

THE ROLE OF IRISH FOLKLORE IN FORMING
NATIONAL IDENTITY IN SEAMUS HEANEY'S POETRY

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Abstract. *The article discusses integration of folk poetry to the formation of national identity, preserving cultural memory and shared values in Seamus Heaney's poetry. The incorporation of Irish folk elements serves to emphasize and preserve Irish cultural heritage, playing a significant role in the construction of national identity. Seamus Heaney's engagement with Irish folk poetry is evident in his works, where he often draws upon traditional Irish legends, myths, and oral traditions. Heaney's poetry captures the essence of Irish culture, connecting contemporary readers with their ancestral past. In poems such as "Maighdean Mara", "Anahorish", "Digging", "Sweeney Redivivus" the poet references ancient rituals and legends, invoking a deep historical and cultural memory.*

Keywords: *Irish folk poetry, national identity, poetic techniques, elements of mythology, use of toponyms.*

Аннотация. *Статья рассматривает интеграцию народной поэзии в формирование национальной идентичности, сохранение культурной памяти и общих ценностей в поэзии Шеймуса Хини. Включение элементов ирландского народного творчества подчеркивает и сохраняет ирландское культурное наследие, играя важную роль в построении национальной идентичности. Взаимодействие Шеймуса Хини с ирландской народной поэзией очевидно в его произведениях, где он часто опирается на традиционные ирландские легенды, мифы и устные традиции. Поэзия Хини захватывает суть ирландской культуры, связывая современных читателей с их предковым прошлым. В таких стихах, как «Maighdean Mara», «Anahorish», «Digging», «Sweeney Redivivus», поэт ссылается на древние ритуалы и легенды, пробуждая глубокую историческую и культурную память.*

Ключевые слова: *ирландская народная поэзия, национальная идентичность, поэтические приемы, элементы мифологии, использование топонимов.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada Seamus Heanining she'riyati orqali xalq poeziyasining milliy kimlikni shakllantirish, madaniy xotirani saqlash va umumiy qadriyatlarni ta'minlashdagi roli muhokama qilinadi. Irland xalq she'riyati elementlarining kiritilishi irland madaniy merosini ta'kidlash va saqlashga xizmat*

"ZAMONAVIY TILSHUNOSLIK VA TARJIMASHUNOSLIKNING DOLZARB MUAMMOLARI"
mavzusidagi xalqaro ilmiy-amaliy anjuman

qiladi, bu esa milliy kimlikni qurishda muhim rol o'ynaydi. Seamus Heanining irland xalq she'riyati bilan aloqasi uning asarlarida yaqqol aks etadi, u ko'pincha irlandning an'anaviy afsonalari, miflari va og'zaki an'analariga murojaat qiladi. Heanining she'riyatida irland madaniyatining mohiyati aks etgan bo'lib, bu zamonaviy o'quvchilarni o'zlarining ajdodlarining o'tmishi bilan bog'laydi. "Maighdean Mara", "Anahorish", "Digging", "Sweeney Redivivus" kabi she'rlarida shoir qadimiy marosimlar va afsonalarga murojaat qilib, chuqur tarixiy va madaniy xotirani uyg'otadi.

Kalit so'zlar: irland xalq poeziya, milliy kimlik, she'riy uslublar, mifologiya elementlari, toponimlardan foydalanish.

Introduction. "Heaney belongs to Irish soil, and that soil is much older than the English language. That soil is much older than the Irish language, and yet it is Irish that has given its name to that soil and to everything that grows in it. Is it not a logical step to give voice to his poetry, to explore those areas of consciousness, memory, inspiration, perception, feeling, and sensation that would surely be expressed in Irish but for the vagaries of history?" [2;186] The Irish poet and translator into Irish Gabriel Rosenstock emphasized on the influence of Seamus Heaney's national belonging on his poetry. The deep connection between Heaney's poetry and the Irish traditions can be easily felt in his works through analyzing historical places, the elements of Irish folk poetry, imaginary characters and historical people mentioned in his verses. Heaney's poetry uncovers deeper layers of and historical, national and traditional identity, memory, and inspiration of his nation.

On the other hand Heaney's poetry was also influenced by the English language: "The flow of writing must flow throughout the body, and all my linguistic experiences that contributed to this were English". [2; 45] This impact on Heaney's works highlights the dialogue and interplay between his use of the English language and his deep connection to the Irish cultural and linguistic heritage. While his linguistic experiences and much of his literary works were in English, the Irish roots and cultural background inevitably surface in his poetry, enriching it with layers of historical and cultural heritage. This blend of influences remarks the complexity and richness of Heaney's poetic identity, straddling Irish traditions.

Discussions and analyses. In the poem "Digging" Heaney contrasts his own work as a writer with the physical labor of his ancestors. The poem opens with Heaney observing his father digging in the garden and then transitions to a reflection on his grandfather's work. Heaney describes the skill and effort involved in the digging, and he contrasts this with his own chosen vocation as a poet. The poem concludes with Heaney affirming his commitment to his craft, using the metaphor of digging to convey the depth and intensity of his poetic work.

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound

When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:

My father, digging. I look down [3; 24]

"Digging" is a profound exploration of identity, heritage, and the nature of creative work. Through the metaphor of digging, Heaney connects his poetic practice with the physical labor of his ancestors, highlighting the deep ties between his personal and cultural history. The poem stands as a testament to Heaney's respect for his roots and his commitment to his craft, blending vivid imagery, personal reflection, and cultural significance in a powerful and evocative manner.

Seamus Heaney's interest in folk poetry extends beyond mere preservation; it actively shapes modern Irish identity. By reimagining and reinterpreting traditional themes and stories, Heaney makes them relevant to contemporary audiences. His poetry serves as a bridge between the past and present, ensuring that the cultural heritage continues to inform and inspire modern Irish identity. His use of folk poetry is central to his exploration of Irish national identity. Through the incorporation of traditional myths, legends, and folk elements, Heaney preserves and revitalizes Ireland's cultural heritage. His poetry not only celebrates the richness of Irish folklore but also uses it as a framework to explore and affirm a distinct national identity.

The poem "*Maighdean Mara*" by Seamus Heaney goes deep into a rich depth of Irish folklore and myth, particularly the beautiful legend of the sea maiden. This legend of sea maidens is a captivating element in Irish and Scottish folklore. In Heaney's poem, the sea maiden's tale could symbolize a range of themes, from the tension between longing and belonging to the inevitable pull of one's true nature. The sea maiden's desire to return to her aquatic realm, despite having established a human life, could be seen as a metaphor for various human experiences whether it's a yearning for roots, the pull of an inherent nature, or the struggle between personal desires and social expectations.

Heaney's decision to use the title "*Maighdean Mara*" without translating it into English reflects a deliberate choice to highlight symbolic and cultural meaning. The author's use of the Irish language in this way indeed seems to serve as a bridge to the cultural and literary traditions of Ireland. Heaney is not dismissing the importance of the Irish language but rather using it to invoke a broader range of meanings and associations. The interplay between languages in poetry often creates a dialogue that transcends strict linguistic authenticity. Heaney's manipulation of the Irish language in this manner invites readers to engage with the poem on a deeper level, appreciating the layers of cultural significance and the evocative power of the mythological references.

By invoking the Irish myth of the sea maiden and using Irish, Heaney enriches the poem with a sense of heritage and narrative complexity. This technique not only connects readers to the Irish tradition but also highlights the universal themes of longing, identity, and the inexorable pull of one's true nature, which resonate beyond linguistic boundaries. In "*Maighdean Mara*" Seamus Heaney indeed explores profound themes through the figure of the drowned woman, using the sea maiden myth as a framework. By presenting the image of a woman who has drowned, and suggesting that her death may have been a form of suicide, Heaney delves into complex emotional and psychological landscapes:

*This is the great first sleep
Of homecoming eight
Land years between hearth and
Bed steeped and disheveled* [3; 46]

Heaney's use of the Irish language, even if not always grammatically precise, serves to evoke a sense of cultural identity and heritage. By incorporating elements of Irish folklore and mythology, Heaney creates a bridge between the past and the present, embedding his poetry within the broader context of Irish cultural history. This interplay between languages and traditions enriches his work, allowing it to convey complex layers of meaning and emotion. The symbolic use of the Irish language in "*Maighdean Mara*" highlights the poet's commitment to exploring and preserving his cultural roots while also adapting them to his contemporary poetic vision.

The same technique is used in "*Sweeney Redivivus*" Heaney adopts the mythological narrative, recreating Suibhne's story in a modern context. The cycle of poems reflects Heaney's fascination with the figure of Sweeney, who represents both a physical and existential wandering. This theme represents Heaney's own experiences and reflections on displacement, identity, and the search for personal and artistic meaning. Heaney's observation that "*Sweeney rhymes with Heaney both autobiographically and phonetically*" [3; 56] suggests a deep, personal connection between the poet and the mythological figure. This connection is not merely coincidental but a deliberate artistic choice.

By engaging with the myth of Sweeney, Heaney not only reclaims a piece of Irish cultural heritage but also examines how such narratives can illuminate the complexities of contemporary life. The cycle becomes a reflection on the poet's own journey, emphasizing the continuous dialogue between past and present, myth and reality. Heaney's choice of the Sweeney figure allows him to explore themes of exile, madness, and the search for meaning in a fractured world. Sweeney's curse and subsequent wanderings become a metaphor for the poet's own sense of displacement and his quest for artistic and personal identity. Through Sweeney, Heaney reflects on

the turbulence of modern life and the enduring human struggle to find a place of belonging:

*The old trees were nowhere,
the hedges thin as penwork
and the whole enclosure lost
under hard paths and sharp-ridged houses [3;58]*

In "Sweeney Redivivus" Heaney seamlessly weaves together the ancient and the contemporary, creating a dialogue between the mythological past and the present. The character of Sweeney, with his profound sense of alienation and his perpetual movement through the landscape, resonates with Heaney's own experiences and observations of the political and social upheavals in Northern Ireland. The poet's identification with Sweeney underscores his exploration of themes such as the loss of innocence, the burden of history, and the resilience of the human spirit.

*And there I was, incredible to myself,
among people far too eager to believe me
and my story, even if it happened to be true [3; 58]*

By reimagining the story of Suibhne in a modern context, Heaney not only revitalizes an ancient myth but also infuses his poetry with a rich tapestry of cultural and historical references. This approach allows him to engage deeply with his Irish heritage while addressing universal themes that transcend time and place. In doing so, Heaney's work becomes a bridge between the history and modern period, offering readers a profound and multifaceted understanding of the human condition.

In "Anahorish" Heaney reflects on how geographical places influences literary creation. The collection of essays explores the relationship between place and writing, emphasizing how specific locations shape a writer's work and vision. For Heaney, the physical and cultural landscape of Ireland and Northern Ireland is not just a backdrop but a dynamic, interactive force in his creative process. The way Heaney engages with specific places in Derry reflects not only his personal connection to these locations but also their broader symbolic significance in his poetry.

*My place of clear water,
the first hill in the world
where springs washed into
the shiny grass and darkened cobbles
in the bed of the lane [3; 62]*

The opening line of Heaney's poem "Anahorish" establishes a deep connection between the place name and its historical and environmental significance. The Irish name "Anahorish" can be translated as "place of clear water" which highlights the importance of this location. Anahorish, situated in County Derry, is a small settlement

with a rich historical and cultural heritage. The literal translation of its name reflects the natural abundance of fresh water that was once a key feature of the area.

For Heaney, Anahorish is not just a geographical location but also a place of personal memory and formative experiences. The primary school he attended in Anahorish symbolizes his early education and connection to his roots. This personal association enhances the poem's emotional depth and significance. Heaney's use of the Irish name and its translation is a way of preserving and celebrating the cultural heritage of his homeland. Heaney's reference to the Irish name of Anahorish and its translation in the poem underscores the significance of the place both historically and personally. It highlights the importance of water as a symbol of clarity and connection, enriching the poem's exploration of cultural heritage and personal identity.

Conclusion. Heaney's engagement with folk poetry indeed plays a crucial role in shaping modern Irish identity. Rather than simply preserving traditional themes and stories, he reimagines and reinterprets them, making them resonate with contemporary audiences. This process allows the cultural heritage to remain a living, dynamic force rather than a static relic of the past. Through his poetry, Heaney bridges the past and present, ensuring that the rich traditions of Irish folk poetry continue to inform and inspire the evolving sense of Irish identity.

Thoughtful analysis of Seamus Heaney's use of language and place in his poetry, particularly his incorporation of Irish place names and the bilingual approach that bridges Irish and English provide a deeper understanding of the poetics of his literary identity. This approach indeed adds depth and richness to his work, emphasizing the connection between language, culture, and identity. By using elements of Irish folklore, specific place names and local dialects, Heaney not only immerses readers in the world he portrays but also highlights the significance of cultural heritage in shaping his poetic identity.

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