シェイマス・ヒーニーの『サンザシのランタン』における古典題材の使用について

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鷲塚　奈保

キーワード

ディオゲネス（古代ギリシアの哲学者）　テルミヌヌス（古代ローマの境界神）　ダンテ（イタリアの詩人、『神曲』の作者）　コヴェンティーナ（ローマン・ブリテン時代の水の女神）　ヘルメス（ギリシア神話における旅行者の神）

（要旨）

北アイルランド出身のノーベル賞詩人シェイマス･ヒーニー（1939–2013）の第 8 詩集『サンザシのランタン』は 1987 年に出版された。この詩集を特徴付けるのは広範囲に渡る古典題材の使用である。具体的には、ディオゲネス（古代ギリシアの哲学者）、テルミヌヌス（古代ローマの境界神）、ダンテ（イタリアの詩人、『神曲』の作者）、コヴェンティーナ（ローマン・ブリテン時代の水の女神）、ヘルメス（ギリシア神話における旅行者の神）などが詩の題材として用いられている。これらの古典題材は古代ギリシア・ローマから 14 世紀のフィレンツェまで時代や場所を問わず幅広い。しかしながら、この詩集では一貫して詩人ヒーニーが自らの生い立ちや故郷北アイルランドの政治的・社会的状況を「再考」（“second thoughts”）する為の枠組みとして機能している。

ヒーニーは『サンザシのランタン』が出版される 2 年前の 1985 年から、ハーバード大学教授としてアメリカで教え始めている。アイルランドを離れアメリカに渡った経験が、この詩集において新たな視点で自らを「再考」する契機となっている。また、50 代を目前にしたヒーニーは「自分自身にある一定の再考を行うこと」や「自らの形成された最初の自己（“first self”）に一定の距離を取ること」を強く意識し、その結果、この詩集ではそれまでの自身を俯瞰し、深く内省する詩が生み出されている。

自らの文化圏や言語圏の外にある古典題材は、詩人が生まれ育った土地や文化、そこで培われた自己を再検証する為の枠組みとして重要な役割を果たす。時代を遡り、英語圏を超えたヨーロッパの題材を用いることで、ヒーニーはアイルランドと一定の距離を保ちながら、自らの文化的ルーツや家族的背景、難航する北アイルランドの和平交渉などについて、これまでにない新たな視点から見直すことを可能とした。本論文ではヒーニーが各詩の中で取り組む「再考」を読み解きながら古典題材が果たす役割を明らかにする。

The Use of Classical Materials in Seamus Heaney's *The Haw Lantern*

Seamus Heaney's (1939-2013) eighth collection of poetry, *The Haw Lantern* (1987), was written while Heaney prepared himself for his "fifties": He was becoming more concerned with "a certain rethinking of [himself]" and a "certain distance from [his] first self," as the poet put it (Foster 132-133). The period of self-awareness and self-assessment, accompanied by a heightened sense of detachment or "distance" from his earlier understanding of the world, corresponds to the time when Heaney started teaching at Harvard University as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory several years previously. As a result of living away from Ireland since 1985, Heaney felt forced to make a reappraisal of his origins. Moving outside the boundaries of both his native country and his "first self" motivated Heaney to seek a new cultural framework from which to reexamine what he already knew. (1)

The purpose of the present paper is to closely examine Heaney's use of classical materials and reveal how they contribute to the "second thoughts" he expresses in *The Haw Lantern*—reflections on the first-given and familiar, the usual and personal around and inside himself. (2) This kind of self-examination and scrutiny, performed in midlife, springs from Heaney's renewed awareness of himself as an individual, detached from the ideas of community and solidarity, that is, the poet's higher consciousness of himself as a unique individual. (3)

I. The Greek Philosopher Diogenes

During the late 1980s when Heaney became conscious of the growing maturity of his poetic gift, he distinguished the function of poetry into two chief categories: one for collective and public consumption, the other for the individual and private. (4) There is also a clear distinction between the benign and the harsh. The awareness of the poet's role in society is a central theme in the title poem of the volume, "The Haw Lantern," where the red haw in winter, symbolic of the poet himself, is depicted

as a contradictory fruit with a double purpose:

> The wintry haw is burning out of season,
> crab of the thorn, a small light for small people,
> wanting no more from them but that they keep
> the wick of self-respect from dying out,
> not having to blind them with illumination. (*HL* 8)

The opening line of the poem encapsulates a sense of contradiction which the hawthorn/poet naturally embraces—"burning" as a fruit of winter. In a dull grey landscape, the intensity of fervor with which the red haw/poet shines bright in the outside air is "out of season." The phrase "crab of the thorn" has the same effect. The berry is round in shape and fascinates the people as a "little thing," and yet, when even lightly touched, its sharp thorn gives a pricking pain (Brandes 8). While seemingly genial and approachable, the haw/poet is really ardent and harsh; nevertheless, it serves only one function for the "small people"—to be a "small" good shining on their everyday lives. The importance of the haw/poet lies not in its influence but in its presence, and therefore the "light" should not be so strong as to shock or overawe the people—"not having to blind them with illumination." In the "actuality of [the people's] lives," Heaney acknowledges, illuminating what they do not know or understand, let's say, spiritual or intellectual enlightenment, is uncalled for (Brandes 8). Not confusing their ordinary lives is a rule that Heaney sets for his poetry since he "quelled hopes as a spokesman" (Vendler, "Second" 174). In other words, such a careful observation of his own poetic role arises from the "tender" side of Heaney who maintains "there's no reason why benign emotions shouldn't be able to find utterance" (Scammell 42).

The Haw Lantern, however, is a book that "goes a step further," as one critic, Stan Smith, notes, and the poet's "second" purpose is to reach the full growth of his "private consciousness" (234; Brandes 8). Heaney is here no longer a poet committed to the collective. On a cold day when the speaker's breath rises upward in the shape of a feather, the winter haw seen as symbolic of self-doubt and self-examination is transformed into a lantern that the Greek philosopher Diogenes carries in order to seek for "one just man":

> But sometimes when your breath plumes in the frost
> it takes the roaming shape of Diogenes
> with his lantern, seeking one just man;

so you end up scrutinized from behind the haw
he holds up at eye-level on its twig,
and you flinch before its bonded pith and stone,
its blood-prick that you wish would test and clear you,
its pecked-at ripeness that scans you, then moves on. (*HL* 8)

The "roaming shape of Diogenes" appears out of our white "breath." To use Daniel Tobin's words, it is from the "*pneuma* or spirit" that Diogenes "takes shape" (228). The way Diogenes appears here proves that the cynic philosopher who scrutinizes the speaker from behind the haw lives nowhere but inside us. Looking straight at the winter haw is equal to a psychic experience where in our mind's eye we see ourselves in the light of what we should be. Particularly for the poet whose thoughts are inclined to turn inward at this stage, what happens outside, whether large or small, intrinsic or extraneous, leads to a direct awareness or examination of himself.

It is before the "burning" haw lantern that the speaker feels nervous and insecure while finding the self tested, because the way the haw ripens with its "bonded pith and stone" epitomizes the moral and ethical qualities that the poet has to attain as a mature individual. Despite the difference in substance, the "pith" and "stone" form a harmonious whole in the haw. The image of total unity and harmony embodies an ideal state where the core of thoughts or "stone" is closely related to the essence of life or the "pith." In addition, the "blood prick" represents the poet's harsh scrutiny of himself for finding out what is incomprehensible or undesirable in his mind. On the whole, the haw preserves "ripeness" and offers a vivid example of mature fullness, although bitten by birds. This image of "ripeness" accompanied by external wounds further demonstrates that maturity can hardly be achieved in isolation or being sheltered from reality, and that the damage inflicted by the outside world is part of perfection as a whole.

In the poem, the red fruit of the hawthorn can be viewed as Heaney's version of "an impossible standard of human perfectibility" that Diogenes strives for wandering with his lantern, due to the haw's physical presence and characteristics revealed to the poet's inward eye (Tobin 228). For the philosopher, the ideal and the perfect are constantly aspired toward, yet they can never be reached; accordingly, with a sense of failure after the survey of mankind's possibilities, Diogenes walks away and starts his relentless/endless search again. It is through the examiner Diogenes, from outside Heaney's culture, that the second function of poetry is brought to the poem. According to Tobin, Heaney's self-examination for the purpose of "individuation" springs from "a source […] outside the native boundaries" (229).

The function of the indigenous, however, is unmistakable in the poem. Without the local haw before the speaker, the actual and the physical as observed with his own eyes, he cannot even see Diogenes' ethical lantern which requires his consciousness to reach a higher and wider level. William Scammell writes in his review of the book, when given two qualities or principles in Heaney's poems, "without the one you wouldn't have the other" (42). The haw, therefore, can be read as an emblem of the inner/psychic space that the poet cannot see; at the same time, it belongs to the outer/material world that he can clearly see and touch, the open world that appeals to the senses.[(5)]

II. Terminus as a Boundary God in Ancient Rome

In his essay "Something to Write Home About" (1998) Heaney maintains that the poem "Terminus" was written in the "mid-1980s when the political situation in Northern Ireland was totally locked and blocked" (56). This political stalemate is most clearly reflected in the first part of the poem, where the adult poet commands a view of his first world from the position of the Roman god Terminus presiding over boundaries.

The opening lines include a marked example of this Terminus position in the poem: "When I hoked there, I would find / An acorn and a rusted bolt" (*HL* 4). The key to understanding this introductory part is the verb "hoke" which means "dig[ging] around" in the Northern Irish dialect ("Something" 50). Here, the poet uses the dialectical word as a means of "return[ing] to the very first place in [himself]" ("Something" 50). Put another way, in order to start a reexamination of where he comes from, the speaker first pronounces the old familiar word and then metaphorically digs the ground of his native place. One critic, Terence Brown, claims that the poem is "a highly self-conscious, literary return to a world once taken wholly for granted," in which the poet becomes a "witnessing eye" that "makes a statement" (190).

In the second line of the poem, two objects appear before the Terminus-poet as an "acorn" and a "bolt"; they look similar in shape and size, but differ in origin and kind. Significantly, when observed carefully, the "bolt" finds itself abandoned for such a long time that its iron is covered with rust. This "rusted bolt" confirms that things cannot be held together by joint use as it no longer fits onto a nut. In metaphorical terms, this corrosion creates an unmistakable image of the unfixed and disused, thereby alluding to a Northern Ireland situation which was devoid of cooperative efforts toward reconciliation and settlement.

Another example of how the poem "Terminus" provides a powerful social and political commentary on Heaney's home is the following line where the speaker raises his eyes from the ground

so that “a factory chimney” and “a dormant mountain” are simultaneously in sight (*HL* 4). Here, the rural “mountain” coexists with the industrial “chimney.” Beside the “factory” in operation, however, the “mountain” is “dormant” and strangely inactive as if it is asleep. This stagnation presents a plain and unequivocal image of the suspended negotiation for peace in Northern Ireland because one side has its normal functions discontinued. The word “dormant” is also symptomatic of how local inhabitants are in a kind of mental inertia, sapped of energy and life. The poem mirrors the listless atmosphere that pervaded Northern Ireland at that time, where no further action or progress was expected on the political front.

In the poem, the Terminus-poet is also provided with a sensitive ear, an ear for the social and political climate in Heaney’s native place. For example, when the speaker gives his attention to the sound, he can hear both a car and a “horse” on the same road— “an engine shunting” and “a trotting horse” (*HL* 4). It may appear that the old and the new live side by side. However, the car moves off from the main line to the side (as is suggested by the word “shunting”), whereas the “horse” hurries forward with a short quick step. This separation, in fact, refers to the peace process in Northern Ireland which lacked concerted action during the period when Heaney wrote the poem, as it moved in disorganized directions. In the poem, the sounds of the car and the horse are, moreover, out of harmony while they are running. The image of discordance or disharmony corresponds to the contemporary political situation which was a “considerable dismay” to Heaney when the two sides were far from reaching an agreement: “the IRA’s campaign showed no sign of abating and the Thatcher government was prepared to live with what was termed an accepted level of violence” (O’Driscoll 289; “Something” 56). [(6)] In a style that refuses to be descriptive, preferring instead to be concise, Heaney acts as a poet of boundaries and presents a more balanced view of the two sides of the conflict. Symbolically, each stanza is two lines long, as if to show the poet’s original tendency toward the symmetrical.

Part two of “Terminus” makes a striking contrast with the first: Heaney offers a second thought to the original workings of his mind which often embrace contradictions as concerned with wealth:

> When they spoke of the prudent squirrel’s hoard
> It shone like gifts at a nativity.
>
> When they spoke of the mammon of iniquity
> The coins in my pockets reddened like stove-lids.

It was the march drain and the march drain's banks
Suffering the limit of each claim. (*HL* 4)

For a full understanding of this inward-looking part, it is necessary to keep in mind the "Parable of the Dishonest Steward," which illustrates a moral or spiritual lesson about the "prudent" use of one's wealth (Luke 16.1-13). In the poem, squirrels appear as "prudent" animals who store up nuts for the winter. In the context of the New Testament, the unjust steward is also "prudent" in his foresight, because he uses his master's property against a time when he may lose his position. Here, the poem "Terminus" focuses on the squirrels as they keep a "hoard" of nuts with wisdom; consequently, the "squirrel's hoard" is compared to the sacred "gifts" that the Magi prepare for the birth of Christ. In the first place, the poem provides an instructive example of how "true wealth" leads to justice and goodness—a principle beyond the daily give-and-take.

On the other hand, the wealth that the steward squanders for personal profit in a deceitful manner is "dishonest," the "mammon of iniquity" that exerts a powerful influence for evil. Here, the speaker acknowledges that he constantly engages in day-to-day living and cannot escape from such a negative influence. In the poem, upon hearing the story of the "mammon of iniquity," the speaker's greed and desire for gain are undeniably rekindled. The red glow of the "coins" in the speaker's pockets serves as a sure indicator of his own covetousness.

The Bible teaches us "no servant can serve two masters" and "you cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16.13); nonetheless, the speaker is here bold and honest enough to confess himself a poet of both—spiritual at one time while worldly at the other—"suffering the limit of each claim." Because of such an inevitable duality in his nature Heaney next considers himself as the local stream named the Sluggan in Northern Ireland, the "march drain" that forms the boundary between Bellaghy and Newbridge, between Derry and Armagh ("Something" 53). As a narrow river which divides his native land in two, the poet again holds a corresponding position to Terminus standing on the border. It can be concluded that being in the middle of conflict between two claims is a typical condition for Heaney to experience, whether it is cultural or moral, regional or linguistic.

Heaney writes the final line of "Terminus" in the present tense, where the speaker is caught in midstream, continuously searching for a way out of the present impasse. The third part offers a pithy observation of why the poet has reached such an extreme point where he cannot move forward or backward, to the right or left. In order to seek a definite answer to this problem, Heaney traces its origins back to his cultural and political background in a divided society:

Two buckets were easier carried than one.
I grew up in between.

My left hand placed the standard iron weight.
My right tilted a last grain in the balance.

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

I was the last earl on horseback in midstream
Still parleying, in earshot of his peers. (*HL* 5)

For the young Heaney, to keep the balance between two opposing forces constituted an integral part of his everyday life in the North, a place of division in which the people needed to be constantly aware of how to avoid unnecessary friction wherever possible. "Two buckets" to carry water is here used as a metaphor for the way in which the young Heaney lived peacefully "in between" while growing up.

The grown-up speaker now considers himself in the same middle position, between two banks of the river on the "central stepping stone," in the same dilemma the "last earl" faced when he held a parley with the Earl of Essex in 1599. The earl "on horseback in midstream" is Hugh O'Neill, who was a descendent of the renowned Gaelic family and the Earl of Tyrone appointed by Queen Elizabeth I. For the earl O'Neill, an Irish representative who belonged to England, to make an independent move only for the sake of his people in Ireland would have been practically equivalent to an act of treachery against the Tudor armies to which he owed allegiance. In Heaney's estimation, O'Neill is "one of the first to suffer within himself the claims of the two different political allegiances that still operate with such deadly force inside Northern Ireland to this day" ("Something" 54).

As a leader of divided loyalties, O'Neill is congruent with Terminus because they both epitomizes the "limit" the poet often reaches as a writer to mediate between two opposing sides. O'Neill is trapped as a negotiator between his duty to England and his sympathy for Ireland, while Terminus is a god immobile and "earthbound" between two places ("Something" 56). At the mid-point from which one cannot take another step, they both become involved in a "condition of stasis" and "*rigor vitae*" that cannot see the "emergence of a better future," as Heaney claims ("Something" 58). What Heaney hopes

for in the poem, in Edna Longley's terms, is to "create a third," that is to say, to make the terminal into a starting point for the open and liberated (201). Throughout the poem, however, no further vision for a breakthrough in the situation has yet been envisaged, although the poem is again symbolically composed of three parts. Helen Vendler asserts that the poem "paradoxically" has "three parts" because of Heaney's "delibera[te]" choice (*Heaney* 122). Despite such a stylistic gesture toward going beyond the confines of the given and the fixed, what opens to Heaney/Terminus in the poem is still limited to two sides in conflict with each other over a small region of the earth.

III. The Italian Poet Dante, the Author of *La Divina Commedia*

The poem "A Postcard from Iceland" describes Heaney's visit to the boiling stream in Iceland, where the speaker appears as a traveler who goes downward to "test" the water. The outset of the poem makes a classical allusion to the scene of Canto 12 in the *Inferno*, where Dante and Virgil descend to the river of boiling blood Phlegethon in order to learn the nature of sin. Heaney writes in a style reminiscent of Dante, although the rhyme is irregular:

> As I dipped to test the stream some yards away
> From a hot spring, I could hear nothing
> But the whole mud-slick muttering and boiling. (*HL* 39)

In the *Inferno*, Phlegethon is a river of "fiery passions," a place of punishment in which murderers and tyrants—the passionate souls who were driven by "cupidity" and "rage" to commit violence against their neighbor—are immersed according to the gravity of their crimes and utter a piercing scream in pain (Sayers 146; Singleton 90). In Heaney's poem, Dante's scalding and bloody river is reduced to a mere stream from the hot-spring water, thereby making a barely audible sound. At first sight, the muddy stream is bubbling on the surface, yet the water itself is in fact disappointingly tepid when tested by the speaker. Compared with Dante's fiery Phlegethon, the "whole mud-slick" lacks in vigor and strength to such an extent that the "lukewarm" river gives only a low "muttering" voice.

Mark Musa explains in his commentary on the *Inferno* that the pilgrim is usually "a student eager to learn" (92). In Canto 12, the guide Nessus takes the traveler Dante along the crimson river and shows him where sinners are condemned in various forms. Here, instead of asking many questions as he usually does, Dante becomes silent and meditative because he is urged by Virgil to listen closely to Nessus' explanation of the sinners: This attitude manifests the educational progress the pilgrim has

achieved throughout his journey toward a complete understanding of the system and order of God's punishment. Contrary to this Dantean scene, all the information and knowledge that the speaker in Heaney's poem receives from the Icelandic guide is simply concerned with how the "lukewarm" water feels in his hand, which the speaker thought he "already" knew:

> And then my guide behind me saying,
> 'Lukewarm. And I think you'd want to know
> That *luk* was an old Icelandic word for hand.'
>
> And you would want to know (but you know already)
> How usual that waft and pressure felt
> When the inner palm of water found my palm. (*HL* 39)

In Old Icelandic, the word "*luk*" is etymologically related to the word for "hand." This knowledge itself offers nothing new and special to the speaker. However, when the speaker dips his "hand" into the water which is neither too hot nor too cold, without being conscious of the temperature, he readily receives tactile stimuli, and the "lukewarm" water becomes connected to his sense of touch. Here, the already-known knowledge in his mind is suddenly transformed into a first-hand sensory experience in his "palm"; as a result, the speaker can rediscover "How usual that waft and pressure felt" as he identifies the "lukewarm" water.

According to Shelley C. Reece, Heaney can only reach the "source of things" when the "meaning of the word" is united with the "touch of some being that Heaney feels" (199). With his hand in the "lukewarm" water, the speaker of the poem perceives a sense of "waft and pressure" in reality. By virtue of this distinct physical sensation, the speaker is able to realize that the word "lukewarm" is not merely a piece of information he retains but the substance he feels. This marked physical experience, which renews the speaker's knowledge, preserves a revelatory moment when Heaney can ascertain the nature of what he experiences in the physical world and recognize that "the inner palm of water found [his] palm." According to Seamus Deane, the poem offers "a tentacular hand-shake between the speaker and the thing spoken of" (32). In Edna Longley's words, the poem captures "Heaney's sensuous intimacy" between hands and words (84).

In the poem "North," written about ten years before the publication of *The Haw Lantern*, the speaker does not accept the "unmagical / invitations of Iceland" and chooses to stay home and "burrow"

his “word-hoard” (*North* 19-20). The poetic direction taken by Heaney at this stage was “always turning inward” in order to “trust” what he knows (Foster 63). In “A Postcard from Iceland,” by contrast, it is outer experience that allows the speaker access to the “inner palm” of the already-known, and he can thereby become more fully aware of the feel of the “usual” water which is as familiar and ordinary as to be normally considered not worth noticing. Here, an act of going outside the confines of his native place is a useful approach Heaney develops for the rediscovery of how the “usual” feels in reality. In other words, only when Heaney moves away from his Irish locality, he is permitted to gain a fresh insight into things he has experienced before. In this postcard poem, Dante’s otherworldly journey serves as a key framework that places the speaker outside the normal course of daily happenings, where Heaney awakens to grasp the real significance of how he perceives the world.

IV. Coventina, the Romano-British Goddess of Water

In relation with the poem “Grotus and Coventina,” asked about the classical reference which seems to be “esoteric” or “elitist,” Heaney answered that “it wasn’t a matter of ‘reference’ but of *res*, of the things themselves” (O’Driscoll 295). The poem is chiefly concerned with the sacred object, the “altar” which was dedicated by a Roman soldier named Grotus to the local water goddess Coventina in northern England. In “Grotus and Coventina,” Heaney’s use of material objects marks a new departure for his poetic imagination, because the physical presence or features the speaker treats do not act a primary role in evoking memories or emotions as they usually do in his earlier work.

Instead of the thing itself, the story of the thing as a votive object exerts a powerful influence on the speaker; consequently, the poem deals with the speaker’s own private affairs, that is to say, the domestic and the marital. This agrees with Neil Corcoran’s observation that “narrative,” rather than “image and metaphor,” constitutes a notable feature of the collection *The Haw Lantern* (137, 138):

> Far from home Grotus dedicated an altar to Coventina
> Who holds in her right hand a waterweed
> And in her left a pitcher spilling out a river.
> Anywhere Grotus looked at running water he felt at home
> And when he remembered the stone where he cut his name
> Some dried-up course beneath his breastbone started
> Pouring and darkening—more or less the way
> The thought of his stunted altar works on me. (*HL* 42)

The goddess Coventina is a deity worshipped during the Roman period, and her shrine is located near Hadrian's Wall, which was built between 122 and 127 AD by the Roman emperor Hadrian. On a visit to her shrine, Heaney assures that the "altar" dedicated by the soldier Grotus is, in fact, "a little stunted brickbat of a thing" (O'Driscoll 294). In the poem, at the sight and thought of this "stunted altar," Grotus is most intensely reminded of home as a foreign soldier: In Britain the Roman Grotus is seized with an innermost longing for home "when he remember[s] the stone where he cut his name." Such a spontaneous feeling toward his home and family is usually suppressed or kept hidden, not felt even by Grotus himself in everyday life. However, the stone "altar" that Grotus made for the goddess of water Coventina acts as a catalyst stirring "Some dried-up course beneath his breastbone."

During his visit to the Coventina shrine, the speaker is inspired by Grotus' "altar" to remember the happy days he spent with his family in Glenmore in County Wicklow, Ireland, especially the day when the electric water pump suddenly stopped functioning. In order to illustrate how the whole house was thrown into disorder as the water became temporarily unavailable in their cottage, Heaney uses conversational tone and derogatory terms which express hurry and confusion the family produces in a state of emergency: "our idiotic rage / And hangdog phone-calls to the farm next door" (*HL* 42). When the water supply returns to normal, however, the Latin-derived word "jubilation" heightens a lively sense of satisfaction and gratitude the family experiences:

> And when it began to hammer on again,
> Jubilation at the tap's full force, the sheer
> Given fact of water, how you felt you'd never
> Waste one drop but know its worth better always.
> Do you think we could run through all that one more time?
> I'll be Grotus, you be Coventina. (*HL* 42)

The word "jubilation" originally refers to a "joyful noise." Simultaneously with the pump starting to create a powerful sound of water, the whole family shouts with joy and pleasure and expresses "Jubilation at the tap's full force." Such an exultation reveals an extraordinary moment when the importance of the "sheer / Given fact" is suddenly appreciated as an invaluable source of life, and consequently the poet comes to a fuller realization of how his life has been maintained by something so ordinary and everyday as to be normally overlooked. This scene, in fact, alludes to his closest supporter Marie Heaney, because

"Grotus and Coventina" is intended to be a "votive" poem that the poet dedicates to his wife. At the end of the poem, for example, the speaker refers to his wife and expresses a wish to attach renewed significance to married life by saying, "Do you think we could run through all that one more time?" The speaker is here the modern counterpart of Grotus who asks for the help of the goddess Coventina, in the hope that he can recover a steady flow of feeling to his "dried-up course" and enrich his inner life.

Such a very private affair, however, cannot be adapted to become subject matter for Heaney's poems without any literary reference to the materials that he finds outside his culture. In Heaney's poems, even the word "wife" often needs sensitive handling so that the speaker/husband summons the courage to "broa[ch]" it. (7) In the actualities of married life, what is felt moment by moment is usually a living thing, so disordered and changeable, sometimes so complex and delicate, as to be impossibly vague and formless when expressed directly. Heaney claims that "what's true in life" does not "automatically" lead to what is "true in art" (O'Driscoll 204). In the creative process, Heaney is obliged to transform the raw material of personal experience so that it can assume the appropriate shape as a piece of art. Without any reference to outer sources that can reshape the actual and the everyday, a piece of writing might be reduced to a random collection of inconsistent images and words, or a mere fragment of an embarrassing personal account. This agrees with the conclusion of the world-famous Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz in his essay "A Quarrel with Classicism," in which the poet confirms he is unable to reach reality "without intermediaries of one or another sort, whether they are other literary works or visions provided by the whole past of art," because the "real" is "simply too abundant" (73-74). In "Grotus and Coventina," the innermost feeling, which has been left unsaid in Heaney's mind as obscure in his everyday life, achieves creative expression through the mediation of a personal story from Roman times. The story of Grotus' votive stone allows Heaney to newly treat and develop the most intimate details of his own personal life in the form of a dedicatory poem.

V. Hermes as a Herald Equipped for Travelling in Greek Mythology

In the poem "The Stone Verdict," which is related to the ancient Greek god Hermes, Heaney deals with the end of his father, where the father reaches his journey's end and stands at the "ultimate court." Here, the speaker's father waits for the time of divine "judgment" when God judges him at the end of his life. Heaney's father is dressed in his usual cattle-dealer style, "With his stick in his hand and the broad hat." Significantly, this very style corresponds to a traditional representation of Hermes as a herald equipped for travelling, with broad-brimmed hat, shoes and a rod. Heaney's father, named Patrick Heaney, died in October 1986, and the poem was written as a memorial to him, where the father is symbolically

linked with Hermes as the god of travelers.

The poem reflects the father's lifelong doubts about language as he was a traditional cattle-dealer and farmer who trusted silence more than words. At the following scene, when the "sentence" is pronounced in the "judgment place," the speaker's father is imagined to "expect more than words" in the afterlife:

> When he stands in the judgment place
> With his stick in his hand and the broad hat
> Still on his head, maimed by self-doubt
> And an old disdain of sweet talk and excuses,
> It will be no justice if the sentence is blabbed out.
> He will expect more than words in the ultimate court
> He relied on through a lifetime's speechlessness. (*HL* 19)

The poem illustrates how Heaney's father is marked by his "lifetime's speechlessness." For instance, his father "relied on" silence more than "sweet talk and excuses," because being reticent is an appropriate and honest means for him not to deceive himself in his relations with others. According to Heaney, when his father maintains "embracing silence," it signifies a "comeback rather than withdrawal" (O'Driscoll 311). Here, the father's refusal of speech does not mean being evasive or disguised, noncommittal or neutral; on the contrary, it frames a straightforward answer to the world around him which makes him constantly feel unease because words are often carelessly and insincerely spoken. Heaney's father instinctively chooses to adopt such an uncompromising and conservative attitude in order to be true to his mentality and fulfill a resolution to be more honest and sincere. In short, the poet's father is the old-fashioned type who is disdainful of words used dishonestly as a tool for self-interest or self-defense. (8) Thomas C. Foster claims that Heaney's father represents "common laborers" in a rural district who are often "wary of speech, mistrustful of language, conscious of how easily one may say the wrong thing" (135).

In view of his father's "lifetime's speechlessness" as well as his obstinate adherence to silence, the speaker determines that a fair "verdict" should be delivered to his father by something more definite and certain than words. In search of such an exceptional "verdict" in silence, Heaney explores his "cultural baggage" and discovers the appropriate example of Hermes in the book entitled *The Greeks and Their Gods*, which Heaney has used as an important source for his work since he bought it in a Cambridge

bookshop (O'Driscoll 295). The classical reference again serves as a pivotal framework with which Heaney can reorder and understand his local reality—the loss of his father:

> Let it be like the judgment of Hermes,
> God of the stone heap, where the stones were verdicts
> Cast solidly at his feet, piling up around him
> Until he stood waist deep in the cairn
> Of his apotheosis: maybe a gate-pillar (*HL* 19)

In Greek mythology, Hermes stands public trial for killing dogs, where he is consequently acquitted by the "voting-pebble" that the gods silently cast "at his feet" (Guthrie 88). A pile of "stones" around him is nothing but an unspoken message; however, it offers the formal statement that Hermes is free of the charge. In an interview with O'Driscoll, Heaney acknowledges that he felt "the words in the word-hoard were in danger of being dematerialized" when the poem was written (287). As compared with language, the stone itself is firm and solid, not fluid or unfixed. Heaney focuses on this inherent quality and uses the "stones" as an emblem of a true saying which proves his father's credibility and integrity. Moreover, Heaney's use of Hermes' stones as "verdicts" mirrors an aversion to the "duplicities of language" that the poet developed during the mid-80s, when Ireland "entered the world of media-speak and postmodernity," and an abuse of language became rapidly conspicuous both in the political scene and among the public (O'Driscoll 471, 288). In the poem, the silence of stones acts as forces of opposition to the multitude who speak with a double tongue. Consequently, Hermes' stones provide a new outside perspective from which Heaney can make a critical appraisal of the country he comes from.

Hermes is traditionally represented by a carved stone, and in Greece a cairn of stones suggests Hermes holds divine status by the roadside. In Heaney's poem, such a mythological cairn or signpost is replaced by a stone pillar in the Irish countryside, where the dead father appears as he is invited by the silence pervading the space. In Vendler's metaphysical reading of the poem, the silence of the place is equivalent to a "presence in itself" which the "absence of the dead" creates "in life" ("Second" 172). According to Heaney, silence can produce a "place" of "solitude" in which "a person would find it hard to avoid self-awareness and self-examination" (O'Driscoll 292). However, in contemporary Ireland—the place referred to as "speech-ridden"—the loose and "talkative" tongue forms a dominant force of reality so that the otherworldly and the mythical are both overridden by the "world of our daily experience" (*HL* 20; "Something" 52):

Or a tumbled wallstead where hogweed earths the silence
Somebody will break at last to say, 'Here
His spirit lingers,' and will have said too much. (*HL* 19)

The mythical "silence" originally connects the speaker's dead father to the world of Hermes in the poem; however, in reality such literary associations are easily broken by the secular power of those who cannot keep their mouths shut, when someone starts a piece of reporting on the spiritual, saying "'Here / His spirit lingers.'" The last phrase "too much" summarizes the recent deplorable situation in Ireland, where the poet's imaginative linkage with the classical world is directly exposed to a constant threat of social realities—the living conditions of the masses as contrary to the calmness and stability of Hermes' stones. It is Ireland in changing times against which the stones as the symbol of truthfulness and sincerity directs their unspoken criticism.

VI. Conclusion

In summary, the present paper has demonstrated how Heaney's *The Haw Lantern* is characterized by its extensive use of classical materials: Diogenes in the title poem, the Roman god of boundaries in "Terminus," Dante's journey to Phlegethon in "A Postcard from Iceland," the Romano British goddess of water in "Grotus and Coventina," and Hermes in "The Stone Verdict." These references derive from various sources and belong to different periods and places; however, they have a notably consistent function as a framework for the "second thoughts" the poet develops throughout the book in relation to where he comes from and who he was.

Importantly, such a self-examination as well as self-reflection is made simultaneously with the evolutionary process Heaney goes through during the mid-to-late 1980s (before the publication of *The Haw Lantern*) in order to achieve poetic independence and express what he can individually "believe" at a personal level—in place of the realities that he used to accept by collective agreement and share with the other members of the community (*HL* 53). In short, Heaney's pursuit of "the matter of Ireland" has long been restricted to the narrow limits of fidelity to his county; therefore, in *The Haw Lantern*, Heaney needs to keep a certain constant distance from Ireland and preserve his individuality so that he can observe his own mental and emotional processes as a separate individual and reflect on the formation of his "first self" from a higher and broader perspective ("Cornucopia" 63). As a result, Heaney can exercise introspection and more carefully and thoroughly examine his own thoughts and

beliefs; at the same time, he can take a more detached and enlightened view of his home and provide a personal or critical commentary on the present situation.

According to Heaney, this sense of "detachment" is "something which Irish writers have all had to develop not only over the last twenty but over the last hundred years" ("Anglo-Irish" 9). (9) In Vendler's words, the "detachment" involves a crucial state in which the poet's self is emotionally separated from the "treasured pieties and formed rules" of the place where he comes from ("Second" 173). This sense of separation or "detachment" from his older dedication to his place and people in Ireland is the very thing Heaney aims to acquire and develop by the use of classical materials in *The Haw Lantern*, that is to say, the "habit of mind" which allows Heaney to look deeper into himself and produce a more individual picture of the real world ("Anglo-Irish" 9).

Notes

(1) In her review of *The Haw Lantern*, Helen Vendler claims that the main theme of the collection is a "struggle" between the "old" and the "new": "The struggle to be one's old self and one's new self together is the struggle of poetry itself, which must accumulate new layers rather than discard old ones" ("Second" 167).

(2) "Is it any wonder when I thought / I would have second thoughts?" Heaney, "Terminus," in *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber, 1987) p.4; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (*HL* 4).

(3) This awareness is explained most conclusively in the second last poem of the book "The Disappearing Island," which highlights the sense of loss and disappointment experienced by the Irish abbot St. Brendan on a legendary voyage with a band of monks to a promised land. The poem originates from a legendary story in Ireland, known as the voyage of St. Brendan, in which the medieval abbot and several monks land on a whale in full belief that it is an "island." In the poem, St. Brendan and the monks reach the island after a long period of drifting on the sea and start to make a solid basis for a new spiritual life there. The "hearth" they produce during their stay in the island is one of the most notable manifestations of their enthusiasm for settlement, and the "cauldron" hung "like a firmament" suggests the vastness of their aspiration toward the abstract principle of the common "good" (*HL* 53). In short, St. Brendan and the monks are firmly united in a shared sense of vitality and purpose while working for a common cause as long as they believe the island is real. Despite the seriousness of their commitment and dedication as well as the intensity of their fervor, the island suddenly disappears into the sea "like a wave" when St. Brendan and the monks look down from the sky to their feet (*HL* 53). Here, Heaney dramatizes a pivotal moment when the speaker is released from his former commitments to collective realities, which were strongly believed within the community.

According to the book *Allegory and Imagery* (1966), by Rosemond Tuve, the only theme that all allegorical stories are provided with is "loss and salvation" (qtd. Tamplin 99). Heaney, in his essay "Cornucopia and Empty Shell: Variations on a Theme from Ellmann" (1989), makes a similar point, asserting that "nothingness could be pregnant as well as empty" (60). In the poem, Heaney uses the concluding word "vision" with a double meaning in the same manner, not only as something communal and hopeful that eventually ended in disappointment, but as something emerging and imaginative that the independent poet can "believe" as an individual.

(4) In a 1988 interview, Heaney maintains that the poem "The Haw Lantern" is concerned with "a true middle-years vision of the function of poetry": "Also I liked the phrase in the poem, 'a small light for a small people.' That's a true middle-years vision of the function of poetry. And yet I shouldn't really say that. The function of poetry is to be more than a 'small light for a small people.' The function of poetry is to have a bigger blaze than that, but *people* should not expect more from themselves than adequacy" (Brandes 8).

(5) John Drexel claims that "Heaney's lantern casts its light into the enclosed places where we live or where we might learn to live," referring to the "obsolete" definition of the word *haw* as "an enclosed piece of land" (501).

(6) Heaney refers to the "eighties" as "a decade of considerable dismay in Ireland": "It began with the hunger strikes; and, as it proceeded, the stalemate in the North showed no signs of being broken, nor did the violence show any signs of abating. […] Romantic Ireland died again. […] I felt unmoored from much that I had grown up with" (O'Driscoll 289).

(7) "After eleven years I was composing / Love-letters again, broaching the word 'wife' / Like a stored cask, as if its slender vowel / Had mutated into the night earth and air," Heaney, "The Skunk" (*Field Work* 45).

(8) In an interview with Henri Cole, Heaney gives an interesting comment on his father's cultural and linguistic background: "The Heaneys were aristocrats, in the sense that they took for granted a code of behavior that was given and unspoken. Argumentation, persuasion, speech itself, for God's sake, just seemed otiose and superfluous to them. Either you were an initiate in the code or you weren't. It had to do with their rural background, with the unspoken Gaelic thing that was still vestigially there" (94).

(9) The poem "The Disappearing Island" focuses on this sense of "detachment." St. Brendan loses a sense of communal solidarity when the promised land that the pilgrim monks accepted as true ceases to exist; consequently, St. Brendan becomes no longer a member of the group and looks at an empty sea alone. Here, St. Brendan realizes the land to which he has been committed with his monks is nothing but an idea of the island as an illusion, by saying "The land sustaining us seemed to hold firm / Only when we embraced it *in extremis*" (*HL* 53). Moreover, St. Brendan becomes so keenly aware of himself as a separate individual that he is distanced from other monks and all he has believed in their company by stating, "All I believe that happened there was vision" (*HL* 53). On an allegorical level, this story of "loss" and "emptiness" illuminates a significant stage of creative development that Heaney thinks an

Irish writer is forced to undergo during his/her middle period when "the place of writing shifts its locus into psychic space" ("Cornucopia" 68). Only when deprived of an expectation of rewards from the outside world are writers allowed to discover an unexplored region of their private selves in order to start a new creative engagement with a "vision"—an inner "vision" they start to cultivate in order to achieve their own image of personal and artistic requirements. More importantly, the final line of the poem corresponds to the last line of Heaney's next collection, *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (1990). By using the singular "I" in the present tense, the poem confirms that the illusory island has disappeared with the negation of the poet's earlier commitment to his people and country and goes even further and suggests that it appears instead as a renewal of "vision" which Heaney can individually believe and develop as he is liberated from the "collective pieties" (Brandes 8).

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