historian Tacitus to present before the world the story of Irish Motherland and Her Goddess-centred life system which existed centuries back. As it had been long ago buried deep, the poet can but read it only imaginatively. By a re/turn or reading back the poet has wrought an old crannog, artificial fortified island, piled by the dead on the bog. Tacitus is seen as Roman and the Romans did not invade Ireland when they trampled upon the British Isles. Moreover, Tacitus and other Romans designate Ireland affectionately as the "island of the ocean" (1529). The enemy of an enemy is friend. Rome is the enemy of Britain, which is the enemy of Irish nationalism and cultural revival.

Our mother ground
is sour with the blood
of her faithful,
they lie gargasging
in her sacred heart
as the legions stare
from the ramparts.(1529)

Those who are faithful to Ireland, the nationalists, are lying shot dead by the British military that watch at them from the ramparts.
In the private world of imagination, the poet has created an artificial/non-existing Ireland. Only by observing that Ireland, Tacitus can write the Irish version of Ireland's chronicle:

Come back to this
`island of the ocean`
where nothing will suffice,
Read the inhumed faces
of causality and victim,
report us fairly
how we slaughter
for the common good.
And shave the heads
of the notorious
how the goddess swallows
our love and terror. (1529)

Tacitus is invited to write a fair history of Ireland, free from the British prejudices against Ireland. The dominant British designate the Irish sacrifices as madness or terrorism, as, for example, W. H. Auden does in "In Memory of W. B. Yeats"

Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.

Now Ireland has her madness and her
Weather still. (1400)

Tacitus is requested to report that the Irish do sacrifices for the common good or the Irish welfare, not out of hate but of common love. Such an offering or immolation is different from the British slaughter. It is the causality of the Irish - British tussle. Shaving the head of a notorious fellow as a part of sacrificial rite is different from killing out of hatred. The terror of a sacrificial custom and the love for the common good contained in the custom can be very well grasped by the Irish Mother Goddess Right or Dana, as the Irish are the children of Dana, or in other words, Tautha Daanan. Here Heaney adopts a stance akin to W. B. Yeats in "Easter 1916" (Arnold 1220-1222). Though shocked and sorrowful over the terror and tragedy of the sacrificial Irish heroes/martyrs, Yeats does not condemn them outright:

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild. (1221)

To the questions like how many sacrifices are needed and how much sacrifice will suffice, Yeats does not answer clearly, while Heaney says, "nothing will suffice" (1529).

"Kinship", as the very title shows, strikes the note of deep ecology that is interrelatedness of all biotic and abiotic things. Rootedness or localness in boggy Irish land is not felt as bondage but a bond or kinship. All the three watchwords of deep ecology matricentrism, biocentrism and polycentrism-- as against modernity's patricentrism, human centrism and Euro centrism-- are foregrounded in the poem. The central image is the land, a mother goddess into whose navel, that is the peat, men are sacrificed. The sacrifice is for the continuation or recycling of life - process. The function of all objects small or big is welcomed and appreciated. Even the fern is saluted. The haw-lit hedges are enjoyed. Euro-centrism or its metonym, the British domination is criticized and the Irish revivalism is applauded. Britain is not considered to be the centre of the world. Each locality or ecosystem has its own centre. For going deep into the features of the locality or tinai, it can be seen that the poem does not come under the tinais prescribed as models in Tolkappiyam.
Following the interpretation and suggestion of Ayyappa Paniker Indian (93-121), bog *tinai* or peat *tinai* has to be constructed out of the clues in the poem and the Irish socio-cultural history. Paniker suggests that for modifying, modernizing, or expanding the time factor in the *tinai* concept, at least three elements/three kinds of time have to be considered and included in *tinai* -- the time described in the work, the time of the composition of the work and the time of the reader reading the work. The time described by the work can be identified by placing the work beside some of the findings of Elizabeth Bronfen in *Over the Dead Body: Death Femininity, and the Aesthetic* regarding the Irish social conversion from matriarchal culture to the patriarchal. The matriarchal - bronze culture had had domination in Ireland till the Iron - beating Celts invaded Ireland in about two hundred B.C. (36). Even after that for centuries the Irish culture existed along with the Celtic. The poem refers to the objects and rites of that period. Mother Right or Dana was the chief goddess and there were hand made iron rims, ochre's, autumn's bronze and also sacrifices. Elisabeth Bronfen observes: "Even in the late Celtic legends many startling traits are revealed of bronzen dames who preserved the customs of that age up to early Christian times" (36). Bronfen's description of
pre-Celtic Irish Earth Mother Dana is akin to the goddess presented by Heaney. "Dana, the Earth Mother, bestower of fruitfulness and abundance, [is] one of the deities to whom human sacrifices were presented" (301). The advent/advance of patriarchal culture of Celts is indicated in the "manly pride" with which the poet, as attendant, listens to the words of the lord of the wagon. So, the time described in the poem is a mixture of Irish matricentral and Celtic patriarchal cultures. But, the time is pre-Christian. The dominant sentiment/emotion of the poem is rumination/recollection. Being a less-populated landscape, the bog is a convenient site for recollecting ancient things and beings. The uripporul or mindscape is recollection.

As Ayyappa Paniker postulates (Indian 93-121) the time factor in Mutual Porul of tinai concept has to be expanded including new dimensions of time on the basis of the development of knowledge since the time of the composition of Tolkkappiyam. As the present study purports to analyze the works of Seamus Heaney in the context of deep ecology, the divisions of ecological evolution up to the Industrial Revolution have to be attempted. Arun Balasubramonyam in Participatory Action Research subdivides the ecofriendly epoch, which is the Pre-Industrial Revolution period, into
five stages (28-29) and classifies the traditional farmers into five categories. The first category contains hunters and gatherers. They are predators who live on hunting, fishing and gathering fruits and digging tubers. They live in remote areas unsuitable for agriculture and they are nomadic. The second category contains farmer-hunters. They do predation as a method of supplementing the food they got by farming. The third category engulfs shifting cultivators. They do cultivation, by felling a forest, burning the trees and planting crops in the area cleared. The sites abandoned by them for few years will recuperate and they clear them again. The next stage of ecological evolution or the next division farmers are nomadic hunters who drive their livestock over large territories. The animals supply all their basic needs. This is the state of pastoralism, which abounds in classical literary works. Essential products are obtained through barer. The last category is known as sedentary agriculture. It is the practice of the majority of mankind before the arrival of modern industrial agriculture. Leading well settled life, the farmers recourse to a wide variety of techniques gardening, irrigation, terracing, crop rotation etc. Optimal utilization of eco systems is seen largely defined by local
eco cycles. Ecoaesthetes, as a rule, favour this period or system of life. Julian Huxley remarks:

Ecology must aim not only at optimum use but also at optimum conservation of resources. Further more, these resources include enjoyment resources like scenery and solitude, beauty and interest as well as material resources like food or minerals; and against the interest of food production we have to balance other interests, like human health, watershed protection and recreation. (19)

Heaney's poems under discussion, "Kinship" and "Tollund Man," envisage a stage of this farming community. It is a state of sedentary agriculture.

As the life-system presented by Heaney is an early agricultural one, woman-centred, fertility-oriented, and polycentric in the sense that each areas/locality/ecosystem has its own peat or centre. A part of the produce of Mother Earth/Nature was offered back to Her. The human sacrifice was a part of that custom/concept. The keeping of certain parts of the land as peat, bog, forest, grove and others intact or sacred as untouched is also another form or displacement of the recycling idea, where the ecological sense and the ancient belief coincide. As Heaney writes in the twentieth
century and as the Irish culture continued long after Celtic invasions and settler-colonisation, the pure matriarchal culture cannot be completely presented but can be decoded. Studying ancient Irish

Such a socio-cultural analysis of ancient Ireland helps to fix the time factor of tinai of the poems like "Kinship" analysed earlier. Here also he expresses his wish to go to see the peats in Denmark and see the well-kept victims of ancient fertility rites.

Some day I will go to Aarhus
To see his peat-brown head,
The mild pods of his eye-lids,
His pointed skin cap. (Clark, ed. Arnold 1529)

The brown, muddy head of the victim does not evoke disdain. The pods on the victim's eyelids are designated to be mild. The speaker has affection towards the peat, victim and the mud there. Neither aversion nor distaste comes to the mind when such objects are ruminated over.

In the flat country nearby
where they dug him out
His last gruel of winter seeds
Laked in his stomach. (1529)
The seeds that have to sprout during the next spring undergo incubation in the victim's stomach during that wintry season. The poet imagines the shape of the victim. He is naked except for the cap and the noose used to strangle him to death for the sacrificial rite. The poet will stand before the peat, which is the altar of the Mother Goddess for propitiating whom the rite, is performed. If the goddess is the bride; the poet will be the bridegroom. It means that the poet will identify with the victim. As in all goddess-centred rites and customs, the sacrificial victim is the bridegroom, consort or lover of the female deity. The sacrifice is the most extreme form of union with the idol of worship or the ultimate goal of realization. The mysterious life process, complexity, fertility, abundance and similar ideas and ideals pertinent to Mother Nature or Earth as woman or female deity that makes the pain of sacrifice a pleasure or ecstasy. This imaginative ecstasy inspires the poet to become one with the victim. Soaking the consort in the peat, the goddess confers immortality upon him. He is canonized or declared to be a saint. Immortality is bestowed upon him by the sacred nature of the rite and ecological value by his central participation in the fertility ritual. The poet's/the narrator's witnessing of the site/sight confirms his loyalty to the Earth Goddess and his/the
Tollund man's martyrdom in the framework of the etymological signification of the term 'martyr,' which is witness:

I will stand a long time

Bridegroom to the goddess,

She tightened her toric on him

And opened her fen,

Those dark juices working

Him to a saint's kept body

Trove of the turf cutter's

Honey combed workings. (1530)

The process of transforming an appointed devotee into an immortal saint is presented. The Goddess or Her surrogate, oracle tightened Her collar on him and opens the peat with which his strangled body is deposited. There the dark juices of the lowland keep it forever. The sacred and immortal saint's body is added into the valuable collection of the boggy grass-gatherers and the highly complex, mysterious and multi-stored system of the inhabitants of the bog. The presence of the holy relic in the bowels of the land assures them the everlasting fruitfulness of their area.

The second part of the poem (1530) presents the problem faced by the poet, a city-dweller, who visualizes the ancient epoch. Bog
people might have thought that their peat-centred system of life would continue forever, and hence, it was not necessary for them to risk sacrilege. As the ancient life system exists no more, the poet has to think blasphemy.

*I could risk blasphemy,*

*Consecrate the cauldron bog,*

*Our holy ground and play*

*Him to make germinate*

*The scattered, ambushed*

*Flesh of labourers,*

*Stockinged corpses*

*Laid out in the farm yards. (1530)*

The ancient bog-dwellers would have been satisfied with the fertility of the land; but, the poet feels to invoke/invest miraculous powers with the marshes. All the dead-dwellers, labourers or victims have to be awakened and brought back to life. The corpses have to germinate. The mystery of the ancient and holy land should be translated into miracle. The self-contained, self-sufficient and recycling system of the early agricultural times has to be revived. Of the dead men, Heaney particularly remembers four young brothers kept in the peat. It seems that they had been executed
after carrying them in a tumbrel or farm-cart for miles before their execution and deposit into peat. In the last part of the poem, once again, the poet wishes to identify himself with a Tollund man or sacrificial victim.

Something of his sad freedom

As he rode the tumbrel

Showed come to me, driving. (1530)

The poet recites the names of regions in ancient Denmark where peat-sacrifices were performed. The poet feels unhappy over the sad death of the victims and the tragedy of man-killing parishes. But, at the same time he feels at home only at such sites and times:

Out there in Jutland

In the old man-killing parishes

I will feel lost,

Unhappy and at home. (1530)

It is relevant to add the remarks of Peter Childs on Heaney's bog poems in his *The Twentieth Century in Poetry: A Critical Survey* (182-189). In the context of the analysis of "Kinship" by placing it beside Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and Yeats's "Easter 1916" attempted earlier, Heaney's ambivalence towards Irish terrorism,
tragedy and revivalism/patriotism relates him to Yeats and his 
paganism to Coleridge. Peter Childs briefly opens up such 
possibilities / readings in his following observations:

The horror he finds in the ritual murders is balanced by the 
beauty he finds in the amazing preservation of the bodies, 
which seem to have become something more than human 
closer to ant or inanimate nature. This ambiguous response 
parallels his attitude to Northern violence in the 1970s; he 
shares the disgust but also feels his own tie of Catholicism 
and kinship. Eventually, the figures in the poems seem to 
shift in significance to Heaney, from being victims of an 
ancient ritual to duties of a natural religion with which he 
sympathises. (186)

Heaney affirms his kinship with the Irish folk and bog in "Kinship". 
Such a kinship is universalized by placing it in the wider context of 
Europe in the presentation of the "Tollund Man".

Establishing the gradual but steady return of the Green Man or 
deep ecological values and world-view, the British poet and eco-
spiritualist William Anderson in Green Man: The Archetypes of Our 
Oneness with the Earth refers to a world-view which projects "a 
world of deep kinship with trees and woods, to which people felt as
close on to their own families and tribes" (164). Heaney's poems "Kinship" and "Tollund Man" present such a world-view.

Heaney's bog poems—poems in which seashore and marshy places form the landscape—are of two kinds. Poems like “The Tollund Man” contain sacrifice. There are seashore poems that present a mood of meditation and rumination, where the mindscape is mild, sad but with peace, and it waits for some kind of communion with the harmony of nature. Poems analyzed below belong to this category.

"The Song of the Bullets" (Haw Lantern 42-43) is about the harmony that exists among the apparently diverse objects in the world. All the sentient and non-sentient things contribute to the continuing life force. Comets, bullets, planets, stars, birds, humans, mountains, the sky and all that present together sing a song of harmony. The song can be heard, its melody appreciated and its significance imparted to others. The poet’s silent communion with nature in the house yard near seashore at late evening or night happens to be an epiphany, the moments when the melody of the cosmos is revealed to him.

It is night. The poet is watching the sky. Stars and planets are seen in the firmament as if they have fixed themselves above a
dark hill. A star moves suddenly and reaches the zenith of the sky. Then it cuts across a curving path of a second light. The scythe point of the second light, that is its utmost curve, binds the star. The moved star is bandaged by the curve. The sudden flash of glory makes the poet aware of the interconnection among the different things in the cosmos. A song—to the poet it seems the song of fire balls—is heard. The sky at night mirrors life. All the temporal and the accidental go down; and, all the brilliant and permanent go up. In the case of a bullet or fireball the light goes high and the ashes down:

  Our casings and our blunted parts
  Are gathered up below
  As justice stands aghast and stares
  Like the sun on arctic snow. (42)

As a deep ecologist the poet does not privilege one thing over the other, the ethereal over the earthy:

  Our guilt was accidental. Blame,
  Blame because you must.
  Then blame young men for semen or
  Blame the moon for moon dust. (42)
But the poet finds something worthy of blame, which is the destructive fury of fireballs. They declare:

Mount Olivet’s beatitudes,
The soul’s cadenced desires

Cannot prevail against us. (43)

The vision of harmony disappears because of the threat of modern technology as epitomized in the bullets:

Now wind was blowing through the yard
Clouds blanked the stars. The still
And seemly planets disappeared
Above our darkened hill. (43)

Heaney’s meditation upon reading the language of nature in this poem comes in “From the Land of the Unspoken” (18-19) also. Here the poet proclaims: “Our unspoken assumptions have the force of revelation.” (19) He suggests that the loss of any language or any experience is partial death:

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. (19)

The interanimation/interrelation, indicated here, is an important postulation of biocentrism and deep ecology.