

The Concept of Nature in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney

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ABSTRACT

Nature is one of the most important themes that English poetry comprises. Most of the Irish modern poets tackle the concept of nature in their works. They depict the image of nature in many different ways. The purpose of this study is to analyse the theme of nature in selected poems by Seamus Heaney.

Heaney is widely recognised as one of the major poets of the twentieth century. He draws his tremendous joys and vitality from the Irish landscape, which enables him to explore himself and the mysteries of nature through poetry. His poems were also characterized by the titled "Death of a Naturalist", "Blackberry picking", "Churning Day" with colours, smells, tastes and experiences. In "Death of a Naturalist" Heaney distinctly explains everything the frogspawn, with a child's wide-eyed wonder and natural magic. In "Blackberry picking", "Churning Day" His attention to detail is impressive, minutely observing the people and their places of work, which he explains richly. These poems bear various images of nature. Heaney's poems contain a wealth of description of immense evocative force, implying the poet's intimate relationship with nature and a desire to find solutions to contemporary problems through the lens of nature. Profoundly and conveniently, Heaney connects art, nature, politics, religion, and memory. He emphasizes in his writings the work of man: ploughing, planting, butter churning, blackberry picking and potato picking. In his poetry, he embodies nature, childhood memories, places, and the sense of community in his family.

Finally, nature is one of the most significant concepts that Heaney deals with in his poetry. The natural environment and rural life on the Mossbawn family farm in County Derry are discussed in this research.

Keywords: Seamus Heaney, landscape, rural.

Introduction:

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) is considered one of the finest writers of the late 20th century in Ireland (Hill, 2000, p. 2). The most important Irish poet since Yeats." Heaney was described by Robert Lowell, the American poet, who would become friends with Heaney later in his life." The strength of the Irish experience is represented in most of Heaney's work. He was awarded the glorious Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995, and the jury thanked praising him for "works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past." (Bloom, 2003, pp. 18-20.)

Heaney's poems rely upon rural life and accidents. He creates pastoral pictures using simple synonyms with a mixture of common terms. As a poet, Heaney is the representative of Irish culture, and each of his poems cries out when he portrays the agony suffered by Irish society in-depth. (Ahmed, "Bardic Quality in the poems of Seamus Heaney: Heaney's style", 2018). In a dramatic style, Heaney can present secondary occurrences. His themes produce a noticeable distinction in his work. His poems partake a universal theme: there are, though, some poems that are various in a thematic sense. Also, his themes are connected to Irish citizens and Irish culture as well. Heaney is also a devotee of rural life and in his poetry, he can find pastoral pictures. (Ahmed, "Various Themes in the poems of Seamus Heaney", 2018). "The entire inclination of Catholic thought" was also recognised by Robert Welch as "sacramental," and thus argues that it "reverences profoundly all the minute activities of life and the flesh."

In this context, Heaney's creativity remained sacramental and he consistently understood "the importance of making this thing, here and now, different." This outlook expressed itself in his consistent poetic depiction of extraordinary ordinary objects; the thing itself moves and shimmers with a life of its own in Heaney's hands (Russell, 2016, p. 11). Furthermore, Heaney had many effects that inspired him in his life and, subsequently, his poetry. John Keats was a poet from England. Heaney regarded him as one of his main impacts. William Butler Yeats was a poet from Ireland. The influence of Yeats on Heaney can be seen in the many articles about Yeats that Heaney wrote.. ("Influences- Seamus Heaney", 2019).

"This is always, as it were, a life altogether elsewhere; and the elsewhere in Heaney is characteristically the life of memory, and specifically the memory of his childhood place, the townlands of his origins whose Irish names- Anahorish, Brough, Toome, Mossbawn, Bellaghy- are now such an indelible part of English-poetry, as are their accents, rhyme, and people. There is a real sense in which his poetry is permanent

homesickness, as the place is returned to again, but always with a different until its topography becomes the register of an immensely complex psychological, emotional, cultural and political terrain; until the place has become in the title of one of Heaney's collections of lectures, the 'the place of writing' (Russell, 2016, p. 1)

However, in a small farming village in Northern Ireland, Heaney was raised in a Catholic family in Mossbawn, County Derry. (Mukherjee, 2010, p. 1) Naturally, the rural landscape plays an important role in most of his writing, as most of his childhood experiences were on a farm. Throughout his poetry, Heaney wanted to combine memories of childhood with the picture of the Irish countryside of Northern Ireland. (Mukherjee, P. 83). Later, after his death, a number of his admirers noted that his words endure, live on and support us. One of his admirers, Neil Corcoran, a prominent critic of his work, says: "for all the strength of personality manifest in Heaney's life, it is to the poetry that will return. This is always, as it were, a life altogether elsewhere; and the elsewhere in Heaney is characteristically the life of memory, and specifically the memory of his childhood place." (Russell, 2016, p. 2). Since his earliest poems are focused on and around the farm and neighbourhood where he was brought up, Seamus Heaney is always referred to as a 'farm poet'. (McClements, "Death of a Naturalist by Seamus Heaney", 2020). The natural world is referred to by nature. Heaney lived on a farm and, as a young child; connected with nature in his everyday life. In his poetry, he often looks back at his childhood and often combines childhood and nature as one subject. ("The theme of nature in the poetry of Seamus Heaney", 2019). In 1966, Faber and Faber published his first collection of poetry, *Death of a Naturalist*, It was unusually well-received for a first collection, and critics subsequently had immense expectations of him, contrasting him with previous greats such as Wordsworth. (Mukherjee, 2010, p. 6). The theme runs through his first nature volume, pictures of his native hometown, and Mossbawn's farm. This is where he grew himself, and he was so addicted to it. He expresses bittersweet nostalgia for his childhood on a farm in Derry in this volume. Ted Hughes, William Wordsworth, Dylan Thomas back to Virgil, Gerard Manley, Hopkins and even Dante, as in the pastoral tradition that extends from Robert Frost. Heaney describes his rural agricultural home as his golden age or Eden. However, as soon as scenic rural magic flourishes in him, he expresses it with grim recognition of Ireland's farming and sectarian wars erupting or about to erupt just beyond the ditches and hedges of the farms. (Hart, 1992, p.3).

The Concept of Nature:

The most descriptive is Heaney's imagery of nature. Heaney's pictures of nature, not only the most dramatic, but also extraordinary words and initial phrases. To express his careful study of the poetry of nature, he uses all of his linguistic strength and skill. In Heaney's poetry, one of the most influential themes is nature. (Angela, "Common themes in Seamus Heaney poems", 2019). Terence Browns claims he has an "extraordinary gift in realizing the physical world freshly and with the vigorous exact economy. Heaney can bring everyday natural events before the reader's eyes". In his poetry, nature is a significant theme. "The place of writing" means the complex ways in which the home region of Heaney is intertwined with his concept of writing." For him, the place of writing is true and imaginary, written and oral, a permanent record and a palimpsest constantly written over by a generation of residents. (Russell, 2016, P. 2). Therefore, the work of Heaney portrays the evocations of life at the farm where Heaney spent his early childhood in Mossbawn. Here, nature is the source of childhood and inspiration. (Hanley, "The poetry of Seamus Heaney: some Recurring themes", 2018).

In Heaney's poetry, the terms "nature and landscape" are used to refer to a wide range of different intertwining places that connect to create a complex net of meaning: this is in line with Tilly's concept of nature and landscape as "a set of relational places." Barnes and Gregory claim that concerning the two terms. "whereas place is classically conceived as bounded and circumscribed, constituted by multifarious features and forms that stretch as far as the eye can see". (Helen et al. eds. , 2015, p. 44).

However, Heaney's literary career starts with humble aspirations, by his delving into the history of his youth. Nevertheless, he eventually expands his self-examination to put it with a shared history. He likes to think of his poems as 'soundings' that explore a shared and diminished community in the landscape. By taking it into a substantial relationship with the past, he tries to describe and interpret the present. He sees history, language and myth as related to nature, with territory and landscape, governed by a sense of the forces of nature. This countryside is sacramental. He is uniquely sensitive to the emblematic essence of natural objects and structures. In him, they invoke a deep sense of the numinous. He is open to intuitions, which connect the landscape to human female psychology and sexuality. Nature becomes a memory, a continuum, piety, a mother who is terrified, fecund, and an insatiable lover. Thus, in his childhood apprehension of nature on and around the family estate, the sacred image of a place has its roots. (Andrews, 1988, p. 3).

Images of nature have been divided into three poems in the present paper:

1. 'A swarm of frogs' in "Death of a Naturalist"
2. 'Harvest season' in "Blackberry picking".
3. 'Butter-making' in "Churning Day".

1. 'A swarm of frogs' in "Death of a Naturalist"

Heaney explains his childhood with nature in "Death of a Naturalist" as the theme of nature. Focusing on this flax dam where all the action takes place, he conjures up a richly evocative vision of the countryside. He provides such a sensory journey that even the most uninitiated city dweller feels a keen sense of the countryside's beating heart. A metaphorical death of the innocence of the speaker is the title. This illustrates a child's understanding of nature and his first experience with a swarm of frogs. In this poem, the portrayal of nature is rich, as the poetic instincts of Heaney bring out the Irish farm's rich diversity. (Mukherjee, 2010, p. 30). From a child's eyes, when he sees nature up close and watches as tadpoles become frogs, there is curiosity and excitement. However, as the poet sees the harsher side of nature and feels threatened and terrified by the end, the poem often portrays a loss of innocence. (Cash, "Seamus Heaney: Death of a Naturalist", 2013, p.4). "Death of a Naturalist" with its "Flax-dam" and "frogspawn" firmly places the poet again in a rural Northern Ireland setting, but the soothing landscape of the first stanza and the peaceful sounds of the voice of the teacher telling the young Heaney and the other school children about frogs mating gradually gives way to a terrifying realisation on the part of the young speaker that he has stolen.

In an interview, Heaney says, Book I: "fair seed-time had my soul and I grew up/ fostered alike by beauty and by fear" that " any fear I had was on the whole elemental fear. Wordsworth was afraid in the mountains, I was scared by frogs and rats...and frogs spawning, which went into my first poem, 'Death of a Naturalist'." (Russell, 2016, p. 42). Indeed, a collection of strong pictures and words are used by Heaney. Besides, ' Naturalist's Death' suggests that the poet devotes himself to his local land; he does not pull into a mere pastoral celebration of it. Alternatively, it exposes unsafe locations like bogs-and frightening creatures-frogs and rats. (Ibid.).

'Death of a Naturalist' illustrates the bond between the poet and nature and childhood with nature is exciting or fascinating. It is now, however, only in the kid as

a potential poet as in 'Digging' that something non-generic about the boy of the childhood poems of Heaney is found. This child, like Wordsworth's boy, Winander, thinks more than the normal pastoral child does. The revision of his initial awareness of sex is an intellectual shock that sets the child of 'Death of a Naturalist' as warm with inchoate feelings of interest, fear and disgust in the title poem of Heaney's first novel. The innocent version of sex for school teachers (phrased in the child's native voice retelling his school day) sets the scene:

Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too
For they were yellow in the sun and brown.. (Heaney, 1966, p.2)

This vivid recollection indicates that the lesson about the frogs is enthusiastic. The natural world of Miss Walls in 'Death of a Naturalist' is tamed, domesticated, made harmless and useful. But this is not at all the truth which the child perceives so vividly and explicitly. Like Hughes, by stressing his predatory, frightening aspect (motivated here by the child's shame at having stolen frogspawn). Heaney rejects the idealised, genteel portrayal of nature. The frogs become monstrous, legendary beings, figures of power from an obscene fairy tale, dimly reminiscent of puberty's sexual obsessions. Their habitat is the flax-dam, a dark and scary recess of unknown horror and uncontrollable fertility, festering in the heart of the countryside. The importance of the title 'Death of a Naturalist' by Heaney. This poem is not the work of a naturalist who looks and describes contentedly. Being a poet is coping with other things. The idea of Heaney is a Darwinian notion of enormous mechanism and gradual evolution, but what counts for the poet are the negotiations with the receptor and sensor nature of the creative mind. His title thus refers to the phase of moving to poetic 'sounding' beyond a mechanical, scientific descriptive perspective of nature. The relationships between man and nature, which extend into his relationships with property, culture, and conception, are involved in 'Death of a Naturalist.' (Andrews, 1998, p. 23).

Consequently, the childhood memories of 'Death of a Naturalist' constantly map out important pastoral images as centres to which Heaney has become increasingly tangential. It has set in a rural zone, close to Heaney's life. Heaney offers a colourful portrayal of the world's natural imagery around him, depicting his childhood interest in nature. (Cash, 2013, p. 4)

2. 'Harvest season' in "Blackberry-picking"

Heaney grew up in the Irish countryside on a farm. 'Blackberry-picking' tends to focus on Heaney's childhood memories. The annual experience of picking wild fruit in late summer, he remembers. It is about the loss of innocence and the transience of experience, metaphorically. A very nice image of blackberry fields is created by "Blackberry-picking" Heaney explains the harvest season and his love for blackberry picking. The poem begins with 'late August,' the words. It offers a guide to time near the end of summer. (Russel, 2016, p.43) There are heavy rain and sun for a full week at this time, and the blackberries begin to mature as a result. The poet says:

Late August, given heavy rain and sun
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.

(Heaney, 1966, p. 6)

Heaney illustrates various coloured berries here. A metaphor for grouping up is the blackberries shifting colour and ripening. To grow up, the poet uses bright colours. To represent different berries, such as raw berries and ripe berries, he uses vivid colours. The sweet fruit, "hard as a knot" with "summer's blood" in it, he sensuously describes. A delicious, juicy pulp fills the small, hard berries, enticing the poet with a 'desire' for picking. Indeed, the rural setting appears in "Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills/ We trekked and picked until the cans were full". It provides land for planting. The world is a farm since Heaney spent his childhood on a farm in Northern Ireland's surrounding countryside, reminiscent of a special moment. The poet shows the field of berries in a shining image. In his poetry, Heaney's close observation of nature and his capacity to make certain natural impressions. (Mukherjee, 2010, p.32).

In *The Making of the poet*, Michael Parker (1993), states: "The piercing nostalgia of 'Blackberry-picking' does not cease to be itself in becoming furthermore a type of all that transitoriness for which we have all wanted to weep". The rot of the hoarded blackberries:

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.
But when the bath was filled we found a fur,
A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.
The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush

The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.
Each year I hope they'd keep, knew they would not.

(Heaney, 1966, p. 6)

In the accents of childhood, 'it wasn't fair' calls over the years only to be replied by the final and definitive rhyme of 'rot' and 'not', so uncompromising after the half-rhymes of the previous lines. There can be no question about Mr Heaney's technical fertility, the deployment of rhymes and half-rhymes, the subtle picking up of clues, the sardonic pitying puns, and it achieves its reward in a directness, liberation from all anonymity that is always resonant and uncondescending. (Ibid, pp. 65-66).

1. Butter-making in "Churning Day"

The picture of the churning is another one from rural Ireland. Heaney efficiently depicts the minute observation of the churning. In the new world of widespread urbanisation, these images cannot be seen. The churning work's pace and effort often find expression in the poems. "Churning Day" An incident from his youth, the poet says:

A thick crust, coarse-grained as limestone rough-cast,
Hardened gradually on top of the four crocks
That stood, large pottery bombs, in the small pantry.

After the hot brewery of gland, cud and udder, cool porous earthenware fermented the buttermilk

For churning day, when the hooped churn was scoured.

(Heaney, 1966, p. 10)

A poem set in the childhood farm of Heaney; "Churning Day" describes the process of butter making in the dairy of the farm, through the poet as a boy's eyes. Minute descriptions of farm life, documented in inscrutable detail, carry to the reader the world of Mossbawn alive. Heaney focused on vivid imagery and a wealth of detail in this first volume of poetry, replete with the sights and sounds of modern farm life. The churning of milk into butter, the main picture in the poem, is milk. Heaney describes an event of some significance for a farm family. The poem starts with a description of the 'four crocks' that stood in the pantry, large pots of earthenware. Buttermilk, which

slowly fermented into a 'thick,' coarse-grained' crust, floated on top of the milk, was kept in this article. The poet describes the 'purified', 'sterile' churn, which before churning was carefully scrubbed and cleaned. (Mukherjee, 2010, p.48).

Not only is 'Churning Day' a fine invocation and unimpacted explanation of how milk churns butter, but the poem itself follows the arch of that process. It gradually becomes 'strong and rich, coagulated sunlight' and then eventually, a memory itself, recalls how the recent churning was remembered by the household:

And in the house, we moved with gravid ease,
Our brains turned crystals full of clean deal churns,
The splash and gurgle of the sour-breathed milk,
The pat and slap of small spades on wet lumps.

(Heaney, 1966, p. 10)

What is surprising is the dignity with which such simplicity, such as wet lumps, is invested in Mr Heaney. His theme is certain aspects that are natural or hereditary. In his work, what he praises is to be commended. (Allen, 1997, pp. 22-23).

Heaney draws the most beautiful picture in the world of Mossbawn here. Nature is beautifully portrayed; everything is reported to convey to the reader its people, their work, and their customs. As his mother takes the "first turn" on the churning day and carefully describes every part of the process. (Ibid.) The natural process constantly threatens to fill the poem to the point of satiety, but the human actions of sterilising, boiling and beating keep it in check and finally manage to create the alchemical commodity itself gold, in the form of butter:

Cheeks and clothes were spattered with flabby milk.
Where finally gold flecks
Began to dance. They poured hot water then,
Sterilized a birchwood-wool
And little corrugated butter-spades.
Their short-stroke quickened, suddenly
A yellow curd was weighting the churned up white,
Heavy and rich, coagulated sunlight
That they fished, dripping, in a wide tin strainer,
Heaped up like gilded gravel in the bowl.

(Heaney, 1966, p. 10)

The movement seems to be one from phase to stasis: even the 'gold' itself shifts from 'gold flecks/begun to dance' to 'a yellow curd, "gold flecks/ begun to dance" gilded gravel' and finally, 'soft printed slabs' across stages towards stasis. (Morrison, 1982, p. 40).

Nature and landscape become subjects; Heaney's poems contain explicit references to art. Nature is the intersection of Wordsworth and Heaney and their care for their natural world. In Wordsworth, as a source of inspiration, as a way of achieving a transcendental vision, as an integral part of the education of the mind of a poet (as sensitive to natural objects and phenomena separate from the consciousness of the poet). The land and landscapes of Heaney's nature serve to express the relationship of man to himself, his culture, nation, tradition, history and poetry. The land in Heaney is laden with sense, but it is rarely depicted as humanity's vacuum. (Stefanovic, 2001, pp. 243-256).

Conclusion:

The meaning of nature occurs on various sides; Heaney applies to people from the farm life of the countryside and circumstances. In "Death of a Naturalist", he mostly deals with his childhood memories, growing up on a small farm in Northern Ireland. "Churning Day" defines the act of producing butter and other items in the family dairy graphically, and "the house would stink long after churning day. In "Blackberry picking" is about blackberry picking, and the childhood joys of living on a farm are a metaphor for the essence of life itself.

In this way, in many of Heaney's poems, he sets nature and his rural upbringing as a backdrop, using different aspects to explain and create a comprehensive image of his rural life. He often frequently uses metaphors and images of farm life to explain those thoughts, emotions, and reasoning.

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