

“Body And Soul Apart”: Sense of Death In Seamus Heaney’s Human Chain

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ABSTRACT

Heaney’s *Human Chain* delves deeply into themes of mortality, presence, and absence, making it an excellent text for exploring the sense of death through hermeneutic analysis. Seamus Heaney (1939- 2013) is considered the best poet after W. B. Yeats, and his esteemed reputation among English writers makes his poetry well-known among readers and critics. After a long journey and a lot of experience Heaney gained from the troubles that faced Ireland and what came after, he reached his final step in the *Human Chain*. Going through the twelve collections of poetry that he wrote, from *Death of Naturalist* 1966 to his final collection, *Human Chain* 2010, Heaney explores a variety of themes that are related to his past and present. This article will investigate the concept of death in this volume by selecting the related two poems “Had I not been awake” and “Chanson d’Aventure”. This study applies a hermeneutic textual analysis methodology to analyze the selected poems. The objective of this study is to analyze the two poems and thus find the core of self that the poet reached in this volume of poetry, accepting the idea of death in the final steps of his life.

Key Words: Contemporary Poetry, Death, Memory, *Human Chain*, Katabatic writing, Anabatic writing

Introduction

Heaney’s later poetry continues to explore the theme of death, reflecting his evolving understanding of mortality and the human experience. In his last book, *Human Chain*, He returns to the theme of familial genealogy that he had explored in his earlier works. He combines the past, present, and future in several poem sequences to foster interactions between his family’s generations. The collection starts with memories of his parents and ends with a poem dedicated to his granddaughter; this intergenerational bond is the most important link in the *Human Chain*. The poems he wrote for his parents integrate personal and collective memory, drawing on traditional depictions of mothers and fathers and connecting them to more general cultural portrayals of the family. It is possible to understand Heaney’s handling of intimate familial memories in *Human Chain* and *Aeneid* 6 in light of Svetlana Boym’s definition of “reflective nostalgia”, (Joanne Piavanini, 2017, 184) which is characterized by a desire to return to a place that has been lost.

Heaney uses translation, adaptation, and reference to inscribe his family into the canon of literature. Since the poems constitute a filter via canonical texts, they exist in the gap between individual and collective memory. The most significant figures in Heaney’s life, both past and present, are seen through the lenses of other writings, including Pascoli’s poetry, the Virgilian epic, and medieval Irish poetry. In this collection, Heaney evokes a sense of mobility between the past, present, and future by appropriating and transforming various texts. Renate Lachmann spots that: “Literature inscribes itself in a memory space into which earlier texts have inscribed themselves. It does not leave these earlier texts as it finds them but transforms them by absorbing them” (Renate Lachmann, 2004, 172). Heaney discovered analogies between current events and canonical texts in his early adaptations, but in his last works, he shifts them through the inclusion of family recollections. The incident that the poet faced in his life that I will mention now had an impact on this writing alteration. The theme of death that Heaney focused on his last collection is all about dead people. Dead people are revolving around in Heaney’s memory influencing his psyche and writing themes.

In 2006, Heaney and his beloved wife Marie were out with friends for a birthday party. Heaney was unable to move his left side when he went to get out of bed in the morning. He had had a stroke in the late hours of the night. An ambulance was called, and a physical therapist who was also a guest was called. Heaney and his wife were spending the night at a guesthouse, and it was necessary to carry him down the stairs. After the ambulance arrived, the patient was brought to a medical facility. The three sections of "Chanson d'Aventure" describe the period he spent in a rehabilitation facility, his ambulance ride, and his experience with hemiparalysis. The poems in *Human Chain* delve into various aspects of human existence, from the personal to the political, and showcase Heaney's ability to blend the everyday with the profound. The stroke He faced in 2006 awakened his sense of life and death with positive observation. A close encounter with death can enhance one's perception of life. Helen Vendler defines this as "the inexplicable resurgence of primary first-order desire amid the exacerbations of death's third-order reflection" (153). The first poem in his collection *Human Chain*, "Had I not been awake" (HC, 3) declares this awareness of himself as a man and poet. During his 2009 interview with Robert McCrum, the poet discusses his rescue mission, which has an impact on him as follows:

The trip in the ambulance I always remember," he says, "because Marie was in the back with me. To me, that was one of the actual beauties of the stroke, that renewal of love in the ambulance. One of the strongest, sweetest memories I have. We went through Glendorn on a very beautiful, long, bumpy ride to Letterkenny hospital" (McCrumb 2009). He was, as McCrum (2009) describes it, on the road to recovery in a relatively short period of time a few weeks referring to his hospitalization as "a rest cure".

After writing *Human Chain* some forty-four years later, the author was a Nobel Prize winner, a former Harvard and Oxford professor, a global celebrity, and a long-time professional poet and researcher. Heaney has long been one of the greatest critics as well as aesthetic thinkers; therefore, it would have been beneficial for him to continue to be exposed to other poets' work and to write about other poets' work (Eugene O'Brien, 2). The physical health of the poet was not stable during the former years of his life, and the stroke had a massive influence on his desires and feelings. It's been told that encountering a glimpse of death forces you to oversee and evaluate what you have. The time he spent lying in the ambulance made him rethink and reevaluate the important things he has in his life. His wife Maria, was a big support for him, and thus she was mentioned in the poems. The stroke and the journey that Heaney went through in the ambulance woke up the desire in him to write about different themes in this collection, and death is the most noticeable theme. Going through the twelve collections of poetry Heaney wrote during his life, we can see the shifts in topics and themes that are related to his life and his surroundings. *Human Chain* is a collection of poems he writes that pay attention to different topics and ideas revolving around the poet's mind.

In the *Human Chain*, people are transformed via memory as opposed to merely reproducing past depictions of family. The poet revisits significant topics and ideas from previous collections, even though it is impossible for him to have anticipated that *Human Chain* would be his last collection to be published. This poetry collection was seen by numerous critics as the poet's acceptance of his mortality (Troy Jollimore, 2010). Sean Lysaght claims: 'In *Human Chain*, the poet enters the space of his mortality where he too will be absent one day and discovers a new consolation, not in terms borrowed from Christianity, where the accent is on redemption, but in pagan, classical terms where the poet hands over to posterity and is guaranteed an afterlife in the esteem of others. In late 2010, Heaney declared to the BBC: "I didn't have such a strong sense of mortality running through the book until the reviews began to appear. It daunted me. I thought, this sounds like he's writing his obituaries" (Eimear Flanagan, 2010). He believed that the *Human Chain* had "an element of reprise" rather than being a collection of poems that alluded to his death (Joanne Piavanini, 2017, 185). However, Heaney acknowledges that, until they made it clear to him, he was unaware of how frequently the theme of approaching death had appeared. The poet was unconscious of the approaching death to him but, it was clear in his writings. In every phase of his life, Heaney is experiencing a special factor that affects his personality and inner self, which pushes him to translate feelings into words. Every collection of poetry has been given a title, and the last title he has chosen, *Human Chain* has a deep meaning. He employs a poetic line that is held, interrupted, and left hanging at different points in time, yet at other moments it appears whole and complete in its rhythm. It seems as though allowing the rhythm to reach its full potential would be untrue to the nature of the event that inspired the poem and to the conflict between the knowledge of the depressing details that the somber feeling of loss can provide and the pure possibility language itself can offer. *Human Chain* is a poetry collection of shadows and recollections, of whispered things, of subterranean travels, of translations and elegies, of silences and echoes. It summons the spirits of three painters who dedicated their lives to painting the Irish light and weather: Colin Middleton, Nancy Wynne-Jones, and Derek Hill. John Keats, who penned a late poem titled "This living hand, now warm and capable of earnest grasping", is invoked with a gentle reverence in the three-part poem "Chanson d'Aventure", which describes travel by ambulance following the stroke (Colm Tóibín, The Guardian). Heaney describes it as "my once capable warm hand, hand that I could not feel you lift and lag in yours throughout that journey when it lay flop-heavy as a bellpull" (The Guardian).

The research gap of this study revolves around the question of life and death and their role in shaping the poet's skills, inspiring him to go through his memory and culture to enlighten him and his poetry. Experiencing glimpses of death through the stroke is well enough for him to mention the theme of death in this collection. Death is an interesting topic that I inspect in the poems of his last poetry collection. Two poems are chosen to be analyzed in detail, looking for the sense of death the poet felt and experienced. The hypothesis is that death is fatal and all creatures will die soon or later. But before someone leaves this world a print should be made.

The poet is capable of creating and establishing what he feels into words and that was made exactly by Heaney. A man who sinks deep into philosophy and culture is ready to translate his feelings into words. The poet draws his light from the culture he lives in and the theme of culture is the reflection and representation of the author.

Literature Review

In her essay published in "The Soul Exceeds its Circumstances": *The Later Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, edited by Eugene O'Brien, Magdalena Kay asked a question "Does the imagination dwell most upon the death of one's body or one's mind?" (53). To answer such a question, the latter may seem delightfully oxymoronic, a notion that smacks of materialist unbelief if its conviction in the afterlife is strong. If metamorphosis instead of death means starting a journey across uncharted emotional and intellectual territory instead of passing away. However, what if the imagination is caught between longing for the promise of a new life somewhere else and lamenting the fading animal of the body of one's own, a parent, a friend, or an artist? (Magdalena Kay). Modern elegies composed in the wake of political violence are rooted in the history of classical lament, in which a bereaved singer "communalizes" emotion.

In Seamus Heaney's early poems, death is typically violent and unexpected; political aggressiveness and retaliation are common causes of death, and the slain dead reappear in the living. Although there are also non-political deaths, dying is frequently related to society. When Heaney pays tribute to her mother in "Clearances" in 1987, a unique event occurs: her exquisitely imagined return is counterbalanced in this universe by unanticipated quiet and clearings. For Heaney, death will always be a subject for moral reflection, but it also becomes a question of looking past the terrible moment, appreciating its transformational potential while simultaneously admitting its tragic weight. Thus, as for the poet, death becomes more personal for him than communal.

In Nick Laird's words, it is Heaney's 'Book of the Dead', centered on sadness and loss'; for Eamon Grennan, it is the poet's 'first book of old age', while in Colm Tóibín's view, it is a book of 'shades and memories'. Heaney claims that when it comes to death, modern poetic imagination is always trapped in a "stalemate between the death mask of nihilism and the fixed smile of a pre-booked place in paradise" (*The Redress of Poetry*, 1995 153). It is human ties rather than heroic self-sufficiency that Heaney emphasizes in his last collection of poems, *Human Chain*. The ties of love and care that bind the living to the dead enable people to face, accept, and survive death. These ties are clear in his poems in this collection, which is a very significant and unique collection compared with the others.

Methodology

Seamus Heaney's collection of poems is a poignant exploration of mortality, memory, and the intricate connections between life and death. This collection of poems reflects Heaney's evolving understanding of death, shaped by personal loss and cultural heritage. Heaney's poetry often draws from personal experiences, particularly the loss of loved ones. Critics such as John Wilson Foster (2011) argue that the collection serves as a meditation on grief, where Heaney confronts the emotional weight of death through intimate reflections. The poems encapsulate the process of mourning, revealing how personal loss shapes identity and influence the poet's voice. Heaney's ability to articulate the nuances of grief resonates with readers, allowing them to engage with their own experiences of loss.

This study applies the hermeneutic analysis methodology to analyze the theme of death and its role in Heaney's last poetry collection. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the philosophy's leading authority, the word "hermeneutic" is derived from the Greek word "hermeneutic", which denotes art manifest, interpretation, analysis, and disclosure (Oerther, 2020, 293-298). The chosen work of Heaney is being analyzed using a methodological technique based on a psychological viewpoint. This study analyses the poet's self and experience and also offers a textual interpretation of two of his poems. The study makes use of several elements, most notably his relationship with his wife as well as his connection with his ancestors. The study utilizes the different factors that marked a significant change in the poet's self in the later stages of his life. Heaney underwent different phases in his long life that marked a change in his writing style and themes in his poetry collections. The *Human Chain* marks a new philosophy for him that is attached to the concept of death that is linked to his life. The stroke he faced marks the beginning of that change.

Analysis and Discussion

The question of "Had I not been awake I would have missed it"

Andrew J. Auge examines Yeats's persistent struggle with mortality in the context of the most important contemporary philosophical interpretation of death's significance in human life. Death has been regarded as essential to human existence and as necessary for humans in general. Death becomes a dividing line that unites people into unique totalities when it is recognized as an impending event that precedes all of the self's endeavors rather than as a far-off destination. This being towards death, to borrow Heidegger's terms, involves recognizing mortality as the "own most non-relational possibility not to be bypassed" (Heidegger, 1996, 232). It implies that the person who faces death with authenticity acknowledges that it "does not just 'belong' in an

undifferentiated way to one's own Da-sein [being], but it lays claim on it as something individual" (Heidegger 1996, 243). Similar to this Heideggerian stance, Jahan Ramazani finds in Yeats's "self-elegies" an unwavering acceptance of death that sets off a process of self-recapitulation and ultimately solidifies the self into a unique "aesthetic whole" (Ramazani 1990, 163-164). Heaney's approach to death is very distinctive, as the poet has his philosophy in life, and that philosophy can be affected by the circumstances, he faces every day.

When Simon Critchley insists on "pace", Heidegger says "that death is first and foremost experienced about the death or dying of others, in being with the dying in a caring way, and in grieving after they are dead" (Critchley & Schürmann 2008, 144). Heaney had experienced death before the stroke, but his experience was of a special kind. He represents death in different poems in his collections of poetry. In his book *Human Chain*, Heaney revolves around the theme of death with different characters who influence him. As for Derrida, in his book *Aporias: Dying Awaiting (one Another at) the Limits of Truth*, he clarifies the same point but in a succinct manner that being towards death in due course means accepting "the death of the other in me" (Derrida 1993, 76). According to Derrida, the process of preserving the memories of the dead and leaving behind traces of our fleeting selves is what it means to be alive. The basic binary oppositions of self and other, presence and absence, life and death, and being and not being are undermined by surviving, much like the related Derridean metaphor of the specter (Eugene O'Brien, 33).

Close contact with death can enhance one's perception of life. In his collection *Human Chain*, Heaney blends the past, present and future in his poems. The family lineage was a dominant feature of his early poetry and is flourishing again in his last book. The book consists of poems dealing with the personal matters of his family and connections through different generations. These memories started with a poem to his wife and parents and ended with a poem to his granddaughter. The spark that lit his creativity to come up with such fine poems with gorgeous themes is a result of the stroke he encounters. It had a two-sided effect on him one positive and the other negative. Heaney's negotiation with personal memories in this collection and in *Aeneid 6* can be analyzed in terms of Svetlana Boym's notion of "reflective nostalgia", which is identified as the poet's longing for a lost home. As if he is in a position to go through a journey through the past to be reunited with the dead. He contacted the people he used to be with in the past and there is a longing to join them.

The poem "Had I not been awake" by Seamus Heaney was composed following a stroke the author experienced in 2006. Poetically, the poem celebrates the life and energy of the natural world, which the narrator believes gave him the courage and determination to persevere before and after his stroke. The poem starts with a continuation of the title, in which Heaney expresses his appreciation for being awake because it means he did not miss the mysterious "it". This thing's potential identity is a major source of fascination in the poem. Heaney draws our attention to the surrounding natural environment, particularly the wind and its noises, with his usually expressive poetic eye. As the poem progresses, it becomes evident that the narrator finds courage and inspiration in nature's strength, which gives them the will to live.

Had I not been awake I would have missed it,

A wind that rose and whirled until the roof

Pattered with quick leaves off the sycamore

And got me up, the whole of me a-patter,

Alive and ticking like an electric fence:

Had I not been awake I would have missed it, (HC, 3).

In this sense, the discomfort the inverted commas cause is specific to the period of suffering rather than the period of recovery; Heaney is not considering his recuperation but rather the stroke itself. This agonizing moment would have passed him by if he hadn't been awake or poetically aware. When considering the event solely from the perspective of its physical consequences, it may seem like a strange attitude, but from the perspective of a poet, it is evident that suffering and the observation of suffering are equally important for inspiring poetry, in addition to healing. According to this interpretation, the poem describes the stroke and the reappearance of inspiration as being the same thing, rather than one influencing the other after healing. The third stanza, "Returning like an animal to the house", features poetry that is "dangerously" accompanied by a stroke. Heaney "would have missed" the "courier blast", which conveys a message of physical misery accompanied by a rebirth, if he had not been awake to the sensations that were both poetic and painful that night in Donegal (Charles Bailey, P. 5).

It came and went so unexpectedly

And almost it seemed dangerously,

Returning like an animal to the house,

A courier blast that there and then

Lapsed ordinary. But not ever

After. And not now. (HC, 3).

Death as a Gate to the Unknown in "Chanson d'Aventure"

One of the most well-known and respected poets of our time, Seamus Heaney, won the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature, solidifying the impression that most people already had of him: a towering presence, a maestro, an eminence. And he's indeed getting on at age 71, he has also failed to prevent every negative consequence of growing older. After having a stroke, Heaney had to stop writing and engaging in other actions for over a year. Heaney yet continues to write with the energy and freshness of a young poet despite everything. *Human Chain*

is a collection of poems that can easily be placed with such outstanding previous collections as *North* 1975 and more. In this poem, the encounter with death is clear and that love is present in this meeting. Death approaches in this terrible journey as human love attempts to maintain itself, the lovers' gaze "ecstatic" yet "bisected" by dread, danger, and illness. This may be the call that everyman receives and that the humiliated inability to declare love after "A Call" is made up for years later when husband and wife continue to be together, "everything and nothing spoken, /... no transport / Ever like it" (HC, 14).

The chanson d'Aventure is the literary counterpart of the Romans d'Aventure, the chivalric literary works that first appeared in France in the middle of the fourteenth century. In addition to Middle English, Chansons d'Aventure was also written in the insular French dialect known as Anglo-Norman (Philip Bennett, 2012, p. 525). They are characterized by two elements: a typical romantic action in which the poet is either the protagonist or an observant spectator, and a frame that is frequently a fairly traditional scene, such as taking a walk in the woods. In *Human Chain*, Seamus Heaney describes a katabatic-anabatic experience in his life in the poem "Chanson d'Aventure", when he plays the roles of both witness and hero. As previously stated, the anabasis is the frequently skillfully described episode in which the hero returns to the surface following a more extensively described voyage into and through the underworld. In this poem, the emphasis is shifted, with the anabasis becoming the focal point of the narrative instead (Gesche Frederike, 2020, P. 32).

These poems are more than just lovely expressions of appreciation and affection. Patients who relate the story of how they fell into a medical or psychological imbalance are known as illness narratives. They can therefore be regarded as katabatic narratives. In light of this idea, the parallel story of a recovery from disease is an anabatic tale. An illness narrative's katabatic and anabatic avenues might differ greatly in their imbalance. When there is no recovery, there is no ascension; when there is a sudden illness followed by recovery, the decline is quick and oftentimes so quick that it cannot be repeated, leaving just the potential for an anabatic story. An illustration of this type of narrative is the recounting of a stroke. The disease is a transient phenomenon, as the name suggests, and the katabasis is a free fall (Gesche Frederike, 2020, P. 33).

His body is utilized by others in the opening stanza; an extensive number of verbs depict him as an inert, heavy thing, similar to coal in "Slack" (HC, 33- 44) or a sack of grain in "Human Chain". The poem opens with a brief epigraph that quotes two lines from "The Ecstasy", a poem by John Donne. According to it, love is a spiritual union that is fulfilled by a bodily union. It lays out the main ideas of the poem, which are connection and disruption, soul and body, love and warm intimacy.

Strapped on, wheeled out, forklifted, locked

In position for the drive,

Bone-shaken, bumped at speed,

The nurse a passenger in front, you ensconced

In her vacated seat, me flat on my back

Our postures all the journey still the same,

Everything and nothing spoken,

Our eyebeams threaded laser-fast, no transport

Ever like it until then, in the sunlit cold

Of a Sunday morning ambulance

When we might, O my love, have quoted Donne

On love on hold, body and soul apart. (HC, 33- 44).

The poem's first section recounts the ambulance ride to the hospital, where Heaney is taken with his wife. In the opening lines, Heaney describes himself as "strapped on, wheeled out, forklifted, locked in position", a witness to his handicapped state, which brings us to the lowest point of his katabasis: complete inactivity. The alliterative "bone-shaken, bumped at speed" trip, which contains a nurse and a "you", as the following verse makes clear, then ushers in the anabatic ascent. The "you" in the ambulance is Heaney's wife of more than 40 years, who is seated beside him. They communicate with their eyes instead of words. Heaney's body is unable to speak at the moment due to his sudden sickness, but their spirits are still in communication: "When we might, O my love; have quoted Donne/ On love on hold, body and soul apart." These lovely assonant lines consist of ten rounded "o" sounds until the final word, "apart", enters the picture.

The word "Apart" also appears at the beginning of the second part of the poem, and the entire phrase "Apart: the very word is like a bell" is a preface that is suggestive of Keats' opening line from "An Ode to a Nightingale". This line from Keats' poem captures the sensation of being ripped from his dreams and returned to his devastated reality. Heaney's and his wife's primary fears are being "apart". This anxiety stems from the abrupt illness, which suggests that they may part ways through death, as well as the lack of a sensory connection at the moment because Heaney was unable to feel most parts of his body. The plosive sound of "apart" connects it to recollections of people and places, as well as bells ringing at church and school.

Apart: the very word is like a bell

That the sexton Malachy Boyle outrolled

In illo tempore in Bellaghy

Or the one I tolled in Derry in my turn

As college bellman, the haul of it there still

In the heel of my once capable

Warm hand, hand that I could not feel you lift
 And lag in yours throughout that journey
 When it lay flop-heavy as a bellpull
 And we careered at speed through Dungloe,
 Glendoan, our gaze ecstatic and bisected
 By a hooked-up drip-feed to the cannula. (HC, 33- 44).

Heaney's family has lived in the village known as Bellaghy since he was a teenager. There in the church cemetery lies the grave of the Heaney family. The bells again draw attention to John Donne, as the epigraph has brought the metaphysical poet to the fore. This time, the focus is on his sermon "For whom the bell tolls" (John Donne, 'Meditation XVII') in which the tolling bell denotes death. Looking back on this episode, Heaney's memories of childhood, family, and church highlight the gravity of the situation, even if it wasn't immediately apparent to him. Writers that use katabatic style write from memory; it is essentially a memorizing process. Additionally, it is possible to view literary connections and intertextuality as katabatic, with works being lifted from the depths of memory and given new life. Heaney retrieves his katabatic, memory-retrieving associations from the stroke incident as well as his recollections of it through the composition of this poem.

It's possible that the line "This living hand, now warm and capable/ of earnest grasping" (John Keats) from an untitled Keats fragment is referenced in his poem, "once capable warm hand". Keats knew that he would soon pass away from TB when he penned these lines. For a poet, an incompetent hand could also be equated with a less flexible mind because it hinders the writing process' spontaneity. However, in Heaney's situation, the bodily physiological connection is more important. Heaney's hand seems "flop-heavy" and dead, not even able to convey the feeling of being held. He is now unable to grasp a bell pull with it. The bodily bond between a husband and wife is now replaced by a visual one. Their "ecstatic gaze" is interrupted by the "drip-feed to the cannula", whose mid-thickened shape transports the listener back to the opening stanza's bell pulls. Heaney seeks out his forebears by referencing and rewriting Donne and Keats, using this as a means of establishing a connection with the realm of death. Heaney takes readers on a catabatic voyage as he visits both a literary past and the deceased poets who inhabited it. Of course, the use of quotations and variants in his poems assumes a readership that is well-read and has a good memory, allowing it to attain a kind of passive participation in this illusive circle (Gesche Frederike, P. 36).

Seamus Heaney had to relearn how to walk throughout his recovery. He makes a comparison between himself and the Greek statue known as the Charioteer of Delphi from the classical era in the third part of the poem.

The charioteer at Delphi holds his own,
 His six horses and chariot gone,
 His left hand lopped
 From a wrist protruding like an open spout,
 Bronze reins astream in his right, his gaze ahead
 Empty as the space where the team should be,
 His eyes-front, straight-backed posture like my own
 Doing physio in the corridor, holding up
 As if once more I'd found myself in step
 Between two shafts, another's hand on mine,
 Each slither of the share, each stone it hit,
 Registered like a pulse in the timbered grips. (HC, 33- 44).

The phrase that refers to the missing arm is the only one in the poem that is without its second half, which is "lopped". The statue is incomplete, lacking not only the horse and the chariot but also his left arm, which is described as "his left arm lopped". Unlike statues from later in the classical era, which exhibit a fluidity of captured movement, the charioteer is an upright, standing statue. But like Heaney, who was losing control of his left side of the body, he looks forward with his right hand, "eyes-front, straight-backed". Heaney is reminded of his father's hands supporting him when he walks between the handles of a plough the hands holding him between each shaft of the parallel bars used for physical rehabilitation. The vibrations of the plough sliced into the earth felt to him "like a pulse", as if the surface itself had life. The earth, the father's shade, the guides, the danger, and his wife's renewed love all come together in this last scene to situate the poem in the katabatic-anabatic tradition.

The poem depicts a story of illness, recuperation, and rediscovered love. However, as was already indicated, there is an additional element that exists in all recovery narratives: writing about one's disease and how to get better is a form of story ownership. This is now "my" narrative, not just some dry-worded account from someone else in a hospital file. As with any patient, including Nobel laureates, writing can be a coping mechanism, particularly when dealing with serious sickness such as a stroke. Though Heaney's poetry evokes beautiful, hopeful visions of reborn love, his stroke must have seemed like a terrifying brush with death. Though he didn't pass away at that time, he might have. He could have stopped talking, but he didn't. The stroke was a terrifying experience for Heaney and his family that affected his life in general. Additionally, he was able to share his journey, just like any other hero who has returned from war, because he emerged from the underworld of disease. The poet came back after one year of the stroke with a determination to share with us his experience with imminent death.

Conclusion

Death is something fatal and imminent, and it will come one day. Anyone would change mentally and physically when a glimpse of death is encountered. The Nobel Prize laureate Seamus Heaney saw and felt it earlier, which caused him tremendous pain and suffering. The hard experience influenced his poetic creativity, forcing him to alter the course of his poetry to include new genres and themes. Heaney has always been a loyal poet, writing about his relationships with his family, his friends, his home environment as a child, his academic community, and his nation. Throughout his career, the effects of this bond have varied. Different themes have been used in his twelve major books of poetry, and these books influenced his inner self to produce such fine poetry. These later volumes bear substantial influences from the Aeneid and the katabatic getaway of Book VI; in particular, they shape his book *Human Chain*. Heaney's recollections and the shades he meets on his voyage are given fresh life as if he journeys to the realm of his departed loved ones like Aeneas's journey to the Underworld. Furthermore, this rebirth holds out hope for a future enhanced by the past. The two poems that have been analyzed in the Analysis and Discussion part of my paper are example of what I have just stated.

In his later poetry, the poet often conveys a sense of acceptance regarding death. While he acknowledges the pain and sorrow it brings, he also emphasizes resilience and the strength found in human connections. This duality reflects a mature understanding of life's complexities, encouraging readers to find solace in their relationships. In summary, Seamus Heaney's later poetry presents a nuanced exploration of death, intertwining personal reflection, natural imagery, memory, cultural context, and themes of acceptance. His work invites readers to contemplate their own experiences with loss and the enduring connections that shape our understanding of life and death.

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