



ISSN: 2957-3874 (Print)

Journal of Al-Farabi for Humanity Sciences (JFHS)

<https://iasj.rdd.edu.iq/journals/journal/view/95>

مجلة الفارابي للعلوم الإنسانية تصدرها جامعة الفارابي



## Memory and Resistance: A Postcolonial Reading of Seamus Heaney's Seeing Things

Sara Ammar Abdulhussein

Prof. Ridha Thanon

Dept. Of English, College of Arts, University of Basrah

”الذاكرة والمقاومة: قراءة ما بعد الاستعمار للمجموعة الشعرية ”رؤية الأشياء“ لـ شيموس هيني”

□ ساره عمار عبد الحسين

□ أ. رضا ذنون

□ كلية الآداب / قسم اللغة الانجليزية

### Abstract

Published in 1991, Seamus Heaney's *Seeing Things* explores the postcolonial themes that are embedded in the poet's work. Seeks to investigate Heaney's complex engagement with Irish legacy, colonial legacy, exile, and cultural memory; to achieve this goal, Heaney combines classical allusions, vernacular Irish experience, and spiritual contemplation rather than addressing colonial trauma through argumentation. Based on postcolonial theory, particularly Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space," this paper contends that *Seeing Things* merges Ireland's divided history with the poet's familial and personal history. Key words: Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things*, postcolonial poetry, Irish legacy, cultural memory, hybridity, exile, resistance.

### المستخلص

تستكشف المجموعة الشعرية "رؤية الأشياء" التي نشرت عام 1991 مواضيع ما بعد الاستعمار المتصلة في أعمال الشاعر. وتسعى هذه المجموعة إلى دراسة تفاعل هيني المعقد مع الإرث الأيرلندي والإرث الاستعماري والمنفى والذاكرة. وبغية تحقيق هذا الهدف، جمع هيني بين الإشارات الكلاسيكية، والتجربة الأيرلندية العامية والتأمل الروحي بدلاً من معالجة صدمة الاستعمار من خلال الجدال. تماشياً مع نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، وخاصةً مفهوم هومي بابا ل "الفضاء الثالث"، يظهر هذا البحث بأن هذه المجموعة "رؤية الأشياء" تمزج تاريخ إيرلندا المنقسم مع تاريخ الشاعر العائلي والشخصي.

Seamus Heaney's mature poetic voice in his 1991 collection, *Seeing Things*, explores postcolonialism, cultural memory, and the lasting effects of colonization that continue to impact people today. *Seeing Things* was written after Heaney's father's death and during the last stages of the Northern Irish "Troubles." It shows a poet looking beyond the political problems of the time to a deeper exploration of heritage and legacy. As Edward Hirsch notes in his review, the poems in the collection "cross thresholds between past and present, physical and spiritual, Irish and classical, 'losses balanced by marvels (6)". Heaney discusses postcolonial issues, such as national legacy, colonial power, exile, cultural memory, and hybridity, but not in an overt manner. Instead, he achieves this through personal and imaginative "crossings", developing a postcolonial path from "*Seeing Things*" to demonstrate how Heaney's later poetry adopts a postcolonial viewpoint. As critics observe, Heaney's poetics keeps a "coherent vision of Ireland, past and present" while also accepting a cosmopolitan hybridity and a "new distanced perspective" (Doğan 174). Placing *Seeing Things* in the context of Irish literary history and utilizing relevant research, one can see how Heaney's growth reflects the postcolonial writer's search for cultural memory and inhabits an "in-between" space, ultimately giving credit to wonders beyond the limits of colonial stories (177). Seamus Heaney became a poet in a country that had been "beset" by colonial oppression and its aftermath for a long time. From his early childhood, he was aware of having two legacies: an Irish and an English one, as he puts it: "Irish, yet writing in the English language," Yoo-Hyeok Lee, for instance, discusses Heaney's "the ultimate hybrid state of a postcolonial poet" (6). He knew that he walked a fine line between being a nationalist and being

a colonialist. Kearney-Jane Wallart says that Heaney's art often "undertake[s] a discreet postcolonial disestablishment of [the] classics"(35) and inherited stories, subtly changing them to "echo the contemporary situation of the Northern Irish predicament." In other words, Heaney explores the cultural legacies of both the colonizer and the colonized, inhabiting a space that challenges accepted histories. Upon its publication, the collection received controversial critical opinions. Jefferson Hunter said that *Seeing Things* is "more spiritual and less concrete"(801) than Hunter's earlier work. Words like "spirit" and "pure," which were not common in Heaney's early, grounded poetry, now appear to create a new, distanced perspective and indeed a new mood (808). This change did not mean that postcolonial issues were no longer important; it meant that they were changing." In *Seeing Things*, he places Ireland's colonial legacy within a broader context of myth, memory, and imaginative vision. *Seeing Things* does use Dante and Virgil's visions of the afterlife as examples of how to deal with loss and history. Heaney situates the Irish experience in conversation with imperial Rome and medieval Christianity by drawing on these classical sources. This implicitly takes back those big stories for a postcolonial setting. Maggie Greaves states that Heaney turned to Virgil's Aeneid, Book VI, at essential points in his career, "to examine the role of poetry during the Troubles...and to honour his father" (110). He was sceptical of Virgil's imperial epic, saying that he was "distrustful of what he criticised as its 'imperial certitude.'" Heaney's version of "The Golden Bough" focuses more on personal loss and family love than on the epic's triumphant Roman destiny. This is a clear shift in focus after colonialism: the poet takes the colonizer's literature but "thwarts [its] original meaning and scope" to fit an Irish, local vision. I have already foreseen and foresuffered all, / From the first step of the journey on, / And everything that happened on it. (1-3) So, Heaney's growth can be seen as going through what Sung Sook Hong calls "hybrid strategies," which include resistance, appropriation, and re-creation. Hong calls *Seeing Things*: "a new vision beyond hybridity." He deals with cultural duality so well that he creates a transcendent third space. As he put it in one of his poems, "things beyond measure (2)" can be "sensed, if never directly seen (803) The title of the collection, *Seeing Things*, is a sly reference to both the phrase "seeing things" (which means hallucinating) and the act of really seeing things. The poet invites us to reconsider how both colonial history and our memories might be viewed in a new light through the imaginative lens. *Seeing Things* is full of this tension between the English language that was passed down to them and the Irish "voice" that calls to them. The poems do not directly address English rule; instead, they explore Irish heritage through memory, landscape, and the revival of words that were on the verge of being lost. In "Fosterling," the last poem in the book's first section, Heaney uses local dialect in an obvious way: "the immanent hydraulics of a land / of glar and glit and floods at dailigone"(lines 6-7). The poem is rooted in the Irish oral tradition because it employs raw vernacular words, such as "glar" (mud) and "dailigone" (twilight). At the same time, it thinks about art and being in English. The speaker remembers loving a painting of Dutch canals and windmills as a child. It was a European scene, but the "heavy greenness" (line 1) of the painting reminded him of his boggy homeland and the "lowlands of the mind"(line 8). Heaney achieves this by blending the colonizer's culture with the colonized landscape, thereby creating a sense of imaginative continuity. Writing poetry in the language of the locals is a form of resistance pg. 755 in and of itself, what Declan Kiberd calls "writing back" to the empire's language. Heaney "writes back" not by arguing, but by using Hiberno-English rhythms and images in his poems to show that there is an Irish way of speaking English. The Poetry Foundation biography says that Heaney's early attempts to "preserve in literature [his community's] customs and crafts" were a way for him to serve his culture and join "a larger community of letters." The balancing act continues in a more refined way in *Seeing Things*. The local is still there, but it is often seen through classical or cosmopolitan lenses. The collection does not merely criticize colonialism; it portrays it as a complex presence that requires careful consideration. A few poems explore the significant impact of English culture on Irish life. "The Schoolbag" evokes the concept of formal education, which has historically been a site of conflict between colonizers and colonized cultures. The schoolbag, which is an ordinary object, could represent English classes (such as learning Latin or English literature, which Heaney himself did), alongside personal memories. Heaney's use of translations from Latin (Virgil) and Italian (Dante) in his Irish poetry is compelling. It suggests that the Irish poet can utilize the colonial legacy—the British insistence on classical learning and English norms—to augment his legacy instead of undermining it. Heaney reimagines Aeneas's journey to the underworld in "The Golden Bough," the first poem in the book. The poem's primary focus is "one look, one face-to-face meeting with my dear father," which comes from Aeneid VI. This connects the classical hero's quest with Heaney's longing to be reunited with his deceased father. The poet uses Virgil's epic not to praise the empire but to honour an Irish farmer named Patrick Heaney. Maggie Greaves, in her book *Back to the Light: Seamus Heaney's Virgilian Quest*, says that Heaney "strengthens [the Aeneid's] familial, homespun qualities and channels its mournful energies"(87) into a personal elegy. So, he

downplays Virgil's imperial prophecy of Rome's glory, which Heaney referred to as an overbearing "manifest destiny" element of the epic in another context. So, the classical text is both honoured and quietly decolonised: it is taken back for an Irish context of personal memory instead of building an empire. Wallart calls this approach Heaney's "postcolonial disestablishment of classics" (39). He "thwarts their original meaning" just enough to let an Irish reality come through. Heaney's approach to national legacy in *Seeing Things* is also interesting because it has a tone of reconciliation and introspection. This book has what Heaney calls "There is not much politics in this book, but there is a more generalized eschewal of violence, particularly at the end of 'The Pitchfork.'" This poem appears to be a simple tribute to a farm tool at first, but it takes on deeper meanings that connect to Ireland's past. The pitchfork could refer to the pikes used by Irish rebels in 1798 or to unrest among farmers. Still, Heaney describes it in idealised, almost Platonic terms—"smoothness, straightness, roundness, length, and sheen"—focusing on its shape rather than its use. At the peak of the poem, the pitchfork is thrown into the air like a javelin and comes down "tines aground, upright." The picture of the weapon coming back to earth safely suggests that violence can be overcome. In a review in *The Economist*, it is emphasized that *Seeing Things* has "not much politics... but a refusal of violence, especially at the end of 'The Pitchfork.'" The pitchfork's perfect balance, hanging between heaven and earth, gives us a vision of peace: a tool of work (or war) turned into a symbol of balance. This can be read as Heaney's quiet hope for an Ireland without violence, where the people are grounded but still want to rise. These kinds of images align with postcolonial ideas because they implicitly reject the cycle of violence between colonizers and resisters, and instead imagine a different future for the country, one that is "upright" and free from coercion. *Seeing Things* is a postcolonial collection, revealing ideas such as the feeling of being exiled or displaced and the search for a place to belong. The poet did not go into exile because he spent most of his life in Ireland. In the poem "Glanmore Revisited," the poet discusses his self-imposed exile and its impact on his life in the years since. These seven sonnets look back on that critical move and the "in-between" nature of his life since then. Heaney dates the poem in "Glanmore Revisited 4" by referencing the year he moved there. This connects the personal scene to the historical moment. The sonnet discusses "Scene Shifts" and changes, such as the shock of transitioning from Belfast to the countryside's quietness and how it felt like having "two places" in memory. The poet traces a kind of exile in the Glanmore Revisited series. It is not a forced exile, but a drifting between the North and the South, between the violence he had left behind and the peace he sought. It fits with Heaney's postcolonial view. Placing him in what Homi Bhabha calls a "third space," which is neither fully one nor the other, but a blend of the two. Heaney's poem "The Strand" depicts someone standing on a shoreline, a liminal space, and skipping stones, which all sink without a trace. The strand or shore is a classic symbol of being in between. Many Irish people left their homes in exile, either voluntarily or due to circumstances beyond their control. The dotted line my father's ash plant made/On Sandy mount Strand/Is something else the tide will not wash away (lines 1- 3). Those who stayed behind still felt the psychological effects of colonialism. In *Seeing Things*, the poet makes exile into a journey of the mind. The title poem, "Seeing Things," is a triptych that goes from a boat ride with his father to remembering the carvings in a church to his father's near-death drowning as a young man. He combines personal and ancestral memories in a scene that is constantly changing and moving, like a "crossing" (of water, of life and death) that will not stay in one place. The poem's connections "bring to mind the Yeatsian whirls and twirls" before returning to "the mind of man, a world of imagination." This suggests that Heaney believes a postcolonial poet's true home is not a physical country, but rather the imaginative space where memories and stories reside. Heaney's response to the feeling of not belonging that comes with colonialism in *Seeing Things* is to make people feel like they belong through poetry. He says that people should carry their country in their minds and their art. In *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney*, Dennis O'Driscoll says that the poet reflects on the significance of grounding his work "within the realm of my own imaginative country and my own voice," rather than adopting an abstract or placeless tone (Heaney and O'Driscoll). *Seeing Things* has a lot of that imaginative country in it. Even though it reveals classical and spiritual places, it is still rooted in real places from Heaney's life, such as the family farm, the Glanmore cottage, the island monastery of Clonmacnoise, and the streets of Derry and Belfast that he remembers. The last part of the collection, a series of short poems called "Squarings," often feels like brief visits to scenes from the past. Heaney talks about an empty house and a child's handprint fading on a window in "Settings xxiii." This is an image of absence that captures the pain of moving away or dying. However, by writing the scene, he also fights the erasure: the poet's act of seeing brings back what is gone. In this way, *Seeing Things* serves as a literary homecoming. Each poem is a small journey out (to foreign reference, to the "marvellous" beyond ordinary life) and back home to the self and the Irish context. This pattern mirrors the trajectory of many postcolonial narratives, wherein characters leave home due to colonial disruption

but ultimately forge new, syncretic identities that reconcile the old home with new realities. Heaney shows reconciliation in his mature work. As critic Kieran Quinlan noted, Heaney's poetry gives the "vanished Irish past" an "almost apparitional quality," making it seem like a ghost that is both present and hard to find. The poet is both rooted and rootless: at home in his culture yet constantly navigating that "in-between" – an exile in his own land, looking in. Heaney is often referred to as a poet of memory, and in *Seeing Things*, cultural memory serves as the foundation of postcolonial expression. One of the key burdens of postcolonial literature is to remember and recuperate the past, especially those aspects of history and culture that a colonial regime sought to erase or marginalize. In Ireland's case, this includes the Irish language, folkloric legend, and the experiences of the rural poor, among other things. *Seeing Things* abounds in acts of remembering that link the personal to the collective. In the article *What is Heaney Seeing in Seeing Things?* Colby Quarterly states that throughout the collection, "Heaney delves into the past to remember those (especially his father) who have died, just as Aeneas and Dante did" (245) on their otherworldly journeys. By explicitly paralleling his private act of remembrance with epic precedents, Heaney elevates the remembering of ordinary Irish lives to a mythic plane. In doing so, he asserts that the memories of the colonized are as worthy of epic treatment as the exploits of classical heroes or the lives of saints. In "Field of Vision," he portrays an elderly woman confined to a chair, whose only view is out a window onto a field. He pictures her with dignity and detail – "straight-backed in her white bed", watching the changing seasons, making her quiet life a repository of history and endurance. As such, the poem gently evokes Ireland's own confined vision under colonial rule, yet the persistence of seeing, if not witnessing, is an assertion of legacy. The woman's act of looking out becomes symbolic of a people's determination to see and remember their world, though with a frame. The poet's recording of such a life in poetry ensures that this micro-history becomes part of the larger cultural memory. A striking instance of cultural memory in *Seeing Things* is "Lightning VIII," which retells an ancient legend from the Irish monastic annals. The poem begins, "The annals say: when the monks of Clonmacnoise / Were all at prayers... A ship appeared above them in the air" (lines 1-3). Heaney traces how a crewman from the otherworldly ship accidentally fouls the church with his anchor and how the monks release him. This brief tale – of a ship from the sky, an imaginative miracle recorded by medieval Irish scribes – is revoiced by Heaney with lucid, respectful language. Including the legend in *Seeing Things*, Heaney performs an act of cultural recuperation. He shines a modern light on an almost-forgotten fragment of Irish Christian folklore, affirming it as part of Ireland's literary heritage. The content of the legend itself is suggestive: a collision of two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly, witnessed by humble Irish monks. In a postcolonial reading, we might see the ship as symbolizing an imperial or outside culture suddenly intruding upon an insular native culture; yet here, the encounter is peaceful and transitory, a moment of wonder rather than domination. The monks' compassionate response – freeing the ship's anchor – allows the otherworld visitors to depart unharmed, and normalcy returns. The episode can be read as an allegory for cultural exchange that does not result in conquest. Heaney's interest, however, is likely less allegorical than existential and poetic. The tale exemplifies the "hushed, contrary air between water and sky, earth and heaven" that Edward Hirsch identified as a prevailing mood in *Seeing Things*. It is the aura of liminality where memory and faith give meaning to mundane life. By writing "Lightning VIII", Heaney ensures that this piece of Irish cultural memory continues to "hover" in the contemporary imagination, just as the ship hovered above Clonmacnoise. It's a postcolonial gesture in that it prioritizes indigenous narratives (Irish annals) and portrays Irish spiritual history as filled with its own marvels, independent of—and predating—the English presence. Heaney also engages cultural memory through intertextual homage to Irish predecessors and mentors. The epigraph of "Fosterling" quotes from John Montague: "That heavy greenness fostered by water" shows an older Irish poet who similarly blended personal and national themes in one poem. In "Glanmore Revisited 6: Bedside Reading," Heaney might be seen nodding to Yeats or Patrick, as he reflects on the poetic vocation nourished in the Irish countryside. Indeed, the ghost of W.B. Yeats, Ireland's towering national poet, seems to pervade *Seeing Things*. Unlike Yeats, he does not idealize an Irish past; he interrogates and reanimates it. Jefferson Hunter's review of Seamus Heaney's *Seeing Things* in *The Hudson Review* assembles "manifold arrangements of history," engages in "objective close looking at the things of this world," and contemplates the role of the poet. Such is the case; Heaney fulfils what Irish critic Declan Kiberd identifies as a key task of Irish writers: to "write the nation" (97) into being by remembering and reinventing its story. Each memory Heaney conjures, whether mythic or personal, becomes part of a tapestry of Irish cultural memory. This tapestry is crucial in a postcolonial context: it resists the erasures of colonial historiography and asserts the continuity of an Irish imaginative life. Therefore, Heaney's use of memory is inclusive and hybrid, encompassing not only Celtic or Gaelic influences but also Christian, European, and beyond. In his poem "The Settle Bed," he invokes an heirloom piece of furniture

that carries layers of cultural meaning – the settle bed could have been in an Irish cottage or taken abroad by emigrants. Heaney describes it in almost genealogical terms, tracing the generations who have used it, implying the diaspora's spread. The poem resonates with the idea of cultural furniture carried through time, much like the English language itself, a "piece of furniture" that the Irish had to make their own. By honouring such a symbol, Heaney memorializes the lived experience of colonization, where families cling to tangible pieces of home and the adaptability of culture. Even "The Biretta," which, on the surface, is about a clerical hat from Heaney's altar-boy days, points, on a deeper level, to the overlay of identities in Ireland: The Catholic faith and the tangible sign of that faith in daily life. A seemingly small memory, a boy observing a priest's biretta, speaks volumes about the community's legacy and the way global or imperial forces (the Roman Church, the British Empire) were localized in Irish villages. By recalling the biretta, Heaney again captures a piece of social history with postcolonial resonance, demonstrating how the colonized culture incorporated foreign elements into its own (Lyon 55). Most significant is the postcolonial aspect, rather than what is stated in *Seeing Things*, and its embrace of hybridity, the blending of cultural influences to create something new, and its consequent push toward a transcendent perspective. Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha famously argued that the colonized can subvert authority through hybridization, generating a "Third Space" of enunciation that is neither one culture nor the other, but something different that unsettles domination. In *Seeing Things*, Heaney operates within such a third space. The collection is a tapestry of dualities: Irish/local and classical, English and Gaelic, physical and metaphysical, "earth and heaven" (270) as Hirsch states. Utilizing those dualities, Heaney creates poetry that is dialogic and inclusive. "Casting and Gathering" itself conjoins opposites, alternates images of angling in an Irish river with meditations on lines of poetry and lines of lineage. The poem invokes both the Anglo-Saxon epic tradition and the rhythms of Gaelic speech in its internal music. This fusion of linguistic heritages is something Heaney had done even in earlier works by "meditating on the Anglicization of local place names". However, in *Seeing Things*, such hybridity becomes a deliberate aesthetic. Maggie Greaves observes in Heaney's Virgil translation, "Frequent internal rhymes play out the battling Germanic and Latinate influences on English", linking "the barbaric and heroic through sound" (112). The effect is a "blended line...at once down to earth and elevated" (95), which is an apt description of Heaney's hybrid style. In poems like "The Swing" or "Squarings xlvi," the diction can slide from colloquial to exalted within a few lines, creating a linguistic meeting ground for high and low culture. Hybridity in Heaney is not only linguistic but also thematic and symbolic. The poems of this collection often start in the realm of concrete experience and then "turn" toward myth or vision. This turn enacts the hybrid nature of Heaney's imagination: he will not stay entirely in the mundane (as a purely realist or "resistance" postcolonial writer might), nor will he float free of history into pure myth (as Yeats sometimes did). Instead, Heaney's poetry repeatedly moves between the two, creating a space where, as he writes in "Fosterling," "poetry [was] sluggish in the doldrums of what happens" (12) for years until he allowed himself "to credit marvels". That line "Me waiting until I was nearly fifty / To credit marvels" (lines 1-2) is a metatextual comment on his evolution. The poet explicitly acknowledges that for a long time, he grounded himself in the actual. Still, that maturity brought a willingness to believe in the "marvels" that a hybrid imagination can reveal. The result of crediting marvels is that *Seeing Things* often transcends the traditional binaries of colonizer/colonized or Irish/British, entering a liminal realm of insight. As Henry Hart puts it, Heaney's poems achieve a "visionary dialectic" wherein "the pressure of reality that threatens to eradicate vision" (33) is countered by the pressure of vision that redeems reality. This dynamic is essentially the creation of a third space: the poem becomes the meeting ground where historical reality and imaginative possibility converse. In postcolonial terms, this is a healing gesture suggesting that out of the collision of cultures and histories, something new and affirmative emerges. This is clearly evident in "The Skylight," where Heaney recounts initially resisting the installation of a skylight in the roof of his cottage but then marvels at the transformation when "the roof-light / split me wide open" (lines 10-11) with its sudden beam of sky. The skylight is a literal opening to the beyond, symbolically revealing the poet's mind as it opens to change and light from elsewhere. Notably, the poet invokes the Annunciation in this poem, comparing the shaft of light to the angel's arrival, and blending Christian myth with the domestic scene. The hybrid image is clear here: a humble Irish cottage fused with a Renaissance-like spiritual revelation. The poet, who once held onto the insular and familiar, accepts a hybrid new reality. This mirrors Heaney's acceptance of his hybrid legacy – Irish and cosmopolitan, grounded and transcendent. The very "marvels" he learned to credit are often moments of hybridity: when a commonplace thing or event becomes numinous, or when two frames of reference suddenly coincide and illuminate each other. Crucially, Heaney's turn toward transcendence is not escapist. Instead, it fulfils what postcolonial critic Ngũgĩ was Thiong'o described as the writer's task to "re-member" – to put dismembered parts of history and self-back together (Ngũgĩ 92). In *Seeing*

*Things*, Heaney is holistically re-membering Ireland's story, fusing its fragments English and Irish, past and present, local and global into a new coherence. As Hong observes, "Heaney's poetry reflects...re-establishing a culture by negotiating a cultural hybridity while establishing...legacy" (89). By the collection's close, the poet achieves a hard-won equilibrium. In "Squarings xlvi," the final poem, Heaney writes: "And yes, I can tell even here, from the thin / crying by the vacant seashore, / that someone is crossing, is coming into their own." (lines 56-57) The crossing is at once an image of death or afterlife and a metaphor for finding one's legacy. This gentle, ambiguous ending suggests that in the liminal space between worlds, the self may finally be realized. It is a beautiful encapsulation of the postcolonial hope: that after the long crossing through colonial trauma, a people or a poet might come into a self-defined legacy, whole and free. In *Seeing Things*, Seamus Heaney achieves a rare synthesis of the personal and the postcolonial, the earthy and the numinous. A close reading of some poems shows that the collection addresses Ireland's colonial legacy indirectly and powerfully. This, moreover, a confident hybridity characterizes Heaney's mature phase: he invokes the English canon and Irish legend with equal ease, collapsing hierarchies between them. His poems "The Golden Bough" and "Lightning VIII" demonstrate Heaney's method of repurposing classical and Celtic sources to serve an Irish artistic vision, a subtle decolonization of literature itself. Meanwhile, intimate pieces like "Fosterling" and "Glanmore Revisited" articulate the poet's internal journey toward accepting "the marvellous" and transcending old binaries. *Seeing Things* has indeed taken its place not just in Irish literature but in postcolonial literature more broadly, as an example of how a writer from a formerly colonized culture can simultaneously remember and reinvent their heritage. In the collection *Seeing Things*, Heaney shows an Ireland that is not a victim of history but an equal contributor to the human imaginative record. The collection's postcolonial themes of legacy, memory, exile, and hybridity are woven into its fabric through symbol and narrative, rather than being stated bluntly, a mark of Heaney's artistry. As a result, more significantly, *Seeing Things* invites multiple readings: as a son's elegy, a spiritual meditation, and a subtle commentary on Ireland's condition as an "in-between" nation. His *Seeing Things* exemplifies the power of poetry to create a "third space" where contradictions are held in fruitful tension. The national is reconciled with the universal; the colonial past is not erased but transformed into fertile creative material. In one of his Oxford lectures, Heaney wrote that poetry can "redress" imbalances by its very existence. Heaney's mature poetry thus fulfils the postcolonial project of asserting cultural selfhood, while also achieving a kind of aesthetic liberation that transcends politics. By crediting marvels alongside the mud and rain of memory, Heaney ensures that Ireland's story, in all its tragedy and transcendence, continues to be seen and felt.

#### Works Cited

- Doğan, Buket. "The Spatial Turn in Contemporary Irish Poetry: From Nationalist Landscape to Globalized Spaces." *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2018, pp. 173–182. scholarship, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9h3405ft>.
- Greaves, Maggie. "Back to the Light: Seamus Heaney's Virgilian Quest." *Literary Matters*, vol. 9, no. 1, 11 Sept. 2016.
- Hart, Henry. "What Is Heaney Seeing in 'Seeing Things'?" *Colby Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1994, pp. 33–42. Available at Digital Commons @ Colby.
- Heaney, Seamus. *Seeing Things*. Faber and Faber, 1991.
- Heaney, Seamus, and Dennis O'Driscoll. *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney*. Faber and Faber, 2008.
- Hirsch, Edward. "Thresholds." *The New York Times Book Review*, 11 June 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/11/books/thresholds.html>.
- Hong, Sung Sook. "Seamus Heaney's 'Hybrid Strategy' in the Postcolonial Context." *English & Literature (Korea)*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2005, pp. 771–789. KCI (Korean Journal Database).
- Hunter, Jefferson. "Heaney's Seeing Things." *The Hudson Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, Winter 1993, pp. 801–803.
- Lee, Yoo-Hyeok. "Seamus Heaney's Postcolonial Epistemology and Political Aesthetic." *Academia.edu*, 2001, [https://www.academia.edu/44182207/Seamus\\_Heaneys\\_Postcolonial\\_Epistemology\\_and\\_Political\\_Aesthetic](https://www.academia.edu/44182207/Seamus_Heaneys_Postcolonial_Epistemology_and_Political_Aesthetic).
- "Seamus Heaney." *Poetry Foundation*, 2017, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/seamus-heaney>. 9 May 2025.
- "Seeing Things: Poems (1991) – Description." *Book Passage*, quoting Edward Hirsch, *New York*, 17 May 1992.
- The Economist*. "A Soul on the Washing Line." *The Economist – Prospero*, 5 Sept. 2013.
- Virginia Quarterly Review. Jefferson Hunter, "Review of Seeing Things by Seamus Heaney," *VQR*, Autumn 1991. (Quoted in *Poetry Foundation*).
- Wallart, Kerry-Jane. "Taking One's Bow: Performing Things in Seamus Heaney's The Cure at Troy." *Études Britanniques Contemporaines*, no. 35, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ebc.5921>.
- Wallart, Kerry-Jane. "Performing Things in Seamus Heaney's The Cure at Troy." *Études Britanniques Contemporaines*, no. 39, 2010, <https://journals.openedition.org/ebc/5921?lang=en>.