Resonant Forms: Architecture in the Poetry of
Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott

by

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A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

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Abstract


Architectural images and metaphors frequently appear in the poetry and poetics of Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott. Architecture, including the vernacular, acts as a means by which both Heaney and Walcott locate their poetry in place. In other, often enigmatic ways, the use of architectural and spatial tropes provide the dynamic terms for exploring temporal issues. This thesis investigates the imaginative process by which each poet reads various examples of architecture in Ireland, the West Indies, and elsewhere. Chapter one explores the poetics of Heaney and Walcott in relation to architecture and creates the basis for a detailed analysis of the poetry. Form emerges as a main concern. They each develop architectural metaphors in their discourse regarding other poets and matters of craft, technique, and voice, but also, in an extended fashion, use it to address broader cultural issues such as language. In chapter two, which traces the notion of 'home' in the poetry, an awareness of architecture as an expressive entity capable of suggesting an almost organic inner life emerges. On occasion, they also reveal a deep ambivalence toward built structures. Chapter three examines their handling of the estate house in the light of traditional representations, leading to a focus on other architectural sites which carry strong historical resonances for each poet. The final chapter continues this inquiry in relation to the presiding notion of memory, the genre of elegy, homage, and the idea of mimetic 'poetic architecture.' Spatial imagery becomes crucially linked with remembrance. In conclusion, architecture in the writing of Heaney and Walcott does not consist merely of static forms, but is responsive to the animating forces of poetic language, continually evoking the fluidity of time.
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One/ Reading Architecture in Heaney and Walcott's Poetics</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two/ &quot;Lost, Unhappy, and at Home&quot;: The Architecture of Estrangement</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three/ Houses of Literature: Centers on the Landscape</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four/ Elegiac Architecture</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Consulted</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations
(See Works Consulted for publishing information)

Seamus Heaney:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crediting Poetry</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door into the Dark</td>
<td>DD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of a Naturalist</td>
<td>DN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Work</td>
<td>FW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government of the Tongue</td>
<td>GT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Haw Lantern</td>
<td>HL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupations</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Place of Writing</td>
<td>PW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Redress of Poetry</td>
<td>RP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweeney Astray</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Island</td>
<td>SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit Level</td>
<td>SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing Things</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wintering Out</td>
<td>WO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derek Walcott:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another Life</td>
<td>AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arkansas Testament</td>
<td>AT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bounty</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Castaway</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fortunate Traveller</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gulf</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a Green Night</td>
<td>IGN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midsummer</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omeros</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Star Apple Kingdom</td>
<td>SAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea Grapes</td>
<td>SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the Twilight Says</td>
<td>WTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The world is far from static. In a way it comes into being through the very chaotic confrontation of oneself and the material world, through the interpenetration of living beings and the sensual exuberance of nature.

-Brandon LaBelle

Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott have long maintained a personal friendship. They are colleagues in a literary sense as well: each has commented on the other's work. Heaney has compared Walcott to J. M. Synge and W. B. Yeats, noting how form emerges as an "instrument" wielded with "rare confidence" in his poetry. Walcott has also made references to Heaney. In an interview conducted after the publication of The Haw Lantern, he states:

Seamus uses a language now that is not concentrated and fine and provincially exquisite or right, but one that is passing into a language of understanding, of exchange in a territory where the blocks of the polysyllables exist as solidly as if they were nature. And how does that happen? It happens because Heaney allows the voice in.

Walcott's emphasis on finding one's own voice is matched by a concern with the discovery of an apt "language" allowing for "exchange." This implies metaphorical exchange, and Walcott also suggests that Heaney casts the component parts of words into an organic arrangement, a natural spatialization. Walcott can understand Heaney's achievement as he shares a similar interest in architecture and poetic form. In addition, their poetic worlds have been shaped in certain ways by the confrontation with architecture as a resonant form. These are

While architecture, as Herbert Read contends, is the "art of enclosing space," poetry is the art of enclosing language, thus enabling it to sing across time.¹ Architecture and poetry have long been the subject of comparison, and Walcott's words recall Ben Jonson's view of language in his Discoveries, "The congruent, and harmonious fitting of parts in a sentence, hath almost the fastning, and force of knitting, and connexion: As in stones well squar'd, which will rise strong a great way without mortar."⁵ Makers in each field share the desire for felicitous design. They also share a concern with form in its various capacities. The Greek word poiesis, or 'making,' relates poetry to architecture on the primary level of form: a poem, like a building, is conceived according to a plan, however unconscious or improvised. This is an inquiry into architectural images and metaphors in Heaney's and Walcott's poetry and poetics. I pursue a critical reading that examines the role architecture plays in their verbal designs: they use architecture to engage questions of memory and history.

I approach the question of architecture in the work of Heaney and Walcott from five related angles. Form is the first of these, creating a bond with other makers and artists, as well as poets and architects. Second, the imagery Heaney and Walcott evoke in relation to built structures allows us to follow particular lines of imaginative and discursive thought. They both read architecture as a symbolic language. This leads to the third angle, which involves the way

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architecture acts as an extended metaphor for personal and cultural issues in their work. The fourth takes into account the mimetic notion of 'poetic architecture.' The final angle is provided by a concern with the role of poetic voice, which Heaney and Walcott each repeatedly associate with architecture. These factors inform the thematic focus of each chapter, whose content I outline at the end of the introduction.

Heaney and Walcott create, as all poets (and architects) must, through what C. K. Williams calls the "necessities of form." These are the "generative factors" that "take us places we wouldn't be able to go otherwise; it's form which allows us to move into the unique kind of consciousness poetry inspires, to be a bit possessed [...]." This applies to both the poet and the reader-listener. We may metaphorically enter poems, and they offer an imaginative transport, a figurative "passage" in time and space. But form also involves a number of different concepts. As Garber notes, the idea of form as an analytic tool now generally takes in "metrical patterns [...] lexical, syntactic, and linear arrangements." It can also mean (inner) structure, the arrangement of textual materials to "create shape." Imagery and metaphor are thus involved. I also use form in the holistic sense implied by Hayden Carruth as the "essential idea of imaginative process."

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7 According to Frederick Garber, the history of the term 'form' goes back to Plato and Aristotle. In his Republic, Plato conceives of form in terms of origins; as fixed, external, transcendental, a perfection that gives the model for the text or object. Aristotle in the Poetics, regards form more in terms of its telos (final completeness) and as "emergent and dynamic." Form, for Aristotle, is "intrinsic and immanent, coexistent with the matter in which it develops towards its fullest realization." Prior to structure, it is the "informing principle that works on matter and causes the text or object to become all it is." In Aristotle's view, form and content are unified. Drawing on Neo-Platonic ideas, the mid-eighteenth-century concept of "inner form" emerged in the thinking of Goethe and others, where a work's wholeness shared an equivalence with the external world. In a subsequent refinement, A. W. Schlegel distinguished between organic and mechanical form in his Dramatic Lectures, the first internally generated, natural in terms of growth and bound in with the material, the latter imposed externally, in an "additive" fashion. This idea of form is still influential. See Frederick Garber, "Form," The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms, ed. T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) 93-94.

8 Garber 93, 94. This may involve rhetorical schemes, or, as in New Criticism, a search for the "ironic patterns of tension within a text" that give it shape.
taking into account the symbiotic relationship between form and content in the poetry of Heaney and Walcott. Their use of architecture highlights this association.

Carruth also makes the historical distinction between form and style which he contends existed from Goethe to T. S. Eliot: "Form has meant the poem's outer, observable, imitable, and more or less static materiality; style has meant its inner quality, essentially hidden and unanalyzable, the properties that bind and move and individuate." He argues for a fusion of these elements into a single notion of form. Style is so "minutely constituted and so obscuredly combined" as to be immeasurable. But the idea of style as "something contained within form," is an aspect of the architecturalization of voice as 'found' poetic subjectivity within language that Walcott refers to in Heaney's work. The notion of form as dynamically activated by voice (refining 'personality' into unique subjectivity) influences the poetics of Heaney and Walcott.

The making of forms creates a basis for identification between the poet and the architect that can be extended to include other arts. Heaney's invocation of a language, or a continuity of forms, discussed in chapter one, catches this movement. As Bridget Elliot and Anthony Purdy contend, architecture has "long held a privileged position as metaphor for art in general, possessing typically the status of inaugural form, as in Hegel's Aesthetics: 'Architecture confronts us as the beginning of art, a beginning grounded in the essential nature of art itself.'" The architectural thus becomes a crucial site relating to any new beginning, as the master trope of artistic self-formation. Ellen Eve Frank identifies four fields where architecture is an analogue: the body, the mind, memory, and literature. But it is

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9 Carruth notes: "It means the whole poem, nothing less. [...] the form is the poem." See Hayden Carruth, Selected Essays and Reviews (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon, 1996) 168.
10 Carruth 167.
11 Bridget Elliot and Anthony Purdy, Peter Greenaway: Architecture and Allegory (Chichester: Academy, 1997) 46.
largely in connection with art that her ideas touch on the flow between forms that Heaney and Walcott invoke. Frank argues:

Pater, Hopkins, Proust, and James choose architecture as their art analogue for literature in part because it is the art form most capable of embodying thought-spirit, or essences, most capable of the conversion act. These four writers call the conversion activity translation; we may think of it also as *trans*-formation, or one art *form* into another, of being into embodied being.\(^1\)

Heaney and Walcott share the transformative urge. Alongside their reading of architecture, allusive relations to other arts and occupations involving skilled design such as sculpting, painting, and music become a means of drawing form into a continuum within their poetics.

Examples of architecture read as a language are common. James O’Gorman calls architecture an extremely flexible "form of language, of communication. It speaks. It can convey through its design its place in society, its content." He adds that, to "communicate architecturally, or to respond appropriately to a building’s message, you must use or read its formal parts according to their associative meanings." Where the "building blocks of language are vocabulary and grammar," the main one of "architectural meaning" is style.\(^1\)\(^3\) But while Heaney and Walcott are capable of reading for architectural "style," they are more interested in searching out deeper meanings through their poetic representations. To quote John Ruskin’s aphorism, "All architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not merely a service to the human frame."\(^1\)\(^4\) This "effect" is constantly found in their poetic readings. as architecture becomes the starting point for inquiries into often enigmatic areas.


\(^{13}\) O’Gorman 89, 98. He uses the example of Classicism in the design of the Washington Mall to illustrate the idea of stylistic continuity, stating that the buildings "rose imaginatively out of the accumulated meanings embedded in the inherited forms of the past." O’Gorman 95.

\(^{14}\) Ruskin 10.
In the hands of Heaney and Walcott architectural imagery often becomes an extended metaphor that relates to language, historical and political issues, and the often ambivalent feelings each poet has regarding his place in the world. The notion of memory is central. As Phillipe Hamon declares, “memory is [...] a function of architectural spaces, places that haunt the collective unconscious.” In the same mode, architectural memories come to haunt “that other collective unconscious, which is language.” Both Heaney and Walcott see words as forms which preserve “traces of specific places.” Hamon claims that language acts as the “natural conservator of national heritage.” As Walcott’s Shabine suggests, words can contain the enormous “pain of history.” In the writing of Heaney and Walcott the architectural nearly always expresses an underlying meaning. The transference, through imagery, of built structures into poetry’s unique order of representation allows them to be figured-forth in newly imagined ways.

This process can further involve matters of form, and the notion of poetic architecture. Traditionally, poetry has been placed in imagined competition with the architectural, as in the “aere perennius” topos of Horace’s “Exegi monumentum [...]” ode. This provides the oldest argument: “I have completed a memorial more lasting than bronze and higher than the royal grave of the pyramids. that neither biting rain nor the north wind in its fury can destroy nor the unnumbered series of years and the flight of ages.” As David Cowling states, the tradition involves viewing the “textual ‘building’ itself as a finished


product of beauty and/or resilience and permanence." More than 'imitation.' in the case of Heaney and Walcott, a formal "gesturing" is often involved, one of the original meanings of 'mimesis' in the Greek.\textsuperscript{18} The idea remains powerful in their work, as my chapter on elegy explores, as it does in various works where the "architectural concept." as A. W. Johnson writes of Jonson, is "turn[ed]" to "apply to poetry."\textsuperscript{19}

Finally, the matter of voice arises as an informing angle with architectural implications. In classical mnemonics, memory, rhetoric, and voice were intimately and practically linked through architecture. As Hamon notes, "Mnemosyne, the mother of the arts [...] goes hand in hand with architecture. Rhetoric is based on nothing more than a series of places, or \textit{topoi}."\textsuperscript{20} In this ancient art, movement through the rooms of an imagined structure helped the mind's recall. Heaney makes a strong connection of architecture with voice, as well as Walcott, due to the association of sites and structures with various poets—such as Yeats and his tower at Ballylee. Voice, in poetic terms, is not primarily a reference to speech, but to individual tone and diction, that combination of factors a poet discovers unique to his or her use of poetic language.\textsuperscript{21} Since Jacques Derrida's \textit{Of Grammatology} the privileging of speech as 'true' presence over writing has been exposed as a 'logocentric' bias in Western metaphysics.\textsuperscript{22} In the work of Heaney and Walcott, however, voice is a figure caught between speech and writing. They

\textsuperscript{18} T. V. F. Brogan, "Representation and Mimesis," Brogan, ed. 254.

\textsuperscript{19} As with Heaney and Walcott, Jonson's conception of language is couched in architectural metaphors. But Johnson argues that Jonson carries this further, seeing the fashion in which the "disposition of that language in a poem resembles the disposition of an architectural plan, and the poet is like a moral architect. [...] Jonson actually 'turns' architectural concepts so that they apply to poetry." Johnson 33-34.


\textsuperscript{21} It is related to the Aristotelian \textit{ethos}—originating voice expressive of poetic intention, and organizer of persona—behind the voice of the silent meditating poet, addressing an audience, and of persona T. S. Eliot asserts in "The Three Voices of Poetry." See Fabian Gudas and Michael Davison, "Voice," Brogan, ed. 337-38.

privilege writing while at the same time bracketing poetic voice as a medium of
tonal truth. Acting as a metaphor for linguistic and personal identity, the
subliminal design of voice announces a presence in poetic language in a way that
complements, yet supersedes, the notions of style and *ethos*. Voice marks a key
aspect for Heaney and Walcott, not only in the "metalanguage" provided by
architecture each uses to talk about poetry, but in the verse itself.23

My thesis argues that architecture functions in a number of capacities as both
a problematic and enabling source of imaginative engagement for Heaney and
Walcott. The poetry reveals a deep ambivalence, balancing wariness and
reverence toward built structures. Architecture becomes a site of ongoing
metaphorical reference. Ultimately, the spatial dimensions of architectural
representation are the means of allowing their poetic language an extended and
more resonant grasp on its central orientation, time and memory.24

* * *

Gaston Bachelard suggests in *The Poetics of Space* that all "really inhabited
space bears the essence of the notion of home." He contends "the houses that
were lost forever continue to live on in us [...] they insist in us in order to live
again, as though they expected us to give them a supplement of living."25 That
"supplement" is discernible in Heaney and Walcott's poetry in the way that the
family house becomes an underlying figure in memory of dislocation and loss.
Some awareness of the architecture in Heaney's and Walcott's early lives and
their countries is thus important in relation to the role of architecture in their

23 Cf. Hamon's provocative remarks: "It is by means of architecture that the text begins to speak of what
basically defines it as a structure, as a fiction, or as a structured fiction. All architecture in literature thus
becomes to a greater or less degree, an incorporated metalanguage." Hamon 24-25.
24 Cf. Paul de Man's statement: "poetic language is not really oriented toward space, but ultimately toward
Lindsay Waters (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 1989) 114.
comment: "over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a
group of organic habits." Bachelard 14.
poetry. Mossbawn, the farm near Castledawson in County Derry, Northern Ireland where Heaney was born in 1939, is an example of traditional building resistant to changes in fashion. The ‘vernacular’ is “architecture without architects,” to cite the title of Bernard Rudofsky’s study.26 The farmstead was a thatched cottage of three rooms built round the hearth, the hub of family life. Originally built from rubble stone and lime-plaster, these cottages were literally worked into the landscape.27 The Heaney household was situated on the “ley line of Irish history” according to Michael Parker.28 Such cottages represent throwbacks to another era, especially since the ‘bungalow blitz’ in the 1980s, an influx of often ostentatious, pattern-book houses into the countryside. This shift, as Frank McDonald says, reveals the way the Irish vernacular tradition has been rejected due to the association with “poverty, dispossession and the Famine.”29 Yet Heaney draws on an architectural heritage richer than this assessment would allow, stretching back to the 4000-year old prehistoric burial site in Phoenix Park, Dublin. Passage-graves like Boyne emerge as recurrent sources of imagery in his poems.

From the founding of Dublin by the Vikings in 841, through the growth of monasteries and the arrival of the round tower near the end of the first millennium.

28 This was due to the way the farmstead was sandwiched, “between Moyola Park, a large estate belonging to James Chichester-Clarks, the former Unionist Prime Minister, and Toome, a village surrounded by bogland on the banks of the Bann, where Roddy McCorley, a young patriot was hung [...]”. Parker 7.
Europe's influence has been felt on Ireland in architectural terms. Irish architecture reveals the assimilation of Gothic, classical, and neo-classical styles. Yet variations on stylistic convention, such as the Irish version of the Georgian country house, are also often apparent. In the twentieth century Modernist tendencies in design evolved. The language of the International Style can be seen in the "geometric, white-painted, flat-roofed buildings" that dot cities like Dublin. This style had peaked by 1940, though the forms of Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright continued to be influential. As Simon Walker suggests, certain 'organic' modifications, such as the "integration of rustic masonry and local vernacular with modern construction," become a recurring theme in Irish architecture. In the seventies this fusion of ancient and modern was seen in the "often extraordinary level of craftsmanship that still existed in the trades [...] exploited to the limit in the deceptively difficult task of realising 'minimalist' buildings." Recently tourism has brought innovation, involving the restoration of existing structures. For example, the juxtaposition of "ancient stone masses with a refined modern enamelled white steel and glass structure" at King John's Castle, Limerick, which incorporates "modern materials and aesthetics in an historic setting." In a similar manner, Heaney's poetry fuses the archaic and modern, as he renovates time-worn forms in newly challenging ways, shifting them from the elegiac to the enduring.

Derek Walcott was born in 1930, at 17 Chaussee Road in Castries, St. Lucia.

one of the Windward Islands in the Lesser Antilles.\textsuperscript{36} The mainly wooden house, now converted into a printer’s shop and with its front veranda removed, has a steeply pitched roof and three louvered windows on the second floor. Built in a decorous mixture of picturesque and formal styles, its unassuming demeanour belies the fact that it survived when four-fifths of Castries burnt to the ground in 1948 (for the fifth time). Walcott Square—formerly Columbus Square, but renamed in his honor—officially occupies the center of Castries.

As Edward Crain notes, the “reconstructed buildings that surround [the square] reflect some apparent French influence.”\textsuperscript{37} St. Lucia changed hands thirteen times between the British and French over the course of its history. The hybrid architectural forms of Castries now reflect the multicultural origins of its inhabitants past and present. West Indian architecture commonly seems an incongruous and eclectic mixture of styles, at least to outsiders. Crain observes how churches in Castries mix “medieval and classical details,” and describes Government House as an “eclectic combination of details” featuring both Palladian windows and Demarara shutters.\textsuperscript{38} A large range of influences (and use of vivid colors) is visually apparent in St. Lucian and West Indian architecture. Some of this eclecticism emerges in Walcott’s poetry, successfully integrated into an aesthetic of transcultural design.

On the whole, as Pamela Gosner notes, the architectural influences were English in origin, due in part to the arrival of Georgian builder’s handbooks.\textsuperscript{39} A

\textsuperscript{36} See for background Robert D. Hamner, \textit{Derek Walcott} (New York: Twayne, 1993).


\textsuperscript{38} Crain 188, 104-5.

\textsuperscript{39} Pamela W. Gosner, \textit{Caribbean Georgian: The Great and Small Houses of the West Indies} (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1982) 5-6. She writes of James Gibbs (1682-1754): “Through his \textit{Book of Architecture}, published in 1728, Gibbs had a greater influence on both provincial British and colonial architecture in the 18th century than any other architect [...]. Besides its adaptability, the translation of this style to the colonies was made possible by the nature of Gibbs’s book. This was the first architectural book designed as a how-to-do-it manual, or builder’s handbook. [...] it was soon followed by a veritable flood of similar handbooks.” Gosner 18. Colonists modified designs to suit tropical conditions.
cultural imperative seems at work in the importation of these books, extendible to the way formal languages in literary and architectural senses achieved translation in the islands. From the mid-eighteenth century, Gosner notes, West Indian colonists were using "the classical vocabulary of architecture easily and gracefully, but with a definite Creole accent," a resilient "tropical Georgian." But African slaves built the forts, Great Houses, churches and sugarcane-milling factories of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a fact remembered in Walcott's *Omeros*. Most of St. Lucia's plantation buildings are now destroyed, and the threat is now commercial development. This is a point Walcott takes up in poetry and prose, as my first chapter raises, along with his views on the rise of 'brutal' international trends in architecture in Caribbean cities.

* * *

The issue of architecture in Heaney and Walcott has not gone unnoticed by critics. With regard to Heaney, Neil Corcoran, Michael Parker, Henry Hart, Stan Smith, Michael Molino, and Steven Matthews are useful in this area. Corcoran notes that "Heaney's Derry is the best-known instance of rural representation in post-Yeatsian Irish poetry," and draws attention to his inheritance of Kavanagh, Montague, and Fallon's "ways of reading Irish rural experience." But as I argue in regard to both poets, not only is the land "densely recessive, a script which knowledge can teach the poet to read," but architecture as well. Parker broaches a theme which will be explored in the second chapter, how Heaney early on "discovered in language and literature. and the 'tongue's / old

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40 Gosner 20.
dungeons', a surrogate home.’ The ‘supplement of living’ Bachelard remarks
upon in regard to home finds its correlative here, though the comparison is stated
in negative terms. Home (and language) appear as incarcerating forces, an
unsettling aspect that emerges strongly in Heaney’s early work in particular.

Parker also notes how a proportion of Heaney poems take place at the
‘intersection of the real and the surreal, the concrete and the abstract, public and
private spheres.’ Other critics also note this ‘inbetween’ space as a metaphor
for Heaney’s suspension between place and displacement. Hart notes how
Heaney crosses “back and forth between different enclosures, whether they be
Irish or English, British or American, Protestant or Catholic, Romantic or Classic.”
Hart’s deconstructive bias accords a certain agenda to such Heaney works as The
Haw Lantern, which he terms a “miniature but probing grammatology that
attacks ‘logocentric’” thinking. Yet such a reading does not account for the
recurrant privileging of voice in Heaney’s writing, as an indeterminant factor
complicating any distinction between speech and writing, or presence and
absence in his poetics. Smith also seizes on Heaney’s state of “inbetweenness,”
remarking how language functions as “itself a site of displacement,” and
perpetual homecoming.

Molino quotes an architectural analogy made by Heaney in a BBC interview,
where he speaks of a “dark centre, the blurred and irrational storehouse of insight
and instincts, the hidden core of the self—this notion is the foundation of what
viewpoint I might articulate for myself as a poet.” Molino interprets this
experiential “storehouse” as akin to a self that is “always already a construct of

43 Parker 133, 214.
45 Stan Smith, “The Distance Between: Seamus Heaney,” The Chosen Ground: Essays on the
Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland, ed. Neil Corcoran (Mid Glamorgan: Seren; Chester Springs, PA:
Dufour, 1992) 38, 46.
language." Yet the uncanny notion of a "hidden core" conjures up images of both captivity and shelter, and if related to the idea of the "found" poetic voice suggests an anxiety on Heaney's part to keep this inner zone a mystery—an unknowable, unquantifiable place where the "pre-reflective" and the "pre-verbal" also hold sway as sounds that may just as easily escape the "construct of language." The solid image of the "'storehouse'" essentially reflects a symmetry and unfussy utility of design. Perhaps one reason Heaney sees the voice as buried so deeply is because it dwells in an aesthetic stronghold of poetic memory, its sustaining values under attack from many sides. Heaney needs to keep open this access to the enigmatic and "irrational" energies that inform his writing, springing from the landscape and language itself.

Matthews rejects 'mystery' as a valid poetic or literary criterion, referring to the way the aesthetic mode of reading dominates the poems until it appears as "a space of almost mystical wholeness" removed from political and historical contexts in some commentaries. These critiques, associated with Helen Vendler's method of reading, sustain an "organicist model of lyric poetry [...] a model which is at least superficially under question in Heaney's [...] own self-consciousness" about his nature poetry. Heaney destabilizes the dichotomy between the 'natural' and 'unnatural' as part of his poetic practice. Early on, though, he actually refers to poems "surfacing with a touch of mystery. They certainly involve craft and determination. but chance and instinct have a role in the thing too." But Matthews makes a necessary challenge to "Anglo-American aesthetic. placeless and timeless views of poetry" by locating the verse

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47 As O'Reilly states, "efficient form and multiple usage" are "features that reverberate through Irish architecture." O'Reilly 12.
in the “more immediate context” of the Northern Irish cultural milieu.49

Matthews’s work deals with formal experimentation in Heaney’s “later airy poetic architecture.” In “‘Reconciliation Under Duress’: The Architecture of Seamus Heaney’s Recent Poetry,” he is concerned not so much with the way Heaney reads architecture, but in how the “processes of history” and the “lyric moment” form a tension together that results in the poem. The later poetry (Seeing Things and The Haw Lantern at least) constitutes a “union” of the “aesthetic with the political,” which the examples of Mandelstam and Yeats help foster. Matthews contends that the ‘flimsy’ nature of such Heaney sequences as “Squarings” mark an “assault on the Yeatsian tower” and the “foundation of Thoor Ballylee as a symbolic place of writing.”50 It is arguable, however, to what extent the description of “willed provisionality” holds when applied generally to Heaney’s poetry, where an assumed embrace of the tentative and fragmentary is not necessarily reflected in the choice of form.51 He still pays homage to convention in his use of the sonnet, for example, as “A Hyperborean,” discussed in chapter four, demonstrates.

Critical commentary has been devoted to Walcott’s use of architecture as well. Most writers, however, tend to focus on his relationship to the landscape, as the formative “natural topography” of his poetic life.52 Notable emphasis has

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50 Matthews 169-174.
51 Matthews 185.
52 See, for example, “Natural Topography: 1974-1980,” in Hamner, Derek Walcott 88-116.
been placed on examining Walcott’s aesthetics as a painter. Walcott’s reading of cities has drawn comment. J. Michael Dash, speaking of The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory, notes his vision of the Caribbean city as “polyglot and indeterminate.” Critics often speak of Walcott as existing in an ‘inbetween’ state as well, and view the poetry as reflecting this fluid condition.

As Edward Baugh states of the division into halves of The Arkansas Testament, both ‘Here’ and ‘Elsewhere’ are negotiated from the point of view of the transient. In the accounts of both ‘countries’, we are likely to find the persona travelling through, working out of a hotel room (sometimes a beach house) which is at one and the same time an emblem of his precarious, ‘floating’ condition and a protection or refuge, a mask of anonymity.

As Baugh suggests, the room functions in an analogous way to the unsettled ‘placing’ poetry represents which also claims Walcott, a space where the notion of “anonymity” is associated with the dissolution of identity into craft.

Baugh’s study of Walcott’s Another Life examines how the poem is anchored in Castries. For Walcott, Government House and the vanished Saint Antoine Hotel act as “symbols of privilege and affluence which dominated the view of the Morne from the harbour.” Against these stand the “shacks of the poor” on the overlooking hillside, representing “the other, unwritten history of the place.” He notes how in the poem Walcott identifies his original house, with its bougainvillea and allamanda vine-covered porch, with his mother “until each


becomes the other.” Baugh also notes, most strikingly in relation to Heaney, how Walcott also invokes ‘presences’ in architectural objects.57 Baugh quotes from a review Walcott wrote observing that objects, “furniture and landscape exist to strengthen the meaning of human existence.”58 This factor—a sensitivity to the ‘underlife’ of things—emerges in the poetry of both Heaney and Walcott.

More recently in this respect, Tom Sleigh has drawn attention to Walcott’s ongoing “faith in metaphor.” Sleigh discusses a poem from The Bounty, “Manet in Martinique,” where Walcott ‘describes the interior of a house furnished like a 19th century salon” evoking the “mute past” of objects: “Walcott’s empathy with the cultural markers of this scene is tempered by his suspicion that the spirit of the house is a cliché. Yet he doesn’t disdain that spirit. In a moment of fellow feeling, he pities it for its own sense of exile.”59 Baugh argues that Walcott, in the process of ‘living’ in his “‘different gift, / its element metaphor […]’” has turned increasingly to self-reflexive readings of the textual encounter. This, essentially, has resulted in a steady fusion of spaces within his poetry, an ideal figured in “For the Altar-piece of the Roseau Valley Church, Saint Lucia,” from “Sainte Lucie.” Sea Grapes. As Baugh observes, the poem “fuses the painter, the painting and the common folk of the Roseau Valley who are represented in the painting. That fusion is a central point of the poem. the inter-rootedness of the place, its people and its art.”60 But the architectural pivot-point of the poem’s ‘turns’ needs mentioning as well. As Walcott writes: “The chapel as the pivot of this valley. / round which whatever is rooted loosely turns.”61 This architecture
contains the metaphorical exchange, symbolizing the enclosure made in formal terms as well.

The "complexity of metaphor" contained in Another Life takes on potential architectural significance in Baugh's overview, as an effect of reading: "We can see the poem spread out before us in its totality, like a painting or tapestry, presenting a subtle design of intermeshing webs of images and a rich texture of many-layered meaning at any point." This effect keeps the poem "true to its own medium, as distinct from the medium of paint." Yet the concept of poetry as a "distinct" medium is contested by Rei Terada in regard to the lyric at least: "Walcott's brief lyrics tend to assume aesthetic interpenetrations, freely applying questions of representation derived from the visual arts to poetry or vice versa." She contends that since "Walcott thinks of language as material to shape, he sees poetry as a 'craft' that shades into painting and shares its goals and limitations." As a result," she continues, "he maintains an awareness of the spatial and visual properties of writing. For Walcott, visual art is not a separate and competitive system, but a part of poetry itself, even as metaphor, semiotics, and narrative shape visual art." This could be extended into his ideas on architecture, yet the stress on writing risks obscuring the more indeterminable factor of voice in the poetry. As Hamner writes of Omeros, "Undergirding the prosody and the narrative form [...] is always the controlling factor of Walcott's voice." While Hamner's intention is to mark the presence of Walcott's narrator, he implies how the formal movement of the poem is structured into a coherent pattern by this feature.

Several critics have noted the way Walcott sometimes fits spatial form and

63 Rei Terada, Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1992) 120, 149. See also her remarks on the "overwhelmingly spatial" metaphorical "network" present in "The Hotel Normandie Pool." Terada 138.
architectural content together in his work. "Crusoe's Journal" provides an example. J. Edward Chamberlin writes that the "beach house 'perched between ocean and green, churning forest' is an image for the poem itself," and thus acts as a site of mediation for a number of issues. The poem's form is loosely mimetic, in a 'gesturing' sense, structured or 'staged' by Walcott in order to convey the physicality of the beach house, alongside its metaphorical powers of suggestion:

Once we have driven past Mundo Nuevo trace safely to this beach house perched between ocean and green, churning forest the intellect appraises objects surely, even the bare necessities of style are turned to use

Form acts to visually reinforce the content, as the precarious nature of West Indian architecture, continually subject to the elements, is also expressed here in the balancing of the lines one on top of the other. Walcott's form encourages us to read the poem mimetically, suggesting that the beach house topos holds a particular place in his thinking about the nature of dwelling. These implications will be further examined in chapter two.

Finally, Fred D'Aguiar's observations on "Cul de Sac Valley," from The Arkansas Testament, should be noted. The poem is divided into four parts, and consists of forty-five identically formed quatrains. D'Aguiar suggests that Walcott posits "an inevitable symbiosis between the shapes that define a space and place and the forms and shapes of the poems that come out of it." Walcott's construction of the first stanza's 'room' sets up this idea of

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65 J. Edward Chamberlin, *Come Back to Me My Language: Poetry and the West Indies* (Toronto: McClelland, 1993) 162. Similarly, but with more emphasis on Walcott's sense of displacement, Terada contends that the "position of the beach house [...] evokes Walcott's own precarious position, apparently 'between worlds.'" Terada 159.
correspondence, as the mimetic relationship between poetry and architecture is stressed:

A panel of sunrise  
on a hillside shop  
gave these stanzas  
their stilted shape.68

D’Aguiar sees the quatrain as “a panel added to the overall building of the poem.” the sunrise-made shape a model for the pattern:

Those hillside shacks and shops seem somehow to have grown out of the landscape, seem outcrops of the elemental world. By locating the tightness of the quatrain form firmly in the ‘natural’ world Walcott is partly absolved from the criticism of literariness, of devices imported to contain and organise material that would otherwise take on looser, less formal shapes. He does this by claiming that in this example it is nature which dictates what form the poem takes and not the poem which gives shape and form to nature.69

As D’Aguiar implies, the metaphor for ‘natural’ rootedness in the landscape that evolves from the sunrise image on the shop is not unselfconsciously evoked. In the notion of “devices imported to contain and organise material” the possibility arises that Walcott’s poetic architecture may still be paying oblique homage to traditional forms in West Indian and English housing, as well as verse. The ‘natural’ sunrise also refers to the civilizing mission of colonialism, as with these rays he ironically alludes to the Empire on whom ‘the sun will never set.’70

D’Aguiar raises important issues and “Cul de Sac Valley,” alongside Walcott’s ideas concerning architecture, craft, and form, will be further examined in chapter one.

* * *

Chapter one deals with Heaney and Walcott’s poetics of architecture as

70 In relation to this sunrise the etymology of ‘form’ may be significant. As Frank points out, the word form comes from the Indo-European mer-bh, meaning to sparkle or gleam, as form can be seen or known by the light it gives off: “in this way, edge of light—beginning of contrast—determines or signifies the shape of the form we see.” Frank 272.
expressed in their essays, reviews, interviews, and addresses. Their recognition of the spatial element of language is apparent, as is their conception of poetic forms through the use of architectural metaphors. Moving from more direct architectural observations, I trace the way these ideas inflect upon their notions of composition, voice, and ultimately how the making of forms becomes a means of engaging their cultures in dialogue. Architecture emerges as central to their poetics.

In Chapter two I begin examining the poetry in detail. The architectural sensibilities of each poet are explored in connection with the ambivalent relationships they maintain with their respective homes. Though several critics have pointed out the role of displacement in their poetry, the actual metaphorical construction has not been examined closely in this respect. For Heaney and Walcott, the poetic process leads them to adopt a liminal status on the borders of society. The use of architecture as a way to enter imaginatively into historical and memory-related matters and situations is apparent, as various settings are evoked and explored.

Chapter three looks at the way the phenomenon of the Big House (as it is known in Ireland) and the West Indian Great House is represented in the poetry of Heaney and Walcott. A number of other centers and sites in the poetry will be discussed, as well as their frequently enigmatic treatment of architectural objects. For each poet, architectural sites and structures emerge as places of visionary reverie in many cases, as a strong temporal dimension is once again opened up by their spatial inquiries.

Finally, chapter four examines how Heaney and Walcott use architecture and form to evoke poetic architecture in relation to the elegy. Some examples of eulogy and homage are also considered. Temporality, in particular the transformation and preservation of memory, is again a concern here, as
architectural metaphors frequently act as organizing frameworks for the imagination. Elegiac rebuilding or the ‘housing’ of memory in certain poems leads Heaney and Walcott to involve the reader-listener in an often mimetically orientated process that depends on the architectural trope in vital aspects.
Chapter One: Reading Architecture in Heaney and Walcott's Poetics

At several points in Derek Walcott's _Omeros_ a deepening in the narrative occurs with the sounding of a conch-shell, or its metaphorical equivalent, sending the imagery carried in his _terza rima_ spiraling off in a fresh direction. Drawing on the work of D'Arcy Thompson, who considered organic form expressive of both beginnings and ends, causes and purposes, Philip Kuberski writes of the metaphor of the shell: "each 'new' development in a spiral is both a departure and a return to its own nature." It acts as a "metaphor of a larger metaphoric process of organic development."¹ In Heaney's and Walcott's work we see a search for poetic form that is organically, intuitively occurring, emerging spontaneously from within, and a competing awareness of the inescapable artificiality of forms, the exterior logic of power that bears down on creative judgments. As Heaney states, poems are implicitly "formations at once organic and contrived."² What would be a shell must become an _oikos_, a house or construct of a different order, acted upon by poetic forces of design.

Form provides an axis of understanding around which architecture and poetry revolve. But form also carries a link to power and its control. Nietzsche, for instance, considered the grand style of architecture a type of 'oratory of power' conveyed by formal means.³ This rhetorical insistence, verging on the insidious, is registered in Heaney's and Walcott's awareness that architectural forms are texts

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¹ Philip Kuberski, _The Persistence of Memory: Organism, Myth, Text_ (Berkeley: U of California P, 1992) 88. Thompson notes Aristotle's parable: "the house is there that men may live in it; but it is also there because the builders have laid one stone upon another." He relates this idea of 'mechanism' to the growth of natural phenomena: "Still, all the while, warp and woof, mechanism and teleology are interwoven together [...] their union is rooted in the very nature of totality." D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, _On Growth and Form_, ed. John Tyler Bonner, abr. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966) 5.
³ Nietzsche states: "Pride, victory over weight and gravity, the will to power, seek to render themselves visible in a building; architecture is a kind of rhetoric of power, now persuasive, even cajoling in form, now bluntly imperious." Friedrich Nietzsche, "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," _Twilight of the Idols_ and _The Anti-Christ_, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968) 74.
that 'speak' or demand to be read. While an almost religious veneration for form emerges in their poetic discourses over time—poetry and buildings are given sacred force—so also does an underlying distrust of cultural systems that attempt to organize perception and responses. The relationship between architectural and poetic form is made problematic in the discourses of Heaney and Walcott by such tensions, as this chapter will explore. Architecture emerges as a way of conceptualizing poetic form in the language each poet uses to talk about the creative process. In a broader sense, however, the focus will be on the use of architecture as a metaphor in their thinking about language, identity, and poetry.

Beginning with Heaney, the discussion will move from an examination of the values and meanings expressed by certain architectural sites, into an analysis of the statements each poet makes regarding factors such as poetic craft, technique, and voice. The comments of Heaney and Walcott on various poets are important here. Joseph Brodsky, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Osip Mandelstam, and Yeats are among those to whom they refer. Through a survey of the ideas expressed in their poetics, the link between architecture and poetry in the formal realm of the verse will become more firmly established.

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Heaney once faced an unusual question from Henri Cole, who asked: "What about architecture? If you could be a building, what would you be?" He replies:

The Pantheon. Why not? Paul Muldoon once made me a 'monumental / Emmenthal' when he assigned the poets their identities as cheeses. When I went to Rome, of course, I went to St. Peter’s Square and found it an overwhelming experience, partly because of the magnificent architectural sweep of it. […] tears came to my eyes when I went into it. A sudden irritation.[…] I ended up returning over and over again to the Pantheon.

One of the most traditional of forms, the Pantheon expresses a unified symmetry, obdurate endurance and an underlying perfection. Part of the appeal may be the

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grounded quality it shares with the stone world of Ireland. The design parallels the deep cultural rooting of the Irish in their milieu and shows the fondness of Heaney for plain, generally unnuanced forms, reliable in function. Yet there is a stolid predictability about its monumental “sweep” that is troubling, and he chose another ‘ruin’ to immortalize in “Mycenae Lookout,” that undoes such stasis through its jagged formal arrangement. The Pantheon is a sublimely intimidating structure to identify with, yet also an innately conservative choice. Its sacral temple character as unhomely as an Egyptian pyramid, or the Boyne tombs.

In the same interview another architectural reference involving nostalgic longing for an unattainable permanence appears. Heaney recounts an unsettling dream he had before deciding to accept the Harvard position he teaches for half the academic year:

I was in the desert and it was night. I needed some place to lie down, some shelter, and came upon this lean-to made of posts angled up against some sort of wall or cliff face. And over the posts there were skins or some sort of covering. I crept in underneath this to sleep for the night and then in the next frame of the dream it’s broad morning, sunlight, the cliff face has disappeared, the lean-to is gone. I’m out in the open. What I had taken to be a solid wall had actually been the side of a liner docked in the Suez Canal and during the night the liner had moved on.5

With the loss of the ship’s illusionary foundational support, the form of the lean-to simply disintegrates in the uncanny context suggested by his second, internal sleep. The sleep he dreams of provides a framing mechanism for the shock of exposure that follows upon waking, and suggests the impossibility of dwelling “in the proper sense,” to quote Theodore Adorno.6 Heaney’s predicament is compounded by the description of his Harvard existence as “like nesting on a ledge, being migrant, being in someone else’s house, in fact.”7 All three of the

5 Cole 96.
7 Cole 97.
structures Heaney mentions have a quality of the unhomely about them—Pantheon, lean-to, and house—serving to illustrate competing strains in his poetry and his poetics: the attachment to the classic and canonical, the radically bracing sense of being "out in the open," and the transitional stage of accepting the new, experimenting with displacement and disjunction on the threshold of possibility.

The more conservative Heaney emerges strongly in a speech presented to a group of Irish architects in 1986. "From Maecenas to MacAlpine," while intended as a "meditation upon the relations between architectural images and emotional values," comes across as a retrograde attempt to defend an elite aesthetic sensibility. Heaney takes Coole Park, renowned for its associations with Yeats and Lady Gregory, as a locus of potential. He makes it a metaphor for Ireland as a whole, with whose poetics of architecture he is concerned. Early on in the speech a connection with reading is established:

Buildings and monuments constitute a system of signs which we read and construe into a system of attachments and relationships. What we used to say about the lessons in infant-school reading books can be said equally about the buildings and monuments. streets and squares, churches and factories which constitute our horizon of vision: we read them into ourselves.

These architectural objects demand a type of cognitive interpretation: a semiotic translation of one "system" into another more emotionally and imaginatively-centered version. Heaney posits a symbiotic relationship leading to a shared "horizon of vision." To read structures and surroundings "into" the self is to absorb forms at a conscious, but also unconscious level. The analogy with book-reading implies a transference of essences, as the visual matter of architecture acquires a symbolic power of virtual self-indoctrination for him. Beyond shaping

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subjectivity. an internal merger of sensibility with the external world’s architecture is imagined.

Heaney presents a deterministic notion of formative reading as an encounter with active powers that colonize vision. He grants buildings a subjectivity which he ultimately traces back to the makers of these forms. A sinister, faintly oppressive air of mutual surveillance appears:

As we con them, they are conning us—sometimes in the good original sense of that verb, sometimes in its less flattering, more contemporary sense. They take us in and we take them in, first as imprints on the retina, then as known dwellings, then as remembered forms. They begin to insist themselves into our consciousness as a kind of language which, like any language, embodies certain values and enforces certain ways of knowing reality.

As we read and observe buildings, they respond. But a rhetoric of persuasion lurks within the exchange that sees a mistrust emerge; the powerful strain of ‘oratory’ expressed in such forms may conceal a confidence trick designed to play upon the emotions. The impression of the “known” carries an ambiguity at its core as these “remembered forms” occupy their place in the mind. The rhetorical insistence of forms is felt as a vague “kind of language,” an enforcement of certain givens. Problematically, Heaney’s statements amount to a defence of form in both architecture and, by extension, poetry, while simultaneously revealing an awareness of the insidious nature of built structures. The implications for Heaney’s poetics are substantial, as forms take on some of the distrustful, oppressive edge his poem “The Ministry of Fear” implies, from “Singing School” in North, as imposers of ideological order (see chapter two).

Heaney largely suppresses these tensions in his prose writings, going in fact

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9 Writing of George Bataille, Denis Hollier notes how architecture “captures society in the trap of the image it offers, fixing it in the specular image it reflects back. Its locus is that of the imaginary understood at its most dictatorial, where the cement of faith confirms religions and kingdoms in their authority.” Architecture, in Bataille’s conception, “does not express the soul of societies but rather smoothes it.” Denis Hollier, Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: MIT P. 1992) 47.
in the opposite direction by pointing out the humanistic, elevating possibilities
form lends itself to. Like any language, he states, “the language of forms can be
understood in terms of its roots, or its borrowings, or its clichés, or its creative
action. It can be spoken mechanically or originally, coarsely or elegantly; and just
how it is spoken by individual buildings is going to affect its efficacy as an
instrument for humanising and refining our consciousness.” In giving buildings a
human agency and comparing individual examples to “instrument[s]” capable of
edifying the recipient, Heaney privileges the way such an expression of power
demands the right governance of rhetorical capabilities. A political dimension
emerges. The exercising of power latent in the “language of forms” begins with
the creators, in his opinion, as the “formal solutions and imprintsings of a building
[…] serve some function and responsibility beyond the pure utilitarian and
aesthetic. They become a human statement and give new emphasis—or express
fresh resistance—to values and attitudes already embodied in the existing forms.”
Heaney stresses the resiliently “human” element that inheres in architecture.
Architecture offers a site of negotiation with the past. However, architects are
seen as testing “values.” and re-imagining formal possibilities, from a threshold
perspective that also faces the future.

The ambiguous nature of form as a closed, potentially totalitarian system,
mirroring and refracting the desires of its inhabitants draws Heaney back as he
locates the “language of forms” at the heart of the political unconscious. The
“politics of buildings,” he claims, may be “mute but they are potent. They supply
some of the dream images by which the polis, the group, identify themselves and
therefore they cannot be innocent of their own force as political, in the widest,
non-partisan sense of the term.” Designing buildings carries an imperative in that

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10 Cf. His notion of the “government of the tongue” regarding poetry’s authority: “As readers, we submit
to the jurisdiction of achieved form, even though that form is achieved not by dint of the moral and ethical
exercise of mind but by the self-validating operations of what we call inspiration […]” (GT 92).
a culpable force is directed, tapping into and manipulating the collective psyche. In this respect, he adds, architects cannot claim “artistic quarantine and say they are dealing only in techne or know how. What they design becomes [...] symbolic, and once we enter the realm of the symbolic, we have crossed the threshold of human mind and feeling.” But the political context’s insidious, irresolvable tensions, far from being transcended with the turn to the symbolic, are carried across. Coole Park exists in this “realm of the symbolic” for Heaney, epitomizing architectural excellence, and in reactionary terms, a “sacred space,” a phrase he borrows from the anthropologist Mircea Eliade. In straining to make the “language of forms” bridge secular and spiritually-attuned realms, Heaney’s language undergoes a Neo-Platonic reversion as Coole Park is made the ideal form, removed from reality. Like the Pantheon, Coole Park safeguards the cumulative virtues of generations of formal refinement, but also marks a locus classicus of the insidious power it is imagined to rise above.

The demolition of the house by developers marks a crime against the polis, one in which the “language of forms” suffers desecration as well. Heaney calls it an “act of vandalism.”11 Aligning himself with the old order, he argues: “it represents a definite assault upon the covenant between power and aesthetics.” This argument finds its parallel in Heaney’s treatment of Christopher Marlowe’s “Hero and Leander,” where he defends a canonical text from hostile revisionist critics.12 In his idealistic portrayal, Coole Park symbolizes this “covenant” in its divine removal from mundane affairs. The identification with ruling class values flies in the face of the politics of the weak and dispossessed Heaney espouses elsewhere, and in his verse. He emerges as a defender of a dubious faith against the builder MacAlpine, who wrecked “a mature and culturally significant site.”

11 Heaney, “Maecenas” 70.
Heaney describes him as being from "another social reality." He represents a "MacAlpine principle" where all deference to forms is trampled underfoot. Building, displacing architectural purity, pollutes the site, in the guise of a "secular, economic, democratic, utilitarian, wellington-booted, hard-hatted enterprise." Heaney laments the loss of "paternalistic" order, deriding the social mechanism of "planning permission and public funds" that now brutalize his vision of high cultural achievement. He laments the way "private patronage [and] the fortification of a ruling caste" have been debased by the "flow of money." 'MacAlpine builders' are demonized in his reading. Signaling a "new dispensation," the vengeful rise of the workers to undermine the "visionaries" is played out in his scenario. Heaney overlooks the social roots of these "bloody-minded" figures who "represent a constant aspect of the social conditions within which architects, as the makers and breakers of form, must also work." The MacAlpine type of worker's ability to break form (and remake it) is excluded. Their zeal becomes a mere barbaric urge for profit.

Heaney goes on to discuss the importance of vernacular Irish architecture, and includes this "idiom" as part of the "formal architectural language," which he argues is "being spoken to us all the time." But, with regard to Coole Park, his criticism of the MacAlpine "sappers" masks a defensiveness about his own position as a beleaguered builder of verse. He defends the "purely artistic destiny" of architecture to be "a celebration of its own technical possibilities" and "an expression of the common hankering after definitive and symbolically pregnant forms." At the same time, though, the "language of forms" emerges as slightly elitist in bias, and there is a sense that he has repressed his own deep ambivalence towards such makers as Yeats in the embrace of Coole Park's garden and its symbolic perfection.

He takes as Coole Park's emblem a bust of Maecenas, the Roman patron.
imported by Lady Gregory in the nineteenth century. Setting Maecenas in opposition to MacAlpine, Heaney celebrates what the “privileged oligarchy” have left through this image, the group he continues to idealize:

Maecenas in Coole Park. The classical head in the hortus conclusus. The image of the patron in the demesne of the landlord. This whole set of correspondences and associations is one which may well have become eroded in the Ireland of the 1980s, but it remains as an enduring emblem of the covenant which architects must surely still observe, a covenant with classical achievements, with powerful patrons, with images of order, with projects of salutary beauty and force.13

The bust symbolizes the way form and force, (or aesthetics and power), are combined in a compact for architects. In relating this “covenant” to the fiscal power of patrons, with “classical achievements […] images of order,” and works which realize the aesthetic and forceful. Heaney’s “language of forms” asserts an ethical imperative. Heaney engages Yeatsian values on the earlier poet’s own turf as a way of demonstrating his own strength as a form-maker, something he does more subtly and convincingly in his verse. As “A Peacock’s Feather” (discussed in chapter three) reveals. Heaney’s relationship to patrons and patron poets is more problematic than the bond he implies between Irish architects and power.

In poem xxii from “Squarings.” Heaney confronts questions directly relating to form in a way that deliberately undermines the idea of an unassailable “sacred space.” The notion of an artistic ‘higher calling’ expressed above, perhaps with a trace of irony, returns here as well. “Where does spirit live?” the opening asks, “Inside or outside / Things remembered, made things, things unmade?”14 A concern with the housing of consciousness haunts the poem:

What came first, the seabird’s cry or the soul
Imagined in the dawn cold when it cried?
Where does it roost at last? On dungy sticks
In a jackdaw's nest up in the old stone tower

13 Heaney, “Maecenas” 69.
Or a marble bust commanding the parterre?
How habitable is perfected form?
And how inhabited the windy light?

What's the use of a held note or held line
That cannot be assailed for reassurance?
(Set questions for the ghost of W. B.)

The reference to the "marble bust commanding the parterre" no doubt refers to the "Maecenas in Coole Park" trope. Here the "perfected form" appears unhomely in implication, and the tower is finally portrayed as a place of "spirit" dwelling that offers little inner solace.

In his speech to the architects, Heaney answers these questions almost in the spirit of Yeats. Maecenas, standing for a hierarchical "system of privilege," also represents the "pre-democratic world where power and arbitration, in matters of taste as well as in matters of state, are kept in the hands of what the Romans called the optimi, the best people."15 These are matters of style and refined taste. Heaney defends the aristocratic system through recourse to their collective achievements, again in terms which rest uncomfortably with his poetic views elsewhere. Citing the "architectural magnificence" of "great works," from the Kremlin to the Boyne Valley tumuli, he argues that they all depended upon "a centralised and secure elite" for their completion. The insular Irish inheritance proceeds from this same system:

From the Rock of Cashel to Castletown House, from Jerpoint Abbey to the Custom House and the Four Courts, the contribution of the Norman ecclesiastical power and the Anglo-Irish ascendancy has been assumed into our heritage and our consciousness. We can stand before these monuments and not feel oppressed, politically or aesthetically. If they affirm a sense of possession, they do so by now without any intent to affront. If they symbolise their original proprietor's place at the top of the power structure, they also display an awareness of knowing their place topographically, culturally and—by now—historically.16

Heaney claims these sites now offer a reconciliatory space of connection with the

15 Heaney, "Maecenas" 69-70.
16 Heaney, "Maecenas" 70.
observer. However, the implication is that the “sense of possession” they affirm is also over the onlooker. The reference to Irish architectural achievements “knowing their place” clearly refers to a (lethal) social ordering that also implies the masses. The ‘con,’ it appears, is complete.

Heaney’s poetry, which so intuitively evokes the pagan unconscious he reads in the land’s markings, and in language itself, is jettisoned by association here for the civilizing mission that the Maecenas image promotes. Maecenas symbolizes a placatory force encouraging humility and social prudence. In the latter stages of the address, after invoking what amounts to a secular priesthood of architects, he tones down the rhetoric, claiming that their responsibility is to “bear witness to space as a human home rather than space as geometric dimension. It is up to the architect to keep faith with human scale, to remember that the spirit and the unconscious need caring for, need to dwell in amity inside a building.” Yet, architecture, to be “conservative of the nesting instinct in human beings,” does not have to be “reactionary in style or technique.” A key factor is raised with the notion of “faith,” implying that society looks to the architect as having access to a symbolic “language of forms.”

 Architects, keepers of the covenant, are implicated in a metaphor of cosmic proportions in Heaney’s opinion: “each new structure involves, in a deep metaphorical sense, a re-creation of the world, and so contributes towards the bringing into being of a certain kind of world.” Comparing Blake’s notion of the “act of poetic imagination” to the architectural process of making, Heaney implies how the divine and secular meet, sounding as a “repetition within the finite mind of the eternal I AM.” The architect, though existing in the “world of the profane space [...] cannot escape from casting a vote, as it were, in favour of that profanity or against it.” His or her subjectivity bears the stamp of the master-

17 Heaney, “Maecenas” 72.
architect, the _ethos_ of the supreme patron who may speak through their forms.

Heaney’s speech continues to explore the relation between “profane” and “sacred” architecture. Many “profane” sites become “sacred spaces” over time, he grants, raising the question of whether the “local mana” that “still emanates from much of [Ireland’s] environment” is not simply a function of human memory, the accumulated text of centuries of readings. Irish space “is still imprinted with indigenous forms and is pervious to domestic human affections.” Space functions as the inner essence worked on by the architect’s forms in his last statement: “His space is still more than vestigially sacred. and it is both his privilege and his responsibility to be its custodian. What is improvised upon the drawing board today will be improvised upon the consciousness of the future: the writing, so to speak, is in the wall.” Still, in Heaney’s association of this “sacred […] privilege” with the chosen few immortalized within Coole Park’s “perfected form.” a problematic ambiguity remains. Heaney’s accent on ‘improvisation’ glosses over the disturbingly programmatic elements in his argument with its ritual laws of boundaries and defensive rehabilitation of the “optimi.” “From Maecenas to MacAlpine” leaves no doubt, however, over the depth of Heaney’s feelings regarding architecture’s powers of cultural definition.

In an article entitled “Place, Pastness, Poems: A Triptych,” Heaney delves into the idea of the architectural object as a ‘haunt’ converging with formative imagination and memory. The apprehension of the world’s reality, he contends, first takes place at a “pre-reflective stage.” World-making again relies on ‘conning’ forms. In a passage recalling Bachelard’s _Poetics of Space_, he writes:

Neruda’s declaration that ‘the reality of the world […] should not be underprized’ implies that we can and often do underprize it. We grow away from our primary relish of the phenomena. The rooms where we come to consciousness, the cupboards we open as toddlers, the shelves we climb up to, the boxes and albums we explore in reserved places in the house, the spots we discover for ourselves in those first solitudes out of doors, the haunts of those explorations at the verge of our security—in such places and at such moments ‘the reality of the world’ first awakens in
us. It is also at such moments that we have our first inkling of pastness and find our physical surroundings invested with a wider and deeper dimension than we can, just then, account for.  

Another covenant with tradition lies in this attitude toward the past that finds its way into Heaney’s verse. Recovery of a “primary relish” for nooks and crannies as experiential realities can be discerned as organic and mechanical forms blend as one: all the spaces he notes figuring analogously for the constructed space of the poem. For him their forms mediate between cognition and the unknown, language and the inexpressible, located at the expanding “verge of […] security.” These haunts cleave more to the vernacular sense of architecture, though a linkage with “pastness” as an ‘enshrined’ spirit occurs for Heaney. The notion of presence emerges in the article, a patina of memory read as revelatory essence. Heaney’s reading of Thomas Hardy’s “The Garden Seat,” textualizes a form lending itself to another nebulous “dimension,” paradoxically rooting it more firmly in the “reality of the world.” Heaney transfers the poem’s unspoken subject-matter: “the ghost-life that hovers over some of the furniture of our lives,” onto another, architecturalized plane of regard. Objects, in his reading of Hardy, may become “temples of the spirit,” sacred, like Coole Park:

This garden seat is not just an objet, a decorous antique; it has become a point of entry into a common emotional ground of memory and belonging. It transmits the climate of a lost world and keeps alive a domestic intimacy with a reality which might otherwise have vanished. The more we are surrounded by such things, the more feelingly we dwell in our own lives. The air which our imaginations inhale in their presence is not musty but bracing.

It could even be maintained that objects thus seasoned by human contact possess a kind of moral force. They insist upon human solidarity and suggest obligations to the generations who have been silenced, drawing us into some covenant with them.  

Heaney’s use of an architectural analogy to describe the seat—a “temple”—flows directly from his conception of form as space made potentially sacred. To a degree

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19 Heaney, “Place” 30-31.
the poem stands in symbolically for what it purports to represent, becoming through its form the connecting means, or “point of entry,” into this “common [...] ground,” and the reality of a “lost world” it houses. Heaney is talking not only of the way these charged objects can enhance life, but by implication, how poetry itself can supply the “air which our imaginations inhale.” The seat, while possessing a “kind of moral force,” a definite power, is a cipher for form as well, both architectural and poetic, in the way it speaks silently of duties and responsibilities, and a covenant, again, with earlier makers. The implication lingers, though, that the objects’ insistence upon “human solidarity” draws those around them into the “ghost-life” as well, an aesthetic reverie not unlike the sinister ‘mirror-trap’ effect of the architectural discussed above. Heaney cultivates this atmosphere, as it is the entry point he takes into writing many of his own poems.

The “language of forms” is also proposed as a means of intuiting presence, as shown in his recollection of a childhood memory from Mossbawn. He describes the object-strewn top of the dresser in the farm kitchen as “like a time machine,” a simile which could be applied to his and Walcott’s poetry. This humble miscellany functions as a lexicon of forms in his mind. They were “living some kind of afterlife. Something previous was vestigially alive in them. They were not just inert rubbish but dormant energies, meanings that could not be quite deciphered.” He describes his response to this arcane vocabulary as “all sensation, tingling with an amplification of inner space, subtly and indelibly linked with the word ‘old.’” Awareness of a deepening imaginative reality occurs with ordinary things which yet “swam with a strangeness.” Another instance is revealed in the discovery of old house foundations when digging goal-posts. The hole begins to “open down and back to a visionary field, a phantom whitewashed cottage with its yard and puddles and hens. The world

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20 Heaney, “Place” 32.
had been amplified: looking and seeing began to take on aspects of imagining and remembering." In a trope that recurs in his poetry numerous times, the center becomes a 'door into the dark' of possibility. The foundations are "amplified" by imagination to achieve an "afterlife" in the "time-machine" of remembered architectural form. The whole "language of forms" depends on this metaphoric "amplification," and Heaney's spatialization of objects extends in the final analysis to words themselves.

Later in the article he attempts to define poetry itself through an extended metaphor, seeing it situated Janus-faced at the intersection of past and future. The word signifies, "an orb on the horizon of time, simultaneously rising and setting, imbued with the sunset blaze of master-works from the tradition yet dawning on every poet like hope or challenge."21 This is one of the recurrent threshold metaphors Heaney uses for poetry, offering insight for the way he relies on a spatial reification to generate a vibrant image of temporal suspension. Calling language a "time-charged medium," Heaney argues how the poetic mind can never "rid itself of temporal attachment," leading him into a consideration of form similar in character to his architectural musings in "From Maecenas to MacAlpine."

"It is very hard," Heaney writes, "to conceive of an imagination which creates without the benefit of inherited forms, modes of expression historically evolved yet universally available, and that benefit itself is an unconscious perspective backward." This "perspective" is associated with memory, and appears in his thought in connection with the imagination's power of making: "The actual poetic task is to find a way of melding the intuitive and affection-steeped word-world of personal memory with the form-hungry and projecting imagination, to find an idiom at once affective and objectified, as individual as

21 Heaney, "Place" 38.
handwriting and as given as the conventions of writing itself.”22 Hence the appeal of the “language of forms” idea, offering both a covenant with tradition and the scope for revisionary individual dialogue.23 The writing metaphors Heaney uses, however, point to a concern with finding an “idiom” that is actually synonymous with discovered poetic voice.

Heaney’s view of poetry as first craft, then ultimately technique, depends on the shift in voice from instrumental means to end. Craft and technique have an important role in both Heaney’s and Walcott’s poetics for the way the ideals of skillful making and design sanction access to a shared “language of forms” with architects. Heaney, however, conceives of craft in an inverted manner from Walcott, who follows the conventional notion that this represents the culmination of a poet’s development. In “Feeling into Words,” Heaney speaks of the “sense of crafting words [...] words as bearers of history and mystery began to invite me” (P 45). Craft is the pragmatically acquired “skill of making,” for him, preceding the deeper engagement with voice and self that evolves as technique. Craft is a poet’s “way with words, his management of metre, rhythm and verbal texture.” It lays the foundation for what is to come.

In contrast, for Heaney technique involves a “definition” of the poet’s “stance towards life [...] of his own reality” (P 47).24 Technique enables the poet to “raid the inarticulate,” through “a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience and the formal ploys that express these in a work of art.” Intuition, attuned to the containing facility of form proves

22 Heaney, “Place” 41.
23 Cf. Heaney’s remarks in the foreword to a recent book on new Irish art: “what stays constant behind the bewildered multiplicity of individual styles is the symbolic nature of the language that art speaks, a language that allows the inwardness of individual consciousness to parley with the barely manageable reality that surrounds it.” Seamus Heaney, foreword, Modern Art in Ireland, ed. Dorothy Walker (Dublin: Lilliput, 1997) 10.
24 For Walcott technique is implicit in craft rather than the other way round, as discussed below. Voice marks the final achievement of craft, and paradoxically this leads into anonymity.
vital to this process: “Technique entails the watermarking of your essential patterns of perception, voice and thought into the touch and texture of your lines: it is that whole creative effort of the mind’s and body’s resources to bring the meaning of experience within the jurisdiction of form.” Heaney seems to be reaching beyond stylistic considerations to touch upon an oracular element that occupies a “pre-verbal” level of formative impulse. He uses as an example the water diviner, whose gifts represent “pure technique,” yet also suggest pure intuition. In privileging technique and treating craft as “know how,” as he says to the architects, access to a larger ‘design’ is gained: the “threshold of human mind and feeling.” Technique emerges as the ideal state of the form-making imagination at its most focused.

Reminiscent of Eliot’s idea of the ‘impersonality’ denoted by immersion in a living tradition, both Heaney and Walcott conceive of a guild-like purity of impulse present in the poetic process. Poetry, Heaney states, “constitutes a rule, a habit, a disciplina for every practitioner.”

Form grows from the maker’s engagement with their materials. Inner laws reveal themselves to the initiated. Many Heaney poems, from “Thatcher” to “An Architect,” and to the tailor in “Three-Piece,” elucidate this relationship as vocation and formal language are inextricably combined. All resemble the poet in the ability to “make palpable what was sensed or raised,” as Heaney says of the diviner (P 48). In idealizing such figures the “language of forms” is made visionary in scope. They become ‘technicians,’ liminally placed on the border between the secular and the sacred.

The cultivation of an objective ‘language of vision’ was a factor associated with the Bauhaus, forerunner of the International Style in architecture.

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27 A parallel exists here with the way Brodsky, Heaney, Murray, Milosz, and Walcott among other poets were heralded briefly as ‘New Internationalists’ at one stage during the 1980s.
founder Walter Gropius’s 1919 manifesto, architects, sculptors and painters are considered together through an understanding that there is “no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman.” For Gropius the source of creativity was to be found in an artist’s proficiency in a craft. This lent itself to anonymity as a goal, a perspective reinforced by the model of the medieval German Bauhütten, or “craft guilds,” as Mark Gelernter notes. Recalling Heaney’s emphasis on making “palpable” the “sensed or raised,” a matter that becomes second-nature with technique, the original guilds stressed that design and execution reflect one continuous process. Forms could be found, Gelernter adds, “in the nature of their materials, in their constructional systems and in the functional uses to which the objects would be put.” These ideas heavily influenced the Bauhaus. After 1921 a more deterministic mode set in as German thought began moving away from Romanticism and Expressionism, with its emphasis upon “personal expression and intuition,” towards Neo-Plasticism, and its “impersonal, ‘objective laws’ of form.” Arguably, Heaney looks for a uniting of the subjective and objective in his “language of forms,” a move that forms the basis for a creative synthesis in technique. A poetic universality is aspired toward, despite the flaws inherent in such a vision. The Bauhaus awareness of the design achievements of the past coupled with a reverent belief in the power of functionality and innovation to overcome stylistic obsolescence resonates with both Heaney’s and Walcott’s veneration of form.

28 Qtd. in Mark Gelernter, Sources of Architectural Form: A Critical History of Western Design Theory (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995) 239.
29 Gelernter 240.
30 Gelernter 246. László Moholy-Nagy, another figure active in this era of the Bauhaus, “reasserted the Neo-Classical belief in an objective and universally valid language of design that exists independently of individual predilections or tastes,” says Gelernter. Accordingly, “He attempted to show that all art and architecture—no matter what its style—consists of lines, planes, masses and colors composed according to principles including balance, proportion and rhythm. These elements and organizing principles Moholy-Nagy termed a universal ‘language of vision.’” Gelernter 247.
Both poets have acknowledged the time spent in ‘apprenticeship’ learning how to compose the fully finished poem. For each, the finding of voice begins in reading, memorization, recitation, and imitation. An idea of the poem as a spatial form whose innermost secrets awaited discovery is implied in Heaney’s memory of his earliest attempts at verse. He confides that he had no “sense of a poem as a whole structure,” at this stage. Speaking of Hopkins’s influence on his initial ‘trial-pieces,’ he turns to a sculptural analogy describing the poems as, “little stiff inept designs in imitation of the master’s fluent interlacing patterns, heavy-handed clues to the whole craft” (P 45). They exist as fragments, in the modernist trope, broken off from a larger artistic entity. Again, in “The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats,” he discloses how ‘makings’ was chosen in his title for the way it “gestures towards the testings and hesitations of the workshop” (P 61). The workshop acts as a metaphor for the imagination for Heaney, a threshold space where creativity and learning are equally combined. It becomes open to a visionary light at times, as the account of visiting sculptor Dmitri Hadzi’s studio reveals.

Heaney’s comments on Hadzi’s works illustrate the way he regards technique as having triumphed over craft in the sculptor’s output. Responding to the “deeply satisfactory self-sufficiency” of the sculptures evident in their thoroughly “finished” nature, he relates them to poetry through the “language of forms” they participate in: “They are like those forms which W. B. Yeats invokes in his poem ‘Byzantium,’ ‘images that yet / Fresh images beget’; once I settle myself to take in the balances and challenges of an individual piece, a whole set of reinforcing presences and associations begins to congregate at the edge of my field of vision.”31 A protean, organic element is ascribed to Hadzi’s image-generating forms that prompts Heaney to enter an aesthetic reverie. Hadzi

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combines traditional forms with a modern sensibility to create the neo-classic, in a manner consistent with Walcott's notion that, "What's new about a classic is that it stays new." Contemporaneity and timelessness fuse as Heaney intufts "reinforcing presences" speaking through the conduit of the form, beguiling him.

Hadzi's Greek-American ancestry, according to Heaney, is as "elective as it is genetic [...] behind his use of ancient motifs [lies] artistic intelligence and a recognition of archetypal affinities [...]." It springs from a match of his work ethic, a paradigm of technique for Heaney, and a refined sense of form:

His Centaurs and Pillars of Hercules and allusions to Thermopylae and so on are not a mere matter of ethnic glamour; one recognizes rather that within this psychic and cultural ground the artist has been able to assuage his primal hunger for a totally satisfactory vocabulary of forms—forms through which an energy flows that is every bit as contemporary as it is classical. [...] I recognize solidarities that are democratic and a discipline that is traditional and solitary—as every artistic discipline sooner or later becomes, once it has been seriously embraced.

Heaney stresses the way Hadzi's forms conduct an "energy" that is 'timeless,' or at least, undiminished in its power. Yet, in a familiar lyric trope, that force comes across as transformative. Inspired to visionary response by the forms themselves and the "after-image" of Hadzi's figure, Heaney turns to his own forte by way of tribute, wherein the concern with temporality further emerges.

Heaney's untitled poem to Hadzi answers in both a design of his own making and through the traditional strain of octosyllabics. However, the archaic diction hints at a rhetorical exercise:

But sculptor's time keeps other laws.
It marks the time and makes it pause
As megaliths in misty air
Or your strong forms in Harvard Square
Wherein we can descry (forsooth)
The uncut, quarried stuff made couth,
Your mastery of the chiselled line,
Your impulse and your discipline—

33 Heaney, Hadzi 17.
Half lost in work and half ecstatic,
Both down-to-earth and Graeco-vatic!34

What should be pointed and witty in tone emerges as pithy, as if Heaney is still lost in his own “half ecstatic” transport. He misses capturing the sculptures’ ethereal “megalith[ic]” suspension in his lyric by converting their energy into a strange jauntiness expressive of his camaraderie with Hadzi. The “classic lyric task” of “stopping time and keeping language” which he discerns occurring in the work fails to be marked in parallel by his own here.35 Trying to render the forms “couth,” the civilizing mission only vaguely succeeds, as Heaney’s symbolic language remains caught up in his subjective response. The foreboding, primordial nature of the works must be repressed. Through his allusions to Hadzi’s patrons (Harvard), and to mystical forces, he reins in “sculptor’s […] laws.” Yet this may be to misread the poem’s context, a workshop piece meant only to give us “pause.” Little comparison exists to “Mycenae Lookout,” (examined in chapter three), which Heaney formally dedicated to Hadzi and his wife, where his voice once more comes into its own.

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Heaney conceives poetic form as evoking a spatial dimension, and along with the inner ‘life’ of objects, extends this concern into the names of things, and the presences they invoke. He determines that both poetry and language are informed--given shape--by voice as an animating energy. For Heaney, we dwell in linguistic as much as architectural spaces, dwellings inseparably, even uncannily, linked in memory. In the “1972” section of his essay “Belfast,” for instance, he takes the word for his family farm, Mossbawn, back to its historical foundations: “Moss, a Scots word probably carried to Ulster by the Planters, and bawn, the name the English colonists gave to their fortified farmhouses. Mossbawn, the

34 Heaney, Hadzi 18.
35 Seamus Heaney, The Place of Writing (Atlanta, GA: Scholar’s, 1989) 70.
planter's house on the bog" (P 35). Other names are opened out in this way:

Mossbawn was bordered by the townlands of Broagh and Anahorish, townlands that are forgotten Gaelic music in the throat, bruch and anach fhior uisce, the riverbank and the place of clear water. The names lead past the literary mists of a Celtic twilight into that civilization whose demise was effected by soldiers and administrators like Spenser and Davies, whose lifeline was bitten through when the squared-off walls of bawn and demesne dropped on the country like the jaws of a man-trap. (P 36)

The architecture and poetry of colonization insists itself into the landscape, insidiously jawing its forms into the disparate meldings of Irish-English language. Here the structures of enclosure, "squared-off walls of bawn and demesne," are visualized in unison as linguistic and physical forms. A latent violence colours the choice of metaphor; this incursion represents a rhetoric of power that brooks no reply. The "man-trap" is figured as a perversely mechanized logos placing the territory under a new dispensation. He portrays a fusion of structures caught in these words amid a web of historical forces: an architecture of living forms. Heaney alludes to how the "energies" of the words can be summoned, an aspect of technique that carries with it the "secret of being a poet" in his opinion.

"Feeling into Words" connects the poetic process with discovering such "energy flows" in words, a factor leading to the finding of an informing voice (P 42). In the conception formulated here, a "bugging device" provides the metaphor for the "fundamental structure [in which the] voice [is] caught," and is connected to the development of a critical ear (P 43). Poetic voice 'fingerprints' the author, he contends, though it also bears a vernacular trace of a "poet's speaking voice [...] his original accent." Poetic voice and "discovered style" eventually become indistinguishable, signifying the core of what becomes technique. For Heaney, an "essential quick" defines this core, inhabiting an internal zone of "'power.'" to quote the lines from The Prelude he opens with.36

36 These lines run in part: "The hiding places of my power / Seem open [...] I would enshrine the spirit of the past / For future restoration" (P 41).
The figuratively architectural nature of Wordsworth's analogy becomes a way of conceptualizing how the voice, and with it the making impulse, is informed by memory in regard to different verbal sounds.

The aural is spatialized as Heaney describes how the formative encounter with the verbal "music" of other poets results in a "true sounding of aspects of yourself and your experience" (P 44). He attempts to ground the presence he discerns in words in a systematic way. Having referred to the voice as a complex structure and to sounds entering the "echo-chamber of [the] head," the ear is now conceptualized as a symbolic site of building. A space is formed in the ear by the seminal influx of words from various sources: "they were bedding the ear with a kind of linguistic hard-core that could be built on some day" (P 45).

Rilke's notion, from his first sonnet to Orpheus, that poetry builds a "temple inside the hearing" is invoked, a key idea for Heaney (PW 32). Contrasting such "unconscious bedding" with the "conscious savouring of words" through poetry, certain works by Keats, Wordsworth, and Tennyson are remembered as "touchstones of sorts, where the language could give you a kind of aural goose-flesh" (P 46). Heaney grounds his responses to these literary peaks in the ear.

With The Government of the Tongue, Heaney's architectural metaphors recur, together with a further refinement in understanding of the spatial qualities of poetic language and form. Writing in "The Poems of the Dispossessed Repossessed," he states: "Tone is the inner life of a language, a secret spirit at play behind or at odds with what is being said and how it is being structured in syntax and figures of speech. It has subtly to do with the deepest value system that the group speaking the language is possessed by" (GT33). Where voice is

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37 In connection with the "temple" image, an earlier parallel is intriguing. Thompson writes of the ancient traditions concerning the teleological "concept of end, of purpose or of 'design,'" with regard to growth and form. He notes how eighteenth-century physics was strongly influenced by the "argument of the final cause," dominating L. Oken's Naturphilosophie. Oken's followers, states Thompson, "were wont to liken the course of organic evolution not to the straggling branches of a tree, but to the building of a temple, divinely planned, and the crowning of it with its polished minarets." Thompson 3.
articulated at the heart of technique, tone appears to live in language’s hidden places. But Heaney’s accent on ‘possession’ recalls the idea expressed in “From Maecenas to MacAlpine” regarding the way architecture is taken in by consciousness, and at a slight unease on his part over whose “spirit”—whose “value system”—haunts language as a cultural structure. Heaney’s anxiety over language and the buried life it contains increasingly moves into metaphysical notions relating to form, and the latent power of “sacred spaces.” He posits his choice of terms architecturally, as a reply in a 1989 interview reveals: “really the question of how to place a structure upon which to rejoice, how to place a geometry on the middle of absence, how to create a trustworthy form, is a sort of religious question.”

The image of poetic architecture is evoked, frameworks whose design is dependent on a faith in words and their powers.

Closely related to this “religious” dimension surrounding the making of forms is Mandelstam’s example, backed by Dante. Heaney notes Clarence Brown’s view of the Russian Acmeist group Mandelstam was associated with, citing their, “sense of the poem as an animated structure, an equilibrium of forces, an architecture” (GT77). He follows up the observation by honing in on the relationship to words themselves and Mandelstam’s “furious devotion to the physical word, the etymological memory band, the word as its own form and content.” Heaney sees words as possessing this same durable physicality. Words are “living metaphors,” like shells, with an organic link to the corporeal. They can be “animated” in poetry, by voice. Speaking of Mandelstam’s love of the “vaulted solidity of buildings,” Heaney remarks on his use of architecture as a prosodic device, as interpreted by Robert Tracy (GT78). He states there is “much to be gained from holding on to metre and rhyme [as] the metaphorical basis in

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39 Kuberski 36.
building is thereby preserved" (GT79). But a warning follows: "to speak too much in these building terms is probably to misrepresent the excitements of the 'moving lips.'" The elusive voice, hidden by the text on the page, is reasserted in the form for the way it humanizes and animates the poetic architecture.

Mandelstam’s poetry carries behind its form the process of composition in a corporeal memory involving the moving feet, as well as the lips. Heaney quotes Mandelstam on Dante’s practice of composing his lines orally, and the Italian’s devotion to “the step, linked to the breathing and saturated with thought: this Dante understands as the beginning of prosody” (GT73). The ear’s shell-like helix in Dante marks the site of poetic construction as it “becomes finer and is whorled in a different pattern” (GT85). Mandelstam’s willingness to evoke a “language of forms” in his poetics appeals to Heaney, as he implicates the body’s organic structure in the process of composition.

When Heaney turns to another one of the arts in a polemical comment he makes on the “return to form” in contemporary American poetics, it is the kinetic element on which he lays emphasis:

I think a sonnet, for example, isn’t fourteen lines that rhyme, a sonnet is a system of muscles and enjambments and eight and six, and it’s got a waist and a middle—it is a form. In a lot of the writing that’s going the rounds in the United States—there’s a lot of talk about return to form—there are indeed fourteen lines and there are indeed rhyme words at the end, but the actual movement of the stanza, the movement of the sonnet isn’t there. I would make a distinction between form which is discernible on the page, but inaudible, and kinetically, muscularly unavailable. Poetry is a muscular response also, I feel. If you read a Shakespeare sonnet, a beloved Shakespeare sonnet, it’s a dance within yourself.  

Heaney sees the act of reading as able to move the poem into the body and mind, invoking a lyrical transport. Only when animated by a force beyond mere

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40 Brodsky, et al. “Poets’ Round Table” 42-43.
recitation and written cognition, do true forms leap off the page. The essential poetic voice must deeply organize a sonnet's form for it to be charged and sensually activated. Shakespeare's sonnet—Schlegel made his works models of organic form—represents the dynamic ideal against which all others are measured.

When Heaney considers Frost's legacy he raises similar concerns, particularly concerning poetry's "animated structure." Frost saw voice as having access to sonic origin, a presence beyond, yet intimately connected to poetic language. Heaney first notes Frost's fascination with sounds in their sensory and sensual human capacities in an article on Sylvia Plath. What Frost terms "sentence sounds" and "tones" carry a formal, impulse-laden charge as "vocal entities in themselves, predestined contours of the voice, previous to content and articulated meaning [...]" (GT 148). They act as poetic 'units,' primordial building blocks on the tongue and in the ear. In "Above the Brim," his poems are cited as "events in language, flaunts and vaunts full of projective force [...]". The spatializing language ensures Frost's effects are seen as "not 'put on from without,'" but stem from within the process itself. They represent "not a flourish of craft, but a feat of technique." Heaney reiterates Frost's notion of the origin of sentence and speech-sounds: "The best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words [...] It is the abstract vitality of our speech. It is pure sound—pure form." Frost's architectural images create an equivalence with the "cave of the mouth" these 'things' come to occupy, in utero, as it were.

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41 Cf. Mandelstam's contention regarding *The Divine Comedy* that only when poetic material is voiced does it have a true existence: "The finished poem is no more than a calligraphic product, the inevitable result of the impulse to perform." Osip Mandelstam, "Conversation about Dante," *The Complete Critical Prose*, trans. Jane Gary Harris and Constance Link (Dana Point, CA: Ardis, 1997) 284.


43 Heaney, "Brim" 69.

44 Heaney, "Brim" 71. Problematically, the issue of mishearing is raised as a source of origin; the ideal of "pure sound," like "perfected form," remains a chimerical ideal.
For Heaney, Frost’s poetry finally “gives access to origin by thus embodying the lineaments of pristine speech,” an embodiment capable of fulfilling “at a level below theme and intention, a definite social function.”\(^{45}\) The searching engagement with form evident in Frost’s work reflects how the threshold of the symbolic is constantly crossed by his projections, a pattern Heaney evokes in relation to the ideal architect. The mouth’s cave acts as more than a metaphor in Frost’s poetics, becoming an image for the sacred, productive and sheltering space of form. As in Yeats, an ancient dwelling site is made central to accessing a symbolic language.

In Heaney’s view, the retreat by Yeats to the tower in County Galway symbolizes his embrace of solitude as an apt mode of artistic existence. A correlation between form and the architecture of poetic stance as self-projection can also be read into the move. In “The Place of Writing: W. B. Yeats and Thoor Ballylee,” Heaney sets out to show the process by which the tower becomes a poetic symbol in his poems of the 1920s, and how “the poetic imagination in its strongest manifestation imposes its vision upon a place rather than accepts a vision from it [...] this visionary imposition is never exempt from the imagination’s antithetical ability to subvert its own creation. [...] once the place has been brought into written existence, it is inevitable that it be unwritten” (\textit{PW} 20).

Yeats established “an outpost of poetic reality in the shape of a physical landmark,” even though he eventually came to undermine its perfections (\textit{PW} 21). Heaney evokes, for contrast, Hardy’s birthplace in the “hearth world” of Wessex: “Set among the trees, deep at the center of a web of paths and bye-roads, in the matured stillness of an old garden, small-windowed, dark-ceilinged, stone-floored, hip-thatched, the [house] embodies the feel of a way of life native to the place.” “We recognize,” he continues, “a consonance between the inside

\(^{45}\) Heaney, “Brim” 72.
and outside of that house and the center and circumference of Hardy’s vision. Hardcover country, in other words, predated Hardy. It awaited its expression.”

Drawing the reader’s eye into the center of the house in a manner which plays upon the symbolism of “birthplace,” Heaney’s focus magnifies the “vision” ultimately shared.

As with the birthplace, Hardy’s other house on Dorchester’s outskirts, Max Gate, carries an “emblematic meaning” vastly different from that of Yeats’s restored tower, according to Heaney. Located unobtrusively within a sedate setting, the Hardy-designed Max Gate does not “seek the status of the monument.” Instead, it both “embraces and embodies ordinariness, if only as a camouflage or a retreat; it certainly does not proclaim itself or its inhabitant as an original, a founder, a keeper, a sentry or a besieged one” (PW 23). Resistant to mythologization, these houses cannot be made to “signify.” Instead they function on a domestic level as shelters, a scale outside the economy of artistic projections of symbolic form aligned with the “writing self.” The Norman tower, however, purchased by Yeats in early 1917, assumes the status of a “verifying force” within his mind. Through his poetry, “a fabulous second dimension” emerges, eventually coming to “transform its original status as a picturesque antiquity” (PW 22). Heaney examines Yeats’s involvement with the tower in an ambivalent manner that suggests how understandable, yet at the same time, how problematic he finds the earlier poet’s self-consuming identification with the stone structure.

The tower assumes a position guiding Yeats’s state of mind Heaney observes, entering so deeply into the “prophetic strains of his voice that it could be invoked without being inhabited” (PW 24). He affirms the stakes at hand:

Ballylee was a sacramental site, an outward sign of an inner grace. The grace here was poetry and the lonely tower was the poet’s sign. Within it, he was within his own mind. The posture of the building corresponded to the posture he would attain. The stone in all its obstinacy and stillness, the
plumb bulk and resistant profile of the keep, the dream form and the brute fact simultaneously impressed on mind and senses, all this transmission of 
sensation and symbolic aura made the actual building stones into 
touchstones for the work he would aspire to. (PW 24-25)

Heaney stresses the subjective nature of Yeats's relationship with the tower, as 
the expression of a "sacramental site" that corresponds symbolically with the 
space of poetry, and finally the mind's form itself. Yet his analysis also appears to 
criticize this (self-)embrace, particularly in his emphasis on the "posture" 
necessary to attain the effect. The pretensions implicit in Yeats making "one of 
the soul's monuments of its own magnificence" fill him with disquiet (PW 24). In 
contrast to Frost, it is an effect finally 'put on from without' he implies. A 
manipulative factor is involved. Noting the "transcendent imperative" attached 
to the tower's image which elevates it out of history into an objective correlation, 
Heaney turns in more detail to the way Yeats's choice of poetic form reflects his 
arhitectural preoccupations.

The "place of writing" signified by the tower, Heaney observes, becomes in 
"Sailing to Byzantium" essentially "the stanza form itself, that strong-arched 
room of eight iambic pentameters rhyming abababcc which serves as a redoubt 
for the resurgent spirit"(PW 29). Through Heaney's reading the architectural 
moves into effect in a dominant, almost overstated manner, as rhetorical homage is 
paid to the redoubtable "spirit" of Yeats. He continues, in hyperbolic fashion:

In these poems, the unshakably affirmative music of this ottava rima 
stanza is the formal correlative of the poet's indomitable spirit. The 
complete coincidence between period and stanza which he had begun to 
strive for compounds utterance with architecture, recalls Milton's figure of 
the poet as one who builds the lofty rhyme and also recalls Yeats's own 
stated desire to make the tower a permanent symbol of his poetic work. 
'plainly visible to the passer-by.'

The strain for sublimity may be successful, but a hint of distaste for such 
overweening ambitions is present in Heaney's discourse, reflecting the suspicion 
for ostentatious show evident in much of his own poetry. The process of analogy
by which the tower becomes a "sacred space" drawing in poetic form for Yeats, also undermines its premises, as the earlier poet tries to fix his vision in stone.

With "The Tower," Thoor Ballylee assumes its most extreme symbolic significance, becoming in Heaney's estimation "a podium from which the spirit's voice can best be projected" (PW 30). As much as Yeats, he encourages us to read the poem's sections as verbal designs that 'repeat' the force and form of the tower against the reverberations of this voice. Heaney's rhetoric proves true to the figural demands "The Tower" makes on its reader-listeners. In the third section, for instance, he states how "the tower's stoniness is repeated in the lean, clean-chiselled obelisk of the verse-form," giving rise to a "head-clearing airiness." Formal considerations overwhelm with this analogy and Heaney determines that indeed, "the tower is now [...] a pure discharge of energy [marking] an original space where utterance and being are synonymous." He invokes Rilke, "another tower-dwelling visionary," in terms that accord with form representing architecture in a poetic area of figural equivalence.

The telling factor in Heaney's veiled critique of Yeats regarding this space rests in the unspoken emphasis on the word "needy" in the following passage:

suddenly in that needy space, a tower ascended. Not a tree, as in Rilke's first sonnet to Orpheus, not a natural given miracle but a built-up, lived-with, deliberately adhered-to tower. Yet by now that tower is as deep inside our hearing as the temple which Rilke imagines the god Orpheus building inside the listening consciousness of the creatures. Before the visitation of his song, their ear was full of humble, un-self-trusting creaturely life, shabby huts full of common speech and unpoetic desultoriness. But his song brought about a marvel. (PW 31-32)

Through the agency of voice the tower is aligned with the making of the unique "temple" represented by poetry's effects. The creation myth he uses conflates both the birth of architecture and the figurative rise of a poetic architecture into a literary topos. Despite the scenario played out here, however, the lack signified by the subjective impetus remains within Yeats's "needy" consciousness, in the
space open to self-doubt and a lurking distrust of material securities. Yet Heaney bears witness to what Yeats achieves on an extraordinarily elevated scale, virtually mythologizing his character by association.46

Intensifying Rilke’s metaphor, the connection between architecture, voice, and poetic form is reinforced:

That sense of a temple inside the hearing, of an undeniable acoustic architecture, of a written vaulting, of the firmness and in-placedness and undislodgeableness of poetic form, that is one of Yeats’s great gifts to our century; and his power to achieve it was due in no small measure to the ‘beckoning,’ the ‘new beginning,’ the ‘pure transcendence’ of an old Norman castle in Ballylee, a place that was nowhere until it was a written place. (PW 32)

The idea of an “acoustic architecture” has resonances with Heaney’s own poetics, as we have seen, though more ambivalence surrounds his other choice of words regarding form. “[U]ndislodgeableness” carries a sense of awkward intransigence that seems at odds with the previously cited “airiness” of “The Tower.” Alongside the apparent assurance in relation to form, according to Heaney, “mutinous” self-doubts surface regarding “the final value and trustworthiness of this powerfully composed tower in the ear […]” As revealed in the rigorous self-interrogation of “The Black Tower,” the perfections of isolation or what Heaney calls “that quarantined, stone-kept otherness of the artist” prove useless in the end to block out the “unaccommodated cry of suffering nature” (PW 33).47 Yeats is haunted by the return of a force he thought he had risen above, as Anthony Vidler writes of the uncanny, “something that should have remained secret,” making his tower an unhomely place.48 Heaney’s

47 Despite these inner assailings, the equivalence between poetry and architecture remains intact, Heaney contends: “the felicitous conceit of a stanza being a room got verified in poetry whose syntactic and metrical vaulting was the equivalent of that ‘chamber arched with stone’ in which Yeats composed the syntax and metre of his own stanzas” (PW 36).
48 Vidler 27.
depiction also portrays the strange way this poetic architecture threatens to entomb Yeats alive within its confines; the text, as the "place of writing," still ghosted by the spirit of his voice.

Heaney's earlier article, "Yeats as an Example?" has an ambivalent edge, as well. A stress is laid, however, on the way Yeats "encourages you to experience a transfusion of energies from poetic forms themselves, reveals how the challenge of a metre can extend the resources of the voice" (P 110). Later in The Place of Writing, Heaney implies strategies enabling his own voice to exist at a tangent to the earlier poet's, which contradict the underlying, elective premises of "From Maecenas to MacAlpine" to a degree. Heaney contends that Louis MacNeice "initiates a counter-Yeatsian move in Irish poetry" (PW 47). He cites Derek Mahon's "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford" as a poem which removes itself from Yeats and his tower to a self-affirming degree (PW 49). The examples of Kavanagh and Muldoon also confirm how "a dialectic is set in motion in which the new writing does not so much displace the old as strive to displace itself to an enabling distance away from it" (PW 55). Heaney, like the poets he comments on, keeps this "distance" in play in a problematical fashion, retaining a strong architectural element to his poetics. Despite his rhetorical undermining of Yeats's stance, there is a sense that the "ghost of W. B." may revisit if the poetic architecture is not kept flexible and open.

Heaney's notion of poetry as a threshold space tends to act as a corollary to his conception of form. He continues to spatialize poetry through his metaphor of the "frontier of writing," developed discursively in The Redress of Poetry. Ironically, certain architectural tropes reassert themselves. One of the title essay's explanations of "redress" concerns "reaffirming poetry as an upright, resistant, and self-bracing entity within the general flux and flex of language" (RP 15). Heaney's figural language accords poetry tower-like proportions here. The
metaphors he uses combine the abstract quality of verse with the corporeality of form in a single design; another "orb" on the horizon. Poetry is celebrated by Heaney for its "given, unforeseeable thereness, the way it enters our field of vision and animates our physical and intelligent being," a description which again could describe a sun-like omniscience, but also a particular architectural structure read into the consciousness (RP 15). Certain works, he claims, "having once cleared a new space on the literary and psychic ground [...] go on to offer, at each re-reading, the satisfactions of a foundation being touched and the excitement of an energy being released" (RP 20). A vision of a frontier that straddles an imagined "ground" located within communal consciousness is suggested: a force and form existing in an indeterminate temporal state.

The architectural is also asserted in Heaney's reference to the "shifts and extensions which constitute the life of a poem" (RP 37). He distinguishes an "exuberant rhythm, a display of metrical virtuosity, some rising intellectual ground successfully surmounted [...]". This abstract 'building' process finds acute focus in a poet like John Clare. Writing in "John Clare's Prog," Heaney visualizes a "thirst or ache" existing deep within the poetic imagination: "This ache comes from his standing at the frontier of writing, in a gap between the unmistakably palpable world he inhabits and another world, reached for and available only to awakened language" (RP 68). There exists a grail-like "thing" Clare is guided towards "behind his voice and ear." Nadezhda Mandelstam called it, says Heaney, "'the nugget of harmony'. To locate this phonetic jewel, to hit upon and hold one's true note, is a most exacting and intuitive discipline [...]" (RP 73). The informing essence of the poetry is internalized within Clare's sensibility, as a supreme lyric principle he gains purchase on through technique.

A similar conception of harmony, as the aesthetic principle underpinning an imaginary topos, resurfaces in Heaney's plan for a new Irish body politic in his
"Frontiers of Writing" essay. He imagines a new provincial space which will "bring the frontiers of the country into alignment with the frontiers of writing, an attempt to sketch the shape of an integrated literary tradition" (RP 199). Acting as an architect who reads the great "literary and psychic ground," of Ireland's text as a landscape of possibility, Heaney adopts a playfully imperious demeanour in explaining his plan of a "quincunx" of towers, reflecting a Yeatsian desire to embed his forms in the collective consciousness. The sacred center to this garden (or plantation) reclaimed in the imagination, is taken by a "tower of prior Irelandness, the round tower of original insular dwelling, located perhaps upon [...] 'the pre-natal mountain'" in a phrase he borrows from MacNeice. As if deciding the parts in an architectural allegory, Heaney outlines his plan:

I then placed at the southern point of a diamond shape Kilcolman Castle, Edmund Spenser's tower, as it were, the tower of English conquest and the Anglicization of Ireland, linguistically, culturally, institutionally. Then, on the left of the diamond's shoulder, in the west of the country, at Ballylee, there is the Norman tower occupied by W. B. Yeats as a deliberate symbol of his poetic effort, which was to restore the spiritual values and magical world-view that Spenser's armies and language had destroyed. The fourth tower, on the eastern edge, is Joyce's Martello tower, on Dublin Bay, the setting of the opening chapter of Ulysses and symbol of Joyce's attempt to 'Hellenize the island', his attempt to marginalize the imperium which had marginalized him by replacing the Anglocentric Protestant tradition with a newly forged apparatus of Homeric correspondences, Dantesque scholasticism and a more or less Mediterranean, European, classically endorsed world-view. (RP 199)

Heaney's design establishes a historical and ethical balance by redressing the isolation of these tower-dwellers—all poets and writers—thus aligning their perspectives. As he states earlier, poetry should ideally be "a source of truth [...] a vehicle of harmony" (RP 193). In relating the tower forms to the literary forms each inhabits, the "frontier of writing" is given a foothold in a newly envisaged potential reality, where the principle of harmonious coexistence may hold good.

Each tower faces toward the central, original round tower of the "mythic first Irish place," denoting a different attitude toward the past, while also looking
outward to Ireland’s coastline and the world to come. Spenser’s tower sees “popery, barbarism and the Dark Ages,” for instance. Joyce’s tower views the “archetypal symbol, the omphalos, the navel of a reinvented order” as well as a Europe, beckoning with “secular freedoms” (RP 200). For Carrickfergus Castle, on the northernmost tip, Heaney reserves his most telling fusion of artist and architecture, a tower “sponsored by MacNeice’s vision.” An “Irish Protestant writer with Anglocentric attitudes,” MacNeice managed to be “faithful to his Ulster inheritance, his Irish affections and his English predilections.” Heaney thus makes him a Janus figure: god of thresholds, talk and negotiation. A gatekeeper, he “offers a way in and a way out not only for the northern Unionist imagination in relation to some sort of integral Ireland but also for the southern Irish imagination in relation to the partitioned north.” The image of a passage held open between possible worlds and the “pressure of reality” proves vital. MacNeice’s ability to bend, seeing both sides of the story grounds his tower’s strength in tolerance, a flexibility absent in the primal form of the original Yeatsian stronghold.

Heaney states that his aim was “to affirm that within our individual selves we can reconcile two orders of knowledge which we might call the practical and the poetic; to affirm also that each form of knowledge redresses the other and that the frontier between them is there for the crossing” (RP 203). The siting of the towers not as defensive vertical cells, but as lookouts, reading one another, reverses the Yeatsian trope of heroic denial. By re-imagining the possibilities of form to actualize other realities, the towers shift from being symbols of splendid isolation. It is possible to read the quincunx plan as an extended utopian metaphor, fueled by Heaney’s awareness that the ‘frontier’ can be crossed more times than double-crossed. He places a “geometry,” a “trustworthy form” on the middle of Ireland with his quincunx. Whether the order escapes a hierarchical
sense that the forms of the “optimi” have been singled out as elect is less clear.

The “Frontiers of Writing” plan puts into practice a concern Heaney raises when discussing recent American poetry. Noting more generally how with any conception of poetry, there is “just a form [...] housing a set of harmonies and balances,” he states: “I think that in the culture and situation I come from, you want to punish the form with some relationship to the actual.”49 It is precisely this punishment he admires in Lowell, praising his poetry as a “site” whose authority was discovered “not by the assimilation of literary tradition but upon the basis of the roused poetic voice” (GT 138). The poems are not “primarily interested in building stanzas like warehouses” to store opinions. Rather, they work to convert subject-matter into “an event,” aspiring to “project forms and energies in terms of it” (GT 139).50 Lowell was not afraid to deconstruct the architecture of his formal achievement. The punishment emerges in “the spectacle of a poet taking the crowbar to a perfected style: these new, unmelodious, impacted forms are deliberate rebukes to the classical cadences of the volumes of the 1960s” (GT 141). Though mystifying the reader in Heaney, he admires the poetic necessity behind this move. As with Yeats, a mind-set that renounces formal perfections represents an ascetic ideal, a willingness to become “form-hungry” once more. Lowell’s example implies a creative re-engagement with the living “language of forms.” Heaney states that Lowell helped him find a way “to fortify the quotidain into a work,” and in all these architectural metaphors the voice’s ‘steadfastness’ remains key.51

The “dominant music” of Lowell at his peak is exemplified, for Heaney, in the

49 Qtd. in Corcoran, Seamus Heaney 38.
50 Cf. Heaney’s comments, especially in regard to the quincunx of towers plan: “Poets should be the alternative government. The poetic intelligence of the country should be the other government.” The challenge is “to raise the breath and project a vision.” Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott, “Robert Penn Warren,” interview by Christopher Lydon, Partisan Review 53 (1986): 606-12. 609.
Mandelstam lines he quotes: “If I believe in the shadow of the oak and the steadfastness of speech articulation, how can I appreciate the present age?” (GT 139). In Crediting Poetry the phrase is also invoked, alongside Rilke’s spatialized notion of poetry. Heaney refers to poets whose voice partakes of the “documentary adequacy” he finds in a passage from Homer’s Iliad, and the “adequacy […] specific to lyric poetry” in his eyes:

This has to do with the ‘temple inside our hearing’ which the passage calls into being. It is an adequacy deriving from what Mandelstam called ‘the steadfastness of speech articulation,’ from the resolution and independence which the entirely realized poem sponsors. It has as much to do with the energy released by linguistic fission and fusion, with the buoyancy generated by cadence and tone and rhyme and stanza, as it has to do with the poem’s concerns or the poet’s truthfulness. In fact, in lyric poetry, truthfulness becomes recognizable as a ring of truth within the medium itself.  

Standing for the “entirely realized poem,” the temple image appears inseparable from an idea of form, shaped by the interconnected factors Heaney lists. Through Rilke’s construct, the tenuous “ring of truth” metaphor is moved over the true template of the “medium itself” which is transferred “within the hearing.”

Lyric poetry, temple, “truthfulness,” are simultaneously “called into being,” by a figural animation in the hearer’s imagination. The ‘dance’ is freed from the text. Form-making is again revealed as an essentially religious ideal in Heaney’s scheme; a poetic architecture that relies on the “totally persuasive voice behind all the other informing voices” to be fully grasped (CP 51). Voice and form are joined in the imaginary temple of the ideal poem, allowing a correspondence between inner and outer, and “organic and contrived,” to operate.

For Heaney the architectural is inseparable from his conception of poetic form, though the connection remains problematic. Form is “crucial to poetry’s power […] to persuade that vulnerable part of our consciousness of its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it” (CP 53). But here, once more,  

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Heaney is referring to the late poetry of Yeats, revealing the depth to which he has read him into a receptive part of his consciousness—like a building, or tower, 'conned'—over the years. An ethical imperative arises from the visionary commitment technique involves, giving form powers beyond the rhetorical persuasion the quote reveals. Form emerges in Heaney’s poetics as a site where the “projective” capacities of poetry are worked out and the potentially unassailable “sacred space” is tested, defended and aspired to in figural ideals such as Coole Park, or the temple. As contradictory tensions in his writing reveal, however, the exact terms of the “covenant” between power and aesthetics remain undecided.

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If Heaney ultimately vindicates Coole Park through the values associated with its architecture only to return and question those ideals, Walcott’s relationship with Cap Estate, a privileged residential area on St. Lucia, illustrates a more decisive attitude toward the place has subsequently altered:

I had a furious contempt for the gate that excluded outsiders and protected the people with elaborately tended gardens, the sprawling, spacious houses with dogs and servants, the silent superiority of golf with its contempt for impatience, a serene domain beyond the broken streets and rusting tin roofs of the fishing village that it went beyond in class and climate, and now I live here, without guilt, without irony, not because I deserve to but because Cap is as much my possession and inheritance as all the broken villages of this island, because it is another section of my palette and because I belong with equal certainty to the barefoot lanes of Gros Islet as I do to the dry pastures that I keep painting.53

Collapsing the distinction between “serene domain” and “broken villages,” Walcott converts the Cap Estate’s forms to “another section of [his] palette.” They are absorbed into the language of his art, in a victory over history. He now lives on the estate in a house built with his Nobel Prize money, spending part of

each year there. Caliban, no longer estranged, has returned as Prospero.

Despite the denial, ironically Walcott has become a virtual estate owner, concerned over trespassers on his land and the "insatiable maw of the growing hotels." His comments on having to act the landlord are defensive: "I dislike the role I must play to define territory. So much of that action is a part of our history, and all of that freedom is in the sea that [the fishermen] work with such ease."54

Like Heaney, he sees no inherent contradiction, nor does he nurture any postcolonial angst regarding his embrace of this hortus conclusus. Reflecting his own poetics, and the West Indian history of architectural assimilation, Walcott makes Cap Estate his rightful "possession," turning the past to new, forceful purposes. Yet the move also marks a reluctant entry into a power structure that his poetry generally treats with ambivalence, and a symbolic identification with the Great House. Though Cap Estate figures as a site he no longer feels oppressed by "politically or aesthetically," to invoke Heaney's earlier comments, Walcott still debates over whether to separate his house from the surrounding world: "I don't want to build a fence even if cows drift in and gnaw at the garden." He wonders with Heaney how habitable the "perfected form" can be, and tries to keep his boundaries fluent and open.

Walcott's various architectural observations shade constantly into his views on language, creativity and the endless possibilities of form. The Caribbean, he states, "[...] is both a new and an old society. Old in history, new in the experiment of multi-national concentration in small spaces."55 It is a dichotomy, rich in implication, that informs his poetry and poetics. Consistent throughout Walcott's work has been an ambivalent awareness of both the beauty and the deprivation of settlement life in the West Indies. What does it mean to represent

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54 Walcott, "Where I Live" 34, 36.
the (apparently) rundown and gimcrack within the privileged bounds of a 
sonnet? Are the structures thereby converted into beauty of a kind, elevated by 
association? In part, Walcott addresses this problem by inventing nonce forms 
which draw on a multiplicity of heritages. For example, the radically sprawling 
nature of *Another Life* with its varying line-lengths and shifts in stanzaic form, 
lends itself to his pithily localized view, “hell is // two hundred shacks on wooden 
stilts.”  
The shack is often (ambivalently) celebrated as a symbol for the hybrid 
construction, vibrancy, and tenacity of the multifarious cultures of the West 
Indies in Walcott’s work. In *Midsummer* LIV he refers to “these shacks that made 
me.”  

Dotted throughout the topography of Walcott’s writing, the shack figures in 
a way for the improvised habitat of Crusoe’s generic habitat. In “Crusoe’s 
Journal” he writes: “All shapes, all objects multiplied from his, / our ocean’s 
Proteus” (*G* 28). More perhaps than any other architectural form on the islands of 
the West Indies, it is emblematic of the necessity of making a fresh start out of 
nothing. He observes, in relation to this trope:

> every race that has come to the Caribbean has been brought here under 
situations of servitude or rejection, and that is the metaphor of the 
shipwreck, I think. Then you look around you and you have to make your 
own tools. Whether that tool is a pen or a hammer, you are building in a 
situation that’s Adamic; you are rebuilding not only from necessity but 
also with some idea that you will be here for a long time and with a sense 
of proprietorship as well.

One step beyond the “shipwreck,” an allusion to the ingenious construction of 
the shack as a vernacular form emerges in this idealized scenario. The tools of pen 
and hammer enable the “Adamic” privilege of naming anew from the wreckage

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57 Derek Walcott, *Midsummer* (London: Faber, 1984) 174. D’Aguiar draws attention to these lines in his 
of history. They allow shaping of the formative elements of a fledgling language that the shack, in its archetypal status of shelter, partakes in as well. Walcott sways between building and rebuilding here, a major aspect of his approach to poetic form as a process combining innovation with renovation. His poetry often draws on other verbal and formal ‘materials’ for support.

The “language of forms” spoken by the tropical construct of the shack enables Walcott to read it as a multifaceted metaphor. For example, at the beginning of “What the Twilight Says: An Overture,” the shack assumes a primal significance in an architectural setting suffused with memory: “When dusk heightens, like amber on a stage set, those ramshackle hoardings of wood and rusting iron which circle our cities, a theatrical sorrow rises with it, for the glare, like the aura from an old-fashioned brass lamp is like a childhood signal to come home.”59 This sense of ritual divides Castries from the “true cities” overseas, where “neons stutter to their hysterical pitch, bars, restaurants and cinemas blaze with artifice, and Mammon takes over the switchboard […].” Walcott claims the light “makes our strongest buildings tremble,” implying a fragile balance, but also a poised sanctity. But while the “allotments of the poor […] vivid, voluble and cheap” assume at one level the quality of “gilded hallucinations” for the observer, a “corrupt resignation” also arises. He becomes caught up in the rhetorical effect of the spectacle: “as if the destitute, in their orange-tinted backyards, under their dusty trees, or climbing to their favelas, were all natural scene-designers and poverty were not a condition but an art. Deprivation is made lyrical, and twilight, with the patience of alchemy, almost transmutes despair into virtue.” The architectural landscape assumes an irresistible imaginative power under the influence of the twilight, which figures for Walcott’s transformative eye as well. Suspicious of the aesthetic force of this light-headed vision, where

poverty can be read as an “art,” and shacks “gilded” into shrines, a starker appraisal is made.

West Indians “have not wholly sunk into [their] own landscapes,” Walcott ventures, a condition emblematically suggested by the shack’s image. He contends that a sense of lightness and immediacy pervades matters ranging from Carnival to local funerals. Memories of St. Lucia are recalled, stripped of their nostalgia:

To be born on a small island, a colonial backwater, meant a precocious resignation to fate. The shoddy, gimcrack architecture of its one town, its doll-sized verandahs, jalousies and lacy eaves neatly perforated as those doilies which adorn the polished tables of the poor seemed so frail that the only credible life was nature. […] A nature with blistered aspects: grey, rotting shacks, the colour of the peasant woman’s dress, which huddled on rocky rises outside the villages.

Associating the town’s apparent fate of marginality with the frailties of its architecture, acceptance at least brings a chance for transformation. When Walcott relates how nature offers itself as the only “credible life,” the “rotting shacks” take on a mediating role. Granted aspects of human and natural worlds through his imagery, the forms embody a tenacious spirit of survival, a vital logos.

In “On the Beat in Trinidad,” Walcott remembers an experience from his school years. A linguistic interweaving took place, a revision involving the subtle presence of shacks on the hillside, presiding “over the town,” and over formative events in language:

‘Urbs, urbs, Urbem.’ Rest. ‘Urbs, urbi, urbe.’ ‘A city,’ we conjugated, chanting the Latin from our scarred desks in the huge wooden college of colonial Castries, in St. Lucia. Long after our soprano voices had broken we would revise these conjugations in chorus as fourth formers, the tonic range of our chant combining fake falsettos, altos and the rumbling basses of the ones who shaved, at the back of the class. The caesura, dividing the six cases exactly—nominative, vocative, accusative—break—genitive, dative, ablative—once more—not only provided a calypso rhythm, but also gave the braver ones a chance to mutter, like calypsonians, such asides as ‘Urbs, urbs, urbe, let me tell you,’ or ‘what you talking?’ while the rest of

60 Derek Walcott, “Twilight” 20.
61 Derek Walcott, “Twilight” 14.
us, looking above and beyond our Latin master's head to the woolly green hills and hill shacks over the town knew, sure as daylight, that we weren't living in an 'urbs.'

The embellishment of the Latin chant, and the shift in the columned architecture of its mnemonic layout, becomes symbolic of the way not only language, but the "language of forms" is altered by a "calypsonian" patois. In Walcott's extended metaphor, relatable to West Indian culture, the modification—an idiomatic translation—invests the words with new formal energy through the spoken context. An unreformed chorus of "hill shacks" outside the school windows is depicted joining with the boys in a compact. The chanting voices mark a creative response to their vernacular spirit of the makeshift and spontaneous.

A comparable registering occurs when Walcott draws attention to the "dated rigidities of certain forms" in another article, leading him to posit an experiment in the making: a West Indian vernacular in which "all our races are powerfully fused." The remainder of "On the Beat in Trinidad" becomes a meditation on the elusive nature of the Caribbean city, and how it absorbs and recycles both tradition and the new. "[T]here are still no cities in the islands," he observes, "Our capitals are sprawling seaports, market towns." Looking back to his upbringing again, Walcott remembers how French patois as opposed to Latin defined a specific barrier: "we had no word for city but 'ville' [...]."

Describing this as his "Roman" period, when a provincial and an "imperial eye" were held in balance, he elaborates:

Any noun on which my eyes rested, a hill across the harbor, a lane between the fishermen's shacks, silently returned two sounds, one the patois, the other English. I had my own vision then of the West Indian city, an amalgam of Athenian columns and African robes (white cotton robes on

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64 At an average pace, he states, "the city limits of Castries can still be circled in under half an hour." While Kingston, Jamaica, or Port of Spain have the population and size to be called cities, "breadth is not all [...]. A city is willed into being by the ideals of its politics, and by the patriotism of its art." Walcott, "Beat" 38.
white stone steps), an image based on the classics we were being taught. This imaginary city dilated the scale of Castries to a well-ruled, well-watered city with a modest square, tame parks, an architecture that joined both its Roman-Greek and African sources, just as every object had two names. Four decades and none of this has come about. Why should it? It was an ideal, and like the moon itself, a capital in the sky; every one of my footsteps pushed this ideal city farther away, so our island cities have remained untranslated from their patois.65

Walcott’s twinned vision of a new city comes from his literary reading and the oral influence of the patois. Ultimately the language of the latter triumphs in the “untranslated” architecture that persists, displacing the “imaginary [...] ideal city” for an indeterminate stylistic hybridity. The “imperial eye” observes the “island” city and sees “the mess that was made by their colonizers, the waste left by a degrading history.” Streets, “seem noisy but purposeless, their architecture a jungle of derivations.” No originality is found, “if by originality we mean an exact native replica of what has already been made.” The provincial eye sees something unique, a mode of dwelling that escapes any easy classification.

Trinidad’s capital, Port of Spain, depends on the adoption of a similar viewpoint if it is to be appreciated. It contains the seeds of possibility for the ideal city Walcott originally imagined, but the patois reflects the diverse mixture of races that makes up the citizenry:

The visitor may distantly hear an uproar of demotic tongues, the exotic babel of a bazaar, but these races speak one language. He will see an erratic skyline of stubby skyscrapers, French colonial mansard roofs, turrets, even a minaret. The set is picturesque, the extras as vociferous as required, but no robed fanatic is going to leap at him from some side alley. He will have to find his adventure in the surfaces, textures, the names of streets. Bengal, Lucknow, Tragarete, in shadows without threats. Port of Spain cannot be reduced to the functional sanity of real cities. Its contradicting tastes cannot be measured by the past. Port of Spain, like its Carnival, will always go its own way.66

Walcott conflates verbal language with the “language of forms” Port of Spain

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65 Walcott, “Beat” 38, 40.
voices forth in its architectural space. The unstable theater of the bazaar epitomizes the inner life of what Kamau Brathwaite calls “nation language,” where architecture, (with calypso and Carnival) expresses an energy at odds with foreign conventions. Here Walcott’s idea of the vernacular finds its correlation in calypso as the ‘vulgar’ voice of “immediacy.” Coming from the Latin verna referring to a home-born slave and vernaculus meaning indigenous, calypso becomes a form in which the “abrasive coarseness of Port of Spain’s oral literature keeps its immediacy, or, in the Roman sense, its vulgarity.” “Once that quality withers from poetry,” he adds, “cities cease to be cities—they become machines. Towns become cities through their oral literature, their political rhetoric, but also their satire, when it is sung by hundreds of thousands.” Vernacular architecture taps into this same process, the shack symbolizing an extreme instance of tenacious “immediacy.” A line can be traced back to the slave dwellings of the islands where an indigenous sense of identity found its origin.

Port of Spain’s suburbs come vividly into relief in Walcott’s descriptions, as he speaks of the “green-shadowed silence of long streets in Woodbrook and St. Ann’s, with high walls and ornate wooden mansions. the Carpenter’s Gothic of elaborate eaves, gables and verandas.” This “Gothic” becomes understandable as a text in Walcott’s poetry. But the idyllic scene is under threat:

All over the city there are proofs of native craftsmanship and cunning. The high houses survive hurricanes, but can also breathe in the heat. Their interiors are cool, their wood exhalas, but modernity is eating away the rim of these intricate examples, and what was once common, functional and organic in the look of the city is quickly becoming exotic, archaic. Modern

68 Walcott, “Beat” 43.
69 Walcott’s crossover language of creative forms is implied: “Port of Spain is the one city I can think of that devotes itself to the industry of a popular art, which demands originality every year from its Carnival designers, poets and musicians. There is no chaos in its character, any more than there is in the preparation of an object in art, in verse, in sculpture or music.” Walcott, “Beat” 43.
70 Cf. a reference to the caves of the Walcott house in Castries with its “carpenter’s Gothic joke, A, W, A, W” (Af. 12). These are the initials of his parents, Alix and Warwick.
Port of Spain has some of the ugliest examples of brutal architecture the traveller will see. Their weight and stupidity startle, when, turning the corner of some old Spanish or Portuguese rum shop, the squat stare of a bank or an insurance building brutalizes him.

Walcott’s emphasis on the “native” serves to privilege the vernacular and its expression in local building through the prowess of the makers. The houses are anthropomorphically ingrained with their traits: living, breathing, dealing with the elements. In a venerable, unassuming reflection of the culture that produced them the various forms persist. Modernity’s encroachment is figured in terms of a woodrot, ironically altering the city’s “organic” make-up to the out-of-step and alien. A “brutal” wave of architectural style threatens to dislodge the grace of the old. Such mass-laden buildings affect the “traveller” through an insidious “stare” as he perceives their silent forms. An oppressive intrusion into his sensibility is registered, a violence affecting spatial relationships. The symbolic identification of poetry with the city’s architecture, maintained in the ideal of the vernacular, comes under stress from these influences.

Invoking the classical notion of the memory theater, Walcott contends that Port of Spain can be ‘conned’ in the purest sense by walking, as cities are “learned through the foot.” The trick is to keep going “steadily […] without expecting memorials or monuments,” until finally, “the last of the city will come through your soles.” Walcott wills a symbiosis to occur through the process: “I should like such a city to be contained in me, my veins its alleys, my heart as wide as its Savannah.” Reversing the drift of the city’s architecture toward the dehumanized, he posits its organic nature within the framework of his own corporeality, a move which has resonances with the poetry’s formal organization. The veins may function as “alleys,” but they are also potential lines of verse. Alongside this transfusion of energies he takes from the city’s form, walking in Port of Spain offers the chance to encounter both people and the different

71 Walcott, “Beat” 44.
architectural expressions of their presence. Each represents "at their ordinary work, fragments from the continents of the world: Asia, Europe, Africa, facts as ordinary as footsteps." These "fragments" are pieces of what Walcott later goes on to call 'epic memory,' merged in the transcultural continuity of forms he sees defining Port of Spain.

In his Nobel lecture, *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory*, Walcott continues the groundwork laid in "On the Beat in Trinidad," further delineating the ideal contours of Port of Spain. A key issue emerges: "Ours are not cities in the accepted sense, but no one wants them to be. They dictate their own proportions, their own definitions in particular places and in a prose equal to that of their detractors [...]." 72 His concern with architecture once again takes on a warning note as he elicits fear of the 'brutal' neocolonial transformation of Trinidad. It is an ongoing moment of crisis that threatens to reduce much of the Caribbean archipelago to a memory, a ghost of itself. The proliferation of hotels and badly-designed banks threatens to bleed the landscape white. Walcott opens his lecture with a consideration of Felicity. Within this isolated Trinidadian village lie the "fragments of epic memory." 73 Consider, he states, "the scale of Asia reduced to these fragments: the small white exclamations of minarets or the stone balls of temples in the cane fields [...]" (A 5). Massive proportions of time and space are condensed within this subtle architectural lexicon which has 'broken away from the main,' in much the same way as poetry he implies. As languages, they share a deep and intertwined past:

There is the buried language and there is the individual vocabulary, and

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73 Walcott's use of "epic" resonates with the rhetoric of forms, or 'oratory of power' that West Indian culture and its architecture could be said to represent in conjunction with its 'organic' nature. Cf. his declaration: "I come from a place that likes grandeur; it likes large gestures; it is not inhibited by flourish; it is a rhetorical society; it is a society of physical performance; it is a society of style. The highest achievement of style is rhetoric, as it is in speech and performance." Hirsch 277. Architecture is not static in his conception, but speaks; it is performative in nature, responsive to the dictates of this "rhetorical society" and the great, "epic" range of its collective cultural memory.
the process of poetry is one of excavation and of self-discovery. Tonally the individual voice is a dialect; it shapes its own accent, its own vocabulary and melody in defiance of an imperial concept of language, the language of Ozymandias, libraries and dictionaries, law courts and critics, and churches, universities, political dogma, the diction of institutions. Poetry is an island that breaks away from the main. (A 10)

Like the indentured laborers who built the unique minarets and temples of Felicity through recourse to the "buried" and "individual" aspects of their own architectural legacies, the poetic voice finds itself in the experience of absorbing the past, and starting out replenished in awareness from this "broken" and drifting or marooned state. From Felicity and its surrounding villages, Walcott turns to Port of Spain where evidence of such "defiance" of a totalizing language of empire can be found, in the (ideally) resistant strain of its architectural forms.

Port of Spain is defined by the "sum of its history, Froude's 'non-people'" he notes, in a reference to the English writer J. A. Froude's summary dismissal of West Indian culture in his 1887 book The English in the West Indies. Recalling his earlier description, Walcott capitalizes on the significance of this melange, calling the city a "downtown babel of shop signs and streets, mongrelized, polyglot, a ferment without a history, like heaven. Because that is what such a city is, in the New World, a writer's heaven" (A 12). Though Port of Spain has "deepened itself" in him, he remains haunted by its disorientating architectural 'brutality.' Staring from a window on his first morning, he muses,

A return from American seductions used to make the traveller feel that something was missing, something was trying to complete itself, like the stained concrete apartments. Pan left along the window and the excrescences rear—a city trying to soar, trying to be brutal, like an American city in silhouette, stamped from the same mould as Columbus or Des Moines. (A 13)

Such an "assertion of power, its decor bland," exposes the "provincial ambition of Caribbean cities where brutal replicas of modern architecture dwarf the small houses and streets" (A 22). It debases Port of Spain's idyllic nature, which
nevertheless remains perfect underneath for Walcott in its "commercial and human proportions, where a citizen is a walker and not a pedestrian" (A 19). The same qualification holds regarding architects. They are craftsmen, rather than mere developers: "The finest silhouettes of Port of Spain are idealizations of the craftsman’s handiwork, not of concrete and glass, but of baroque woodwork, each fantasy looking more like an involved drawing of itself than the actual building." The emphasis on craft and skillful making that informs Walcott’s poetics is apparent in his reading here, as is a sense that the building shapes are creatively activated in his mind’s eye. A dynamic, vibrant quality is discerned.

Architecture and matters relating to building constantly lead to issues of naming and language in Walcott’s poetic thought. His view of language and the city as metaphors for one another has an earlier formulation in Ludwig Wittgenstein: "Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses." Though the mention of "additions" suggests how the influences present in West Indian architecture have accrued, the qualities of Walcott’s hybrid cities and villages are absent here. The notion of language expressed in Wittgenstein’s analogy does, however, suggest the “Dutch sanity” that Walcott reads in Virgin Islands architecture. This is a sanity bereft of the “ramshackle adventurousness of the Catholic islands” (WTS 107). Walcott perceives the ideal West Indian city in organic terms through a vernacular logic. It appears as an intuitively formalized, self-shaped entity in his descriptions.

A passage from The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory expresses this idea.

Criticizing the literary-inflected sadness of Western travelers who pine for an Edenic retreat, only to recoil from Port of Spain’s discomforting tumult, he bristles:

These writers describe the ambitions of our unfinished cities, their unrealized, homiletic conclusion, but the Caribbean city may conclude just at that point where it is satisfied with its own scale, just as Caribbean culture is not evolving but already shaped. Its proportions are not to be measured by the traveller or the exile, but by its own citizenry and architecture. To be told you are not yet a city or a culture requires this response. I am not your city or your culture. There might be less of Tristes Tropiques after that. (A 22-23)

For Walcott, the ideal Caribbean city is forever “unfinished” in the accepted sense, and thus never subject to an external formalization of its energies and limits. A transgressive core remains. Caribbean architecture defines with the local citizenry the unique extent of its achievements, in a fashion that needs no outside corroboration. Under the rubric of the “already shaped” culture, the enduring balance of old and new remains viable as a force conforming to inner principles.

For Walcott, the mix of forms and traditions present in Port of Spain is classic, “stay[ing] new,” in the order he envisages. But in a move away from the city and the “guano of white-winged hotels,” he notes there still exist “cherishable places, little valleys that do not echo with ideas, a simplicity of rebeginnings, not yet corrupted by the dangers of change” (A 33). Like Felicity, these places are not “nostalgic sites but occluded sanctities as common and simple as their sunlight.” Where Heaney invoked a “sacred space” in relation to Coole Park, Walcott envisages uncorrupted places at the insular heart of his Trinidad, over which the prospect of development looms. He imagines these “sanctities,” as existing in a state “as threatened by this prose as a headland is by the bulldozer or a sea almond grove by the surveyor’s string, or, from blight, the mountain laurel.” Walcott’s tone remains far from defeatist, however. Representing the island’s inner essence, by extension, the “occluded sanctities” become

75 Cf. his comment: “If you go to a peak anywhere in St. Lucia, you feel a simultaneous newness and sense of timelessness at the same time—the presence of where you are.” Hirsch 278.
emblematic of a spirit that must be defended. He adopts a similar stance with regard to poetry in his use of architecture as a metaphor, looking to tradition as both a source of fortification and a way of approaching the future.

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Walcott’s thoughts on poetic form and its relation to architecture reveal a major factor in common with Heaney. He is also conscious of the poem as an “organic and contrived” formation, constructed through crafting language into an order able to withstand and engage time. The facts of a poet’s physical world interest him as well. These facts affect how a poet symbolically ‘dwells in language,’ and how he or she relates to poetry as a formally imagined structure. His observations on Emily Dickinson provide a notable example. Speaking with Brodsky, he states that he is unsure whether “you can separate the geography from the topography of a poem,” following up this parallel: “When I think of Emily Dickinson’s poetry, I think of chapel, rose, tomb stones, organ music in a chapel.”

In effect, this “topography” constitutes an architecture of form that identifies Dickinson with the chapel’s structure. Intensifying the metaphor, Dickinson is figuratively described as “locked in a chapel,” a predicament by necessity curtailing her outlook. The uncannily charged correlative of her stanzas must suffice. Brodsky suggests the link:

The confines of Dickinson’s stanza of course corresponds to the little life she lived, although it corresponds in a larger sense to the immediate landscape of that western part of Massachusetts [...]. And yet when you read her verses they are so compact that they explode from inside. [...] Perhaps a poet employs a very tight form simply in order to control that bursting thing.

A moral imperative is implied in the way her management of energies signifies a surface decorum, that shields from the potentially devastating. Dickinson’s Blake-

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77 Brodsky, “Power” 4.
like fission of the universal in the particular both governs voice and frees it. The stanzaic dimensions organize an inner life of revolutionary proportions. As Walcott states of Philip Larkin’s prosody: “The compression that ensued out of an absolute devotion to the rhythm produced, in its microcosmic clarity, like a lens or a dewbead, a world that is whole” (WTS 164). Immense authority is generated in the creative intermeshing of poetic drive and formal means for Walcott.

In a subsequent interview Walcott returns to Dickinson. Elaborating on the cryptic form-making impulse he observes in her stanzaic shapes, he draws on Brodsky’s spatializing imagery:

> When you learn finally to come to Dickinson and realize that here in a box-shape, you know, very tight stanzas, that are like little prisms of things—all this experience is contained, and that the half-lines are staggering—Astonishing. Frightening—that that little box contains more in it that [sic] the loud, amplified line of Whitman, then you are a mature person.78

Refining the previous allusion to a chapel, Dickinson’s “box-shape[d]” forms finally demand reading as “prisms,” rather than prisons, as he confirms to his interviewer. Beyond the grandiose sublimity of Whitman, Walcott’s sensation is one of awe and slight fear, registered in the disjunct flow of his words as well. Unsettled by the thought of so much repressed tension contained within the poetic architecture, he implies that her voice continues to echo within a “little box” now carrying more sinister overtones.

Architectural and spatial metaphors arise in another discussion on Frost, relating to Dickinson’s use of slant rhyme. Walcott comments: “In formal verse, tension creates memory, the taut lines between the poles of the margins,” offering that “shape is as much a cause of that tension as stanzas and their breathing spaces, also carefully measured between the stanza patterns.”79 Design is

extended into a more overall unifying pattern here, as form is identified with voice and the motive presence of breath. Stanzaic structure determines the manner in which the syntactic encounter with the reader-listener will unfold in terms of time, as it "creates anticipation; and the verbal music, by its chords, its elisions, its caesuras, delights the ear when expectation is confirmed, but with additional surprise." Form organizes how this lyrical strain will affirm itself in the ear, Walcott infers. He expands on his spatialized conception of the poem as a projective frame of forces in more detail with regard to Frost.

In the same article, "The Road Taken," Walcott notes how Ezra Pound "saw a classic shape in Frost that made 'it' (poetry) new by its directness and vigor: Frost's writing achieved a vernacular elation in tone [...] with a clean ear and a fresh eye." Here we see a connection with some of the qualities he prizes in West Indian culture and the vernacular "language of forms" it has carved out for itself. Pound had no alternative, he states, "but to recognize the syntactical variety in Frost's verse, the vers libre within the taut frame," due in part to its "shifting, dancing caesuras." Trying himself to read this structural integration of forces, Walcott, like Heaney, turns to choreography for a design metaphor that will communicate the sense of flux he discerns. But he maintains the reliance on organizing metaphors which connect to architecture. Just as Dickinson's rhyme scheme revealed the inner scope of her forms, Frost's personal devastations show up in his scansion, though "they did not break his meter or pitch it into a rant that broke its disciplined confinement, for the confinement brought the discipline that his sorrow needed." In referring to the strict rein on voice within this "confinement," Walcott again focuses attention on the way Frost's forms become "prisms" and not sealed cells. As in Dickinson's case, feeling is refracted

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80 Walcott, "Road" 98.
81 Walcott, "Road" 99.
82 Walcott, "Road" 116.
and dispersed into a spectral array of possibilities.

In the Frost essay Walcott tends to read poetic form as an analogy for both poet and habitation, as a ‘house of poetry’ that gradually engulfs the creator in morphogenesis. Walcott sees certain poets becoming their poetry as life closes in, and imagination pushes back. With Frost, he determines, the poems, "essentialize the life."83 Up to death he “fought his own petrifaction into a monument by dry, didactic humor.” Recalling Heaney’s portrait of Yeats consumed by the demands of his tower, Walcott suggests an image of the old poet making the poem the spiritual equivalent of a bulwark against the elements: “he could close it tight in its frame like a door against foul weather, or light it, like an old lamp, against even worse weather, the black gusts that shook his soul.”84 Conflating poetic form, house and “soul” to architectonic dimensions, Walcott’s figural language reveals how ingrained the relationship lies within his own thinking.85 But there is less ambivalence shown towards the idea than Heaney displays.

Walcott implies that Robinson Jeffers parallels Frost in this respect. Though he states they were true opposites, and also opposed to “Dickinson’s confines, or caves, of parlor and chapel,” Frost and Jeffers are described in terms which differentially unite them. Both, from their respective American coastlines, “proffer[ed] rocky, granite-featured profiles to ‘the elements’[…]. They are stone heads of reassuring integrity.”86 Walcott obviously has in mind the Irish-inspired stone tower Jeffers built at Monterey. While the imperious reach of his long lines is signified through the figure of waves, dashing their meter along the shores, a parallel between the diction of Jeffers in its “barren severity” as the rock coast.

83 Walcott, “Road” 115.
84 Walcott, “Road” 117.
85 Walcott's usage of a long line scheme and relatively uniform stanzaic structure for the lyrical excursions and meditations of his 1997 collection, The Bounty, could be said to represent a similar reliance on the spiritual fortifications of a chosen form. Significantly, the book’s publication followed Walcott’s building of a permanent home on Cap Estate.
86 Walcott, “Road” 109.
and the cracked tonal core of voice as the tower itself emerges. However, if his diction inhabits the “hawk-height of the sublime,” it simultaneously stands as “stillborn” in Walcott’s eyes. Symbolizing the fusion of poet, voice and tower, the “majestic tone that he considers fit for a stupendous and humbling coastline,” actually proves a metaphor for his work’s legacy. Tone may be the vessel for a classically severe temperament, but to engage Jeffers’s verse is to enter not simply into his ideas, but into the whole formal enterprise he spent his life writing, or voicing into being; it is to hear his echo in the structure he named ‘Hawk Tower.’

The emblematic reading of poets in relation to their poetic architecture comes through in Walcott’s appraisal of Ted Hughes as well. Moving from a topographical description of his poetry as “lonely and remote,” overseen by misty towers and “hieratic stones,” he expands the metaphor to take in the historical landscape of English nature poetry: “Nature, in English poetry before Hughes, was a decent panacea. One went towards it, entered it like a roofless cathedral. It was a place of contemplation, not terror. It was the benign shrine of the pathetic fallacy” (WTS 176). Cast as a Romantic ruin, the spatialization of this aspect of the canon enables Walcott to imagine Hughes as an iconoclastic architect who renovates according to an intuitive drive. He then evokes the ‘common perception’ of Hughes, as a “monodic monolith. We can’t stand his tone,” signaling a tie with Jeffers and his tower (WTS 178). However, unlike Jeffers, Hughes does not “carve his own visage from stone.” A natural shaping, free of egocentric dominance, comes to define Hughes and his work according to Walcott. An organic “openness” characterizes the poetic architecture he inhabits: “Poets come to look like their poetry. The page is a mirror, a pool. Hughes’s face emerges through the pane of paper in its weathered openness as

87 Walcott, “Road” 110.
88 However, writing of Larkin he notes: “In verse, tone is one thing, but in pitch lies the seismographic accuracy of the individual voice, the shadings as personal as a thumbprint” (WTS 160). Here Walcott picks up on the idea of the voice’s uniqueness through the same metaphor Heaney uses in “Feeling into Words.”
both friendly and honest. It speaks trust. The way a stone appears to speak about
itself" (WTS 178). A window into poetic soul through form, the face framed in the
“pane of paper” invites rather than repels the reader-listener. Like Heaney’s
“watermarking” notion of technique, an essential patterning is caught in the
lineaments of form. For Walcott, however, this represents the peak of craft.
Walcott discerns the stony “touch and texture” of Hughes’s lines as silent
‘speech.’ He divines the instinctual shaping tones of voice through his reading.

As with Hughes, Walcott turns to stone for analogies to building and design
that elucidate the poetry of Lowell through his craftsmanship:

Lowell heard his mind talk and directed it gently, but without bending it
into a formal structure of rhyme or the conclusive homilies of a couplet. He
simply lopped it off when he knew its length was right. It is the instinct of
the stonemason, the instinct that knows the weight and fit of each block,
rough-edged, and fitting into a structure whose ultimate shape is unclear,
not drawn in advance. The style is gothic. It keeps going till it becomes
cathedral, tapestry. Only death stops it. (WTS 101-2)

Granted a projective, visionary equivalence in the prima materia of line, thought
(and voice) is converted into poetry with consummate ease. Lowell’s poetic
architecture is improvised according to his own oblique stylistic strategy, Walcott
implies. His creativity acts as a force of poetic nature: “Lowell had a sense of
structure, of technical order that was so strong it saved his mind and work. It
could look down on himself as a subject” (WTS 103). Lowell’s craft allows him
to construct, and occupy the high, vaulted aspect of this abstract structure. Form
is figured as an all-embracing poetic entity.89 He has become his poetry in
Walcott’s cathedral metaphor, a presence. The stonemason image symbolizes
humility and anonymous, mindful toil.90 A religious sense of devotion to craft is

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89 Cf. Walcott’s use of architectural metaphors to characterize the ‘classic’ poetic status of Les Murray. He
complains, regarding dogmatic conceptions of prosody, that “Modern American poetics is as full of its
sidewalk hawkers as a modern American city.” But Murray is “Roman in the way that Ben Jonson was
Roman, firm-based and pillared with scholarship, way above the tiny hawkers below in the market” (WTS
190, 191).

90 A humility, in Walcott’s eyes, able to risk the lines that close out Lowell’s “Epilogue” he cites: “Pray
for the grace of accuracy / Vermeer gave to the sun’s illumination” (WTS 106).
expressed, a note that resounds throughout Walcott’s poetics.91

Heaney praises Lowell’s “crowbar” renovations, and that ability to drastically alter and revise his style also intrigues Walcott. Rather than concentrate on the perfected formal statement, he points out how Lowell’s process enters into the end result in a self-reflexive fashion: “All of his writing is about writing, all of his poetry is about the pain of making poems. The physical labour. He doesn’t sweep the fragments off the floor of his study, or studio, and show you only the finished sculpture. In History you see the armature, the failed fragments, the revisions, the compulsions” (WTS 89). Thus the workshop is an unavoidable part of a Lowell poem, the generative core or “armature” within the structure acting as a reflection of his makerly concerns. History must appear aptly named in Walcott’s opinion for the trail of detritus caught up and carried along in its formal wake, the fragments recalling the role of “epic memory” in his ideas on Felicity and Port of Spain. Lowell’s poems carry traces of a “buried language” and an “individual vocabulary” that inform his idiomatic approach.

Walcott sees Brodsky’s poetic approach in similar terms. He lauds his “determination to continue, to hallow by his reverence, the history of his craft, its sacred, tested shapes in various languages, through Virgil as well as Spenser, in ode as well as eclogue, and also in the solid, elaborate architecture of his stanzas.”92 The craft of poetry, as Brodsky’s work attests, maintains a cache of “sacred [...] shapes” over time. Mention of the “elaborate” nature of Brodsky’s poetic architecture points to the Baroque tendencies present in his formal outlook.93 In contrast to Lowell’s instinctive approach, these poems are “hugely designed” in Walcott’s eyes. He calls attention twice more to the solidity of

91 Cf. Walcott’s assertion: “I have never separated the writing of poetry from prayer. I have grown up believing it is a vocation, a religious vocation.” Hirsch 272.
Brodsky's structural elements: "the solid architecture of his stanzaic designs, the intricate triple rhymes, are solid, concrete, without a single heart-flutter of doubt about their vocation."94 Such cohesion reflects the covenant between force and form befitting a man who "lives inside of poetry" in completeness and through necessity he adds.95 Yet elsewhere that space is figured as a captivity as well. "The Brodskian figure," he suggests, "is a banal figure, in a raincoat, sitting in a hotel room by himself."96 Unattached and semi-rootless, he is the very figure of anonymity, enveloped by his craft. To Walcott, Brodsky's ego is best categorized as anonymous: "this is what makes it classical."97 The classical, to reiterate, stands for a mastery capable of an endless freshness of making in Walcott's poetics. But he extends this trope to take in poetry as a whole.

To Walcott's mind, working within the craft of poetry ultimately means that "you are completely anonymous, you are as anonymous as a priest is anonymous." The situation demands the "surrender of your identity, of your future, of your career [...]."98 Total immersion is called for in this Dantesque scenario, the descent into poetry through its history ideally resulting in a contribution to the eternal, overarching plan. Stating that perhaps he has a "medieval mind," Walcott bears out the concern with poetry's perpetuity within language: "I’m really part of a guild. I don’t consider myself to be an individual.

94 Walcott, "Magic" 38. Cf. his observation on Brodsky's poetics: "this whole veneration of form, which he saw [...] the way that his poems are architecturally designed, this is part of the whole idea of structure that has reinforced for me, at least, my own sense of what stanzaic responsibility, and rhyme, and all the requirements of the effort of writing verse thoroughly required, needed." Derek Walcott, "A Tribute to Joseph Brodsky 1940-1996," *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* 28 (1997): 186.
95 Walcott also refers to Brodsky's "house of the mind." Walcott, "Magic" 38. Heaney describes the experience of visiting Brodsky in the study where he wrote as comparable to entering "some kitchen of the mind." Heaney, "Brodsky's Nobel" 63.
97 Walcott, "Magic" 36.
And if I were working as a stonemason in a guild, that would be my contribution to the cathedral.” Similarly to his portrayal of Lowell, he sees himself as helping to build a universalized ‘temple.’ He chooses the “cathedral” metaphor for its elevated expression of poetry’s underlying formal sanctity, and implication of a devoted work ethic. Analogies with the Bauhaus ideals are clear, down to the use of the cathedral as a symbol of enduring faith in the covenant between past and present, aesthetics and utility. A concern with stripping style down to an inner essence marks Walcott’s commitment to the guild idea. Drawing, design, and poetry are linked with the notion of dissolving personality in tradition. Walcott hovers between the generic roles of stonemason and draftsman to describe his calling as a poet, however, conveying an idea of “stanzaic responsibility” in relation to how the ‘blocks’ of language and form are placed together.

Walcott identifies himself with carpentry in an interview conducted in 1985. A return to an elemental “language of forms” is found here as well:

At this period of my life and work, I think of myself in a way as a carpenter, as one making frames, simply and well. I’m working a lot in quatrains […] I feel myself wanting to write very simply cut, very contracted, very speakable and very challenging quatrains in rhymes. Any other shape seems ornate, an elaboration on that essential cube that really is the poem. So we can then say the craft is as ritualistic as that of a carpenter putting down his plane and measuring his stanzas and setting them squarely. And the frame becomes more important than the carpenter.

He connects the carpentry analogy to Protestantism, “in making things simply and in a utilitarian way.” Recalling the emphasis on frames that characterizes “Cul de Sac Valley,” as mentioned in the introduction, the metaphor has links

100 An expressionistic depiction of a cathedral was used in connection with the Bauhaus manifesto at the movement’s inception. See Gelernter 242. Cf. also Walcott’s comment: “I have always believed in fierce, devoted apprenticeship. I have learned that from drawing. You copy Dürer; you copy the great draftsmen because they themselves did. I have always tried to keep my mind Gothic in its devotions to the concept of master and apprentice. The old masters made new masters by the discipline of severity.” Sjöberg. Baer, ed. 83.
101 Hirsch 274.
with film, another of Walcott's passions. Film is also a potentially vernacular means of expression, and in his concern with the "simply" made, and the "speakable" yet "challenging" quatrain, we see Walcott looking to connect with his ideal audience in a language reflecting the idiosyncrasies of Caribbean culture and architecture.

Corresponding to the dissolution of identity in craft comes the paradoxical discovery of a poet's own voice and "accent" in Walcott's view as stated earlier. This again depends on a spatialized notion of poetry as a construct built in language, that will return the 'echo' at the heart of the calling, as it were. As he claims in the "Poet's Round Table" discussion: "All poets try for that ultimate echo that is their own voice— is it my own voice? [...] every writer who has laboured to authentically hear his own voice has his own accent."[^103] "[A]ccent" is defined by scansion for Walcott, keeping the issue squarely within the realms of form.[^104] The shape of words as much as the stanzaic framework defines the range of the authentic voice and its "ultimate echo."

To return to "Cul de Sac Valley" as an example. Walcott can be seen voicing this echo within the architecture of his island community. With the "essential cube" firmly in mind he labors mimetically, in imitation of the carpenter:

> If my craft is blest;  
> if this hand is as accurate, as honest as their carpenter's,
>
> every frame, intent on its angles, would echo this settlement of unpainted wood

[^102]: In parts of *Omeros*, for instance, cut-up methods of juxtaposing images appear, creating a build-up effect of considerable tension and dramatic power. Other poems are "scripted" as if for films. Walcott's working manuscripts are often accompanied by story-boards he uses to project his ideas.

[^103]: Brodsky, et al. "Poets' Round Table" 45.

[^104]: Cf. the assessment of Frost's influence on Edward Thomas: "their accents were different, and accent is scansion." Walcott, "Road" 108.
as consonants scroll
off my shaving plane
in the fragrant Creole
of their native grain (AT'9)

Still, the poem we have is not written in Creole. Walcott works instead through a process of rhetorical allusion. To "echo this settlement" is here to test the voice against the resonant language of a Creole architecture, set in the "native grain," its timbers shaped by craft. A premise is asserted: to design in a sense true to the topographic language of the valley is to make forms analogous to one another.

By the poem's end, each stanzaic form has been translated into a number of different frames. Walcott suggests we read each as if it were a prism, in keeping with his view of Dickinson's verse shapes. With the final quatrains an evocative connection is made, however. Just prior to the night time image of a shop door as it "flings a panel of light / on the road" creating a symmetry with the opening stanza's "panel of sunrise / on a hillside shop," the speaker turns to the hillside architecture in a closing epiphany:

Shack windows flare.
Green fireflies arc,
igniting Forestière,
Orléans, Fond St. Jacques.

and the forest runs
sleeping, its eyes shut,
except for one glance
from a lamplit hut;

now, above the closed text
of small shacks that slid
by the headlights: the apex
of a hill like a pyramid. (AT 15)

Lit from within, each shack authenticates Walcott's echo in the final plottings of his stanzaic architecture. As D'Aguiar states, there is a strong attempt to mould his shapes seamlessly into nature and vice versa.105 Yet Walcott is too self-

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105 See introduction.
conscious about his own role as poetic maker, too aware of the form-venerating "history of his craft" to lose perspective. This "lamplit hut" is finally separate from the forest, observing its behaviour with the wide-eyed alertness of the speaker himself. The shacks the poem pays homage to in its box-like forms are not belittled by the comparison of the hill's "apex" to a "pyramid." The monument image figures loosely for the sacramental structure Walcott seeks his "ultimate echo" within, visualized as benignly crowning—sacrêr, in the French— the shacks that make up its base. An emblem of one of the sacred valleys within the imaginative landscape of the West Indies he celebrates, is "occluded" in the text's closure.

Architecture takes on an organic quality in Walcott's thought, particularly when the vernacular aspect arises, as in the shack, or Port of Spain. He strongly associates this indigenous, 'natural' element with language, patois, seeing a constant threat from mechanical, 'brutal' outside forces. The people are shaped by architecture and language, in a way that ties in with Heaney's notion of the latent power wielded in forms. The "fragments of epic memory" are preserved in architecture, and this conviction allows Walcott to imaginatively enter into their structures in his poetry. Generally a continued awareness of form's architectural potential can be discerned evolving in Walcott's poetics, along with an understanding of the metaphorical basis of poetic making in building. Poetic form takes on an emblematic quality in its ability to merge the expressiveness of voice within its structure, as in the case of Dickinson, and more ambivalently, Jefferers. But the "weathered openness" Walcott associates with Hughes finally becomes the architectural ideal he most strives to emulate in his poetry—an openness to history and memory, the elements and the local inhabitants, that he wishes the Cap Estate beach house to symbolize.

*  *  *
The similar language Heaney and Walcott use to expand metaphorically upon poetry, making it a temple or universal granary of truth, develops from the spatially enclosing aspect of form. Poetry is troped in their imaginations as an architectural structure, enabling them to analyse and compare the work of other poets. Architecture thus becomes a way of engaging the past, present, and future states of poetic making. Heaney and Walcott each desire a state of ‘evolution’ to be maintained in poetry (as in architecture): not a mindless progress or development, but a reverential growth honoring formal verities. Both poets tend to conceive of poems and architectural forms as “organic and contrived.” They are made ‘living’ constructs in their readings, capable of figuratively embodying spirit or presence, as various statements reveal. The emphasis on the poem as a kinetic, animated structure, integrating the voice, hands, feet, and ear as somatic and sensory moving forces within the process, also leads to a view of poetry as a ‘threshold.’ In their poems, Heaney and Walcott consciously work to keep a sense of movement in play regarding the ‘fixing’ power of architecture, that looks to this threshold, or “frontier of writing” as a shifting migrant space. In Walcott’s “Store Bay,” the speaker observes, “I still lug my house on my back—/a mottled, brown shoulder bag / like the turtle’s.”106 This shell is moulded to his sense of self. But it is also where Walcott, like Heaney, is forced to carry his writing, the material place of form to which his voice is ultimately tied, and where his subjective purpose rests.

In the next chapter the way Heaney and Walcott represent architecture and react to its power in various poems will be discussed in relation to this mobile sensibility. The slightly uncanny, mutual ‘conning’ aspect regarding the imaginative encounter with architecture also surfaces. Architecture is used to engage history and memory. An ambivalence toward a constraining idea of home,

the quintessential "perfected form" in some respects, acts as the organizing theme around which my readings revolve.
Chapter Two: “Lost, Unhappy, and at Home”: The Architecture of Estrangement.

Voiced from a Jutland bog, Heaney’s phrase from “The Tollund Man” raises the question of what exactly ‘home’ might represent in relation to the architectural issues in his and Walcott’s work. An anti-nostalgic homesickness for Ireland is registered in this line that problematizes where ‘home’ may rest. The speaker’s sense of displacement comes through, yet so does an acceptance of his alienated condition. Home for now is an abstract space Heaney wanders in and writes out of that is detached from the other, island-bound community. Poetic inspiration, in the guise of these lines, seems to be located in upheaval, in internal exile—the renunciation of home for a deferred homecoming and for the cold comfort of the ‘house’ one carries. As Heaney states, “Whatever poetic success I’ve had has come from staying within the realm of my own imaginative country and my own voice.”

Both Heaney and Walcott maintain an ambivalent, restless relationship with their places of origin, questioning the fixed and enclosing forms of home and culture through architecture. Architecture becomes a metaphor for the unhomely sense of estrangement each feels possessed by on occasion.

An emotive core buried in memory, home, in its broadest sense, joins certain abstract and material characteristics into a single (multi)cultural structure of imagining wherein people and architecture form a perceived unity. Upholding heritage and national identity, and helping frame the image in space and time, architecture exists inseparably from the concept. Architecture is a part of the metaphorical domain of ‘roots.’ However, roots are capable of both strangling and fostering growth, and Heaney and Walcott seek to renegotiate their...

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1 Seamus Heaney, Wintering Out (Boston: Faber, 1972) 37.
connections to the earth and to community in a more elusive manner. A creative detachment is required, a dissociation of perspective. Heaney states, "being a poet is to be self-born at a distance, starting again," implying that alienation is a process without end. 3 But this distancing coexists with a feeling of responsibility. "So much in Ireland still needs to be done," he notes in this context, "the definition of the culture, and the redefinition of it." 4 With alienation comes a distancing from home that makes architecture readable in other, defamiliarized terms.

Alienation is inevitably a part of what Mark Williams and Alan Riach call the "rich complexity of reference worked into the poetry of those who choose to start out from that sense of displacement, of unhousing, which is part of the general condition which terms like postmodern or post-colonial attempt inadequately to account for." 5 But this runs the risk of oversimplifying matters, in the implication that "unhousing" constitutes a deliberate rhetorical strategy. The 'designs' of Heaney and Walcott are far more ambiguous in nature. They oscillate between accepting their changing domestic and communal places, and appearing trapped and at odds with the intransigent cultural patterns and historical encumbrances that often underlie surface realities. It is a tension that informs the abstract space the poetry offers, keeping it preoccupied with home, but in a way tinged with the "sad freedom" of the Tollund man, or the "bitter devotion" of Walcott's "Return to D'Ennery, Rain." 6 Walcott attests, however, that "all island artists" face an "inevitable problem [...] the choice of home or exile, self-

3 Brodsky, et al. "Poets' Round Table" 46.
4 Haftenden 59-60.
realization or spiritual betrayal of one’s country. Travelling widens this breach.”

Raising the necessary indecision between home and exile, Walcott hits on a crux. The “breach” he speaks of becomes the site of an irresolvable struggle for articulation that keeps each poetic voice pitched to its own frequency. Creative complacency is staved off by turning that emotive sounding ‘exile’ inward, breaking form with home, so to speak. Poetry’s formal synthesis of experience, memory and latent potential, helps make “homecomings without home” possible as Walcott’s “Homecoming: Anse La Raye” has it (G 85).

As Heaney and Walcott find themselves at an ambivalent remove from their domestic origins, they reveal architecture as both settling and unsettling in nature. It represents a sheltering spirit that in turn invites rebellion and unease. This conflict is apparent in Heaney’s comments on his time at Glanmore cottage:

> The activity of writing originates very, very far down, and is affected by everything in your life, and it should affect everything in your life. I found in Glanmore […] some kind of coming into home—I discovered there that you had to be really coherent, and you had to be in earnest, and significantly that was the first place I was able to write about the house I was living in. That was because Glanmore was like the original place. But talking about the comfort of life and home, I’m afraid of comfort, and at the same time I believe that man was made for it too. I would love to be able to write a poetry that had some kind of sureness and fullness and generosity, yet wasn’t complacent in any way.

Though Glanmore offers a “home,” he resists its potentially smothering “comfort.” As the last sentence suggests, poetry provides an objective correlative. A link between poetic form and the actual house occurs here, as if writing the “Glanmore Sonnets” and “Glanmore Revisited” sequences relocates the structure in Heaney’s memory.

Re-imagining home calls for a new architecture of the spirit. “I think there’s some kind of psychic energy that cries out for a home,” Heaney responds to a

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8 Haffenden 69.
query regarding his occasionally arcane subject matter, "[...] you have to build the house for it with the elements of your poetry, and that imagery has to have a breath of life in it." This resonates with the Rilke analogy he likes to invoke that poetry builds "a temple deep inside our hearing" (RP xvii-xviii). Poetic form, a vessel echoing with voice, provides a 'house' for those energies. But other "cries" keep coming—the threshold of each dwelling must be crossed for another, as the poet is compelled to resist any final coming to rest, and maintain an openness to the creative possibilities of upheaval and renewal. Similarly, Walcott speaks of the "retreat, not from fame but into a craft," using craft here as a vessel—a Dantesque metaphor for the sea-journey of a life lived in forms. Through the housing of self in poetry as a version of a carapace or shell that can be shed, the promise of home is preserved.

Early in his career Walcott looked to Crusoe as an archetype of the primordial craftsman thrown back on his own resources:

Crusoe’s triumph lies in that despairing cry which he utters when a current takes his dugout canoe further and further away from the island that, like all of us uprooted figures, he had made his home, and it is the cynical answer that we must make to those critics who complain that there is nothing here, no art, no history, no architecture, by which they mean ruins, in short, no civilization, it is 'O happy desert!' We live not only on happy, but on fertile deserts, and we draw our strength, like Adam, like all hermits, all dedicated craftsmen, from that rich irony of our history.

It is what feeds the bonfire. We contemplate our spirit by the detritus of the past.

Iconoclastically alluding to a new site scoured of its surface history, and a "spirit" enlightened by the burning of "history," he envisages an architecture no longer beholden to ruins, the Eurocentric beacons of "civilization." Alternate structures are given a chance to take hold in the imagination. To be a poet is to

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9 Haffenden 66.
10 Derek Walcott, "The Figure of Crusoe: On the Theme of Isolation in West Indian Writing," Lecture delivered at the University of the West Indies in the Open Lecture Series, 27 Oct. 1965. Pub. Hamner, ed. 40.
celebrate with corrosive wit the powers that isolation and solitude bestow, setting an example to a formative, hybrid culture that must create its own, refreshed knowledge of itself.

As Heaney contends in *The Place of Writing*, "if one perceptible function of poetry is to write place into existence, another of its functions is to unwrite it" (*PW* 47). Certain sites and architectural structures assume symbolic importance as topoi for this 'unwriting' impulse. Each poet returns to a *tabula rasa* that is part wasteland, part blueprint for renewal, a space of both futility and potential. Heaney argues for a view of the poet as "a figure not only committed but compelled to enter and re-enter a given domain."[11] These "domains" include architectural sites, where complex responses beyond "veneration and dominion" are provoked.[12] Architecture allows another "consciousness of reality" to be uncovered, and figuratively invoked in poetic form and imagery.[13] The provocative readings of Heaney and Walcott expand architectural detail within a more allusive ongoing process, opening up issues of history and memory. To quote "Tollund," Heaney's revision of "Tollund Man," writing emerges as a transient state wherein the "Hallucinatory and familiar" achieves prominence; a mode of being, "footloose, at home beyond the tribe."[14]

* * *

In "Feeling into Words" Heaney defines a conception of poetry that provides almost mystical access to the unconscious:

poetry as divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself; poems as elements of continuity, with

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[13] Cf. Richard Kearney's comparison of poets and prisoners as subverters of the "normal edifice of discourse. Both refuse the current consciousness of reality by invoking *something else* which precedes or exceeds it, which remains, as it were, sub-conscious or supra-conscious. In Ireland, this 'something else' often finds its habitation and its name in *myth*." Richard Kearney, *Myth and Motherland* (Derry: Field Day, 1984) 5.
the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds, where the buried shard has an importance that is not diminished by the importance of the buried city; poetry as a dig, a dig for finds that end up being plants. (P 41)

In “Digging” the notions of “divination” and “revelation” are placed in uneasy connection with underlying metaphors for ‘knowing’ and regeneration, all latent in the sexual connotations of the implements first introduced: “Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.” Coeval with this accent on some primordial understanding, the poem’s window image offers a vantage-point from which to posit spatial relationships:

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging. (DN 1)

The father’s measured assaults on the earth lead to a distancing of the speaker’s perspective. While the setting superficially remains Toner’s bog, the play of memory dislocates the action, as the house becomes a framework Heaney’s imagination can internally ‘dig’ within.

The earth is figured as a sensory inner space that is suddenly alive in the mind:

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I’ve no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I’ll dig with it. (DN 1-2)

Resetting the traditional rural digging world in the imagination, the “head” becomes synonymous with the house the speaker writes in. Yet this

internalization appears part of a wider process of renunciation. If the cuts through "living roots" signify a severance from the idea of the pen as gun, a cleavage noted in the dropping of that metaphor from the final stanza, they also signal a deeper emancipation from the everyday reality of home.16

Heaney’s "curt" digging marks a figurative penetration into the womb of the imagination. Metaphorically, he aspires to go further down than culture-bound roots can reach, breaking through into a subterranean architecture of running streams, and molten energies. The house of the poem is transformed into a symbolic stone omphalos that seeks to divine these currents as it rests atop them.17 As Heaney states, writing "Digging" had the "force of an initiation" for him (P 42). The imagery of breaking through "roots" into other imaginative structures signifies a quest for re-definition through poetry itself. Yet, the interplay between the earth and his imagination relies on the architecture of the writing place to frame his perspective, and metaphorically open up the ground of 'pastness' beneath.

Heaney spatializes the imagination in several other lyrics, giving it power to create and wield new forms. With “In Small Townlands,” painting the landscape brings forth “splintered lights” from the brush’s “wedge.” These cleansing forms of light “slice like a spade / That strips the land of fuzz and blotch, / Pares clean as bone” (DN 41). The imagination is given the authority of a metalworker’s forge: “A new world cools out of his head.” It is the creative flux of mind the figure in “Synge on Aran” possesses as he walks with a “hard pen / scraping in his head; /

16 Stan Smith notes how “Digging” may take its title (and metaphorical impetus) from Edward Thomas’s several poems of the same name. Thomas uses the house as a metaphor for the “whole dilapidated culture” he finds himself in. See Stan Smith, Inviolable Voice: History and Twentieth-Century Poetry (Gill: Dublin, 1982) 67.

17 Note how the poem is placed at the head of Death of a Naturalist, coincident with the way the opening “Mossbawn” chapter in Preoccupations begins with “I. Omphalos”: “I would begin with the Greek word, omphalos, meaning the navel, and hence the stone that marked the centre of the world, and repeat it, omphalos, omphalos, omphalos, until its blunt and falling music becomes the music of somebody pumping water at the pump outside our back door. It is Co. Derry in the early 1940s” (P 17).
the nib filed on a salt wind” *(DN 39).* Such tropes express a desire to give physical space a mental correlative, setting it at a tangent to reality. Apart from such images of creativity, however, a more ambiguous relationship emerges with the structures Heaney observes, implying a link with the unconscious. The title poem, “Death of a Naturalist,” evokes a “flax-dam” festering in the “heart / Of the townland,” nearby where the young speaker draws jampots of frogspawn to be arranged on “window-sills at home, / On shelves at school” *(DN 3).* Captive to his fears, the invasion of the dam by “angry frogs” figures for the advent of the “great slime kings” in his mind *(DN 4).* A sense that the holding force of organic forms is being breached is caught in the nauseous panic of the speaker. His experiments with frogspawn are revealed as transgressions against a natural order carrying deadly implications. A malign center on the landscape, the flax-dam takes dominion everywhere, to invoke Wallace Stevens, rather than the jam-jar, its natural architecture a metaphor for an unspecified sense of malaise.*

In “The Barn” there is a continuation of the imagery that equates the inner space of the mind with architectural structures. Paradoxically the barn, the rustic storehouse of sustenance, becomes a deadly prison in Heaney’s formal outline. A near-gothic terror seems to pervade memory of the place. As sacks of threshed corn, “piled like grit of ivory / Or solid as cement” transform into “great blind rats” over the poem’s course, an uncanny feeling of the structure as entombing the speaker emerges. Heaney walks us into the barn like a story-teller creating an atmosphere. His observations recall a latent violence, lingering from the past: “The musty dark hoarded an armoury / Of farmyard implements, harness, ploughsocks” *(DN 5).* The five tightly-packed quatrains stake out the barn’s cold, estranging architecture as it resonates within the speaker’s mind:

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18 Cf. also the architecturalization in “The Other Side” Heaney uses: “His brain was a whitewashed kitchen / hung with text, swept tidy / as the body o’ the kirk” *(WO 25).*
The floor was mouse-grey, smooth, chilly concrete.
There were no windows, just two narrow shafts
Of gilded motes, crossing, from air-holes slit
High in each gable. The one door meant no draughts

All summer when the zinc burned like an oven
A scythe’s edge, a clean spade, a pitch-fork’s prongs:
Slowly bright objects formed when you went in.
Then you felt cobwebs clogging up your lungs

And scuttled fast into the sunlit yard—
And into nights when bats were on the wing
Over the rafters of sleep, where bright eyes stared
From piles of grain in corners, fierce, unblinking.

Architectural features are swept into a dark fantasy as the unhomely space
invades the imaginative precincts of his “nights,” the dreamworld where sleep’s
structure is traversed in tandem by the barn’s clutching aura. Activated by the
half-light of metaphor, an almost Piranesian gloom is suggested.

The imagery of captivity is hammered home: “The dark gulfed like a roof-
space. I was chaff / To be pecked up when birds shot through the air-slits. / I lay
face-down to shun the fear above.” Yet if the “fear above” entraps, it is also the
imagination that entombs here with a pleasure in being held so helplessly at
bay.20 As Heaney confides: “Fear is the emotion that the muse thrives on. That’s
always there.”21 Emotional submission to an architecture of utter dread is
captured in the poem, a sublimity refined into the space that rehearses the
engagement. Form organizes this dread, the insidious trope of the barn also

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20 In regard to the state Heaney’s speaker enters here, cf. Vidler’s remarks: “As a concept […] the uncanny
has, not unnaturally, found its metaphorical home in architecture: first in the house, haunted or not, that
pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror, and then in the
city, where what was once walled and intimate, the confirmation of community—one thinks of Rousseau’s
Geneva—has been rendered strange by the spatial incursions of modernity. In both cases, of course, the
‘uncanny’ is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any particular spatial conformation;
it is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the
boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking
and dreaming.” Vidler 11. Relatedly, not only “Rousseau’s Geneva,” but Walcott’s Port of Spain is
suggested here. In cities he often confronts “the shadows of glass-faced towers down evening streets,” as in
“The Season of Phantasmal Peace” (FT 98).
21 Haffenden 69.
standing in for the haunting of Heaney’s culture historically, by terror.

Strangely, this depressive, claustrophobic air is carried over into the external, ‘natural’ world in “Dawn Shoot,” where the five nonce stanzas trace a pastoral setting pervaded by an institutionalized sense of fear: “Clouds ran their wet mortar, plastered the daybreak / Grey” (DN 16). The sky mirrors the landscape in a collusive manner: “The plaster thinned at the skyline, the whitewash / Was bleaching on houses and stables.” Cattle, “watching, and knowing,” evoke an atmosphere of surveillance heightened by the snipe hunters’ stake out of the den in the invaded meadow. Given Heaney’s love of hiding places—“All children want to crouch in their secret nests” he declares—the quasi-military operation on the snipe’s retreat has added significance (P 17). Despite the speaker’s callous language, an undertone implies he identifies with the snipe, its imperiled sense of place, and the covert existence to which it is consigned. The poem’s evocation of a drab architecture that contains and orders the experience of hunting actually reveals Heaney’s alienation from the ritual. It extends a metaphor connected with what he calls “our sensing of place. It was once more or less sacred. The landscape was sacramental, instinct with signs, implying a system of reality beyond the visible realities” (P 132). That “system” has been disrupted and co-opted, the young hunters turned mercenary killers: “we did not bother to cut out the tongue. / The ones that slipped back when the all clear got round / Would be first to examine him” (DN 17). Contained within a structure of ‘naturalized’ consciousness, as within the formal outlines of the stanzas, the snipe hunt is revealed in a defamiliarizing light through Heaney’s choice of language. Imprisonment within an ideological construct is conveyed.

In several poems Heaney interrogates an idea of defensiveness through

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22 Another symbolic identification of hunter with hunted occurs in one of Heaney’s first fishing poems, “The Salmon Fisher to the Salmon” with its images of “Exile in the sea,” “your home water’s gravity,” and the bittersweet barb of “We’re both annihilated on the fly [...] I will turn home, fish-smelling, scaly.” Seamus Heaney, Door into the Dark (1969; London: Faber, 1972) 6.
architecture—the ‘fortress mentality’—in relation to Ireland as home. Notable for its formal mimesis of huddled density is “Storm on the Island,” where the adoption of an Aran Island persona also draws in other voices under assault from the elements:

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
This wizened earth has never troubled us
With hay, so, as you see, there are no stacks
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees
Which might prove company when it blows full
Blast: you know what I mean—leaves and branches
Can raise a tragic chorus in a gale
So that you listen to the thing you fear
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.
But there are no trees, no natural shelter.
You might think that the sea is company,
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs,
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits
The very windows, spits like a tame cat
Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo,
We are bombarded by the empty air.
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear. (DN 38)

Long dug-in against a hostile environment, the islanders merge with their “squat” dwellings, incarcerated by the storm and by an ill-defined “fear.”

Inviting complicity on one hand (“you know what I mean”) the conversational, yet evasive tone implies a stoic waiting-out of the weather’s assault. Elemental “Space” takes on a charged quality, for despite being a “huge nothing,” it dominates the community’s concerns. A massive pressure bears down on the vernacular architecture of mind and habitation alike.

Architecture, as cultural marker of memory, can prove symbolic of ideological intransigence and easily take on negative connotations in Heaney’s poetry. A less subtle critique emerges in some poems than others. Set in four blank quatrains, the dour mind-set of a Northern Protestant is revealed in “Docker” through the malevolent imagery of his physiognomy’s design: “The cap juts like
a gantry's crossbeam, / Cowling plated forehead and sledgehead jaw. / Speech is clamped in the lips' vice" (DN 28). Reified in his features, one side of the power structure informing the sectarian problem in Northern Ireland is set, "strong and blunt as a Celtic cross." Again, behind the anguished tone of a stanza from Heaney's "An Open Letter," written to protest his inclusion in an anthology of British verse, lies another reading of architecture as symptomatic of an underlying cultural malaise:

Traumatic Ireland! Checkpoints, cairns,
Slated roofs, stone ditches, ferns,
Dublin squares where sunset burns
   The Georgian brick—
The whole imagined country mourns
   Its lost, erotic

_Aisling_ life.23

The catalogue draws in the parts of a denaturalized landscape as elegiac remnants of a "lost [...] life." Home—"Ireland"—is fractured into spatial components of a former wholeness. The lines leading up to this stanza speak of Heaney's "deep design," his desire to "be at home / In my own place and dwell within / Its proper name," yet that "name" is made up of traumatized elements. They are open sites, areas of exposure, which do little to invite dwelling.

Heaney's association of architecture with confinement is again figured in ambivalent terms in "Personal Helicon," where imagery of wells resonates with the _omphalos_ implicit in "Digging." Looking to other worlds in its invocation of the mountain in Boeotia which housed the seat of Apollo and the Muses, the world of the "flax-dam" is also alluded to: "I loved the dark drop, the trapped sky, the smells / Of waterweed, fungus and dank moss" (DN 44). The speaker remembers how he would clear wells, one with a "rotted board top" too deep for reflection, another whose bottom offers up his "white face" like a moon after he

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has “dragged out long roots from the soft mulch.” Heaney plays on the formal
correlation between these drills into darkness and poetry’s thrust into deep
imaginative terrain: “Others had echoes, gave back your own call / With a clean
new music in it.” But a renunciation occurs, the speaker declaring:

Now, to pry into roots, to finger slime,
To stare, big-eyed Narcissus, into some spring
Is beneath all adult dignity. I rhyme
to see myself, to set the darkness echoing.

Rejection of this ‘narcissism’ is couched in gently self-mocking tones. But the
well space shifts into Heaney’s imagination in the last lines. “[R]hyme” is
envisaged as capable of making the “darkness” echo, a trope which relies on the
architectural metaphor for impetus.

Heaney gives the interplay between light, darkness, and form a clearly
architectural twist in the title Door into the Dark, his second book. Architecture
acts as the site of an uncanny movement between the imagined and the real. As
he inquires into the “buried life of feelings,” a sense emerges that “unnameable
energies” surround certain structures, and that architecture provides the “point
of entry” needed into memory, myth, and the unknown.24 In “Night-Piece.”
disembodied images of a horse cohere within the frame of a stable, sounded
through the imagination:

Must you know it again?
Dull pounding through hay.
The uneasy whinny.

A sponge lip drawn off each separate tooth.
Opalescent haunch.
Muscle and hoof

Bundled under the roof. (DD 1)

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24 Cf. his statement: “When I called my second book Door into the Dark I intended to gesture towards this
idea of poetry as a point of entry into the buried life of feelings or as a point of exit for it. Words
themselves are doors; Janus is to a certain extent their deity, looking back to a ramification of roots and
associations and forward to a clarification of sense and meaning. [...] there are a number of poems that arise
out of the almost unnameable energies that, for me, hovered over certain bits of language and landscape” (P
52).
Rhyme, and the sparse stanzaic form supply hints of an underlying logic here, as Heaney gestures at the presence unsettling the horse. Opening out “Night-Piece” is a reference in “The King of the Ditchbacks” from Station Island. The speaker asks, in one of the invocations “dared” to a shadowy figure, if he is the “one who lay awake in darkness a wall’s breadth / from the troubled hoofs?” He describes this as one of the “Dream fears” he “inclined towards” and in the exchange of identities that characterizes the poem, turns to follow him, “as if I were coming into my own. I remembered I had / been vested for this calling.” “Night-Piece” can be read as an invocation of a “stealthy rustling” in Heaney’s spirit; the call of this furtive Sweeney persona, a “denless mover” whose presence haunts him through the stable’s enigmatic agency (SI 56).

Door into the Dark takes its title from the sonnet “The Forge” where a blacksmith’s workshop is the setting. The opening lines establish a sense of the structure: “All I know is a door into the dark. / Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting: / Inside, the hammered anvil’s short-pitched ring” (DD 7). The “altar” of the anvil, is located “somewhere in the centre, / Horned as a unicorn.” But when the speaker observes how the blacksmith “expends himself in shape and music” there and “leans out on the jamb” to talk, a correspondence with this worker in the “language of forms” develops. Heaney’s sonnet forms an architecture responsive to the semi-mythical overtones of his “music,” as a concise shape also made to an old template. Darkness plays a strong role in “The Peninsula” as well. A car journey signifies a transient state, insulated from the external world:

25 In “Gone,” the next poem, the sinister feeling is maintained with the horse’s sudden disappearance: “His hot reek is lost. / The place is old in his must” (DD 2). The stable is left “unmade.”
27 Cf. “The Thatcher.” Represented as an artisan, he is transformed into almost mythical terms as a pattern-maker as he replaces the cottage roof. He uses a “light ladder” and staples made for “pinning down his world, handful by handful” (DD 8). Lying hidden, “Couchant for days on sods above the rafters,” the speaker observes him weaving “a sloped honeycomb,” leaving the onlookers “gapmg at his Midas touch.” Heaney’s “rigging” of the process in his four quatrains shows the thatcher completely immersed in his work, a triumph of technique.
"so you will not arrive // But pass through, though always skirting landfall" *(DD 9).* This vantage point frames "horizons" and the "ploughed field" which "swallows the whitewashed gable / And you’re in the dark again." The final stanza carries an austere note of resolution, as the time to "drive back home, still with nothing to say" comes. But the experience has led to a fresh way of perceiving forms: "now you will uncode all landscapes / By this: things founded clean on their own shapes, / Water and ground in their extremity." Reading architectural structures partakes of the will to "uncode," to forge a clarity of line.

"In Gallarus Oratory" is ambivalently steeped in a collective memory Heaney attempts to sound, with the poem itself built on a contrast between darkness and illumination. Fourteen-centuries old, the tiny chapel’s atmosphere is internalized in the speaker as a sense of vertiginous dread. Entering its confines, he experiences a temporal confusion that makes the ancient coeval with the present:

You can still feel the community pack
This place: it’s like going into a turfstack,
A core of old dark walled up with stone
A yard thick. When you’re in it alone,
You might have dropped, a reduced creature,
To the heart of the globe. No worshipper
Would leap up to his God off this floor. *(DD 10)*

Suggesting the packing of words into the "place" of the poem as well, the oratory’s form nurtures a "core" hermetically sealed off from the outside world. The turfstack metaphor centers the interior at the "heart" of rural life. While a reference to dropping to hell is clear, the idea of falling subordinate to the "heart of the globe" also captures a reference to the insidious colonizing power of Elizabethan England to make "reduced creature[s]" of the Irish. Heaney implies that this theater in memory he sets up may share a link with the Globe in London, a core of that enterprise in cultural terms, asserting an irresistible gravitational pull
on the "worshipper." The allusion to a line from Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, "O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?" reinforces the connection.

Such an undercurrent may extend from Heaney's remarks in his essay "The God in the Tree: Early Irish Nature Poetry," concerning the rebuking "weight of Christianity." A colonization of the 'rebuked' spirit to servile ends is intimated:

This was eleven years ago, at Gallarus Oratory, on the Dingle Peninsula, in Co. Kerry, an early Christian, dry-stone oratory, about the size of a large turf-stack. Inside, in the dark of the stone, it feels as if you are sustaining a great pressure, bowing under like the generations of monks who must have bowed down in meditation and reparation on that floor. I felt the weight of Christianity in all its rebuking aspects, its calls to self-denial and self-abnegation; its humbling of the proud flesh and insolent spirit. But coming out of the cold heart of the stone, into the sunlight and the dazzle of grass and sea, I felt a lift in my heart, a surge towards happiness that must have been experienced over and over again by those monks as they crossed that same threshold centuries ago. (P 189)

Heaney experiences a "sudden apprehension of the world as light, as illumination" when leaving the structure where his soul has fretted, an experience carried over into the final verse of "In Gallarus Oratory." In "The Main of Light" Heaney writes that some poems (Shakespeare's Sonnet 60 is his example) have "openings at their centre which take the reader through and beyond" (GT 15).

The white space between the two stanzas figures for such a 'visionary' opening in the form for the imagination here as well.

Dramatizing a "threshold" experience of crossing into another time as well as out of the oratory into the light, Heaney projects an imagined scenario using the monks. A tableau effect is created:

Founded there like heroes in a barrow,
They sought themselves in the eye of their King
Under the black weight of their own breathing.
And how he smiled on them as out they came.

28 In "Elegy for a Still-born Child" Heaney comforts a bereft mother using similar imagery, reminiscent of a metaphysical conceit. Calling her a "cartographer," he laments her "collapsed sphere": "That evicted world // Contracts round its history, its scar," saying of her husband: "He guessed a globe behind your steady mound" (DD 19). The spatial is again the prerequisite structure for a temporal orientation of language.

The sea a censer and the grass a flame.

The speaker no longer simply feels the community “pack” the oratory, but appears there with them, observing the action. Heaney recasts the chapel in the image of a burial mound with the comparison to a barrow, the “eye” forming the space’s one light-source, a small key-hole shaped window in the east wall. Yet Gallarus Oratory is actually shaped like an upturned boat as Thomas Cahill notes, compounding the notion first understood by the ear that hears ‘foundered’ for “Founded.” The transition from the “door into the dark,” the interior, to the suddenness of the world of light outside is presaged by the King’s “eye,” which sees the worshippers delivered into a world made revelatory and strange. Heaney envisages the sea and the landscape symbolically charged into emblems of faith.

Rooted in belief, the monks of “In Gallarus Oratory” are imaginatively construed as presences still hovering, ‘encoded’ in the chapel’s architecture. But “Last Camp” attacks the idea of roots, using bleak imagery. Heaney adopts a persona whose coarse word-play is matched by a bitter defensiveness, as the architectural references imply a sense of constraint within a malevolent structure of consciousness:

Our Lars always at stud—
Battering out a spore
Of fouled whitewash and tar—

Now haunts the charred gables,
Poison curd on the walls,
Abandoned urinals.

The feeling that Lars is being elegized, perhaps as a hunger-striker, emerges in the allusion to his spirit haunting the “charred gables.” and the state of the walls.

While a deserted prison is called to mind, aspects of another forlorn shelter now

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begin to dominate. Reminiscent of Heaney's Dante translation, "Ugolino," a hellish territory is described: "Here in the tundra we / Trot among our icons, / Old dung scattered like brains." The speaker's catalogue of fragments--"Purses shrivelled like figs, / Cast-offs, spent cartridges"--imply a past obsessively clung onto: "God, we will defend these // Scraps with nails and canines." Heaney uses this ground as a metaphor for a specific history, and portrays his speaker as confined at the center of the construct, a site fortified by "Our bonded detritus, / Pieties, rare droppings." One of Heaney's harshest indictments of the parochial mentality, the heavily stressed, clipped lines he uses in his tercets convey a formal sense of entrapment as well, the correlative to the underlying prison-camp analogy running through the poem.

The dedicatory poem to Wintering Out offers a further counterpart to the haunted imagery and feeling of architectural dread found in "Last Camp."

Rhyming abab, the three quatrains outline a local Irish setting made strange, as the speaker, passing through, is seized by a vision of "the new camp for the internees [...] machine-gun posts defined a real stockade" (WO v). Yet this registering of a "real" prison-camp is disrupted by a comparison of what he sees to "some film made / of Stalag 17, a bad dream with no sound." The material reality of the architectural site is deliberately thrown into question by Heaney, as the encounter moves into a rumination on the unhomely nature of existence:

\[
\text{Is there a life before death? That's chalked up} \\
\text{on a wall downtown. Competence with pain,} \\
\text{coherent miseries, a bite and sup,} \\
\text{we hug our little destiny again.}
\]

A poisoned domesticity is implied. The speaker identifies himself as captured in the trudging circuit of the "we" he invokes, the new camp made a metaphor for communal imprisonment in a foreboding social structure. But the dream aspect of the poem also marks the sentiments out as a warning Heaney is making to himself.
The camp, and the graffiti-covered walls point to how easily the trope of confinement could become a metaphor for an acquiescent state of mind. As the title Wintering Out suggests, the constraints of architecture in association with the idea of home are questioned and rejected in certain poems in this collection. The notion of taking refuge—a rest in the face of adversity—arises as a serious option for Heaney.

The pressure of the overarching political situation in Northern Ireland in 1972 forced Heaney and his family to live more covertly, a move reflected in the five-part "A Northern Hoard." "Leaf membranes lid the window" of the house with sinister effect in the first part, "Roots" (WO 29). Architectural images flash up ambiguously in the night-time of the poem’s imagining. Punctuated by the “din / Of gunshot, siren and clucking gas,” catastrophe lurks at the edge of the houses:

Out there beyond each curtained terrace
Where the fault is opening. The touch of love,
Your warmth heaving to the first move,
Grows helpless in our old Gomorrah,
We petrify or uproot now. (WO 29)

Heaney’s remorse at this self-fulfilling prophecy of uprooting becomes the animating strategy behind "No Man’s Land," the next poem in the sequence: "I deserted, shut out / their wounds’ fierce awning" (WO 30). Rhetorically he asks: "Must I crawl back now, / spirochete, abroad between / shred-hung wire and thorn [...] ?" The house becomes a place of horror, where he will be forced "to confront [his] smeared doorstep" and "lumpy dead." Neutrality offers only a dangerous limbo, cold comfort in the face of this threshold, figured as a sacrificial altar or the entrance to a charnel-house. From this quandary Heaney imagines the "sad freedom" of the "Tollund Man," lost and at home in his own "old man-killing parishes," a fate not unlike that of Sweeney, as will become clear (WO 37).

The third poem in the sequence, "Stump," equates the speaker’s state with
an amputation in the soul, as he figuratively enters into an earlier time-period. 

"[R]iding to plague again," he relates seeing the "needy in a small pow-wow" amongst the ruins of a house: "under a sooty wash / From the grate in the burnt-out gable" (WO 31). But his estrangement appears complete: "What do I say if they wheel out their dead? / I'm cauterized, a black stump of home." "Tinder," the last poem, strives to make something cohere out of all this upheaval. Fire now becomes a necessity for survival in the decimated, imaginary landscape his persona is forced to inhabit. Over a series of tentative, sporadically rhyming couplets flints are metaphorically tried for their powers:

Cold beads of history and home
We fingered, a cave-mouth flame

Of leaf and stick
Trembling at the mind's wick. (WO 33)

Faith in the old sureties barely raises a flicker. Taken back to the threshold of a cave, from this exposed place he asks: "What could strike a blaze / From our dead igneous days?" A retreat to a pre-architectural, or vernacular means of shelter is made. In the poem's final three lines tinder is found, though not fire: "We face the tundra's whistling brush // With new history, flint and iron, / Cast-offs, scraps, nail, canine" (WO 34). Ironically, the array of items is directly drawn almost word for word from "Last Camp." But unlike the "detritus" coveted by the bellicose persona of that poem, the speaker of "Tinder" calls these fragments "new history." Seeking to animate perception, he re-reads the makings he is left with, a reflection of the way Heaney himself revises "Last Camp" for his "Northern Hoard."

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Several other poems deal with the idea of entrapment and internment in
Wintering Out. In North, however, Heaney offers one of his most architectural versions of the motif. A built structure again becomes the means of entering into an engagement with deeper historical and ideological issues related to Ireland. In “The Unacknowledged Legislator’s Dream” architectural images frame a tightening focus that takes the reader-listener from “the masonry / of state and statute,” inside the Bastille, and finally to the cell corner where the persona ends up (N 50). Two assertions begin the poem: “Archimedes thought he could move the world if he could / find the right place to position his lever. Billy Hunter said / Tarzan shook the world when he jumped down out of a / tree.” Heaney takes his title from Shelley’s “A Defence of Poetry,” in which the poet’s imagination is granted extraordinary powers of creation and upheaval. Continuing to invoke those fantastic powers, the speaker acts the role of heroic rescuer in his dream:

I sink my crowbar in a chink I know under the masonry of state and statute, I swing on a creeper of secrets into the Bastille. My wronged people cheer from their cages. The guard-dogs are unmuzzled, a soldier pivots a muzzle at the butt of my ear, I am stood blindfolded with my hands above my head until I seem to be swinging from a strappado.

An extended metaphor for political intervention, the rescue-mission rapidly comes undone, as the attempt to “come on meteorite,” as “Exposure” has it, seems already expected (N 66). Though his designs place him at the situation’s heart—

32 See “Bye-Child,” for example, whose epigraph reads: “He was discovered in the henhouse where she had confined him. He was incapable of saying anything.” His photo is recalled “still / Glimpsed like a rodent / On the floor of my mind, // Little moon man, / Kennelled and faithful / At the foot of the yard” (WO, 59). “Good-night” also seems to address this confinement, reading almost as a “remote mime” in imagining the bird-boy’s view: “A latch lifting, an edged den of light / Opens across the yard. Out of the low door / They stoop into the honeyed corridor, / Then walk straight through the wall of the dark” (WO 61).
34 Shelley claims that poets are the “unacknowledged legislators of the world,” stating: “poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion.” Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry,” Romantic Poetry and Prose, ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (New York: Oxford UP, 1973) 762, 748.
inside a monolithic prison structure figuratively enclosing the “wronged” consciousness—the protagonist ends up subject to a bland appeasement: “The commandant motions me to be seated. ‘I am / honoured to add a poet to our list. [...] You’ll be safer here, anyhow.’” The irregular blocks of the stanzas assume a mimetic function by the final verse: “In the cell, I wedge myself with outstretched arms in the / corner and heave, I jump on the concrete flags to test / them. Were those your eyes just now at the hatch?” The form insinuates that the speaker is caught inside the text, inviting our complicity in his predicament.

According to Shelley, poetry is at once “the centre and circumference of knowledge.” But if the poet-hero forms the focus here, the steady reduction in the space of action leaves him a diminished figure, ineffectually testing his bounds, walled in by expectations. Heaney’s extended metaphor locates him wedged unhappily home, “slumbering” at the “very hub of systems” to quote “From the Land of the Unspoken.” Heaney’s metaphors of entrapment in social constraints are reified in the architectural images of the poem’s setting. Poetry, Shelley adds, “strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms.” It is not “beauty” which is laid bare here, though, but the way reader and poet are implicated together at society’s core through the prison metaphor, almost as guard and detainee. After penetrating the prison with levers and wedges, the poet-hero struggles to extricate himself through the same means. But the process may simply be repeated if he escapes. Like the tundra site in “Last Camp” and

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35 Shelley 758.
37 The significance of the Bastille in the poem may allude to Wordsworth’s experiences in revolutionary France. Cf. Bataille’s comment, however: “monuments inspire socially acceptable behaviour, and often a very real fear. The storming of the Bastille is symbolic of this state of affairs; it is difficult to explain this impulse of the mob other than by the animosity the people hold against the monuments which are their true masters.” George Bataille, “Architecture,” Leach, ed. 21.
38 Shelley 759.
"Tinder," the prison is a "domain" Heaney must "enter and re-enter," centered in collective memory. Yet it is also emblematic of the way poetry isolates and alienates Heaney from his "wronged people," as much as it allows him to enter into their plight. Architecture provides the cultural analogue for structuring this inside-outside dichotomy which he both maintains and deconstructs in "The Unacknowledged Legislator's Dream."

The first poem in the "Singing School" sequence, "The Ministry of Fear," makes the "lonely scarp / Of St Columb's College" (where Heaney boarded for six years) an outward symbol of the oppressed sense of "exile" the young speaker feels (N 57). By the final lines, the whole atmosphere is dominated by an imaginary structure of intimidation: "all around us, though / We hadn't named it, the ministry of fear" (N 59). Heaney relates the feeling to the indoctrinating powers of the English language and its enforcers. Language acts as a meeting point where identity is suddenly subject to interrogation and review. But it also becomes a surreptitious place of resistance in its poetic form, a site of displacement: "Ulster was British, but with no rights on / The English lyric." With the metaphor of the "ministry of fear," Heaney alludes to the social architectures of containment he feels oppressed by and often undermines in his work.

In "Exposure," the last poem in the sequence, another entry into the tundra's domain is signified. Set in Wicklow, the ten unrhymed quatrains trace the speaker's thoughts as he walks through "damp leaves. / Husks, the spent flukes of autumn," then sits "weighing and weighing" his "responsible tristia" (N 66). The prison-camp image reappears as he imagines a hero, "On some muddy compound, / His gift like a slingstone / Whirled for the desperate." As in earlier poems, a type of renunciation and internalization occurs. The "diamond absolutes" strengthen the resolution the speaker makes, divorcing him from the structures of home, yet aligning him with archetypal figures from the past:
I am neither interned nor informer;
An inner émigré, grown long-haired
And thoughtful; a wood-keme

Escaped from the massacre,
Taking protective colouring
From bole and bark, feeling
Every wind that blows (N 67)

A sense of “sad freedom” is once more intoned in these lines.\(^{39}\) The ruse of camouflage describes a merger with nature as a form of resistance, at once deferring and exacerbating his feelings of alienation. Huddling under the elements, “blowing up [...] sparks / For their meagre heat,” a connection to both “Tinder” and the unhoused condition of Sweeney can be discerned.

Heaney’s ‘disturbance’ of the peat bog graves metaphorically housing ancient sacrificial victims in several poems from North can also be read as a questioning of home’s structures. The “Ruminant ground [...] Earth-pantry, bone vault” of such poems as “Kinship” proves a related “outback” in Heaney’s mind to the Irish situation, or at least the culture of violence and death associated with the ‘Troubles’ (N 34-35).\(^{40}\) In “Triptych,” from Field Work, Heaney links images of the Irish sectarian violence he strives to escape to architectural forms. The three poems consist of five quatrains each. “Two young men with rifles on the hill” are observed in “After a Killing” standing like round towers, “as if our memory hatched them, / As if the unquiet founders walked again [...] Profane and bracing as their instruments.”\(^{41}\) The speaker asks rhetorically: “Who’s sorry for our trouble? / Who dreamt that we might dwell among ourselves / In rain and scoured light and wind-dried stones?” To dwell “in” stones conflates a

\(^{39}\) Note, however, his comments on this cagily autobiographical poem and the conditions of its writing: “where I had no security, no rails to run on except the ones I invented myself. That’s an ideal situation; you’re like a goalkeeper waiting for the world to fire balls at you, and you see things more urgently and clearly, and you think.” Haigendcn 71.

\(^{40}\) Heaney is fascinated by the uncanny aspect of the preserved bodies, so alive to the eye when bought out of their natural ‘caskets.’ “The Grauballe Man” and other poems will be referred to in chapter three.

\(^{41}\) Seamus Heaney, Field Work (London: Faber, 1979) 12.
conception of inert, petrified human existence—as if transfixed in horror by a
Medusa—with stone cottages. Heaney alludes to the pervasive spirit of this
situation in the third stanza: “In that neuter original loneliness / From Brandon to
Dunseverick / I think of small-eyed survivor flowers.” Again, the architectural
becomes an entry-point into a “buried life of feelings” as this “loneliness” is
made to resonate with the collective memory. But the mood alters with the sight
of another dwelling: “I see a stone house by a pier. / Elbow room. Broad window
light. / The heart lifts.” A girl “walks in home” to the speaker there with a gift of
food, the implication being that she is one of the “survivor flowers” envisaged.

In the second poem in the sequence, “Sibyl,” the image used for speech in
the opening line: “My tongue moved, a swung relaxing hinge,” sustains the
trope of the stone-dwellers who have all but melded with their habitations (FW
13). The speaker asks the sibyl: “‘What will become of us?’” She predicts to
Heaney’s Aeneas: “‘I think our very form is bound to change. / Dogs in a siege.
Saurian relapses. Pismires. // Unless forgiveness finds its nerve and voice’ [...]” A
metamorphic element is thus invoked, indicating a reality buckling under stress,
and transforming its inhabitants. “‘The ground we kept our ear to for so long,’”
she continues, “‘is flayed or calloused, and its entrails / Tent to an impious
augury.’” The roots figured here by the “‘entrails’” come from a “‘helmeted and
bleeding tree.’” But in the notion of a punishment inflicted on the earth, the
architecture of the stone-dwellers is implied, especially the “Profane and bracing”
image of the rifle-toting men on the hill. A mythical perspective on Irish problems
is evoked, similar to Heaney’s use of the ritual killing grounds in North.

The speaker finds himself on Devenish in the last poem, “At the Water’s
Edge,” listening to “the keeper’s recital of elegies / Under the tower,” an
encounter with Yeatsian connotations (FW 14). But gradually the scene shifts to
“a cold hearthstone on Horse Island,” where he watches the sky “beyond the
open chimney” while an army helicopter patrols above. A strong urge to renounce the world emerges. “Everything” in him, he confides, “Wanted to bow down, to offer up, / To go barefoot, foetal and penitential, // And pray at the water’s edge.” Again Heaney returns to the image of the ruined house as a metaphor for the state of isolation he finds himself in, and for the way it structures the displacement he feels. Reacting to the traumatic undercurrents he discerns around him, a desire for a retreat into austerity and denial is marked. The incentive is to break the boundaries signified by the stone-dwellers, for an openness to possibility.42 This craving is revoiced in “September Song,” written just after he had completed four years of teaching in a hedge-school.43 The conjunction of metaphors proves telling: “When we first got footloose // they lifted the roof for us in Belfast” (FW 43). Apart from signifying a high-spirited gathering, a lifting of old constraints is felt, anticipating the “Unroofed scope. Knowledge-freshening wind” of “Lightenings” (ST 55).

As noted earlier, Heaney considered Glanmore a second home during the four years he and his family spent there. In the ten poems of the “Glanmore Sonnets,” the tensions implicit in maintaining this relatively settled existence resurface in his forms, disrupting syntax and supplying dark imagery. The first sonnet’s opening line: “Vowels ploughed into other: opened ground” carries a strong hint of this discomfort, with its convulsive caesura slicing through the syntactic flow, forcing a catch in articulation (FW 33). The “good life” is not all it appears, as the speaker halts again: “Wait then...Breasting the mist, in sowers’ aprons, / My ghosts come striding into their spring stations.” In the third poem he refers to the “strange loneliness” of the Glanmore situation, before the ensuing sonnets drift into childhood memories (FW 35). What should be a sanctuary, offering a warm

42 Cf. another urge for renunciation in “The Badgers,” where the speaker poses the question: “How perilous is it to choose / not to love the life we’re shown?” (FW 26).
43 The name ‘hedge school’ derives from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In order to evade the law on Catholic education, Irish schools were held outdoors in unfrequented places.
domestic reminder of home, is portrayed in the verse as a place of captivity. At the same time, Heaney's empathy with the rural world to which the cottage forms the center is made a constant factor in his representation.

This feeling of endearment—a "quickening" of the spirit—is apparent in the coastal reverie of sonnet VII, where the speaker relishes various names of trawlers and islands in a way recalling Walcott's "A Sea-Chantey." But he also hears the "Sirens of the tundra" calling, "Of eel-road, seal-road, keel-road, whale-road," vying with the idea of Wicklow as a "haven" (FW 39). The mood turns sinister again. In the following poem the speaker wonders: "How deep into the woodpile sat the toad? / What welters through this dark hush on the crops?" (FW 40). He stammers out: "Come to me quick, I am upstairs shaking." Glanmore's "wilderness" haunts with rats in the ninth sonnet, staring through the kitchen window, and "speared in the sweat and dust of threshing" (FW 41). His wife's face is made strange as well, "a new moon glimpsed through tangled glass." The ominous nature of the cottage is carried over into the poetic architecture of the sonnets, as it goads something deep within Heaney's imagination. The final sonnet marks a wish for departure in terms that reject the finally unsettling comforts of Glanmore: "I dreamt we slept in a moss in Donegal / On turf banks under blankets, with our faces / Exposed all night in a wetting drizzle" (FW 42). The influence of the cottage taints the ambiguous promise of escape the dream offers. Heaney imagines the sleeping figures in deathly repose: "Darkly asperged and censed, we were laid out / Like breathing effigies on a raised ground."

Glanmore, in this sequence, is ambivalently represented by Heaney, carrying the subtle threat that its architecture finally offers incarceration, more than respite.

Heaney's poetic language, especially his imagery, opens up the ground beneath (and around) the cottage, to draw on the numerous 'energies' he discerns that provoke allusions and trigger his memory. Architectural
concreteness acts to free up the imagination to roam. In "The Birthplace," from *Station Island*, which describes a visit to Hardy’s native haunt, the speaker evokes this solidity from an abstract perspective:

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Everywhere being nowhere,
who can prove
one place more than another?

We come back emptied,
to nourish and resist
the words of coming to rest:

*birthplace, roofbeam, whitewash,
flagstone, hearth,*
like unstacked iron weights
afloat among galaxies. (SI 35)
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Breaking up the founding things of ‘home’ into syntactical components, Heaney weighs them as “words” carrying worlds in their amassed bodies. They are made strange in his recitation, as is their architectural purpose in defining the birthplace.44 The idea of “Everywhere being nowhere”—figuratively ‘up in the air’—regarding Heaney’s sense of place leads us to the figure of Sweeney.

Sweeney’s appeal for Heaney lies in the way he resists “coming to rest,” instead nurturing a free-ranging relationship with the world he is forced to traverse. ‘Mad Sweeney,’ as he was initially called, is a literary creation, known from the *Buile Suibhne*, the medieval Irish story of a king who goes mad during battle in AD 637. He is cursed, changed into a bird-creature by the cleric Ronan, and banished into the wild. As Heaney says in the introduction to *Sweeney Astray*, his 1983 translation of the saga: “My fundamental relation with Sweeney [...] is topographical. His kingdom lay in what is now south County Antrim and north County Down, and for over thirty years I lived on the verges of that

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44 Significantly, the poem comes after “Making Strange,” where an encounter with a stranger ends up with the speaker driving him through “my own country, adept / at dialect, reciting my pride / in all that I knew, that began to make strange / at that same recitation” (SI 33).
territory, in sight of some of Sweeney’s places and in earshot of others [...]”45 In Heaney’s reading, Sweeney’s plight epitomizes the retreat into a network of threshold dwellings, the hidden spaces that find expression throughout his poetry.46 Heaney’s identification with this “creature of the air” marks a fascination with his topographic haunts within nature’s vernacular architecture.47

Heaney resists the urge to romanticize Sweeney’s situation in his translation. Sweeney is a torn figure, divided between man and bird, who longs for home:

I wish I lived safe
and sound in Rasharkin
and not here, heartbroken,
in my bare pelt, at bay in the snow. (SA 18)

“[H]eartbroken” becomes the place where Sweeney lives here, a fractured inner state where his words must “sound.” Longing for the sound of a house “humming full,” at another juncture he cries: “My life is steady lamentation / that the roof over my head has gone, / that I go in rags, starved and mad” (SA 23).

Pleasure is taken in Glen Bolcain, “my lair, / my earth and den” (SA 40). But the burden of Sweeney’s lot exists at odds with the footloose lightness he evinces by turns in the poem. He only achieves rest in the thoughts of those like Moling who make a final home for him: “‘His memory flutters in my breast. / His soul roosts in the tree of love. / His body sinks in its clay nest’” (SA 85). Heaney’s translation becomes his newest vault of remembrance. His voicing tropes Sweeney as a spirit guide indelibly haunting his version of the poem.

Set in three parts, “The King of the Ditchbacks,” makes Sweeney a furtive presence entering the speaker’s orbit, “As if a trespasser / unbolted a forgotten

45 Seamus Heaney, Sweeney Astray (London: Faber, 1983) iii.
46 For example, in “Oracle” the speaker hides in the “hollow trunk / of the willow tree,” entering into communion with the “woody cleft, / lobe and larynx / of the mossy places” (WO 18). Cf. also the fifth “Glanmore” sonnet: “So, etymologist of roots and graftings, / I fall back to my tree-house and would crouch / Where small buds shoot and flourish in the hush” (FW 37).
gate" (SI 56). Moving like a secret messenger he encrypts the landscape, opening "a dark morse / along the bank." This "crooked wounding // of silent, cobwebbed / grass" changes the ground into a text he tracks his way through. Sweeney, "a denless mover," acts as an archetype of the 'barefoot' poet: "He lives in his feet / and ears, weather-eyed, / all pad and listening." In a sense, he lives in his voice as well. In the last of the five quatrains Heaney’s persona reveals an obsession with the figure: "I am haunted / by his stealthy rustling." In part II the actual writing space forms a point of entry into Sweeney’s alluring kingdom:

I was sure I knew him. The time I’d spent obsessively in that upstairs room bringing myself close to him: each entranced hiatus as I chainsmoked and stared out the dormer into the grassy hillside I was laying myself open. (SI 57)

Entering the garden to follow Sweeney’s calling, the Heaney acolyte’s vision becomes that of a bird’s “at the heart of a thicket” in part III, which reverts to spartan couplets. The speaker sees himself “rising to move in that dissimulation, // top-knotted, masked in sheaves” (SI 58). The architecture of the house is left behind in this ‘translation’ as he imagines himself “a rich young man // leaving everything he had / for a migrant solitude.” It is a world entered through writing.

Heaney’s engagement with the figure continues in the “Sweeney Redivivus” sequence. In “The First Gloss” a new start is symbolized:

Take hold of the shaft of the pen.
Subscribe to the first step taken
from a justified line
into the margin. (SI 97)

The disengagement from the “justified line,” carries echoes of the refusal of religious pieties (Sweeney’s crime), as well as signaling a sidestep from societal entanglements. The “margin” signifies a transgression of bounds, and a flight into another edgy space of writing; a threshold of re-interpretation and estrangement. Heaney assumes, in hybrid fashion, the revived persona of the outsider. Each one
of the twenty poems is a gloss, "voiced for Sweeney," an imaginative explication of a mode of being (SI 123). The writing metaphor works in with the idea of the palimpsest, where different realities and truths may co-exist inscribed upon one another, just as Heaney works in together his conceptions of Ireland and certain childhood memories. In some poems he relates this layering to the land as a medieval manuscript page with its own margins wherein he roams. The title piece, "Sweeney Redivivus," views the changing prospect from a "steep-flanked mound" as a supplanting "language of forms." As the speaker notes: "The old trees were nowhere, / the hedges thin as penwork" (SI 98). He sees the "whole enclosure lost / under hard paths and sharp-ridged houses." Architecture pierces the rural skyline, threatening to dominate the scene he faces.48

A textualization of landscape also informs the imagery of "In the Beech," as Heaney develops a sense of a medieval manuscript's illuminated opening letter. The speaker acts as a "lookout posted and forgotten" in the strange, yet comforting beech, whose form suggests it is "as much a column as a bole. The very ivy / puzzled its milk-tooth frills and tapers / over the grain: was it bark or masonry?" (SI 100). The figurative 'C' of a chimney is then raised up: "I watched the red-brick chimney rear / its stamen course by course, / and the steeplejacks up there at their antics." Signifying forms of measure, the letter-structures—which appear both "organic and contrived"—mark the encroachment of an "imperial standard" of (written) language.49 In the penultimate stanza, the speaker feels the vibrations of advancing tanks expanding out from the tree's "growth rings." Swooped upon by a plane, he winces at "their imperium

48 Heaney alludes to the tradition of the prospect poem here. Originating in the 1600s, the prospect poem is a descriptive, yet discursive study of a given landscape from a particular vantage point. It was refined in the next century in poems such as James Thomson's The Seasons. This topic will also arise in chapter three. For further background see John Barrell, The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972).
49 Cf. Midsummer, XLIII, "Tropic Zone," (iii) where Walcott makes an analogy equating American interests with architectural trends in the West Indies: "Above hot tin billboards, above Hostería del Mar, / wherever the Empire has raised the standard of living / by blinding high rises" (M 58).
refreshed / in each powdered bolt mark on the concrete.” a reference which negatively associates architecture with a domineering ‘improvement’ of the landscape. The tone turns elegiac in the last lines which carry their own kind of syntactic architecture, initially expressed in a near-chiastic pattern of repetition: “My hidebound boundary tree. My tree of knowledge. / My thick-tapped, soft-fledged, airy listening post.” The play of “bound” and “tree” serves to reiterate the speaker’s absolute identification with his beech and its enclosing framework of criss-crossing branches. Yet Heaney also puns on “hidebound” to convey how both secret concealment and a rigidly defensive turret of belief are signified in the organic construct of the tree. Hide is the binding material of old books and manuscripts as well, suggesting that the Sweeney persona’s reluctant flight marks an escape from the containing forces of a new, colonizing language with designs on the landscape. These designs are fatefuly aligned with history.

The rejection of historical “Units of measurement,” as “The First Kingdom” has it, sees an attack on settled society’s “two-faced and accommodating” nature: “seed, breed and generation still / they are holding on, every bit / as pious and exacting and demeaned” (SI 101). Architecture’s purchase on the land as an expression of entrenched belief systems is again implied. In “The First Flight” a further uprooting ensues: “I was mired in attachment […] so I mastered new rungs of the air” (SI 102-3). The bird-man relocates himself amongst “the people of art” where he can “climb / at the top of [his] bent.” But Heaney remains wary of such transcendence, his tone troubled in these assertions. In “The Cleric,” the persona wonders: “History that planted its standards / on his gables and spires / ousted me to the marches […] Or did I desert?” (SI 107). A clear correlation between religious, political, and architectural power is made through the annexing action of “History.” But some part of the Sweeney figure’s conscience

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50 I am indebted to Jeffery Donaldson for alerting me to the effect of near-chiasmus operating in the first line.
ties him to these home structures as well, in the fear that he abandoned his post.

Sweeney's urge to soar, flying up among the "people of art," places him perilously near the Yeatsian figure of "The Master," dwelling hidebound "in himself / like a rook in an unroofed tower" (SI 110). The visit to his retreat has been read as Heaney's rejection of the Yeats model of formal perfection, in the fortified style of his tower. The "book of withholding" he clutches contains "just the old rules / we all had inscribed on our slates." But the master figure's book also identifies him with the codification of the landscape in architecturalized 'letters' that can be traced as an underlying issue in the sequence:

Each character blocked on the parchment secure in its volume and measure.
Each maxim given its space.

Like quarrymen's hammers and wedges proofed by intransigent service.
Like coping stones where you rest in the balm of the wellspring.

These "blocked" characters and maxims relate to the literary architecture of Yeats, but also imply how the landscape is dominated by an imperious vision for the speaker. His cautious descent, "hearing the purpose and venture / in a wingflap above," reveals an image of the "Master" as a hawkish creature threatening to overshadow the Sweeney ideal of the "denless mover," by fixing him in a "place of writing" not his own. As the last poem, "On the Road" attests, Sweeney is more akin to a motive force in Heaney's persona, and he ends the sequence in a place the symbolic opposite of the tower, 'migrating' through a cave mouth, "down the soft-nubbed, / clay-floored passage [...] to the deepest chamber" (SI 121). Gone to earth, he contemplates his own "book of changes" (rather than of "withholding"), which he envisages shaped in the "font of exhaustion," the text where his voice finds its 'clay nest.'

51 See for instance, Matthews 173.
“Squarings,” Heaney’s long elegiac sequence in *Seeing Things* related to the death of his parents, tropes the idea of the soul’s “cold freedom” in connection with architectural structures. Split into four “sub-sections”—“Lightenings,” “Settings,” “Crossings,” and “Squarings”—each comprises twelve poems that “could be said to form a sort of constellation around the image of an unroofed space” explains Heaney. The first, he continues:

imagines the soul being called away on its journey after death to undergo the particular judgement. And the place where this otherworldly encounter happens is an unroofed wallstead and the soul appears at the door in the figure of a shivering beggar. But the main thing about these poems as far as I’m concerned is the free-ranging, sort of hit-and-run, lightsome sensation that I had when I was writing them.\(^{52}\)

This “sensation” represents the qualities sought in Sweeney, now transferred into the experience of composition. Contradictorily, these “free-ranging” elements are confined within the limits of a given form: twelve-liners each made up of four three-line stanzas. But they are open-ended frameworks in terms of meaning, where once more the spatial acts as a “door into the dark” of memory and into various other temporal abstractions in the movement of the sequence.

The first poem begins with Heaney sketching out the derelict house within the limbo of this “otherworld.” A structure slowly reverting to nature emerges:

> Shifting brilliances. Then winter light  
> In a doorway, and on the stone doorstep  
> A beggar shivering in silhouette.

> So the particular judgement might be set:  
> Bare wallstead and a cold hearth rained into—  
> Bright puddle where the soul-free cloud-life roams. (*ST* 55)

Beggar and house are meshed together in a dissimulation of corporeal existence, an embodiment of form awaiting transmutation. As seen before, the climate of desolation is also one of imminent renewal: “And it is not particular at all, / Just old truth dawning: there is no next-time-round. / Unroofed scope. Knowledge-

\(^{52}\) Seamus Heaney, transcript from *Stepping Stones* (Penguin Audiobooks, 1996).
freshening wind" (ST 55). Like the tundra, a ground-zero of awareness is represented, a coming into one's own. The imaginary architecture is figured as another type of 'birthplace' for the soul, its lack of shelter a metaphor for an ultimate clarity of perspective.

Poem ii begins with gentle imperatives addressed to the beggar-soul to make this judgement place a (temporary) home: “Roof it again. Batten down. Dig in. / Drink out of tin. Know the scullery cold, / A latch, a door-bar, forged tongs and a grate” (ST 56). It is also a “lightsome” invocation to the spirit of poem making, a trope for the process by which Heaney keeps the formal “constellation” moving about the initial, ambiguous sense of unhoused desolation and latent “scope.” The lines continue: “Touch the cross-beam, drive iron in a wall, / Hang a line to verify the plumb / From lintel, coping-stone and chimney-breast.” The speaker emphasizes measuring and spatial relationships that will result in the right degree of claritas in dwelling, architecturally attuning the poem. A Vitruvian principle of organic unity is asserted. Every part fits and is vital to reflect a conception of the whole as a harmonious order: “Relocate the bedrock in the threshold. / Take squarings from the recessed gable pane. / Make your study the unregarded floor.” The re-building of the house constitutes a pure impulse, making poetry the spirit-level that balances being in the final lines: “Sink every impulse like a bolt. Secure / The bastion of sensation. Do not waver / Into language. Do not waver in it.” The idea of making is equated across the “language of forms” to rest in poetic language itself where words are proportioned into well ordered designs.

The influence of Sweeney can still be seen in “The Flight Path,” from The Spirit Level. Heaney again spatializes his ambivalent feelings of attachment.

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toward home through architectural analogies. Part three, written in tercets, has a notebook quality as he outlines his feelings on the transatlantic commuting that has thrown him into limbo in recent years. From the short “stand off” of time spent in Ireland, the speaker confronts: “The spacewalk of Manhattan. The re-entry. // Then California. Laid-back Tiburon.” (SL 23) Glanmore cottage (which the Heaneys eventually bought) is savored more positively for its grounding capacities. A triple rhyme reflects the cottage's new status as a “structuring agent” in his life.54


However, like Sweeney he must uproot and fly: “Across and across and across. / Westering, eastering […] A holding pattern and a tautening purchase” (SL 24). An identification is firmly made: “Sweeney astray in home truths out of Horace: / Skies change, not cares, for those who cross the seas.” Home may be a series of “truths” lost in translation, but poetry offers refuge in its halls.

In part four an old saying is made strange by repetition and context. Asked to car-bomb a customs post at Pettigo, the narrator relays the operative's assurances: “And I'd be home in three hours' time, as safe / As houses…” (SL 25). The ellipsis hints at his uneasiness with the analogy employed. Six lines later a new stanza thrusts up the image of Long Kesh prison, and Ciaran Nugent's “dirty protest.” recalling the “nightmare tower” in “Ugolino” (FW 62). This is another prison site Heaney is compelled to enter, and he observes: “The gaol walls all those months were smeared with shite.” In the next lines of the passage, however, a shift to a visionary setting occurs, drawn from the “rhymes and images” of Dante’s hell in the Inferno. The speaker states: “I too walked behind the righteous Virgil, / As safe as houses and translating freely.” The echoed

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phrase "safe as houses" hangs in the air, given an ironic twist. The question arises: Is poetry a 'safe-house' or a prison? "Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself" he tells his angry interrogator on the train to Belfast. A "frontier of writing" is placed in the formal design of "The Flight Path," a place exemplifying how the pressures of reality and of the imagination are locked in a "holding pattern" as well. Answering "'far away'" to a request for his address at a roadblock in the fifth part, the speaker proceeds to meditate on home as "both where I have been living / And where I left. [...] a distance still to go." But if home remains unfixed here, a final poem reflects how a certain architectural image has retained for Heaney a power of divination located in Irish soil.

In the double-sonnet "At the Wellhead" a memory of one of Heaney's childhood neighbours, a blind woman musician, is evoked by a singer's rendition of songs sung "like a local road / We've known every turn of in the past" (SL 65). The reader-listener is carried into the old home territory through this memory. Remembering her piano-playing, Heaney relates how the notes rose to the ear, "like hoisted water / Ravelling off a bucket at the wellhead." In the second sonnet, a defamiliarization takes place as the neighbor comes to stand for a 'well' herself, sunk deep into the place "where the singing comes from." He describes her as "like a silver vein in heavy clay. / Night water glittering in the light of day. / But also just our neighbor, Rosie Keenan." Blindness is figured in terms of insight: "her eyes were full / Of open darkness and a watery shine." Signifying an omphalos in principle, she represents art's transformative energies, and a regenerative life force. Heaney's reading, taken from the 'wellhead' of his own art, echoes "Personal Helicon," referred to above: "When I read / A poem with Keenan's well in it, she said, / 'I can see the sky at the bottom of it now'" (SL 66). The blind musician sees the sky's reflection in the well of the poem, while

55 Cf. "The Toome Road": "O charioteers, above your dormant guns, / It stands here still, stands vibrant as you pass, / The invisible, untoppled omphalos" (FW 15).
Heaney sees in her eyes a well from which he draws “At the Wellhead.” In his poetic architecture the well is not only “in” the structure, but mimetically suggested by the way the twin sonnets invoke an “intimate” and cranial acoustic space, “far-voiced” by Heaney.

The pensive undertones surrounding the well in “Personal Helicon,” are simply not present in the “open darkness” Keenan’s well represents here. As “At the Wellhead” indicates, Heaney’s gradual acceptance of his semi-transient status over the years has seen him occasionally ‘unwriting’ and revising his negative portrayals of home. Heaney’s recurrent usage of immovable-seeming quatrains occurs less as second nature now than as part of a varied palette. No decisive resolution can be established, however, as too much of his creative being is invested in the disruption of safe routines of dwelling and writing. As “The Flight Path” reveals, a central strain of ambivalence in Heaney’s relationship to home remains formed by architecture as a metaphor in his poetry. The encounter with architectural structures of various kinds frequently entails the invocation of other temporal dimensions. An aspect of the uncanny can often arise. In addition, however, Heaney often centers his poems around purely imagined sites. These settings allow him to explore the possibilities of an indeterminate, threshold reality, where the sense of constraint associated with architecture as a cultural signifier in many instances can fall away. The underlying desire for “Unroofed scope” runs throughout the poetry.

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Derek Walcott’s choice of architectural imagery is also influenced by his sense of being slightly displaced, not only in St. Lucia, but on a broader scale. As he says of his early years, there was the “sense of being disconnected with the world outside, but knowing that one has to push further on and make that
In his poetry architecture affects consciousness in a way acting in metaphorical symbiosis with the landscape, offering him a door into the collective memory and to a buried or 'submerged' history. The island world becomes the domain to which he is compelled to return, and where his handling of poetic form takes its more improvised, abstract lyric quality from in comparison to Heaney's.

In the opening poem of \textit{In a Green Night}, "Prelude," the speaker states that his life "must not be made public" until he has "learnt to suffer / in accurate iambics" (IGN 11). Already poetry as a space of ambivalent retreat and solitude is suggested, a way into the free fall of the imagination. Yet the self-consciousness of this manifesto extends throughout Walcott's writing, as a trope of estrangement: the poet separated from home, his mind detached from the forms it both responds to and creates. In "As John to Patmos," the claim is made: "This island is heaven—away from the dustblown blood of cities" (IGN 12). While the assertion appears heartfelt as the persona adds: "So I shall voyage no more from home; may I speak here," the beauty of "home" becomes an enclosing force that has "surrounded / Its black children." Though it has also "freed them of homeless ditties" there is an ambivalent feeling of removal on the speaker's part. He wills the sentiment to include himself, yet is in secret rebellion against such curtailment. Walcott dives for a deeper home beyond the 'village mentality,' just as Heaney digs, voyaging into the inner recesses of self and community in the effort to balance obsession with responsibility, and appease his "wandering soul."

In architectural terms, the near-total destruction of Castries Walcott witnessed in 1948 proves an opportunity for him to imagine a great upheaval in accepted conventions. His sonnet "A City’s Death by Fire" represents an extended metaphor for the creative possibilities latent in both the self and the communal

\footnote{Styron 43.}

\footnote{Cf. his remark: "History, in the archipelago, is subdued, submarine." Walcott, "Where I Live" 30.}
psyche to invent a radically new form of home out of the destruction:

After that hot gospeller had levelled all but the churched sky,  
I wrote the tale by tallow of a city’s death by fire;  
Under a candle’s eye, that smoked in tears, I  
Wanted to tell, in more than wax, of faiths that were snapped like wire.  
All day I walked abroad among the rubbled tales,  
Shocked at each wall that stood on the street like a liar;  
Loud was the bird-rocked sky, and all the clouds were bales  
Torn open by looting, and white, in spite of the fire.  
By the smoking sea, where Christ walked, I asked why  
Should a man wax tears, when his wooden world fails?  
In town, leaves were paper, but the hills were a flock of faiths;  
To a boy who walked all day, each leaf was a green breath  
Rebuilding a love I thought was dead as nails,  
Blessing the death and the baptism by fire. (IGN 14)

Ironically, the “hot gospeller” suggests a Satan presiding over this “wooden” world’s epic ruin. The speaker’s walking “abroad” implies a heretical absconding from his place.58 Resisting the desire to wax eloquent in “tears” over the city’s razing, an anti-architectural impulse can be discerned, as he blesses the fire for the new world it shows him in nature’s “green breath.”

In an early article Walcott writes of how his Methodist upbringing made him an outsider in predominantly Catholic St. Lucia: “estranged not only from another God, but from the common life of the island.”59 He was tempted to “find in the actual hell of the great fire, a certain exultation, since it had destroyed that other life.” The “wooden” element is reiterated in his architectural reminiscences:

The air above the ruins, for months after, seemed to ripple like a washboard. There was a powerful sense of the unreal, the absurd. It was long after the shock of that destruction that the shapes of houses vibrated in memory and could be, in our imagination, placed rigidly into their foundations. This was a plain of blackened walls, ridiculous arches of doorways, of steps that marched in air. […] The fire had humiliated the smug, repetitive lives of these Civil Servants, merchants and Creole professional men who had lived in rambling wooden houses with verandahs and mansards, attics for mongoloids, alcoholic uncles and half-racked, ageing aunts, that rigidly constructed, French-colonial life of the petit-ponche and the evening stroll. Down to the wharf to look at the

58 Walcott left St. Lucia to study in Jamaica supported by funding created in the fire’s wake.
island schooners and back, always along the same streets. All that had disappeared in smoke.

“Wooden” becomes a metaphor for the “rigidly constructed” way of life he associates with French colonialism and a “smug” middle class. Walcott encodes many of these resonant architectural ‘vibrations’ in memory, in his poem’s form, creating a figurative construct wherein we follow the speaker’s thoughts as he remembers the outline of the city and its “churched sky.”

Walcott gives an order and logic to the city’s decimation through his choice of the sonnet form, making an architectonic connection with the rare “sense of circumference” he finds in Castries and Trinidad’s Port of Spain.\textsuperscript{60} The sonnet’s well-worn pathways map out a formal gait here, in keeping with his comment that a city must be “basically, for a certain distance, ambulatory.” Paradoxically, though, the sonnet is also a conventional form, and despite the imagery of a blank template—the chance for a visionary rebuilding—Walcott falls back on tradition. As “The Cement Phoenix” section of Another Life shows (discussed in chapter four), the implication may be deliberate, as the rebuilt city bitterly disappointed him in its unoriginal, ‘Commonwealth’ inspired design. In contrast to Heaney, Walcott has generally experimented little with the sonnet since “Tales from the Islands,” the form possibly carrying too much historical weight in his mind: a “classic bulk” at odds with the fluent stanzaic architecture he seeks.\textsuperscript{61}

Frequently throughout his poetry Walcott tropes the cleared ground represented in “A City’s Death by Fire,” as an ambiguous site of potential growth, a ‘nothing’ formed in response to V. S. Naipaul’s comment that “nothing

\textsuperscript{60} Cf. his comment: “I think the proportions of cities, and certain historical peaks of great literature, or painting, for example, all have a neighborliness, a familiarity, even a provincility, to them.” Styron 41.

\textsuperscript{61} Exceptions include “The Polish Rider,” and “Homage to Edward Thomas.” The phrase “classic bulk” comes from this last poem (see chapter three).
was ever made in the West Indies, and nothing will ever be created."\(^{62}\) It is a paradigm for cultural renewal that often finds expression in architectural imagery: "Colonials, we began with this malarial enervation: that nothing could ever be built among these rotting shacks, barefooted backyards and moulting shingles; that being poor, we already had the theatre of our lives."\(^{63}\) Fire imagery is invoked in relation to the founding of a city devoted to art, a Walcott ideal:

If there was nothing, there was everything to be made. With this prodigious ambition one began. If, twenty years later, that vision has not been built, so that at every dusk one ignites a city in the mind above the same sad fences where the poor revolve, the theatre still an architectural fantasy, if there is still nothing around us, darkness still preserves the awe of self-enactment as the sect gathers for its self-extinguishing, self-discovering rites.\(^{64}\)

The "vision" remains unbuilt, in these words written before he embraced Port of Spain as the ideal West Indian city. But the iconoclastic energies exposed in "A City's Death by Fire" continue to ignite the "city in the mind" here in reference to the theater group Walcott was involved with in the early 1970s. 'Nothing' remains a primordial space of power, the "darkness" of creative possibility.

In "To A Painter in England" this remaking is figured in the decision to "inform the blind world of its flesh" (IGN 17).\(^{65}\) Faith becomes, over religious belief, a means of solidarity with St. Lucia and the shapes of its landscape: "But the grace we avoid, that gives us vision, / Discloses around corners an

\(^{62}\) Qted. by Walcott, who adds: "Precisely [...]. Nothing will always be created in the West Indies, for quite a long time, because what will come out of there is like nothing one has ever seen before." He points to Carnival, calypso, and the Carnival costume as examples of forms which are "original and temporarily as imitable as what they first attempted to copy. They were made from nothing, in their resulting forms it is hard to point to mere imitation." Derek Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 16.1 (Feb. 1974): 8-9. Naipaul writes: "History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies." V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies—British, French and Dutch—in the West Indies and South America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 29.

\(^{63}\) Walcott, "Twilight" 4.

\(^{64}\) Walcott, "Twilight" 4-5.

architecture whose / Sabbath logic we can take or refuse.” The speaker implies that it is a matter of free will whether one stays or leaves, yet in that mention lies a reminder of the artist’s divided loyalties. This factor now looms, and “leaves to the single soul its own decision / After landscapes, palms, cathedrals or the hermit-thrush.” Still, the sensuous picture is undermined by prior images of “drought,” and the “heart’s desolation” in the third stanza (IGN 16). Addressed to Harold Simmons, Walcott’s early mentor, envisaged “rot[ting] under the strict, grey industry / Of cities of fog” in England, that desolation eventually led, in an unforeseen way, to his suicide upon returning to St. Lucia.

In Another Life, Walcott’s long semi-autobiographical poem, a revision of the “Sabbath logic” of architectural and painterly representation in “To a Painter in England” takes form in an elegiac image of Simmons:

People entered his understanding
like a wayside country church,
they had built him themselves.
It was they who had smoothed the wall
of his clay-coloured forehead. (AL 134)

Simmons has become what he painted and loved, and in this identification Walcott declares, “he is a man no more / but the fervour and intelligence / of a whole country” (AL 135). But countering this idealized picture of St. Lucia as home is the opening of the next chapter:

Why?
You want to know why?
Go down to the shacks then,
like shattered staves
bound in old wire
at the hour when
the sun’s wrist bleeds
in the basin of the sea,
and you will sense it (AL 136)

66 Cf. the remembrance of the “unroofed scope” the painters had: “We were blest with a virginal, unpainted world / with Adam’s task of giving things their names, / with the smooth white walls of clouds and villages [...] nothing so old / that it could not be invented” (AL 152).
Despair is always ready to build in the ‘nothing’ of creativity as well, as the speaker tries to justify Simmons’s death to himself. Where before he lightly reminded the painter of his “gift wasting before the season,” and helps to persuade him to come back to the island, he now admits that there are “spaces wider than conscience” (*AL* 138). Architecture expresses two extremes in Walcott’s outlook, from the lyrical metaphor of the cathedral to the fragmented vernacular of the shacks, acting as a powerful means of altering tone.

The selfless identification of Simmons with the island and its people leads into alienation, a paradox Walcott learns to appreciate. In “Return to D’Ennery, Rain,” the speaker’s isolation resonates on the level of form, marking a figurative barrier detaching him from what he observes:

> Imprisoned in these wires of rain, I watch
> This village stricken with a single street,
> Each weathered shack leans on a wooden crutch,
> Contented as a cripple with defeat. (*IGN* 33)

These “wires” are the poem lines as well, framing the mind’s eye. Registering the resigned state of the ‘crippled’ shacks around him, the prison imagery denotes a melancholic acceptance of poetry as a structure of engagement that, on one level, entraps. But the mind, organizing perception, remains an exposed place here as well. The “rain beats on a brain hardened to stone,” states the persona. At this point an image of the heart provides the first of several transitional metaphors. Walcott makes its “tide” the oceanic swell wherein “a grave / Or a bed, despairing in action,” becomes the “anchor of suffering” (*IGN* 34). “O God, where is our home?” the speaker pleas. The heart begins to resemble a haunted construct: “The passionate exiles believe it, but the heart / Is circled by sorrows, by its horror / And bitter devotion to home.” The search for the source of these

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67 Walcott makes an implicit association of poetry with enclosure in “Forest of Europe”: “the tourist archipelagoes of my South / are prisons too, corruptible […] there is no harder prison than writing verse” (*SAK* 40). Cf. also his comments comparing poetry to a “life-long sentence” that is served, “the sweet and chafing prison which the soul chooses.” Derek Walcott, “Caligula’s Horse,” Slonem and Tiffin, ed. 139.
ambivalent feelings continues through architectural images, opening up memory.

Heart and heaven are further linked in a metaphorical shift, as a sense of lost faith is confided. "Heaven remains," the speaker realizes, "Where it is, in the hearts of these people, / In the womb of their church, though the rain's / Shroud is drawn across its steeple." The space of the "womb" is given a negative colouring in this passage by the image of a "Shroud," making it more evocative of a crypt than of celestial heartland. The allusion implies a slaver's hold, with the rain's ropes draping the steeple as if supporting a mast. Relatedly, the persona's self-recriminations center on a "ribbed wreck, abandoned since [...] youth, / Washed over by the sour waves of greed." A foundering on questions of faith, motivation, and the historical trauma of the Middle Passage occurs.

In the final stanza, Walcott continues to superimpose other spaces and times upon one another through metaphor. "The white rain draws its net along the coast," a ghostly reminder of a slave-trader's pillage along a shoreline at once African and West Indian. The haunting of the speaker continues through the invocation of an internalized architecture: "Yet in you [the rain] still seeps, blurring each boast / Your craft has made, obscuring words and features." The site is intellectualized in form: "Nor have you changed from all of the known ways / To leave the mind's dark cave, the most / Accursed of God's self-pitying creatures." Rain comes to symbolize the "sad freedom" of the scribe's lot, locked within the mind, free to wander only through imagination. Still, "Return to D'Ennery. Rain" emerges as an exercise in humility, Walcott's isolation undercut by the sense that in the rest of the poem he speaks for a historical consensus of West Indians, whose "craft" originally carried them over in the Middle Passage.

From prison and hospital through the "gutter of the mind" to womb, church, wreck and cave, the poem narrates a transition in material and imaginary structures of perception. The rain points to an important factor in the West Indian
world-view with regard to architecture. The most elaborate designs are subject to the whim of the elements, as the epigraph to “A Careful Passion,” from a Jamaican song relates: “Hosanna, I build me house, Lawd, / De rain come wash it away” (IGN 43). Ostensibly about the end of an affair, Walcott uses unhousing as a metaphor for a misplaced faith in permanence, as in “A City’s Death by Fire.” Uprooting forces periodically hit the Caribbean, shattering architectural hubris, a notion caught in the mythically-infused “Hurucan,” where “zinc roofs begin wrenching their nails / like freight uncrated with a crowbar,” and the “luxury resorts / revert to the spear-tips of candles” ushering in havoc (FT 40). Another awareness thus informs Walcott’s sensibility when he writes: “The migratory West Indian feels rootless on his own earth, chafing at its beaches.” Such a perspective, of the potential suddenness of a world’s disintegration, forces an accent on renewal that searches for deeper truths that might endure as anchors. Building takes on a regenerative power tapping into a diligence capable of overcoming despair. Identifying himself with the precarious nature of the “rootless” island architecture, Walcott seeks to become more flexible in turn. His growing use of nonce forms reflects an improvisatory spirit at work.

In “Allegre” the speaker imagines the “sunward sides of the shacks / Gilded, as though this was Italy,” and celebrates upheaval as the first stage in a fresh design for living. Trees are transformed into canoes with a chaotic fervour:

Men are sawing with the wind on those ridges,
Trees arching, campeche, gommiers, canoe-wood,
The sawn trunks trundled down hillsides
To crash to the edge of the sea.
No temples, yet the fruits of intelligence,
No roots, yet the flowers of identity,
No cities, but white seas in sunlight,
Laughter and doves, like young Italy. (IGN 58)

Proving themselves equal to the hurricane’s reshaping skills in Walcott’s eyes,

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68 Walcott, “Twilight” 21.
the fishermen craft the primordial equivalent to an idealized, pre-architectural
"Italy" in the symbolic shape of their vessels. The ability to roam free-ranged is
privileged over the trappings of civilization, and offered as an alternative
structure of consciousness. However, Walcott qualifies this vision in the final
stanza, complicating any sense that 'heaven' can so easily be found. "Yet to find
the true self is still arduous," the reader-listener is reminded, "And for us,
especially, the elation can be useless and empty / As this pale, blue ewer of the
sky, / Loveliest in drought" (IGN 59). A melancholic strain tempers his idealism.

If "Allegre" boasts of "No roots, yet the flowers of identity" in an
iconoclastic severing of ties with history for a spirit of continual remaking, then
"Roots" deploys the architectural ruins of Vigie as reminders of "sorrow"
housed in memory:

The sea still beats against the ageing wall,
And the stone turrets filled with shaken leaves
When the wind brings the harbour rain in sheaves,
The yellow fort looks from the historic hill.
(As it were Poussin, or fragment from Bellini)
Its racial quarrels blown like smoke to sea.
From all that sorrow, beauty is our gain. (IGN 60-61)

In this description the ruins shade into flowers that secretly inform identity, an
impression already implicit in the second stanza: "May this make [...] a
'flowering of islands', / The hard coral light which breaks on the coast, near /
Vieuxfort, as lucent as verse should be written" (IGN 60). Yet for every poem like
this, swinging toward a benign acceptance of architecture as part of the organic
unity of St. Lucia, there is another reversing the move. For example, the speaker
in "The Banyan Tree. Old Year's Night" observes bleakly: "The square was this
town's centre, but its spokes / Burn like a petered pinwheel of dead streets, /
Turning in mind [...] children punished in their window gaols" (IGN 71).
Estrangement is seen as a paradoxical state of grace on the margins of "this
town's rotted edges" as the persona declares: "I thank / What wind compelled
my flight, whatever rages // Urged my impossible exile” (IGN 72). A parallel space
to home in the guise of the “deserted mind” is opened up, always in danger of
being “swept of truths as by a broom.” Rain falls in this space as well, but it is
“Blank,” a source of ongoing “melancholy […] Dumb as the ancient Indian tree
that forces / Its grieving arms to keep the homeless wind.” The mind acts as a
locus of architecturally imagined space, wherein an “impossible exile” can be
reshaped and projected into creativity.

Walcott expresses this principle in “Origins,” a seven part poetic creation
myth. Language is envisaged flowing like lava out of mythopoeic sources into a
‘new world’ confluence of writing. But the mind, initially intent on “pierc[ing]
infinity,” emerges as the prime force of form.69 The speaker describes it as a
drifting seed, a primordial force: “The mind, among sea-wrack, sees its mythopoeic
coast, / Seeks, like the polyp, to take root in itself.”70 Coral acts as a central
metaphor, the building material most resembling the fleshy labyrinths of the
exposed brain. Yet the mind itself actually emerges at a remove from the vibrant
sprawl of Walcott’s poetic form here. His shifts in line-length and register help to
impart an oceanic ‘surge’ to his design.71 Acting as Walcott’s prime mover, the
“mind enspheres all circumstance,” as “In a Green Night” has it, a factor that
emerges in his use of the castaway archetype (IGN 73).

The castaway’s ambiguous fate is to be marooned on an island where
‘nothing’ holds sway. “If I listen I can hear the polyp build, / The silence
thwanged by two waves of the sea,” the persona in “The Castaway” notes
distractedly.72 This is followed by a more desperate version of the events in
“Origins,” as a cathartic upheaval in consciousness transpires: “Godlike,

71 The epigraph, from the French-Caribbean poet, Aime Césaire, reads: “narrow path of the surge in the
blur of fables.” “Origins” 51.
annihilating godhead, art / And self, I abandon / Dead metaphors.” He attempts to strip the mind of illusion, of its faith in anything. The problematic relationship of Walcott’s art and the faith of the people is returned to again in the three-part “Crusoe’s Island.” A locus of the speaker’s sensory imagination is signified in the “chapel’s cowbell” that opens part I (C 54). Its peels echo off “Red, corrugated-iron / Roofs,” beneath a “blue, perfect sky, / Dome of our hedonist philosophy. […] I labour at my art. / My father, God, is dead.” In the fifth stanza Crusoe’s stronghould is outlined, in a move to the underlying literary template:

Upon this rock the bearded hermit built
His Eden:
Goats, corn crop, fort, parasol, garden,
Bible for Sabbath, all the joys
But one
Which sent him howling for a human voice. (C 55)

As with Yeats, in Heaney’s reading, haunted finally by the solipsistic vision of his tower, Crusoe’s “perfected form” cannot bring him solace.73

In part II, the island becomes a refuge where the mind may find a natural purity, the “cure / of quiet in the whelk’s centre […] To let a salt sun scour / The brain as harsh as coral.” This evocation is broken by a further shift: “I am borne by the bell / Backward to boyhood” (C 56). But a numbed detachment defines the speaker’s slip into memory. “I have lost sight of hell, / Of heaven, of human will” he asserts. The island turns into a site of penance, of “parched, delirious sand” where the persona stands at his “life’s noon,” faith in his own skill gone. In the final part an invocation to a Promethean spirit of art as “profane and pagan” is made: “may the mind / Catch fire till it cleaves / Its mould of clay at

73 This motif is repeated in “Crusoe’s Journal,” where a hunger for human company bedevils the speaker into writing: “For the hermetic skill, that from earth’s clays / shapes something without use, / and separate from itself, lives somewhere else, / sharing with every beach / a longing for those gulls that cloud the cays / with raw, mimetic cries, / never surrenders wholly for it knows / it needs another’s praise / like hoar, half-cracked Ben Gunn, until it cries / at last, ‘O happy desert!’ / and learns again the self-creating peace / of islands” (G 28-29). The shaping of the “language of a race” is envisaged from the ‘nothing’ of Crusoe’s journals, which now assume a “household use” (G 29).
last" (C 57). The mind is troped as a bell emerging from its firing. Walcott reconciles this image with the actual chapel bell. “Friday’s progeny, / The brood of Crusoe’s slave, / Black little girls” are envisaged leaving the chapel and returning from vespers. “[N]othing I can learn,” he states, “From art or loneliness / Can bless them as the bell’s / Transfiguring tongue can bless.” Despite the humble admission, Walcott continues to try for this ability to “bless” with his voice, as the image of the mind’s emergence as another sounding bell suggests.

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Set within a church, “The Wedding of an Actress” finds Walcott again refusing the comforts of ritual. In fact, the speaker, describing himself as a “guest in the Lord’s house,” proceeds to “seal [his] sense in darkness” (C 30). Another inner architecture of the mind is troped: “In any church my brain is a charred vault / Where demons roost, / A blackened, shifting dust.” This detachment offers the “illusion of another life.” The lyric persona is able to “observe this custom like a ghost” from within the church from which he is “divorced,” a metaphor for the troubled faith Walcott keeps with his home culture as artist.

A church reappears in “Laventille,” from The Gulf. Walcott reads its form in an ambiguous light that reflects the collective memory of the dwellers in a hilltop suburb in Port of Spain. The epigraph is taken (almost directly) from “Morning” by Blake: “To find the Western Path / Through the Gates of Wrath,” and these lines relate to the redemptive vision the speaker struggles to articulate while attending a christening (G 12). Walcott outlines a picture of the suburb as a living

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74 Cf. Walcott’s comments: “The race was locked in its conviction of salvation like a free-masonry. There was more envy than hate towards it, and the love that stubbornly emerged showed like weeds through the ruined aisle of an abandoned church, and one worked hard for that love, against their love of priest and statue, against the pride of their resignation.” Walcott, “Twilight” 15.

75 Cf. “November Sun” which describes a writing place where the speaker sits “measuring winter by this November sun’s / diagonals shafing the window pane, / by my crouched shadow’s / embryo on the morning study-floor.” But it is also a desolate space: “This is a sort of / death cell / where knowledge of our fatality is hidden” (G 25). The room becomes a metaphor for the mind, resigned to a “time-ridden” temporal fate (G 26).
architectural entity in the semi-rhyming tercets that make up most of his stanzaic structure: “It huddled there / steel tinkling its blue painted metal air, / tempered in violence, like Rio’s favelas.” He describes its “snaking, perilous streets whose edges fell as / its episcopal turkey-buzzards fall / from its miraculous hilltop // shrine.” Subdued allusions to a tropical tower of Babel appear, as the historical dimension broadens:

we climbed where lank electric
lines and tension cables linked its raw brick
hovels like a complex feud,

where the inheritors of the middle passage stewed
five to a room, still clamped below their hatch,
breeding like felonies,

whose lives revolve round prison, graveyard, church.
Below bent breadfruit trees
in the flat, coloured city, class

escalated into structures still,
merchant, middleman, magistrate, knight. To go downhill
from here was to ascend. (G 12-13)

The memory of the Middle Passage still flows in the blood of the descendants, but is also remembered in the way the inhabitants are forced to live. Lives “revolve round” certain places, generating an image of a grim architectural constellation of entrapment. A social hierarchy is determined by the allocation of space.

Walcott portrays the Laventille inhabitants’ captivity in figural structures: “lives fixed in the unalterable groove / of grinding poverty” (G 15). A correlation develops between these spaces as his persona surveys the prospect: “I stand out on a balcony / and watch the sun pave its flat, golden path // across the roofs, the aerials, cranes […] crawling downward to the city.” The epigraph is alluded to here, but the spatial trajectory turns inward, to plumb memory. “Something inside,” he states, “is laid wide like a wound.” An “open passage that has cleft the brain,” is imagined, “some deep, amnesiac blow. We left / somewhere a life we
never found. // customs and gods that are not born again” (G 16). A slave-hold or prison cell is metaphorically figured in the unconscious:

    some crib, some grille of light
    clanged shut on us in bondage, and withheld
    us from that world below us and beyond,
    and in its swaddling cerements we’re still bound.

This disturbing notion of being restrained, not sheltered—“still bound” in its “swaddling cerements”—recalls the winding sheet of rain on the church steeple in “Return to D’Ennery.” Walcott’s allusion is multifaceted, taking in the christening going on in the church, the nativity and the consolations of religion, and the structure denoted by the hill-top suburb. The architecture of Laventille forms the basis for an extended metaphor referring to a whole repressive historical condition that has imposed itself upon inherited cycles of existence.

As with Heaney’s tundra, an ambiguous site internalized in the imagination offering both despair and promise, Walcott sees in poetry the hope of structures of consciousness rebuilt.76 “Upon your penitential morning,” as the post-Carnival scenario of “Mass Man” has it, “some skull must rub its memory with ashes, / some mind must squat down howling in your dust […] someone must write your poems” (G 48). Yet Walcott’s disaffection with aspects of home finds fresh expression in the invented figure of Shabine, a seaman, who lends voice to his concerns. Shabine is also an alienated poet, estranged from life in his home port. “The Schooner Flight” looks to old bedrock in its start:

    In idle August, while the sea soft,
    and leaves of brown islands stick to the rim
    of this Caribbean, I blow out the light
    by the dreamless face of Maria Concepcion
    to ship as a seaman on the schooner Flight. (SAK 3)

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76 Cf. Walcott’s remarks: “I’m lucky I didn’t go abroad; I much prefer the route I took, to have been here, writing in a difficult but formative time. To have a sense of working against a sense of futility, but the compensation of a new place as the empire was fading, with new people and a new history you had to reinvest in and redescribe.” Qtd. Maya Jaggi, “Enjoying the Fruits of Life’s Bounty.” The Guardian Weekly 27 July 1997: 27.
Echoes of the opening of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* are apparent here as several commentators have noted, including Heaney in “The Murmur of Malvern.” Yet Walcott seems to be implying that the wanderlust of Shabine is not new—a product of a twentieth-century diaspora—but fits into a crucial legacy of displaced craftsmen who have “no nation now but the imagination” (*SAK* 8). The ‘self-exiled’ Shabine sheds his hide like Long Will and Sweeney. Walcott might concur with Heaney’s caveat in *Sweeney Astray* to the extent that his seaman is heavily self-invested: “insofar as Sweeney is also a figure of the artist, displaced, guilty, assuaging himself by his utterance, it is possible to read the work as an aspect of the quarrel between free creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political, and domestic obligation” (*SA* ii). Shabine is torn with ambivalence regarding home, a place that has gradually become unrecognizable to him.

Questions of dwelling haunt Shabine over the poem’s eleven parts: “Where is my rest place, Jesus? Where is my harbor? / Where is the pillow I will not have to pay for, / and the window I can look from that frames my life?” (*SAK* 8). But the seascape world is initially profoundly non-alienating, and is given an epic domesticity as a habitat in his eyes: “I stood like a stone and nothing else move / but the cold sea rippling like galvanize / and the nail holes of stars in the sky roof” (*SAK* 3). In becoming unhoused, Shabine—like Achille in *Omeros*—engages in a process of reconstructing his more ancient connection to the architectonics of the sky. His lament against Trinidadian neo-colonialism and “Progress [...] history’s dirty joke,” is conducted under this cosmic architecture. He weeps for “the houses, the streets, that whole fucking island” (*SAK* 4). They have started to “poison my soul / with their big house, big car, big-time bohboh,” he seethes, “and I, Shabine, saw / when these slums of empire was paradise.” Walcott’s underlying dismay with the architectural direction of West Indian society can be
discerned, the rise of consumerism threatening to reduce “paradise” to a memory.

Shabine partakes in a succession of visionary and more pragmatic encounters, belying the status of the ocean’s expanse as a vacant ‘nothing.’ At one stage, an allusive reference to Castries surfaces. In “Out of the Depths,” set during a storm, God is imagined hauling “Leviathan upward / by the winch of His will.” (SAK 18) That was “the faith,” he continues:

that had fade from a child in the Methodist chapel
in Chisel Street, Castries, when the whale-bell
sang service and, in hard pews ribbled like the whale,
proud with despair, we sang how our race
survive the sea’s maw, our history, our peril
And now I was ready for whatever death will.

The Jonah story is remembered in the architecture of the chapel through the memory-imbued words and melodies of those sequestered inside. Yet the elemental awe which triggers Shabine’s reaction and makes him suddenly fear God is precisely the sense of revelatory power Walcott sees in language. Like seeds inside a pod, the signified in the signifier, the parishioners figure the structure of words, and as Shabine laconically states: “that’s all them bastards have left us: words” (SAK 9). These “words” contain the “pain of history” for Shabine (SAK 12). As such, they are at once ruins, and lived-in buildings, forms awaiting transformation: unfinished structures that still reverentially house consciousness.

Shabine eventually locates a place in the scheme of things on an epic scale. He opens a map of the Caribbean, and blesses “every town” (SAK 19). The matter of home is recast, though not resolved: “I have only one theme: // The bowsprit, the arrow, the longing, the lunging heart— / the flight to a target whose aim we’ll never know.” Turning upward to the star-map, he muses on earth as “one / island in archipelagoes of stars” (SAK 20). The sea’s space is transposed into the canopy of unknown worlds it reflects as he sings “from the depths of the
sea.” As in Heaney’s “The Flight Path,” however, the ‘true’ home remains an ideal, deferred through a restless journeying.

Walcott often writes from houses that balance between sea and land. In “Winding Up,” he suggests such a temporary coming to rest. “I live on the water, / alone,” says the speaker, “I have circled every possibility / to come to this” (SG 91). He refers to “a low house by grey water, / with windows always open / to the stale sea.” Poetry is a “Silent wife” with whom he lives “rock-like.” Yet Walcott’s own (delayed) voyage out from St. Lucia plots a trajectory of different encounters and locations, recorded in his books as an ‘elsewhere.’ In all these passages, including the half-years he taught in Boston, St. Lucia has been “circled” in the imagination:

I’ve never felt that I belong anywhere else but in St. Lucia. The geographical and spiritual fixity is there. However, there’s a reality here as well. [...] One is bound to feel the difference between these poor, dark, very small houses, the people in the streets, and yourself because you always have the chance of taking a plane out. Basically you are a fortunate traveller, a visitor; your luck is that you can always leave.

In “North and South” he speaks of accepting his “function / as a colonial upstart at the end of an empire” in the guise of this “fortunate traveller” whom his 1981 collection is named after (FT 11). Memory freights these lines:

How far I am from those cacophonous seaports
built round the single exclamation of one statue
of Victoria Regina! There vultures shift on the roof
of the red iron market, whose patois
is brittle as slate, a gray stone flecked with quartz.
I prefer the salt freshness of that ignorance,
as language crusts and blackens on the pots
of this cooked culture, coming from a raw one (FT 13)

The layout of the seaports mirrors the way St. Lucia is centered in Walcott’s own sensibility, at the heart of a belated journeying. Architecture’s “patois” is implicated in this “salt freshness,” a “language of forms” with its own logic.

77 Cf. “Crusoe’s Journal,” where he writes “from this house / that faces nothing but the sea” (G 29).
78 Hirsch 291.
Walcott’s traveling mode often appears less “fortunate,” than an unsettled state of limbo. In “Store Bay” the speaker broods in a hotel room:

I unplug the hotel lamp and lie in bed,  
my head full of black surf.  
I envy the octopus with ink for blood,  
his dangling, disconnected wires  
adrift, unmarried. (FT 83)

Dissolution in an all-consuming state of poetic creativity is figured here, with the sea representing a threshold of freedom. The hotel room, by contrast, has more of a funereal hint about it, a place from which to descend into dreams. His image of the octopus suggests the castaway motif again, in the positive displacement registered. The sense of being “adrift” arises frequently in the wanderings of the narrator in Omeros, where Walcott reads the house and hotel rooms he inhabits in a similarly ambivalent fashion.

In Omeros, Chapter XXXIII, Book Four, set loosely in Boston, Walcott develops a metaphor for an uncanny sense of dislocation from home. The speaker states that “castaways make friends with the sea,” that to live alone is to learn to survive:

    But a house which is unblest  
    by familiar voices, startled by the clatter  
    of cutlery in a sink with absence for its guest,  
as it drifts, its rooms intact, in doldrum summer,  
is less a mystery than the Marie Celeste. (O 171)

Emblematic of the failure he feels as a consequence of “abandonment in the war of love,” the unhomely quality also reflects Walcott’s longing for St. Lucia. An estrangement from this “unblest” structure that mimics home’s form is felt. “I had nowhere to go but home. Yet I was lost,” the narrator states, hoping that “a ghost / would rise from her chair” and help him unlock the door (O 172). But the persona himself resembles a ‘ghost,’ haunting the rooms.

Section III of the chapter presents another view of the house. Walcott reads
symbolic meaning, both mundane and disturbing, into its structure, as his poetic architecture gives form to a dark reverie. Four-beat couplets give the section a formal compression that is both cloying and bitter, the lines trapped and turned in on themselves in self-canceling rhymes. An anaphoric refrain is kept rigidly in place for the first eight couplets. Walcott breaks the rough terza rima pattern of Omeros for the first time to articulate his feelings of entrapment:

House of umbrage, house of fear,
house of multiplying air

House of memories that grow
like shadows out of Allan Poe

House where marriages go bust,
house of telephone and lust. (O 173)

Walcott’s imagery shades the house into others from the past, blurring the speaker’s memories together. Partaking through its “multiplying air” of these ambivalently recalled atmospheres, tensions well-up as it grows into imaginary life with an almost parasitical power, feeding off and wounding its occupier.

The house becomes an extended metaphor for memory’s unwanted returns, and not only the mind, but the body itself, locked in solitude:

House of caves, behind whose door
a wave is crouching with its roar

House of toothbrush, house of sin,
of branches scratching, “Let me in!”

House whose rooms echo with rain,
of wrinkled clouds with Onan’s stain

House that creaks, age fifty-seven,
wooden earth and plaster heaven

House of channelled CableVision
whose dragonned carpets sneer derision

The image of the “creak[y]” body melding with the house is thrown into relief by
the “CableVision” reference, which threatens the ‘theater’ of the self proposed by the “wooden earth and plaster heaven.” At this point the narrator reasserts his authority: “Unlucky house that I uncurse / by rites of genuflecting verse.” The house reflects a deathly stasis for Walcott, a creeping paralysis he must combat: “House I unhause [...] but feel its ice ascend my feet” (O 173-74). A reorientation in perspective is required that will undo its power over him.

A change occurs resituation the speaker’s consciousness under a new, mobile dispensation. “I do not live in you, I bear / my house inside me, everywhere,” he asserts, “until your winters grow more kind / by the dancing firelight of mind” (O 174). The house is assimilated into this figure of the ‘internal’ dwelling, its form disarmingly embraced in the final verses:

House that lets in, at last, those fears
that are its guests, to sit on chairs
feasts on their human faces, and
takes pity simply by the hand
shows her her room, and feels the hum
of wood and brick becoming home.

Acceptance brings compassion, in a metaphorical resolution. The difficulty in renouncing or reclaiming home is an aspect informing many of the interwoven stories in Omeros, but here Walcott implies that the concept itself is open to transformation. By locating his ‘house’ on the inside, he makes his mind, rather than architecture, the enclosing force dictating emotions.

The ocean continues to haunt Walcott in both this space and the actual houses he moves through. In the long-lined self-portrait of poem 30 from The Bounty, he describes a man, not unlike Shabine, in his beach house: “The sea should have settled him, but its noise is no help. / I am talking about a man whose doors invite a sail / to cross a kitchen-sill at sunrise.”79 The notion of the turtle-

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shell house reappears as he imagines the ritual of waking to the new day:

whose wounds were sprinkled with salt but who turns over their horrors with each crinkling carapace. I am talking about small odysseys that, with the rhythm of a galley, launch his waking house in the thinning indigo hour.

Troping the way a page of paper is turned for another, the discarding of the "carapace" also refers to night's passing. The "galley" reference may also play on the notion of a galley proof. In launching his "waking house," Walcott symbolizes both the house where he leaves Sigrid, the poem's dedicatee, in bed, to go and make coffee, and the craft of his own writing.

The persona he creates still seeks his home through this craft. Describing him as "dawn-drawn by the full moon's / magnet," Walcott portrays a force of creative upheaval in the planet's influence:

She drags the tides and she hauls the heart by hawsers stronger than any devotion, and she creates monsters that have pulled god-settled heroes from their houses and shawled women watching the fading of the stars.

These final lines merge the heart, as craft, and the sea together in a union subject to the moon's cycles. To be "pulled" from "houses" is to be uprooted and set on a path of searching here, and to be unroofed and extended through poetry. The sleeping woman is also equated metaphorically with the landfall of a beach: "a freckled, forgiving back [...] its salt neck and damp hair." This "small" odyssey will lead him back to her. Walcott figures her not simply as Penelope, but a symbol of St. Lucia, whose shores he encircles in his writing.

As with Heaney, Walcott continues to react against a feeling of being "god-settled" in any one place, despite sharing a more reflective state of mind. He seeks constantly to evoke an "imaginary country" that will undo routine, taking matters back to one of the first ideas: leaving home. His forms are in an almost constant process of re-invention as well, though he settles his craft more firmly
into patterns in *Midsummer*, *Omeros*, and *The Bounty*. The forces of cultural
definition associated with architecture—the colonial designs whose destruction
Walcott celebrated in "A City's Death by Fire" for instance—continue to be
addressed in his poetry, especially in regard to language. In his eyes this is
ultimately a West Indian "language of forms" under attack from progress, "till a
silence settles on language made with our hands. / The silence of white hotels" (B
38). The soul-deadening threat of architectural enclosure is tempered by the open
quality of the beach-house motif that appears in his work, but also by the notion
of the internalized or attached house associated with poetry's limitless freedom.

* * *

Heaney and Walcott use architecture as a means of critiquing the complex
history and memory-bound notion of home. In their own ways, they put to test
the words of Wallace Stevens in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," who writes:
"From this the poem springs: that we live in a place / That is not our own and,
much more, not ourselves / And hard it is in spite of blazoned days."80 Each poet
tends to reluctantly capitalize on his estrangement as a means of entry into a
creative detachment from which to write. Yi-Fu Tuan states that as people grow
into adults "Abstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes
concrete place, filled with meaning."81 However, these poets defamiliarize place,
transforming it back into space, finding strangeness to be a quality redolent with
memory and possibilities from which to make meaning. In the process, clearances
are made, and sites formed that posit the imaginative spaces for potential
rebuilding. "There was a muddy centre before we breathed," as Stevens writes.82
Through their various personae, Heaney and Walcott pursue a line of

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81 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977) 199.
82 Stevens 210.
reconnection to the figures of Sweeney and Shabine, compelled to renounce home comforts for an inner emigration. Peripheral haunters of margins, they reflect the respective positions of their translator-makers as committed, troubled writers whose architectural references are never incidental, but part of a more intricate, temporally aligned process of understanding.

In the following chapter this emphasis is maintained. A range of architectural settings that appear in the poetry are examined, with particular attention paid to the representation of the Great, or Big House. Heaney and Walcott engage with these places on often free-ranging imaginative terms, though at heart they are always looking for ways to 'open up' the spatial aspect, and connect to issues of history and memory through their readings.
“I had entered the house of literature as a houseboy,” writes Walcott in *Another Life*. “filched as the slum child stole, / as the young slave appropriated / those heirlooms temptingly left” (*AL* 77). In this metaphor, literature represents a Great House transferred onto colonial West Indian ground. Implied is a defiant entry into the English canon on his part, an acknowledgement of the connection between poetry and an architecture built on hierarchy and privilege can be discerned, a tradition stretching back at least as far as Jonson’s “To Penshurst.”¹

In this chapter, the encounters of Heaney and Walcott with estate houses (and their ruins) act as starting points for inquiries into their readings of other architectural sites and structures that form ‘centers’ on the landscape. I argue that Heaney and Walcott attribute a hidden life to buildings and things alike with their words, animating various forgotten structures, and cultural “structures of feeling” in the process.²

Walcott’s persona compares what he takes to “heirlooms” removed in another age, and these forms are thus given symbolic resonance as fragments of a larger whole. The less obviously architectural objects that appear in the poems, especially Heaney’s work, as “relics of memory,” are read as spatial entities that resonate with an inner life as well (*DD* 25). In sounding out the contours of these imaginary architectural forms, an enigmatic quality arises. This is a quality shared by other sites they evoke. Heaney’s wish to “uncode all landscapes” by describing things “founded clean on their own shapes,” is often offset by the use of allusion to deliberately ‘make strange’ his representations in the poems examined (*DD* 9). Writing of the Irish painter T. P. Flanagan, he uses terms equally

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² Williams 46.
relevant to some of the “ghosted forms of landscape” present in his poetry:

The pictures are the afterlife of experience. They advance and retire along the brink of the actual, sometimes coloured by the pressure of sombre encounters, sometimes haunting the canvas like luminous mists. Occasionally they are dramatic and manifestly related to a local geography, more often it is a name in the title that reminds us that the ghosted forms once possessed the lineaments of a place.3

It is not clear whether these forms are architectural or natural features in character. They dissolve into an ambiguously described continuity where ‘pastness’ hovers like a mist. Flanagan is interested in the imprecision of what is represented, a factor linking him to both poets as they evoke the “afterlife” of places in their imagery.

Walcott has devoted more attention to the Great House in his poetry than Heaney. He is also interested in this lingering sense of aura, the vision-inspiring presence connected to his family origins discerned in “Verandah,” for example. Nearly all the centers discussed here are embedded in a landscape of historical significance in the writing of each poet, where they are transformed or revisioned through imagination. Estate houses and their grounds arise as topoi, alongside a variety of different structures, such as the Greek fortress Mycenae. But a more arcane factor is accounted for as well: the bone-house of Heaney, the unquiet ruins and submerged kingdoms of Walcott, ‘doors’ into darkness for which the souterrain might stand as a symbol. The architectural function of this ancient Irish “system,” hollowed-out under the ground, has yet to be fully determined.4 It remains enigmatic, as in Heaney’s poem “Toome.” Often an emptiness each poet reads as carrying uncanny traces of past human presence, or the “ghosted” form of a dwelling, becomes the impetus for a poetic inquiry that extends not into

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4 A souterrain is an “underground system of chambers, often found in or near a rath, of conjectural purpose: storage? escape?” See Morris Craig and the Knight of Glin, Ireland Observed: A Handbook to the Buildings and Antiquities (Cork: Mercier, 1970) 114.
esoteric, but into historically resonant situations.

As suggested in chapter two, architecture has insidious connotations in the poetry of Heaney and Walcott at times. In this chapter, darker sides of the idealized (pastoral) notion of home continue to be exposed in their representations. Heaney and Walcott share an affinity with marginalized figures and forebears, reflected in the registers of poetic voice, and generally refuse to exclude these presences, or their traces, from any imaginative viewpoint they may adopt. Yet, the ‘inner life’ they describe in connection with architecture also reflects a more accommodating vision of the tensions making up any notion of home. As argued previously, the potentially elegiac site or form is always the place of a possible renewal.

* * *

Heaney states, “we all must learn [...] ways of including within the house of poetry life that has heretofore shivered in the gaunt towns and the superstitious minds.” In paternalistic terms more reminiscent of Matthew Arnold than Walcott’s “house of literature,” his metaphor implies that poetry functions as a culturally-ordained authority, drawing the less fortunate within its civilizing walls. In another statement along the same lines he observes: “the political implications of lyric art are quite reactionary. You are saying to people, ‘Everything’s all right.’” While such an admission seems at odds with the poems of North, or the sense of estrangement, political and otherwise, registered in the works discussed in chapter two, it tallies with his stance in other ways. Lyric poetry can be an escape into well-established modes of aesthetic response; a ‘dwelling’ in language as an ordered, quietist matter, with long-standing rights on the ear. While Heaney’s analogy depicts poetry as a grand fixture lying in repose on the

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literary landscape, in “A Peacock’s Feather” he uses the setting of an actual manor-house in the English countryside to examine his role writing under such hospitable conditions.

A number of critics deal with the issue of the Big House in Irish writing, though the association with Heaney usually rests on “A Peacock’s Feather.” Often read as a wry indictment of a whole culture, the picture may be more complex. As chapter one argued, Heaney’s championing of Coole Park reveals a wish to honor the “sacred spaces” of tradition, while contradictorily, that power is queried elsewhere. This ambivalence emerges as a factor in the poem. According to Corcoran, “A Peacock’s Feather,” still stands as one of the “most notable poetic explorations” of the Big House as a topos. Heaney foregrounds the underlying conceit that goes into composing a poem of celebration within the manor’s literal and figurative bounds, as he sites his writing place in a room inside its walls.

Heaney works a series of associations between his newborn niece’s christening, and the English birth-place that has brought the poem into existence. The lead stanza begins:

Six days ago the water fell  
To christen you, to work its spell  
And wipe your slate, we hope, for good.  
But now your life is sleep and food  
Which, with the touch of love, suffice  
You, Daisy, Daisy, English niece. (HL 38)

A mode is established that sees the christening in terms of a “spell,” introducing a pagan subtext. The metaphorical notion of ‘wiping the slate clean’ implies that the christening erases a troubled past through the ritual. This history is associated

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8 Corcoran, “A Slight Inflection: Representations of the Big House.” After Yeats and Joyce. 55.
with the niece mainly through the house, as the slate reference draws in the symbolically related image of rain on its roof. A writing slate as well, Heaney’s figure of speech evokes a sense that the christening ceremony and the house rest together on a palimpsest, a factor which becomes clearer as the poem progresses.

Recalling earlier poets who framed the landscape in various scenes, the speaker surveys the “prospects” of Gloucestershire, lying “Wooded and misty” to his eye. A shift between the house and another place held in memory occurs. He remembers the Irish landscape as “other than this mellowness / Of topiary, lawn and brick, / Possessed, untrespassed, walled, nostalgic,” bringing a hint of “To Penshurst” to bear in the descriptive use of contrast, but reversing the terms. The “topiary” has its correlative in Heaney’s decorous handling of the form, with the right words in the right places dutifully paying homage to precise making. When he refers to “this mellowness,” he is in effect reflexively addressing the mannered tone of his persona as well. The tempering of the tongue is felt throughout not only the landscape, but the poetic form as well, as it frames the house.

While Jonson lauds Penshurst for not falling prey to new architectural trends, Heaney chooses to define the house against a rustic Irish farm reminiscent of Mossbawn. Recalling the Middle English lyric, “I am of Ireland,” a strident claim opens the next stanza: “I come from scraggy farm and moss, / Old

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9 Cf. the discussion of “To Penshurst” by Williams where he notes its “procedure of definition by negatives.” Williams 28.

10 A point recalled by MacLean, Landry, and Ward in relation to Jonson’s poem. They note how part of his design was to “repudiate those nouveau mansions” that had sprung up near the Sidney’s “ancient family estate.” Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward, “Introduction: The Country and the City Revisited: c. 1550-1850.” MacLean, et al. eds. 5. In Heaney’s “Englands of the Mind,” Jonson’s Penshurst is termed a birthplace of the English pastoral, “the microcosm of patronage and paternalism” (P 176-77). See also Williams 27-34.
patchworks that the pitch and toss / Of history have left dishevelled.”¹¹ The famines Ireland has endured are reflected in the choice of “scraggy” in these lines that also anthropomorphize the farm and its surrounds.¹² A tension develops between the graceful tone his persona fits to the house and the resentment felt over the colonial history of other homes displaced by such designs on the land. “Here,” says the speaker, implying the poem’s lyric form and that of the estate house. “for your sake, I have levelled / My cart-track voice to garden tones, / Cobbled the bog with Cotswold stones.” Subjugated, at least on the surface, “voice” is paved over, troped as a judicious pathway in topographical concordance with the “garden tones” required. Though “Ravelling strands of families mesh,” the separation of imaginary home in Ireland and Gloucestershire estate cannot be bridged. “We’ll weave / An in-law maze” he says to the infant, in an allusion to the traditional garden feature and the pattern of complex and bewildering issues that will underlie their relationship. Heaney foresees “trust but little intimacy” between them.

It emerges that the “billet-doux” of the poem, addressed to the niece, is written in Yeats’s shadow. The situation is made transparent:

While I, a guest in your green court,  
At a west window sat and wrote  
Self-consciously in gathering dark.  
I might as well be in Coole Park. (HL 39)

Heaney undercuts the Yeatsian presence through this self-reflexivity. On one hand his self-deprecatating tone shows a poet unafraid of paying homage to the set of values associated with Coole Park. Yet he proceeds to recall the historical sacrifices that have gone into ensuring the house’s longevity, bringing the past to


¹² Cf. “At a Potato Digging”: “In a million wicker huts, / beaks of famine snipped at guts” (DN 19).
bear on the present. "So before I leave your ordered home," the speaker states in
the final stanza, "Let us pray. May tilth and loam, / Darkened with Celts’ and
Saxons’ blood, / Breastfeed your love of house and wood." The evocation of
both Celts and Saxons argues for an acceptance of the legacies left in place by
the leveling passage of time, reflected in the "levelled" intonations of voice. His
own "blood" is involved here as well, and inked in the poem left behind: "I drop
this for you, as I pass, / Like the peacock’s feather on the grass." Taking a feather
from the symbolic peacock of "Meditations in Time of Civil War," Heaney makes
an offering to the child and the tradition Coole Park and the house represent. Yet
he does so from a conflicted standpoint, aligning him more with the lyric persona
of Andrew Marvell in "Upon Appleton House." The "ordered home" of the
estate echoes the "more decent order" of that poem, a "green court" or
"heaven’s centre" that is fragile at best.13

"A Peacock’s Feather," in Corcoran’s opinion, betrays in Heaney the "guilt
of behaving so unlike himself, and the people he comes from, as to strike the
Yeatsian pose."14 But by directly alluding to Yeats, and to Marvell in his use of
form, Heaney’s position actually argues for a less guilt-ridden rhetorical stance.
He contributes to a tradition that steeps his poem in further ambiguities. The use
of the same octosyllabic couplets Marvell uses in "Upon Appleton House" and
"The Garden," suggest that "A Peacock’s Feather" has foundations more
reactionary than subversive. A concern with nature and civilization, the old and
the new (in relation to architecture) is present, as in Marvell’s poem.15

13 Andrew Marvell, "Upon Appleton House," Andrew Marvell, ed. Frank Kermode and Keith Walker
(Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1990) 77. Robert Markley comments on the unresolvable ironies of
Marvell’s poem "that places Appleton House within the contentious history of England’s Civil Wars and
the Reformation, ‘Heaven’s Center’ remains a fiction attainable only in and through poetry—or in and
through a political economy that both acknowledges and represses the fact that there can be no nature
untouched by desire, scarcity, and competition." Robert Markley, “‘Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone’:
Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’ and the Contradictions of ‘Nature,’” MacLean, et al. eds. 100.
14 Corcoran, "A Slight Inflection" 56.
15 Cf. the “complication of feeling between an old order and a new” seen in Marvell’s poem. Williams 58.
Marvell features in Heaney’s “From Maecenas to MacAlpine” address delivered the year before The Haw Lantern was published in 1987, which may have prompted him to reassess this 1972 work. As discussed in chapter one, the notion of Coole Park as a hortus conclusus is prominent. As with the estate house in “A Peacock’s Feather,” it is seen as an insular domain: “This large enclosed space [...] traversed by walks, artfully planted with trees and shrubs.”16 Heaney reads Coole Park in terms of a “language of forms,” declaring, “this area is not uniquely an Irish phenomenon. This garden is an image of the achieved life of civilisation.” His phrasing generates an analogy to Gaunt’s lamentation in Richard II, when the old man looks to the distant origins of England as a figurative garden: “This other Eden, demi-paradise, / This fortress built by Nature for herself [...].”17 The same anaphoric ‘carrying back’ is felt in Heaney’s use of “this” to generate rhetorical effect. But unlike Shakespeare’s, Heaney’s garden is related to “civilisation,” a re-making of Eden.

In much stricter fashion than “A Peacock’s Feather,” he idealizes Coole Park as a “charmed enclosure,” suggesting an eighteenth-century notion of landscape aesthetics as a matter of moral improvement. This is a place where the house sits well-proportioned, its dimensions defined by a naturalized (class) order. Coole Park, for Heaney, signifies an architectural dream of “a possible redeemed life,” where “harmony and fulfilment and a radiant consonance between desire and reality were constantly afforded to the human inhabitants.” The garden acts as an archetypal form-giver in the dichotomy he portrays. Outside its bounds lies: “the unformed, the inchoate, the unspeakable, the unknown,” and inside: “the defined, the illuminated, the elect, the fully empowered human life.” Yet an overgeneralizing tendency in Heaney’s discourse banishes wildness from the garden in his conceptualization, to frame it in the fallen “thorn-world of sweat

16 Heaney, “Maecenas” 69.
and tears.” The garden persists as a “social and architectural form,” representing a symbolic “repossession of the order of Eden, a human triumph.” He claims that an “unbroken line” in history (including Anglo-Irish landlords), attests “to the potency of that designed and planted ground, at once the product of art and nature.” An image is composed of a cultivated place removed from mundane reality, with real (wild) nature actually kept safely at bay. In “A Peacock’s Feather,” however, two simultaneous ‘framings’ are invoked. The delineation of the estate house is matched by the way Heaney’s speaker frames the Irish landscape in his mind’s eye. Ironically, it is an image of “dishevelled” wilderness created by history, which he carries with him into the house, as a scene held in memory.

Marvell, as Markley argues, “questions his own fantasies of pastoral retreat” in “Upon Appleton House,” while interrogating the “values and assumptions of a georgic virtue which unendingly exploits nature for profit.” Heaney does something similar (with regard to historical grievances) in “A Peacock’s Feather,” but in “From Maecenas to MacAlpine” largely refuses to engage the issues of the negative impact of Great (or Big) House culture by invoking a fantasy of Edenic revival. He quotes Marvell’s “The Garden” with its lines: “Society is all but rude / To this delicious solitude,” relating them to the fate of Coole Park and the loss of a sustaining “system of values and manners.” While the Big House

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18 Heaney’s description of the garden as a collaboration between “art and nature” recalls his thoughts about poems as “formations both organic and contrived.” Heaney, “Seamus Heaney Writes” 7.
19 In the late eighteenth century an aspect of landscape aesthetics involving “wild nature and scenic tourism” arose, complicating the art to nature relation in gardening practice and theory. Wilderness, through the influence of paintings, “came to be viewed as framed, [in] composed ‘scenes’ or ‘prospects’ […]” See Elizabeth A. Bohls, “The Gentleman Planter and the Metropole: Long’s History of Jamaica (1744),” MacLean, et al. eds. 182.
20 Markley 24.
21 For Heaney, Coole Park, to reiterate, is an example of the “Maecenas tradition of architecture,” which “comes into being in order to found or to affirm an order of reality, whether the reality be that of the Boyne tomb builders […] or the Anglo-Irish landlords.” The “utilitarian functions” of such buildings “derive from and are probably ancillary to their symbolic functions as foundations, sitings, proclamations of a centre.” Heaney, “Maecenas” 72.
is not unequivocally damned nor deferred to in his poem, it is celebrated as a microcosm in the address. Yet, “A Peacock’s Feather” locates much of its power precisely where “From Maecenas to MacAlpine” fails to convince. The notion that the dichotomy of inside and outside “cannot hold” and that a shared ground is always built on emerges in the poem, to quote Yeats. Any “proclamation of a centre” is always haunted by underlying voices and traditions. Any “ceremony of innocence,” as Heaney calls the christening, like the house and its grounds, depends on shed blood and bone for its foundations.

In his address Heaney looks to a symbol which will stay the tide of architectural “anarchy” unleashed by the ‘MacAlpine principle,’ and finds the garden, as much as the estate house. A concern with this archetypal form finds early expression in “Poem,” dedicated to his wife, Marie. Set in four squarely rhyming elegiac quatrains, the speaker acts as a prototype landscape architect bent on improving the land. But he is also just a child learning to be a gardener:

Yearly I would sow my yard-long garden.
I’d strip a layer of sods to build the wall
That was to exclude sow and pecking hen.
Yearly, admitting these, the sods would fall. (DN 35)

The fall of this enterprise becomes a metaphor for Heaney’s early attempts at verse, infatuated with words and their sounds. In the “sucking clabber I would splash / Delightedly and dam the flowing drain,” he remembers, “But always my bastions of clay and mush / Would burst before the rising autumn rain.” He tries to make the garden assume permanence in the enclosing form he has shaped.

This Adamic enthusiasm to create forms is carried into the poem’s present. It is now the child of the memory whom he wishes to “perfect […] Who diligently potters in my brain.” Having begun the lyric with courtly deference to his dedicatee, an exchange occurs as the speaker asks her (and, by extension, “Love,” the bonding force that builds their new garden), to exchange roles:

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Love, you shall perfect for me this child
Whose small imperfect limits would keep breaking:
Within new limits now, arrange the world
Within our walls, within our golden ring.

Symbolizing perfection and containment, a circular space able to perfect the breached enterprise of the child is imagined, in terms suggesting a wedding band. Though the rain-water destroys the material, the “clay” of the corporeal, it also erodes old boundaries to establish the chance for “new limits.” A fresh covenant transforms the old design as the poem itself closes and organizes vision within its measures. The garden trope rehearses an idea of a world ordered through the poem’s formal bounds, that locates a transcendental essence at its center. It participates, in a related sense, in the symbolic language that the finest architectural forms speak in Heaney’s perspective.

Beyond the garden, Heaney interrogates the character of a large range of forms in his poetry which comprise “foundations, sitings, proclamations of a centre.” Architectural and more purely spatial imagery provides a way into temporal concerns. In “The Plantation” an ambiguous site is described. Heaney enters a place similar to Moyola Park near where he grew up. He surveys part of a Big House’s demesne, describing its force as an originating center, as the original grounds are recalled in the spirit of the grove. In addition, though, the title also recalls the Plantation of Ireland, and a sense that the wood lies on an old settlement is implied.23 The poem opens:

Any point in that wood
Was a centre, birch trunks
Ghosting your bearings.
Improvising charmed rings

Wherever you stopped.

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23 From the late 1500s to 1607, when the Plantation of Ulster was created, and up to 1700, land was confiscated in the Northern counties for British settlers. They built “fortified houses and regularly planned and defensible towns.” Craig and Glin 113. See also James Stevens Curl, The Londonderry Plantation, 1609-1914: The History, Architecture, and Planning of the Estates of the City of London and its Livery Companies in Ulster (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore, 1986).
Though you walked a straight line,
It might be a circle you travelled
With toadstools and stumps

Or did you re-pass them?
Always repeating themselves. (DD36)

These defamiliarizing opening stanzas suggest a maze, but also an almost supernatural limbo, akin to Dante’s deep wood. The isolated inner worlds of Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” and Edward Thomas’s “The Hollow Wood” provide a similar sinister quality. Initially, Heaney’s similes of “bleyberries quilting the floor,” and the finding of a primordial hearth in the shape of a “black char of a fire,” seem homely. But the rest of the nine quatrains are increasingly uncanny.

The visitors, “Lovers, birdwatchers, / Campers, gipsies and tramps,” who leave their traces in the old plantation are haunted by the penumbra of other lives: “Someone had always been there / Though always you were alone.” The wood evokes a presence in the speaker’s imagination, ghosted in the center:

Hedging the road so,
It invited all comers
To the hush and the mush
Of its whispering treadmill,

Its limits defined,
So they thought, from outside. (DD36-37)

The “all comers” who penetrate the area are conflated with the plantation’s original inhabitants, as different temporalities are confused by Heaney. “They must have been thankful,” says the speaker, “For the hum of the traffic / If they ventured in / Past the picnicker’s belt.” A reminder of twentieth-century reality breaks into this darkly “charmed enclosure.” The final lines confirm the wood as a maze in a fairy-tale setting, that carries an enigmatic lesson in its history: “You had to come back,” he states, to “learn how to lose yourself, / To be pilot and stray—witch, / Hansel and Gretel in one” (DD37). As Edouard Glissant argues,
speaking of the West Indies. “socially, the Plantation is not the product of a politics but the emanation of a fantasy.” With this final stanza, a similar registering occurs. Heaney reads the wood as a ‘siting’ of an imaginary world still closed off within the landscape—like the former Plantation at its peak—and responsive to his allusive probings.

A poetic affinity with such enclosed areas is again apparent in a passage from “Station Island.” The speaker marks out a form in his footsteps:

I thought of walking round
and round a space utterly empty.
utterly a source, like the idea of sound;
like an absence stationed in the swamp-fed air
above a ring of walked-down grass and rushes. (S/68)

A build-up of assonance—round, sound, down—helps focus on circles through sounds. Heaney makes the idea of “source” coeval with the “idea of sound,” as the enveloping lines recreate the image of ‘beds’: “stone circles which are said to be the remains of early medieval monastic cells,” as he notes (S/122). An invisibly stationed “absence” evokes the source of creativity represented by the still “untopped omphalos,” standing “vibrant,” in “The Toome Road” (FW 15).

The evocation of an “absence” that has architectural resonance with regard to the past and memory is found in “Ancestral Photograph” as well. When the speaker removes the picture of his father’s uncle from the bedroom wall, there appears “a faded patch where he has been— / As if a bandage had been ripped from skin— / Empty plaque to a house’s rise and fall” (DN 13). Historic land enclosure is gestured at here, the metaphor recalling the “Old patchworks” of fields in “A Peacock’s Feather.” The house’s “fall” has come about through the loss of economic livelihood a world has been built on, a dilemma symbolized in the portrait’s representation: “This barrel of a man penned in the frame.” Figured

25 The title echoes Yeats’s “Ancestral Houses,” with its reference to “famous portraits of our ancestors.” Yeats 201.
in a "servile shape" by the pose (to quote "Ancestral Houses"), the relative's trade as a cattleman is recalled.26 "Closing this chapter of our chronicle," the speaker declares, "I take your uncle's portrait to the attic" (DN 14). With this ascent to Heaney's writing area, an elegiac closure takes place, gesturing at the storage of the memory and its transformation into verse.27

As Rebecca West observes in relation to Eugenio Montale's box of letters and photographs, it is memories that constitute the most "private form of history."28 For Heaney and Walcott this also holds true, and if a photograph is a material relic of experience, it often becomes a means of re-imagining "once living and lived moments." Pursuing a logic of reading that connects implicitly with architecture, Heaney's "A Royal Prospect" develops the 'afterlife' he finds in a set of snapshots over a single thirty-eight line stanza. Calling to mind Sir John Denham's "Cooper's Hill," the poem actually begins with a close-up 'prospect' of a couple: "On the day of their excursion up the Thames / To Hampton Court, they were nearly sunstruck" (ST 40).29 An ominous edge of violence can be detected, reinforced by the detailing of the woman's neck, "bared in a page-boy cut," as if a fate of beheading somehow awaited her. The male figure compounds the "dreamy," funereal effect with his study of the boat's wake. Heaney hints at the association of photography with memory and death--passing away, yet preserved—as the 'evidence' is taciturnly rendered: "And here are the

26 Yeats 200.
27 The attic is a favorite Heaney writing space. For example, in "A Snowshoe" from "Shelf Life" he describes climbing up "attic stairs like a somnambulist [...] Then I sat there writing, imagining in silence / sounds" (ST 24).
29 Denham's "Cooper's Hill," which appeared in a final version in 1668, was one of the first prospect poems. In his case the view took in Windsor Castle, Chertsey Abbey, and the Thames. For eighteenth-century background see "Pleasing Prospects," Williams 120-126.
photographs.” Each one acts as a fragment, a disembodied prospect of the original experience which he traces in the narrative.

The lethargic flow of the lines is once again disrupted by the awkward angle of the woman’s posture in another photograph: “Head to one side, / In her sleeveless blouse, one bare shoulder high / And one arm loose.” She is compared to “a bird with a dropped wing / Surprised in cover.” But the description of her partner reveals a vulnerability as well: “Assailable, enamoured, full of vows, / Young dauphin in the once-upon-a-time.” This last reference to the unreal quality of the situation is immediately followed by an invocation of Hampton Court: “And next the lowish red-brick Tudor frontage.” This abruptly animates the tone, as the speaker draws the reader-listener into the scene with him:

No more photographs, however, now
We are present there as the smell of grass
And suntan oil, standing like their sixth sense
Behind them at the entrance to the maze,
Heartbroken for no reason, willing them
To dare it to the centre they are lost for...

Hampton Court is presented as suddenly charged with life in the poem with this insertion into the memory. An emblematic picture of the couple in the grounds poised on the threshold of the “maze” is witnessed. Again, a center is alluded to, like the wood in “The Plantation.” It marks a place they must become “lost” to find, symbolically resting out of reach. Yet Heaney’s use of “maze” also evokes the Maze prison in Ireland, creating an unsettled undertone, and politically loading the context.

The couple appear locked within the poem’s prospect, destined to return to a fallen world, as an impression that they are somehow elect in another way is

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Surreal clarity is replaced by a distancing mechanism:

Instead, like reflections staggered through warped glass,
They reappear as in a black and white
Old grainy newsreel, where their pleasure-boat
Goes back spotlight across sunken bridges
And they alone are borne downstream unscathed,
Between mud banks where the wounded rave all night
At flameless blasts and echoless gunfire.

Safe, to appearances, they drift downstream through the lineaments of an “Unreal City” reminiscent of Eliot’s *Wasteland*, imitating Elizabeth and Leicester on the royal barge in “The Fire Sermon.” While the spotlight conjures up images of wartime England, it also brings to mind a stage setting exposing them to interrogation, as the speaker pulls back to detachedly reflect: “In all of which is ominously figured / Their free passage through historic times.” Described as “Like a silk train being brushed across a leper,” he observes the “safe conduct of two royal favourites, / Unhindered and resented and bright-eyed” (*ST* 40-41).

Heaney echoes Eliot again in his simile, his tone turning more sinister.

The narrator now emerges in a harshly critical guise, looking to cut the two “resented” figures down to size:

So let them keep a tally of themselves
And be accountable when called upon
For although by every golden mean their lot
Is fair and due, pleas will be allowed
Against every right and title vested in them
(And in a court where mere innocuousness
Has never gained approval or acquittal.) (*ST* 41)

This litigious streak has been present from the underlying violence of the opening imagery, inviting our complicity in judgment. The speaker’s reminder collapses the terms of reference uniting seventeenth and twentieth-century England.

Discoursing in a manner recalling Cromwellian redress in the English Civil War’s

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33 Though the speaker in “The Fire Sermon” states no “Silk handkerchiefs” fill his “Sweet Thames.” Eliot 12.
aftermath, the dour proclamations on the dangling fate of the “two royal favourites” ring with Heaney’s feelings of accountability with regard to the “free passage” he and his wife were granted through Ireland’s ‘Troubles’ in the seventies. His poem constructs a form of ‘court’ in which a retributive view of justice is expounded. The liminal area opened up by the photographs, “ominously figure[s]” the surveillance the protagonists move through under the speaker’s vengeful eye, signified finally by the trap-like form of the parenthetical last lines. A grimly veiled articulation, these last sentiments admit of no quarter, and the free-floating drift of the poem’s start is shut down in the axe-chop closure of a sealed edict. The architectural metaphor of the ‘court’ relates directly to Hampton Court Palace. With the change in tone that marks its appearance, Heaney establishes the couple’s sublimation under the oppressive ‘structure of feeling’ that comes to dominate in the judging figure’s rhetoric.

In “Leavings,” a return to a period with connections to “A Royal Prospect” occurs that relies on an architectural setting for context. The sunset’s “thatch-deep, freshening / barbarous crimson burn” spurs a historical remembrance of a sacked chapel (FW 57). Heaney’s speaker imagines himself as a ‘rider’ in Henry VIII’s times: “I rode down England / as they fired the crop.” Punning on the way a walker’s tread tramples down grass, he qualifies, “that was the leavings of a crop, / the smashed tow-coloured barley.” The narrow, six-quatrained form portrays a descent into collective memory as the ruined landmark is described:

down from Ely’s Lady Chapel,
the sweet tenor latin
forever banished,
the sumptuous windows

threshed clear by Thomas Cromwell.
Which circle does he tread,
scaling on cobbles,
each one a broken statue’s head?
Catholics fared badly under Cromwell, who oversaw the dissolution of the monasteries, and the firing of the crop leavings is made correlative to the razing of this communal belief structure. Heaney tropes Cromwell’s repressive measures in the chapel’s destruction, the “smashed tow-coloured barley” image referring to the shattering of the stained glass windows. Cromwell clears the windows of their colours and sumptuousness; they are “threshed clear,” and the statues destroyed. Seen as a “breaking sheaf of light,” Will Brangwen’s ghost implies the sense of limbo the desecration initiates for the local culture.

Through the architectural connection, Heaney’s ritualistic walking in the field riding down the leavings sparks historical memories of the “barbarous crimson burn” that gave rise to this spirit’s unrest. He identifies with Brangwen, while a certain symmetry of poetic justice ensures that his treading out of the lines is matched by the thought of Cromwell’s eternal trudge, consigned to a Dantesque circle of Hell. By instilling a notion of the chapel’s windows in the reader-listener’s imagination the poem leaves a trace, a revenant of form, from the original structure. What was once the “proclamation of a [sacred] centre” is remembered in Heaney’s representation.

Moving to Heaney’s treatment of objects, the same animation of forms, often ancient in character, can be discerned. Water, soil and bog transform materials the way a poet works words. Before turning things up in the perpetual cycle of “give and take,” as “Relic of Memory” has it, such constant and “drowning love” might “stun a stake // To stalagmite” (DD 25). Shaping forces and hidden designs are made analogous to memory’s processes in this poem:

The lough waters
Can petrify wood:
Old oars and posts
Over the years
Harden their grain,
Incarcerate ghosts
Of sap and season.

Over four stanzas, Heaney traces the relic’s provenance into the quick of its origins. “Dead lava, / The cooling star, / Coal and diamond,” are too “simple,” the speaker relates, “Without the lure / That relic stored.” Though Heaney makes the object ‘come forth’ so the poem assumes some of this “lure,” it remains a “piece of stone / On the shelf at school, / Oatmeal coloured.” The relic undergoes a sublime diminution, emerging as a form at once commonplace and exalted.

Heaney applies the same technique of reading—searching out incarcerated “ghosts”—when he turns to other, more architectural objects. In “Bog Oak” another relic’s “lure” is probed for the way it structures the inside of a cottage:

A carter’s trophy
Split for rafters,
a cobwebbed, black,
long-seasoned rib
under the first thatch.
I might tarry
with the moustached
dead, the creel-fillers,
or eavesdrop on
their hopeless wisdom
as a blow-down of smoke
struggles over the half-door. (WO 4)

Conflating the corporeal and the architectural together, the internal rafters form a figural rib-cage, though the imagery of “tarry[ing] with the […] dead” carries darker implications. A troubled sense of camaraderie is invoked by the speaker, as his mind wanders outside, retracing the origin of the split “carter’s trophy.” But he discovers no “‘oak groves’, no / cutters of mistletoe / in the green clearings.” The ideal is replaced by an anti-pastoral vision whose bearings Heaney takes from Spenser’s and Sir John Gray’s views of Ireland. Spenser’s form is made out, “encroached upon by // geniuses,” who creep “‘out of every corner / of the woodes and glennes’ / towards watercress and carrion” (WO 4-5). While
Spenser’s shade dreams “sunlight,” the local inhabitants crawl into view. The extended metaphor of the bog oak being made into rafters is politically charged, as architecture is used to imply the fragmentation of Irish nationhood. These “geniuses” haunt the frame of the structure, just as they trouble the speaker’s reverie.

Another ‘anatomy of death’ is suggested by “The Grauballe Man,” as Heaney metaphorically crafts his poem out of a man’s form. The “grain of his wrists,” is in fact, “like bog oak,” the body reconfigured so that a spatialization occurs over the twelve quatrains: “The cured wound / opens inwards to a dark / elderberry place” (N 28). “Who,” asks the speaker, looking at the Grauballe man’s photograph, “will say ‘corpse’ / to his vivid cast?” (N 29). Accessing a threshold state with this door-like “wound,” Heaney breaks down the binary divide of birth and death, invoking “his rusted hair, / a mat unlikely / as a foetus’s […] bruised like a forceps baby.” He fuses the organic and mechanical in the idea of rusting hair. Both alien and familiar, the speaker recounts how his “twisted face” now “lies / perfected” in memory, “down to the red horn / of his nails.”

Like the man-child in “Poem,” who wishes to be ‘perfected,’ this is a matter of design, of the formal delineation of bounds. But the image possibly deceives—it “lies”–and “actual weight” becomes the measure over the aesthetic perfections of the visual register.

The Grauballe Man “lies” impressed in the wax of memory:

hung in the scales
with beauty and atrocity:
with the Dying Gaul
too strictly compassed

on his shield,
with the actual weight
of each hooded victim,
slashed and dumped.
Like the Grauballe Man—who is also statue-like, molded, as if “poured / in tar”—the Gaul “lies / on a pillow of turf.” But Heaney’s image seems calculated to invoke spread-eagled Vitruvian man, trapped in his square, the gridded epitome of proportion and measure. Extending the frame of logic, to be “compassed” here is to be pinned at the omphalos, or navel, of a dark plan focused with relentless acuity on retributive balances. Aware of the way his own form ‘grids’ its subject, Heaney draws attention to this dilemma of representation by ironically undermining the ‘perfections’ of his lyric architecture with acknowledgments that it too deceives.

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At the start of “From the Land of the Unspoken” Heaney writes of having “heard of a bar of platinum / kept by a logical and talkative nation” (HL 18). It serves as their “standard of measurement, / the throne room and the burial chamber / of every calculation and prediction.” On one level this refers to the prototype kilogram kept near Paris. Yet Heaney is likely punning on “bar” here to mean the generic Irish public house as well; ominously, given the “burial chamber” analogy. Wry acceptance marks the speaker’s tone: “I could feel at home inside that metal core / slumbering at the very hub of systems.” Heaney architecturalizes the metal rod, metaphorically implying the public bar’s centering in Irish consciousness. In the earlier, six-part “Bone Dreams,” another center on the landscape is invoked, as he enters into an ancient meadhall-like “hub of systems” through the imagination.

With “Bone Dreams,” Heaney delves into the figurative inner life of an object. The white bone the speaker finds is ‘conned’ through the “rough, porous / language of touch” (N 19). It makes an ichnograph, a “yellowing, ribbed /
impression in the grass—/ a small ship-burial.”35 Veneration for the bone’s tactile properties is as much for the transmutations Heaney gleans in the “language of forms” it invokes, before it is transformed by his reading into an architectural entity. The speaker “wind[s]” the bone piece in the “sling of mind,” to metaphorically “pitch it at England / and follow its drop / to strange fields.” In part II, he begins a series of shifts into other temporal dimensions, describing the “Bone-house,” a “skeleton / in the tongue’s / old dungeons.” These “strange fields” emerge as the etymological spaces haunted by the old periphrasic ‘body’ of the term within the recesses of the English language, a language which fills the speaker’s skull. Now architecturally figured around his tongue, within its confines he pushes back “through dictions, / Elizabethan canopies. / Norman devices” (N 20). Similarly to “North,” the tongue acts as a searching, tactile force that hunts out the phrase’s provenance.

The tongue doubles back on itself further, beyond the “erotic mayflowers / of Provence.” and past “the ivied latins / of churchmen,” to reach a source caught in sense-sounds. As in Frost’s notion of sounds living in the cave of the mouth, an ideal form is invoked with the breakthrough “to the scop’s / twang.” The “iron / flash of consonants” are imagined “cleaving the line.” Heaney’s tongue finds its ancient correlative in this image of a Norseman’s sword figuratively voicing his authority in verse, dissecting verbal structures and forms. But the reference to “cleaving” also recalls the migrant line incised by the longship’s bow wave in “Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces.” Making good speed, Heaney’s poem also has ‘a bone in her teeth’ here, as the tongue becomes the incisive instrument of design. Each quatrain hones the momentum, confirming a dynamic wherein the regenerative power sought through words is also felt in the build-up of tensions provided by enjambment and finely gauged syllabic accentuation techniques.

35 An ichnograph, as Hamon notes, is the “representation or the design of the vestiges of a building […] ichnos in Greek meaning vestige, or the imprint left by something when placed on the ground.” Hamon 59.
In part III a type of temple is formed in the speaker’s mind, an allegorized
domestic interior figured in language itself. Heaney reads the spatial contours of
the bone piece’s inner form as an architectural space suffused with life:

In the coffered
riches of grammar
and declensions
I found ban-hus,
its fire, benches,
wattle and rafters,
where the soul
fluttered a while
in the roofspace.
There was a small crock
for the brain,
and a cauldron
of generation
swung at the centre:
love-den, blood-holt,
dream-bower. (N 20-21)

One of the earliest instances of “bone-house” occurs in Beowulf. In his
translation, “The Funeral of Beowulf,” Heaney recounts how “flames wrought
havoc in the hot bone-house, / burning it to the core.”36 Within Beowulf’s
barrow, the hoard of “ancestral treasure” rests in a ‘coffer’ – a sunk panel, or
chest. In “Bone Dreams,” the trove is the word-hoard where “ban-hus” still
burns, defying its tomb-like incarceration. As with the narrator of “To a Dutch
Potter in Ireland,” the speaker reads it as a place of formal “generation,” a forge
of being, entered like “a strongroom of vocabulary / Where words like urns that
had come through the fire / Stood in their bone-dry alcoves next a kiln” (SL 2).
Made coeval with reproductive energies, the organically focused world lodged in
the “ban-hus” appears to incubate deep within language, in Heaney’s vision.

Hopkins’s “The Caged Skylark” for the use of bone-house: “As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage / Man’s mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, / dwells.” Qtd. in Frank 109.
Throughout the poem the bone piece's phallic nature is hinted at. With the image of the “cauldron” swinging at the center of the ‘house’ the sexual is merged with the linguistic through Heaney’s architectural metaphors. The “ban-hus” expands to become: “love-den, blood-holt, / dream-bower” as the tongue’s directive energies infiltrate, creating other word-forms. The speaker ‘comes back’ “past / philology and kennings” to “re-enter memory” in part IV. Another indeterminate imaginary locus is implied, a place “where the bone’s lair // is a love-nest / in the grass.” Suggesting ground flattened from a sexual union, this is the site where the speaker and his lover appear to “ossify” into fixtures on the land through their bodies. In part V there is a continued stress on these figures who end up “cradling each other / between the lips / of an earthwork” (N 21). The trope of the woman as the land on which the persona lies, leads to imagined architectural transformations:

As I estimate
for pleasure
her knuckles’ paving,
the turning stiles
of the elbows,
the vallum of her brow
and the long wicket
of collar-bone.

I have begun to pace
the Hadrian’s Wall
of her shoulder, dreaming
of Maiden Castle. (N 22)

This mapping of the body as a structure propounds in turn a trope of colonial discovery, with the speaker three times proclaiming, “I found […]” in the part. In citing these historical landmarks, Heaney also appears interested in how the memory essentialized in language comes to relate to enduring forms which impose themselves on the terrain. The architecture of the “bone-house” ultimately gives rise to that of power.
Such considerations inform the cryptic meaning of the geographic memory discerned in the “big-boned” dead mole in part VI, as the speaker now ‘winds’ this creaturely frame by blowing the fur on its head. Examining the “‘little points’” of the eyes, he follows advice to “‘feel the shoulders’” (N 22-23). To touch the mole’s “small distant Pennines, / a pelt of grass and grain / running south,” is to touch another fragment of a lost “bone-house” akin to the white bone in part I, and the topographic lore remembered in the lover’s storiied body (N 23). Exploring a further vestige of the hidden life of forms, the hands attempt to divine the “nubbed treasure” of the mole and draw it within the ken.

As evident in “Bone Dreams,” certain words become architecturalized through Heaney’s approach as a way of entering collective memory, located on the landscape or in language. In “Toome” the tongue features once more as a poetic instrument of linguistic inquiry. Punning on a similarity to ‘tomb,’ Heaney pushes into the word “toome” through its sounding of an ancient Irish space:

   My mouth holds round
   the soft blastings,
   Toome, Toome,
   as under the dislodged
   slab of the tongue
   I push into a souterrain
   prospecting what new
   in a hundred centuries’
   loam, flints, musket-balls,
   fragmented ware,
   torcs and fish-bones
   till I am sleeved in
   alluvial mud that shelves
   suddenly under
   bogwater and tributaries,
   and eelers tail my hair. (WO 16)

Heaney reads the “souterrain” as a “hatching ground” of memory and language that he cauls or ‘sleeves’ his speaker in; a womb he enters in his desire for new
knowledge.37 The articulation of “Toome” opens up another “strongroom of vocabulary,” that originates in its recesses.38 The “slab of the tongue” is “dislodged” like a stone over a hidden resource, an underground center.

Another ancient architectural ‘relic of memory’ appears in the three-part “Sheelagh na Gig.” The sparse tercets invite the reader-listener’s immediate complicity in deciphering the carved goddess ornament, as she is ‘conned’:

We look up at her hunkered into her angle under the eaves.

She bears the whole stone burden on the small of her back and shoulders and pinioned elbows,

the astute mouth, the gripping fingers saying push, push hard, push harder. (SI 49)

Pinned under a world, her load recalls the “black weight” felt by the worshippers of “In Gallarus Oratory” (DD 10). Perpetually in harness, as in giving birth, in part II her hands, “holding herself,” are compared to “hands in an old barn / holding a bag open.” The Heaney persona re-enters the past of this barn in an architectural reverie: “I looked up under the thatch / at the dark mouth and eye / of a bird’s nest or a rat hole” (SI 50). Smelling the “rose on the wall, / mildew, an earthen floor, / the warm depth of the eaves,” the inquisitive, relaxed tone becomes ominous in a further memory, or sinister premonition. “And then one night in the yard,” he discloses, “I stood still under heavy rain / wearing the bag like a caul.”

37 In “Hercules and Antaeus” Heaney writes of Antaeus, as an allegorical figure for Ireland: “the cradling dark, / the river-veins, the secret gullies / of his strength, / the hatching grounds / of cave and souterrain, / he has bequeathed it all to elegists. Balor will die / and Byrnoth and Sitting Bull” (N 46).

38 Cf. “To a Dutch Potter in Ireland,” where Bann clay is turned up from “a little sucky hole [...] Like the earth’s old ointment box, sticky and cool” (SL 2). Heaney’s formal tribute complements the potter, Sonja Landweer’s “language of forms,” achieving what he imagines they might have done as children if World War Two had not intervened. It is a way of “touching tongues” (SL 3). The liberation is unfolded symbolically in the dynamic tension he discerns in her work, yet a solidarity is also celebrated: “Hosannah in clean sand and kaolin / And, ‘now that the rye crop waves beside the ruins’, / In ash-pits, oxides, shards and chlorophylls.”
A sense that the figure may be up for execution emerges. At once nourishment source as a mouth “running grain,” and in this stanza a blackness preceding death, the ambiguous bag symbolizes the barn’s unstable nature in the speaker’s mind. An underlying linkage with historical acts of violence is felt, as in “The Barn,” considered in the previous chapter.

Heaney’s association leads back to the harsh life-death principle the goddess figure indifferently signifies in stance, and the center her architectural pivot-point bears witness to in Kilpeck. Finally a return to the site of the initial encounter is made: “We look up to her. / her ring-fort eyes.” Emphasizing the subjugation of the watchers beneath her authority, the defiantly buttressed eyes prove a reminder of the watchers’ own status not as marginal figures “outside looking in,” but as dwellers caught up in a cultural unconscious that still maintains a subliminal adherence to her dark logic. The ‘caul’ nightmare triggered by the uncanny space of the barn establishes this context. The “ring-fort eyes” invoke a zone of defensive hoarding, hard set against the universe, yet Heaney refuses to accept the blinkerings of this logic outright. Her “little slippy shoulders” are also noticed by the “light-headed” observers: “She is twig-boned, saddle-sexed. // grown-up, grown ordinary.” He reads her as “seeming to say, / ‘Yes, look at me […] but look at every other thing,’” and the rest of the sculptures that have endured, fish, deer, “figures kissing,” are brought into relief.

Heaney connects the insidious aura of the Sheelagh na Gig with architecture and cultural constraints through the barn and the ring-fort motif, though his closure of the poem undermines the notion that one must ‘know one’s place.’ In poem xix of “Settings,” from “Squarings,” a system of reading, mnemonics, is recalled that suggests the ambiguities inherent in such a concept:

39 The bag’s use as a womb-like hood recalls lines from “Punishment” referring to a bog victim’s “betraying sisters, / cauled in tar” (N 30).
40 Cf. the Norse Goddess figure in “Kinship” the speaker “steps through origins” to face (N 33). A raised, “cloven oak-limb,” his gaze is transfixed around this “centre,” which “holds / and spreads” (N 36).
Memory as a building or a city,
Well lighted, well laid out, appointed with
Tableaux vivants and costumed effigies—

Statues in purple cloaks, or painted red,
Ones wearing crowns, ones smeared with mud or blood:
So that the mind’s eye could haunt itself

With fixed associations and learn to read
Its own contents in meaningful order,
Ancient textbooks recommended that

Familiar places be linked deliberately
With a code of images. You knew the portent
In each setting, you blinked and concentrated. (*ST75)

Heaney’s tercets lay out an impression of ancient Rome, with a subdued air of violence present in the way perception is uneasily organized and ordered into psychodramatic cues. This learning to “read” is fraught with insinuations of the imperial weight of empire, sinisterly melding mind, memory and architecture into a triumvirate of controlling forces. In the following poem the link is repeated: “On Red Square, the brick wall of the Kremlin / Looked unthreatening, in scale, just right for people / To behave well under, inside or outside” (*ST76). But the “big cleared space in front was dizzying” the persona remembers. As in his encounters with the goddess figure, Heaney uses architecture to convey a disorientating effect that leads into memory, in this case a “dream of flying” above the “old cart road” back in the 1940s. “Terrible history and protected joys” surface in the figures of Stalin and Pasternak.

“Mycenae Lookout” is set in a powerful architectural center with regard to earliest Greek history. Heaney visited the ruins of the massive citadel, legendary home of Agamemnon and site of Aeschylus’s Oresteia, in the early nineties. The poem’s form, consisting of five disparate parts, generates an energy flow (such as Hadzi’s forms suggest to Heaney) through the ordering guise of a persona. The watchman’s voice becomes paramount in quickening the edgy affinity between
place, the *Oresteia* subtext, and the Irish political aspect.\textsuperscript{41} The architectural setting allows Heaney to explore a time-period that resonates with the contemporary Irish situation, a parallel opened out in the imagery of the final part, as the pressures of imagination are used to re-imagine the fortress. In keeping with the Greek word for sentry, *skopos*, Heaney conflates both watchman and his place atop the palace in his title. He is also a ‘scop,’ an ancient, potentially even Homeric, poet. In the conclusion, as he quits the lookout, Heaney grants him a prophetic vision of the future, an “Unroofed scope” related back to Ireland.

In mimetic terms, the form of “Mycenae Lookout” consists of staunch, immovable-seeming stanzas as well as dynamic shapes that imply ladder-like progressions. Using mining, mixed with sculptural analogies, Heaney describes how the second part, “*Cassandra,*” acted as a catalyst, coming out quickly, “like a molten rill” from the spot he hit when he “drilled down into the *Oresteia* bedrock” under the poem. For part one, “*The Watchman’s War,*” the process was like “using a rhymed couplet like a pneumatic drill, just trying to bite and shudder in toward whatever was there. And after that first movement, sure enough, the other bits came definitely and freely, from different angles and reaches. In a way, that material had as much force and underlife for me as the bog bodies.”\textsuperscript{42} The language here is resolutely spatial, implying a technique bent on recovering what already exists in primal form. Each part is seen as proceeding from a different angle to shape the disjunctive form of the poem itself.

“*The Watchman’s War,*” with two large stanzaic blocks of twenty-two and twenty-three lines respectively, initially sets up an effect of burdensome mass. A relatively long line scheme emphasizes the speaker’s daydreaming thoughts atop the palace roof. Forced to endure the monotonous drag of what amounts to a ten-year prison sentence waiting for a sign that Troy has fallen, he drifts into a

\textsuperscript{41} The poem was completed in the wake of the 1994 Irish Republican Army ceasefire. Cole 136.

\textsuperscript{42} Cole 136, 137.
macabre reverie of a “killing-fest, the life-warp and world-wrong / It brought to
pass, still augured and endured” (SL 29). He remembers dreams of “blood in
bright webs in a ford, / Of bodies raining down like tattered meat.” Now “posted
and forgotten” by the Queen, the lookout’s despair and “honour-bound” fate is
felt in the tongue (on which all rely for news), a “dropped gangplank of a cattle
truck, / Trampled and rattled.” The sentry finds solace not “out beyond / The city
and the border, on that line / Where the blaze would leap the hills when Troy had
fallen,” but from an inward prospect, though he remains troubled:

Day in, day out, I’d come alive again,
Silent and sunned as an esker on a plain,
Up on my elbows, gazing, biding time
In my outpost on the roof...What was to come
Out of that ten years’ wait that was the war
Flawed the black mirror of my frozen stare.
If a god of justice had reached down from heaven
For a strong beam to hang his scale-pan on
He would have found me tensed and ready-made.
I balanced between destiny and dread. (SL 30)

Heaney depicts the watchman in a martyrish pose, melded to the roof and
dreaming of “eskers,” long gravel ridges common to Irish glacial valleys. He
imagines himself acting as a “strong beam” for the scales of justice, “balanced”
on this threshold that also forms a ‘listening post’ to the palace beneath.

The jaggedly formed, heavily enjambed tercets of part two, “Cassandra,” are
written in terse prosodic bursts: “No such thing / as innocent / bystading” (SL
30). Heaney resets events in a way that defamiliarizes the murders, stripping away
the distancing effects of literary and historical context for a brutal immediacy:

King Agamem–
non’s drum–

balled, old buck’s
stride was back. (SL 32)

This verbal onslaught comes to rest in the first line of part three, “His Dawn
Vision,” subsiding in a tripartite fashion: “Cities of grass. Fort walls. The
dumbstruck palace” (SL 33). Eight tercets measure out a respite that turns the
watchman’s eye back toward the horizon and the “pre-dawn gossamers” of
stars. The slow incubation of the Greek victory over the Trojans is imaged spatio-
temporally: “I felt the beating of the huge time-wound / We lived inside” (SL 34).
War, in an extended metaphor drawing in the Irish situation, creates an
overarching canopy dominating existence in Heaney’s conceptualization; an
archetypal ‘fortress mentality.’

In “The Nights,” the lookout confides that the “roof was like an eardrum”
reverberating to the sounds of the lovers beneath (SL 35). However, the static
hold of his “cross-purposed silence” is finally broken with the end to the Troy
siege (SL 36). A vision ensues in which the watchman imagines the Mycenae’s
symbolic conversion into the well and temple of the Acropolis. In “His Reverie of
Water” Heaney returns to drill-like tercets, as his persona hesitantly divines the
future: “At Troy, at Athens, what I most clearly / see and nearly smell / is the fresh
water.” In the following verses the via sacra to and from the well at Athens is
evoked in oracular tones as the speaker recalls “that old lifeline leading up / and
down from the Acropolis” (SL 37). This “set of timber steps / slatted in between
the sheer cliff face / and a free-standing, covering spur of rock,” deflects the focus
on finished forms and their sublimity (like the coming Parthenon) onto process
and means of access. Heaney describes a precariously free-moving structure,
made to resemble a DNA helix, the “zig-zag hieroglyph for life itself” in the
words of “Seeing Things” (ST 17). The “life-warp” of history is realigned.

Heaney tropes an insurgent ‘underlife’ at the heart of the monolithic
structure:

    secret staircase the defenders knew
    and the invaders found, where what was to be
    Greek met Greek,
the ladder of the future
and the past, besieger and besieged,
the treadmill of assault

turned waterwheel, the rungs of stealth
and habit all the one
bare foot extended, searching.

The conversion of “treadmill” into “waterwheel” reflexively tropes the poem’s form in an analogous language, drawing the imagery ever closer to the Hippocrene spring at Mt. Helicon. Yet the helicon of “To a Dutch Potter in Ireland” is also figured here, the artist’s “potter’s wheel […] bringing up the earth. / Hosannah ex infernis. Burning wells” (SL 3). The “bare foot extended, searching,” becomes a pun for the line itself, and the sinewed pulse it represents.

In the last three tercets Heaney’s persona lifts slightly and he proceeds to recall a childhood memory: “this ladder of our own that ran / deep into a well-shaft being sunk / in broad daylight, men puddling at the source.” They move through “tawny mud,” and are then envisaged, “coming back up / deeper in themselves for having been there.” With this parallel, centered on a further omphalos-like well within the poem’s imagery, an oracle of Irish peace is voiced. These dynamically structured wells together suggest a re-emergence from carnage and despair, in an image of soldiers changed into “finders, keepers, seers of fresh water / in the bountiful round mouths of iron pumps / and gushing taps.” Heaney envisages the oppressive stone fortress as transformed into the clarified place of the Acropolis, though the architectural setting of the poem is continually made to resonate across time and register in the Irish context.

In each of the examples mentioned here Heaney evokes a center of some type through use of the architectural image or metaphor, thus allowing the process of poetic imagination to focus in upon an occluded ‘underlife’ or potentially transformative essence. As we saw in “Bone Dreams,” and “Toome,” he makes words themselves into ‘relics of memory’ and tropes them as having architectural
elements to their forms. Whether, as in “A Peacock’s Feather,” that center is the house itself, the maze in “A Royal Prospect,” or an architectural object like the Sheelagh na Gig, the encounter with certain structures and spaces prompts Heaney to a deeper reading, and a figurative entry into memory. Through the architectural he is able to evoke different temporalities, and deepen awareness of how each imaginary siting on a landscape is implicated in a historical continuum.

* * *

In many of Walcott’s poems a similar tracing of the underlying meaning of architectural structures and sites through memory can be perceived. As with Ireland, work has been done on the West Indies with regard to the history of the Great House and the plantation system, calling attention to its literary and architectural status.43 Set in St. Lucia, “Ruins of a Great House” explores the interrelated issues clustering around this fallen center-piece of the colonial enterprise. As in Heaney’s case, Walcott is aware of the tradition and conventions surrounding the celebration of the estate house, especially on English soil. The influence of such writers as Marvell and Jonson however, is matched by the ironic relationship Walcott shares to colonial West Indian poets.

The ruined Great House represents the decay of a dream of empire. Though Walcott mentions Raleigh, invoking his pastoral vision of a Guyanese dominion, the problematic tradition of what Karen O’Brien calls the “imperial georgic” mode also informs his poem.44 The “fact of slavery in the Southern states and

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West Indies," argues O'Brien. "could not be digested by georgic poetry." West Indian settler poets such as John Singleton, faced with the "moral problem" of slavery, were often forced to adopt a defensive pastoral image of an "abundant, luxuriant, and seasonless landscape with no trace of laboring people." The uneasy relation between the pastoral and the georgic found in such works as James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*, from 1764, is reflected in Walcott's subtext as he revises this "aesthetic domestication" of a "slave-cultivated landscape." His tone and the prospect observed by his speaker is affected by a local legacy of previous readings, a sensibility left in the 'ghosted form' of the Great House's ruins.

Walcott's poem functions as a meditative extended metaphor that sees the speaker anatomizing a lost way of life in the strewn parts of the house's once coherent features. In the beginning lines a first view is outlined:

Stones only, the *disjecta membra* of this Great House,  
Whose moth-like girls are mixed with candelust,  
Remain to file the lizard's dragonish claws;  
The mouths of those gate cherubs streaked with stain.  
Axle and coach wheel silted under the muck  
Of cattle droppings. (*IGN* 19)

Domestic pastimes of the former inhabitants are recalled in the speaker's image of nails being filed. The cherub's stained mouths suggest the painted statues of the Roman empire. Despite the opening injunction, Walcott's figural language begins to re-animate the scene. Intimations of mixing, filing, streaking, and silting recall the work associated with the Great House and its plantation.\(^47\) Reversed in

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\(^{45}\) O'Brien 173. She notes: "Colonial georgic, which made a virtue of literary derivativeness and of economic dependence on Britain, held up an unacceptable mirror image of the metropolitan vision of empire." O'Brien 174. Other colonial West Indian poets who struggled to reconcile georgic and pastoral modes include Nathaniel Tucker and George Heriot.

\(^{46}\) O'Brien 174. Though others, like Edward Rushton in his 1787 *West Indian Eclogues* implicitly criticized slavery by portraying the brutality it involved. See O'Brien 175.

images of slow degeneration, that making is now the sole preserve of the poet-observer, as a dark anti-pastoral vision is framed in the eye and invades the senses: “A smell of dead limes quickens in the nose / The leprosy of empire.” The emphasis on decay belies the eternal summer trope of the West Indies that earlier poets were continually celebrating in their work.

Unlike Penshurst, this Great House was built to “envious show,” reared with many a “man’s ruin [and] groan” as the cherubs’ faces proclaim. In the next passage the view from the ruins is described in lines that echo the demesne of Coole Park, a “spot whereon the founders lived and died […] ancestral trees / Or gardens rich in memory,” as Yeats writes. Here the “marble head” is the house itself:

Marble as Greece, like Faulkner’s south in stone, Deciduous beauty prospered and is gone; But where the lawn breaks in a rash of trees A spade below dead leaves will ring the bone Of some dead animal or human thing Fallen from evil days, from evil times.

It seems that the original crops were limes Grown in the silt that clogs the river’s skirt; The imperious rakes are gone, their bright girls gone, The river flows, obliterating hurt.

The estate house owners’ hubristic aspirations to a permanent dwelling are recalled, desires mocked by nature. Figured by the speaker as the correlative to the scattered stone ‘limbs’ of the house—the disjecta membra—Walcott implies this skeleton is now grafted into the landscape itself. The “spade” reference puns on Walcott’s African heritage (alongside Dutch and English), as well as invoking the work he is doing, digging up a dark past. Running through the garden, though, the river takes on a redemptive quality, troped as the healing movement.

49 “Coole and Ballylee, 1931.” Walcott’s river recalls Yeats’s streaming “waters” as well. Yeats 244.
of time and the equally mollifying effect of nature.

Walcott makes an analogy to the architects, tradesmen, and by extension, the colonial poets whose perspectives often sought to insulate the exploitative reality of slavery from the idyllic tropical fantasy of plantation existence:

I climbed a wall with the grille ironwork
Of exiled craftsmen protecting that great house
From guilt, perhaps, but not from the worm's rent
Nor from the padded cavalry of the mouse. (IGN 20)

The speaker registers the "grille[d] ironwork" design left by displaced "craftsmen" in a way that alludes symbolically to the writing of other poets. This literary element is developed: "when a wind shook in the limes I heard / What Kipling heard; the death of a great empire, the abuse / Of ignorance by Bible and by sword." The Kipling and Bible references connect the "craftsmen" to the wider foundations of the "house of literature" he associates with the British empire. Surveying the vista, he describes: "A green lawn, broken by low walls of stone / Dipped to the rivulet," and "pacing" as though on battlements, thinks of "men like Hawkins, Walter Raleigh, Drake, / Ancestral murderers and poets, more perplexed / In memory now by every ulcerous crime." As these names come to the speaker's mind, the pattern-book behind this Great House's design is implied as lying partly in literary memory; a now fragmented structure whose makers once shared in an empire's fortunes.

The ruins become emblematic of a broader dissolution: "The world's green age then was a rotting lime / Whose stench became the charnel galleon's text. / The rot remains with us, the men are gone." This "rot" assumes a transformative role, however: "as dead ash is lifted in a wind, / That fans the blackening ember of the mind, / My eyes burned from the ashen prose of Donne." Reading the ruins is crossed with literary memory. The speaker dramatizes the Great House's fall as a dialectical conflict within his own mind, centered on the question of how to come
to terms with historical grievances:

Ablaze with rage, I thought
Some slave is rotting in this manorial lake,
And still the coal of my compassion fought:
That Albion too, was once
A colony like ours, ‘Part of the continent, piece of the main’
Nook-shotten, rook o’er blown, deranged
By foaming channels, and the vain expense
Of bitter faction.

All in compassion ends
So differently from what the heart arranged:
‘as well as if a manor of thy friend’s...’

Walcott re-reads the trope of the Great House within the sphere of a cultural relativism, the ethical imperative he brings to bear lifting it out of the politico-historical mire of the past. The house emerges from the ruins a “‘manor’” restored to some degree, less through an act of homage than an accommodation within memory. Though Donne gives him his final lines, again a Yeatsian note can be detected in Walcott’s reconciliation of his bitterness, as if the ruins have given him a tower-like vantage-point from which to view matters. A foundational center is claimed.

Walcott reads the ruins as organically integrated into the island’s heritage, their presence becoming part of the natural landscape’s regenerative force. Using the Great House’s transmutation as a metaphor for an insurgent hybrid culture, he deliberately undermines the elegiac aspect of his poem. The refusal to “dryly grieve” the past in an unproductive way suggests lines from Omeros regarding St. Lucia: “For those to whom history is the presence // of ruins, there is a green nothing” (O 192). As discussed in chapter two, that ‘nothing’ may represent fecund possibility, in a creative amnesia restructuring old habits of reading architecture and texts with “stony regret.” Again in Omeros, Walcott draws attention to material reminders of the past and deliberately refuses to idealize or extract economic history from the prospect evoked. “The logwoods,” observes
the narrator, were once:

part of an estate with its windmill as old as
the village below it. The abandoned road runs
past huge rusted cauldrons, vats for boiling the sugar,

and blackened pillars. These are the only ruins
left here by history, if history is what they are. (O 20)

The landscapes of village and former estate are embedded in one another, but also
within an embracing, ‘epic memory’ that has superseded “history.” Over-
reaching colonial designs are recalled in a way devoid of sentimentality, as the
relics from the plantation form ironic ‘monuments’ to once lauded forces of
production. The legacy of pain and exploitation the “blackened pillars” hide is
absorbed into the regenerative ground of being that makes up the present.

Seeking to revise both the proprietary delusions of colonizers, and the
historical ennui associated with ruins, Walcott encourages broken-down
architectural structures to take on some of the fluid characteristics he praises in
the sea. He often reiterates this point: “Ruins are out of place in the tropics,
where vegetation smothers stones and makes the most ancient structure
immediate with flowering vines, doves and scuttering mongooses. The less history
one is forced to remember, the better for Art.”50 Once more, he places ‘epic
memory’ above history’s lament: “The sigh of History rises over ruins, not over
landscapes, and in the Antilles there are few ruins to sigh over, apart from the
ruins of sugar estates and abandoned forts” (A 7). Against their place in the
collective psyche the compact with the natural landscape is asserted. In
“Names,” for example, an organic principle of architecture is suggested:

These palms are greater than Versailles,

50 Walcott states: “If you are on land looking at ruins, the ruins commemorate you. They more
commemorate than lament the achievement of man. [...] In a way they commemorate decay. That’s the
elegiac point. The sea is not elegiac in that way. The sea does not have anything on it that is a memento of
man.” “An Interview with Derek Walcott,” interview with J. P. White, Green Mountains Review 4.1
for no man made them,
their fallen columns greater than Castille,
no man unmade them. (SG 42)

A natural immediacy is framed here, though Walcott cannot resist the urge to evoke analogies with the fall of empires in the reference to toppled "columns." History returns in such architectural metaphors, 'ghosting' the forms on the landscape he represents in numerous poems, and haunting memory.

The center represented by the Great House in Walcott's poetry will be referred to again below. A closely related pair of sites act as a recurrent focal-point for him as well, though. He reads vestiges of presence—an 'underlife'—in balconies and verandahs in several poems, and these locii become a way of creatively engaging and figuratively entering deeper issues in memory. As architectural features they tend to provide a mediating place from which poetic perspective can be framed.52 In "Port of Spain" the balcony railing figures symbolically for a city's streets: "I can understand / Borges's blind love of Buenos Aires, / how a man feels the veins of a city swell in his hand" (FT'62). Throughout Walcott's verse many similar prospects tend to appear, recalling a poet's tower in outlook at times.

The speaker is not always directly on the structure, however. In "Chapter II / 'Qu'un sang impur..." from "Tales of the Islands," for instance, the balcony acts as a stage he observes. Cosimo de Chrétien is seen "Peering from balconies for his tragic twist" (IGN 26). A dramatic flourish also attaches to the three-part "Castiliane," where the balcony emblematically figures a style, and then a 'spirit':

The GOLONDRINA is a sour hotel,
Redeemed, like Creole architecture,
By its ornate, wrought-iron balcony;
A floral asterisk to grace a lecture
On 'Spanish Art In The Last Century'. (IGN 45)

52 Large plantation houses were stylistic hybrids. Invariably during the 1700s, due to climate, verandahs and galleries were added to these European-inspired structures, making for what has been called an "essential Creole characteristic." See Slesin, et al. 67.
As in “Ruins of a Great House” the design of the ironwork acts as a text inspiring Walcott’s obsessively literary memory. An imaginary woman, the speaker’s ‘creation’ Doña Maria is read there, her “haunted face, / Dim as an antique faun’s, fin de siècle style, / Imprisoned in the grillwork’s leafless green.” Her smile can “evolve Alhambras” he proclaims, opening the way to a host of Moorish castles, “Albums of lost Alhambras, swaying cypresses” (IGN 46). The poem’s lyric form draws some of this structural grandeur into its frame through the evocative imagery, closing the distance between Castille and Castries (hence, “Castiliane”).

Focused on the balcony, architectural imagery becomes a threshold point where the forces of memory and the redemptive powers of art intersect for Walcott, offering a transformative imaginative engagement:

Yet, Doña Maria, like a worn-out song
That keeps a phrase of wisdom in our ears,
Like the sad gaiety of a drunk guitar,
Like the bright gardens which blind vendors sell,
I watch your ancient, simple spirit where
Its letters flake across the balcony from the façade of a third-rate hotel.

Walcott evokes a sense of a world infused with innate lyricism existing beneath the apparently mundane. He reads an animating ‘spirit’ into the structure.

Verandahs also make frequent appearances in the poetry. One poem in particular, connected to a family member, stands out. Walcott’s grandfather was a planter who emigrated to St. Lucia from England. He apparently committed suicide by burning down his Choiseul house while inside. “Verandah” works as an imaginative reconstruction of that central place in Walcott’s memory.

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53 Cf. “The Gulf,” where Walcott makes an architectural connection between the American South and the Caribbean: “Yet the South felt like home. Wrought balconies” (G 61).

54 In the opening of Another Life, for instance, Walcott writes: “Verandahs, where the pages of the sea / are a book left open by an absent master / in the middle of another life” (Al. 3). An almost mock-epic call to arms, the playfully ostentatious beginning seems a graceful rebuke to the Anna figure’s later doubts of a “race incapable of subtler shadow, / of music, architecture, and a complex thought” (Al. 109). These verandahs, Walcott implies, retain a dignity making them as fit for song as any sublime structure the Muse might deign to visit.
Verandahs functioned as gathering places for colonial planters at the end of each day, and he draws on this architectural significance. The poem, however, is dedicated to Ronald Bryden, renowned for his work in theater. While the imagery and stanzaic progression—ten tercets, two quatrains, a final, single line—imply a visual mapping of the verandah’s length, Walcott also treats the area as a form of set. His opening lines have an element of the stage direction about them:

Grey apparitions at verandah ends
like smoke, divisible, but one
your age is ashes, its coherence gone,

Planters whose tears were marketable gum, whose voices
scratch the twilight like dried fronds
edged with reflection

The planter’s voices are brought to present imaginative life as they mirror the speaker’s, scratching not so much as “dried fronds,” but as writing quills. Their “tears” become written memoirs, *triste tropique*, the bleb in the pen’s eye.

Walcott’s depiction of the verandah becomes panoramic as he narrates the trappings of a lost colonial world. A procession of sensory images unfolds:

Upholders of Victoria’s china seas
lapping embossed around a drinking mug,
bully-boy roarer of the Empire club,

To the taran-tara of the bugler, the sunset furled
round the last post,
the ‘flamingo colours’ of a fading world,

A ghost steps from you, my grandfather’s ghost!

These overlapping images generate a mounting excitement, making the ghost step like Hamlet’s father from the verandah. The speaker describes laying to rest the grandfather’s remains: “Your mixed son gathered your charred blackened bones,

/ in a child’s coffin // And buried them himself on a strange coast.”

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55 Originally pub. as “Veranda” (C 38). I quote the most recent version from the *Collected Poems*, as the spelling “Verandah” is more consistent with current usage. Walcott, *Collected Poems* 89.

56 Walcott, “Verandah,” *Collected Poems* 90. Subsequent references from this page.
to the process is found in the making of the poem. The burial of the “coffin”
becomes a form of foundation-making for future generations as well, as the bones
are linked with the burnt timbers of the house and its verandah.

The raising of the grandfather’s spirit and the old house’s memory are
combined in what follows, made to coincide with the infusion of the bone-timbers
into new lives as a “roof tree.” They grow again, in Walcott’s conception:

Sire,
why do I raise you up? Because

Your house has voices, your burnt house,
shrills with unguessed, lovely inheritors,
your genealogical roof tree, fallen, survives,
like seasoned timber through green, little lives.

Through the grandfather’s emblematic bones the house reverts to its source
material. Walcott enters into a still deeper mode of visionary perception at this
point. The speaker “ripen[s]” towards his grandfather’s “twilight.” “[S]tinged in
that sea-crossing,” he steams towards “that vaporous world, whose souls. // Like
pressured trees brought diamonds out of coals.” At once a vision of the Middle
Passage, other migrational experiences are also drawn in. The strength of will
required to survive those testing journeys is caught in the transformative
properties accorded to the ship here. But the “diamonds” change in the next
lines to stars: “The sparks pitched from your burning house are stars. / I am the
man my father loved and was.” In tracing the provenance of this bone-house
wood, Walcott alludes to the carbon origins of life, as the stars or sparks
metaphorically stand for human beings as well. In a sense, the “burning house” is
conflated with a slave ship. Both are doomed progenitors of life, and with the
image of “sparks pitched” from the house, Walcott raises up and includes in his
structure those unfortunates tossed overboard from the slavers. Their memory
also burns in the pyre he envisages, and the unheard voices enter his own, with
those of his father and grandfather.
Walcott brings matters back to the initial imaginary house in his final lines:

I climb the stair
and stretch a darkening hand to greet those friends
who share with you the last inheritance
of earth, our shrine and pardonner.

grey, ghostly loungers at verandah ends.

Though events appear to end with the speaker mounting into the verandah’s frame, he is now both a “pardoner” and a “lounger” himself. Poet, father and grandfather are drawn together as one. The poem merges with the house in the notion of “our shrine,” becoming a devotional place, hallowed by memory, as well as the literary equivalent of a tomb or casket containing sacred relics. Given Walcott’s acute awareness of the architectural crossover with poetry and the way in which he bookends “Verandah” with such closely-worded lines, the etymology of “shrine” from the Latin scrinium meaning ‘book-case’ may be significant. Enshrining the triumvirate of Walcott’s in its metaphorical house of transformation, the form of “Verandah” also tells a story.

In “The Train,” Walcott wonders where his “randy white grandsire” came from, prior to quitting England for the West Indies (G 54). En route in the “harrowed” English countryside, the speaker laments, “I cannot change places, / I am half-home,” but a sense of shared identity emerges in connection with another forefather in the adjacent sonnet “Homage to Edward Thomas.” The cultural shaping force of poetry is given an ambiguously outlined center in the evocation of the “manor-house” which is associated with Thomas. It opens:

Formal, informal, by a country’s cast
topography delineates its verse,
erects the classic bulk, for rigid contrast
of sonnet, rectory or this manor-house
dourly timbered against these sinuous
Downs, defines the formal and informal prose
of Edward Thomas’s poems which make this garden
return its subtle scent of Edward Thomas
in everything here hedged or loosely grown. (G 55)
Walcott’s continuously drawn-out sentence marking the line scheme entwines around the central image of Thomas and his corpus of work. A “country’s cast” puns upon ‘caste.’

A landscape cultured by the spirit of Thomas into a fully proclaimed topos, behind the stewardship of this *genius loci* lies the “classic bulk” of English architecture and literature which also “delineates” its forms, and would map the shape and extent of his writing within a strict “topography.”

Yet Walcott implies Thomas and his work resist such a classification. Jonson’s lines of praise from the end of “To Penshurst” are recalled in the “classic bulk” comparisons that would critically “proportion” Thomas’s achievement. “Now, Penshurst, they that will proportion thee,” Jonson writes, “With other edifices, when they see / Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else, / May say, their lords have built, but thy lord dwells.” Thomas ‘dwells’ in the essence of literary memory the flowers incarnate, fused in natural repose. As in “Verandah,” a green ‘afterlife’ survives him. Walcott confirms this deeper identification of Thomas with the spirit of the manor-house’s garden in the last part of his homage:

> Lines which you once dismissed as tenuous because they would not howl or overwhelm, as crookedly grave-bent, or cuckoo-dreaming, seeming dissoluble as this Sussex down harden in their indifference, like this elm.

As Williams notes of Thomas’s poem “I never saw that land before,” there is “a sense of being driven back to a hidden language, ‘a language not to be betrayed’, an inexpressible alienation.” This, finally, is the site of “indifference”

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57 Terada reads “cast” as implying “sculpture or printing—in either case, controlled arrangement,” going on to link this with the topographical motif. She suggests that Walcott’s emphasis on “this manor-house” may refer to “the sonnet on the page […] metaphorized” into an analogous structure. Terada 164.

58 Jonson, “To Penshurst” 98.


60 Williams 261. For “I never saw that land before,” see Thomas 104.
Walcott locates him within as well, at the “hidden” heart of a Georgian retreat.61

In Sea Grapes the Great House again comes under scrutiny through the landscape it occupies in “Midsummer, England.” Henley’s “legendary landscapes are alive, / palpable air; woods, castles, manors, suns, / pressing their postcards on you as you drive” (SG 75). In a reversal of the prospect idea the speaker appears the center of attention, closed in on by the setting. The “postcard” scenes dictate his gaze as that of a tourist. Adopting an apocalyptic, Yeatsian tone, the persona interprets this as defensiveness, describing: “the fear of darkness entering England’s vein, / the noble monuments pissed on by rain, / the imperial blood corrupted.” As with “Ruins of a Great House,” a restorative note persists. Summer’s greater design triumphs, trying through “love-nourishing rain / to dissolve individual grief, / history and heart-break.” The last stanza grows ambiguous again, however, as the season takes dominion over the scene:

Prodigious summer whose black fruit includes,
past this and that great house,
between hills bracketing thunder,
a great cloud’s shadow that grows close
as the past, a chill that intrudes
under the heat, under the centuries;
rooks swinging in the wind, under great boughs,
lynched crows, on a green field. (SG 76)

Walcott redirects the colonial tropes of reading the West Indies against the English landscape, portraying this countryside as haunted by its imperial past. The “black fruit,” linked to the “great cloud’s shadow” and the lynchings, recall the underside of the colonial enterprise usually repressed in the poetic imaginary of “imperial georgic.” They signify in Walcott’s text the brutally realized traces, or strange fruits of labor, that prospects from “improved” mansions were “artificially emptied of,” as Elizabeth Bohls comments on Williams’s reading of

61 Regarding this “indifference,” Williams notes that in “For These” Thomas rehearses and finally rejects “the conventional images of the Georgian retreat: “an acre of land between the shore and the hills”, the house, the garden […]” Williams 261.
"To Penshurst."  Writing back to empire, Walcott tests the center he figures in the idea of the Great House, considering whether it holds.

* * *

Returning to the West Indies, we find Walcott paying a meditative homage to a writer through the invocations of memory, centered on plantation architecture. In "Jean Rhys," from *The Fortunate Traveller*, photographs, "faint [...] mottled with chemicals," are the frame of reference wherein the speaker observes the genteel figures who have "drifted to the edge" of verandahs in "Whistlerian / white, their jungle turned tea-brown" (*FT*45). A fin de siècle milieu is evoked, as Walcott re-imagines the estate amongst the lime trees. The mill-wheel—another vital "hub of systems"—is described as the keeper of time itself: "the cement grindstone of the afternoon / turns slowly, sharpening her senses, / the bay below is green as calalou, stewing Sargasso" (*FT*46). A symbolic reminder of the economic stakes underlying the torpor of the scene, the wheel also acts as an emblem for the quickening of Rhys's artistic sensibilities. Walcott again deploys the trope in relation to the Great House, and to language and creativity in "The Star-Apple Kingdom," where architecture becomes an extended metaphor for cultural transformation on an epic scale.

In this long poem, Walcott uses the Great House as the central site of consciousness for his protagonist, Michael Manley, Jamaican prime minister at the time. Over the course of seventeen stanzas, the ironies of political responsibility and the nature of territorial divisions in the West Indies are explored. Manley is portrayed as caught up in the fantasy of power the Great House symbolizes, which Walcott questions in terms of both homage and critique. The poem opens with a reminder of the picturesque framing of the Jamaican landscape by former

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62 Bohls 188.

63 As, for example, in these lines: "One morning the Caribbean was cut up / by seven prime ministers who bought the sea in bolts" (*SA*53).
observers:

There were still shards of an ancient pastoral
in those shires of the island where the cattle drank
their pools of shadow from an older sky,
surviving from when the landscape copied such subjects as
"Herefords at Sunset in the Valley of the Wye." (SAK 46)

Walcott intimates how landscape aesthetics, as formulated in the eighteenth
century in a number of authors, and in poetic works such as James Thomson’s
*The Seasons*, affected the depiction of the West Indies. Here, however, the
process of projection found in Edward Long’s *History of Jamaica*, for instance,
becomes a means of defamiliarizing his own topographic prospect of the
countryside.64

The georgic dignifying of labor as constitutive of moral fibre acts as an ironic
frame of reference for the speaker’s description, as the “shards” of empire emerge
as workerless mills. They mark Walcott’s other main concern in the poem, the fate
of language:

The mountain water that fell white from the mill wheel
sprinkling like petals from the star-apple trees,
and all of the windmills and sugarmills moved by mules
on the treadmill of Monday to Monday, would repeat
in tongues of water and wind and fire, in tongues
of Mission School pickaninnies, like rivers remembering
their source, Parish Trelawny, Parish St. David, Parish
St. Andrew, the names afflicting the pastures

An ideological dominance is asserted in the way these various mills organize time
in Walcott’s conception: “Monday to Monday.” A constant measuring out of
existence in labor terms is asserted, but their rhythms generate a mnemonic effect,
training the land and language together in an insidious manner.

We are gradually led into the Great House through the insistent Parish
naming as the indeterminate temporality of the scene is maintained:

And there were, like old wedding lace in an attic,

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64 See Bohls, especially 185-89. Long’s *History* was accompanied by various views of the Jamaican
countryside painted by Isaac Taylor.
among the boas and parasols and the tea-colored
daguerreotypes, hints of an epochal happiness
as ordered and infinite to the child
as the great house road to the Great House
down a perspective of casuarinas plunging green manes
in time to the horses, an orderly life
reduced by lorgnettes day and night, one disc the sun,
the other the moon, reduced into a pier glass:
nannies diminished to dolls, mahogany stairways
no larger than those of an album in which
the flax of cutlery yellows, as gamboge as
the piled cakes of teatime on that latticed
bougainvillea verandah that looked down toward
a prospect of Cuyp-like Herefords under a sky
lurid as a porcelain souvenir with these words:
“Herefords at Sunset in the Valley of the Wye.” (SAK 46-47)

The observation of an “orderly life” recalls Marvell’s “Upon Appleton House”
and the sentiment: “But all things are composed here / Like Nature, orderly and
near.” Following this line the picture alters, though. Through various details a
miniature doll’s house plantation is revealed, things “diminished” and “reduced”
to no longer accord with memory. The vision is given a “lurid” sheen with this
reading, disorientating perspective in the “emanation of a fantasy” Glissant
determines, as cited in relation to “The Plantation.” The prospect from the Great
House appears a superficial “dream” to the speaker.

In the second stanza the estate order is further disrupted by Walcott in a way
reminiscent of “Midsummer, England.” The repressed “curse of labour” returns,
which Williams notes poems such as “To Penshurst” and Thomas Carew’s “To
Saxham” began excluding to better “bless the country landowner, or, by a
characteristic reification, his house.” The “simple extraction of the existence of
labourers” which colonial West Indian poets also resorted to on occasion, is
again referenced by Walcott as he draws attention to all those house workers

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65 Marvell, “Upon Appleton House” 54.
66 Glissant 67.
67 Williams 32.
excluded from the frames of representation, “their mouths locked in the locked jaw of a silent scream” (SAK 47). “[I]nnocently excluded,” the speaker acidly notes, “the groom, the cattle boy, the housemaid, the gardeners, / the tenants, the good Negroes down in the village.” This scream marks an excess the Great House’s architecture cannot contain: “A scream which would open the doors to swing wildly / all night, that was bringing in heavier clouds, / more black smoke than cloud.” It turns into a “scorching wind of a scream,” that begins to dry the water mill “creaking to a stop / as it was about to pronounce Parish Trelawny / all over, in the ancient pastoral voice.” The scream’s transformation sees it take on a diasporic power as the dark reverie of the Great House fades.

Yet the phrase “ancient pastoral” is sounded a third time, stressing the ambivalent, warning edge in Walcott’s association of Manley with the Great House, in some ways a (potential) “reification” of his character, in Williams’s terms. The Manley figure stares from the “Great House windows,” taking in the changed prospect, faced with the “wind of a scream” continuing outside:

    his hand could not dam that ceaseless torrent of dust
    that carried the shacks of the poor, to their root-rock music,
    down the gullies of Yallahs and August Town,
    to lodge them on thorns of maca, with their rags
    crucified by cactus, tins, old tires, cartons;
    from the black Warieka Hills the sky glowed fierce as
    the dials of a million radios,
    a throbbing sunset that glowed like a grid
    where the dread beat rose from the jukebox of Kingston. (SAK 48)

In one of Walcott’s most vivid portrayals of shantytown sprawl, the rhythms of a resurgent, vernacular sensibility are summoned, recalling Glissant’s view: “The Plantation region, having joined with the endless terrain of haciendas or latifundio, spread thin to end up in mazes of sheet metal and concrete in which our common future takes its chances.” A ramshackle element also marks the line lengths, the form mimetically evoking the teeming array of houses and streets.

68 Glissant 73.
Transfigured in dust and music, the wind comes to resemble a “torrent” filling this spatial matrix, yet the protagonist can think only of the pastorally-inflected ‘language’ of the Jamaican countryside, now running dry: “He saw the fountains dried of quadrilles, the water-music / of the country dancers, the fiddlers like fifes / put aside.” There are no “vowels left / in the mill wheel, the river. Rock stone. Rock stone.”69 But Manley takes it upon himself to “heal / this material island,” and the Great House where he dwells becomes the place from which Walcott articulates this desire for restoration.

The dream-vision of the Manley protagonist enters the simulcra of a vanished Jamaican world, imaged underwater. He sways “like a stone down fathoms into sleep,” the waterwheel imagery employed again:

The house is rocking at anchor, but as he falls
his mind is a mill wheel in moonlight, the drowned
bell of Port Royal’s cathedral, sees the copper pennies
of bubbles rising from the empty eye-pockets
of green buccaneers, the parrot fish floating
from the frayed shoulders of pirates, sea horses
drawing gowned ladies in their liquid promenade
across the moss-green meadows of the sea. (SAK 49)

He hears the “drowned choirs under Palisadoes, / a hymn ascending to earth from
a heaven inverted / by water, a crab climbing the steeple.” Walcott figures the experience in this “submarine kingdom” as a baptism with the Caribbean as a “font.” The diver encounters a tableaux-like rehearsal of West Indian history:

“Jamaica was captured by Penn and Venables, / Port Royal perished in a
cataclysmic earthquake” (SAK 50). The following stanza extends the font idea, evoking the “coruscating façades of cathedrals / from Santiago to Caracas” and the Caribbean as an “elliptical basin,” its islands a rosary, intoned by the “dispossessed [...] for three hundred years, / a hymn that resounded like the hum

of the sea / inside a sea-cave.” Moving toward recent times, the vision turns prosaic: “the hotels went up, and the casinos and brothels, / and the empires of tobacco, sugar, and bananas.” Yet the architectural focusing of the imagery is kept on the Great House, its frame providing context, its center anchoring the dream in Manley’s mind.

The black woman who knocks at the “door of his dream” saying: “I’m the Revolution. I am the darker, the older America” returns uncannily from the collective unconscious. But she is also simply a figure from childhood:

the housemaid and the cook,
the young grand’ who polished the plaster figure
of Clio, Muse of history, in her seashell grotto
in the Great House parlour, Anadyomene washed
in the deep Atlantic heave of her housemaid’s hymn. (SAK 55)

Through her, the house marks a wellspring into an alternative source of myth and memory in the sea itself that belies its backwater status in other eyes: “What was the Caribbean? A green pond mantling / behind the Great House columns of Whitehall, / behind the Greek facades of Washington” (SAK 56). These locii seem two sides of the same coin, emblematically struck by empire. Manley must struggle against this world-weary attitude as a political leader. Yet, the visionary capacities of the West Indies are stressed by Walcott through the allegorical guise of the black woman, and the plumbing of the sea’s imaginative depths. The Great House is enjoined in this transformation, and as with the divining imagery ending “Mycenae Lookout,” a sense is evoked that submarine energies coeval with the collective memory can be tapped. Near the end of the poem the Manley figure is portrayed identifying with the excluded workers from the Great House, as he feels his “jaw drop / again with the weight of that silent scream.” Here Walcott aligns Manley within that “scorching wind” the scream becomes. He no longer stands outside, watching from the windows, but is incorporated in this metaphor for the dynamic resilience of Jamaican culture.
The underwater excursion narrated in Manley’s dream-vision proves a recurrent trope in Walcott’s poetry. On several occasions a problematic siting of an underwater city, a coral El Dorado, is made. “The Sea is History,” he writes in a poem of the same name, and it is in this light that his “parodic” architecture, all “subtle and submarine,” can be understood (SAK 25-26). These “colonnades of coral” and “gothic windows of sea-fans,” where “groined caves with barnacles / pitted like stone / are our cathedrals,” may also mark part of an ironic rebuttal of utopian fantasies of the West Indian future, for the hybrid vistas of epic, “tribal memory.” However, the exact terms on which Walcott defines his underwater allegories seem to resist final determination, though the use of architecture as an integral part of his imaginary settings remains constant. A cultural compact with another temporal order is finally suggested in Omeros.

In “North and South,” a connection with colonialism and language is made by the speaker that evokes ancient cities, now submerged:

It’s good that everything’s gone, except their language, which is everything. And it may be a childish revenge at the presumption of empires to hear the worm gnawing their solemn columns into coral, to snorkel over Atlantis, to see, through a mask, Sidon up to its windows in sand, Tyre, Alexandria, with their wavering seaweed spires through a glass-bottom boat. (FT 11)

The ruins of empire lie submerged in the sea’s ‘history’ he implies, a fact relished in this satirical fantasy of discovering an old world in the Caribbean’s depths. Again, in Midsummer, XXIV, the language issue arises in conjunction with this architecture. “Was evil brought to this place / with language?” asks the speaker, “Did the sea worm bury that secret in clear sand, / in the coral cathedrals, the submarine catacombs / where the jellyfish trails its purple, imperial fringe?” (M 35). These structures parody and threaten to outlast achievements built on land,

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70 Cf. Walcott’s assertion: “In the subconscious there is a black Atlantis buried in a sea of sand. The colonial is tougher. He sees history for what it is in the world around him, an almost inexpressible banality.” “Muse” 22.
creating a castled dynasty of forgotten, whimsical grandeur that undermines imperial and neo-colonial logics of progress or ‘improvement.’

Walcott initially creates a mock empire of ease in “the corals’ bone kingdom” represented in *Omeros*. Achille undergoes a series of dream-vision submersions in this Caribbean underworld: “Why was he down here, from their coral palaces, / pope-headed turtles asked him” (*O* 45). The sea’s vault of history is idealized as a treasure-chest, its “ransom of centuries” counted by a “moon-blind Cyclops” behind “mossy doors” as light paves the “ceiling with silver” (*O* 46). At another point Achille devolves into a “walking fish,” and journeys through a world of “groves” and “vast meadows of coral” which turn out to be “huge cemeteries // of bone” (*O* 142). The three centuries of aquatic journeying on this epic quest take him back in time to the African village of his forebears, whose idyllic premise is on the brink of being shattered by slavers.

Walcott eventually concentrates his architectural imagery into a creation myth signifying his own organic form of community. He envisages “a quiet culture,” emerging “strong as self-healing coral […] branching from the white ribs of each ancestor.” This West Indian coral culture grows at a tangent to history: “it will change us with the fluent sculpture of Time” (*O* 296). An architectural fantasia unfolds on the Antillean seabed:

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Below him, a parodic architecture
re-erected the earth’s crusted columns, its porous
temples, stoas through which whipping eels slide,

over him the tasselled palanquins of Portuguese man-o’-wars
bobbed like Asian potentates, when ribbed dunes hide
the spiked minarets, and the waving banners of moss

are the ghosts of motionless hordes. The crabs’ anabasis
scuttles under his wake, because this is the true element,
water, which commemorates nothing in its stasis. (*O* 296-97)
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In contrast to colonial designs, Walcott’s range of architectural structures points
to a "hybrid organism" escaping categorization: "From that coral and crystalline origin, a simply decent / race broke from its various pasts" (O 297). The opulence is ghosted by "motionless hordes," as the rhetorical excess of the description belies the "nothing" that is commemorated. "[I]t had coral parthenons," he continues, playfully evoking neo-classical parallels, "No needling steeple / magnetized pilgrims, but it grew a good people." Though this is also a place of the dead, an underworld, the accent on natural growth is constant; this city is not built, but evolves, self-formed, inventing itself out of nothing. Walcott offers a vision of intertwined architectural and cultural birth here, coral fusing to form an idealized center answering to its own designs.

A return to another ruined Great House as a site of cultural origin takes place in the first poem of "A Santa Cruz Quartet" from The Bounty. The speaker’s imagining of the house becomes an act of reconstruction that goes back in memory to colonial times and the way races "inevitably took root" in the valley (B 71). He describes the estate: "In their regulated avenues the orchards of grapefruit / hung easy and thick," noting how, "the rind of daylight ripened from green to rose, / as you came down the coiled asphalt ridge with its snaking turns." The speaker’s perspective flows unobtrusively into the scene with this approach, and he assumes a calmly meditative tone maintained over the twenty-five line stanza making up the poem. A feeling close to detachment marks the persona’s air: the argument with the self that informs "Ruins of a Great House" is absent. A pastoral vision of a lost garden, the speaker finds the landscape already aestheticized to the eye which absorbs the scene, a climate where "beauty is ordinary," and the memories benign. Marvell’s mower poems, and lines from "The Bermudas" are alluded to: "the yellow globes in the leaves glowed like Marvell’s lanterns; / then shed roofs began, the lost estate, the scarred quarry. / Imagine the scythes of harvesters on the old estate." No longer true "working
country.” this plantation has once again become a “landscape” in Walcott’s reading.\footnote{Cf. Williams’s comment: “A working country is hardly ever a landscape.” Williams 120.} Observing in turn, the reader-listener is led into the sanctuary of the estate through his persona’s continued invocations to “imagine […]” the prospect.

The ironic orchestration of vision Walcott adopts ‘simplifies’ his reading of the Great House and its grounds, thus according with a modified view of the past:

imagine a Great House (not that great in scale, without a scrolled gate or a keeper’s lodge, only a verandah with fretwork eaves, rocking chairs on the verandah) when the evening egret left off tick-picking cows for the enclosing leaves, and close the book then, with the natural rhythm of its wings and our simplified past.

The speaker’s parenthetical qualifications frame the house on a humbler scale, recalling the catalogue of negatives “To Penshurst” begins with, and offsetting any charge of ostentation. But this Great House ultimately merges with the landscape, becoming a symbol of the buried unity between races. All those who “loved the valley” are summoned within the memory the poet invites. No longer split by “bitter faction,” as in “Ruins of a Great House,” but “rooted in [the valley] with a differentiated love,” he discerns “races as varied as the cocoa pods in complexion, / the snow-speckled trunks enduring the affliction / of envy and hatred, a blight that time would remove.” Walcott celebrates the estate not in terms of improvement, but through the fall back into a reconciled nature. The past deeds and misdeeds of the former inhabitants sink “like the sorrow in the rich soil, until eventually / their history dimmed and vanished into fiction.” An ‘underlife’ is divined where the Great House once stood, but as in “Homage to Edward Thomas,” nature absorbs the essence of the dwellers in the receding “sorrow” of the earth and its resurgent forms.

Another poem from The Bounty evokes Yeats and the “serene domain” of an
“Eden” that descends equally from the fading plantation world, shorn of some of its ambivalence. This is Walcott’s house on Cap Estate, mentioned in chapter one:

Awaking to gratitude in this generous Eden, far from frenzy and violence in the discretion of distance, my debt, in Yeats’s phrase, to ‘the bounty of Sweden’ that has built this house facing white combers that stands for hot, rutted lanes far from the disease of power, spreads like that copper-beech tree whose roots are Ireland’s, with a foam-haired man pacing around a square tower muttering to a grey lake stirred by settling swans, in the flare of reputation; whose declining hour is exultation and fury both at once. (B61)

The homage transforms the beach house to unselfconsciously take in the tower, Yeats’s monument to the poetic will to power. Here the speaker awakes to “gratitude,” rather than to the tenacious “nightmare of history,” as out of place as ruins here: “There is no wood whose branches bear gules of amber / that scream when they are broken, no balsam cure, / nothing beyond those waves I care to remember.” Walcott’s form creates an immersive flow for the eye and ear, as Yeats’s example is decorously drawn into the poem’s structure.

Walcott’s celebration of the sea and the landscape around the house leads him to drift into the imaginary Irish setting, drawn from his reading of Yeats:

I heard the brass leaves of the roaring copper-beech, saw the swans white as winter, names carved on the breast of the tree trunk in the light and lilt of great speech, and the prayer of a clock’s hands at noon that come to rest over Ireland’s torment. No bounty is greater than walking to the edge of the rocks where the headland’s detonations exult in their natural metre, like white wings at Coole, the beat of his clapping swans.

Waves become analogous to poetic lines, metamorphosing into swans. The beat of the swans here is the “bell-beat” of the “clamorous wings” in Yeats’s “The Wild Swans at Coole,” who clap out mortality’s “natural metre” as well. Walcott accepts the “bounty” that is the exultant architecture of his form here, but also the house’s form itself, the reward for his endeavours as maker.
If Heaney accepts his poetic residence in the country house of "A Peacock's Feather" with mixed feelings, Walcott treats his beach house as a rightful inheritance. He fulfills the legacy relating to the nest-building of the swans that Yeats voices as a querulous open-ended conclusion to his earlier poem:

Among what rushes will they build,  
By what lake's edge or pool  
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
To find they have flown away. \(^{72}\)

With the waves as his swans, Walcott's beach house stands resolutely open to the sea and the elements in this poem, though a sense of removal from the local community persists. Yet a specific accord with literary tradition, the surrounds, and with both memory and history appears to have been reached in his eyes.

Walcott handles the Great House as a center on the landscape in a variety of ways in his poetry. The readings from "Ruins of a Great House," to "The Star Apple Kingdom" are filled with ambivalence, coming from an awareness of past history and biased representations. Yet in the poem from "A Santa Cruz Quartet" he allows his feelings of compassion to fully surface and influence his descriptive outlook. In the above Bounty poem, he proclaims his own demesne without any sense of guilt, confirming the sentiments expressed in the "Where I Live" article, quoted in chapter one. As in Heaney's view, certain architectural sites develop over time into "sacred places to adore" in his conception as well. \(^{73}\) Yet Walcott's iconoclastic power of imaginative revision, revealed in the portrayals of history's excluded 'underlife' in the earlier poems, remains undeniable. As in Heaney, we find a concern with the vibrant presences discernible in built structures and architectural objects. This allows him to evoke other temporalities within his poetic confines. To quote from the title of Baugh's study of *Another Life*, a process of "memory as vision" frequently results from Walcott's creative

\(^{72}\) Yeats 131-32.  
\(^{73}\) Marvell, "Upon Appleton House" 54.
engagement with the architectural. Through this imaginary framework deep cultural issues are frequently addressed.

* * *

Various traditions of representing architecture and landscape are apparent in the way Heaney and Walcott treat their subjects. However, they also explore architecture as a form made resonant by memory and imagination, suffused with "another life." From the estate house to the architecturalized object like the bone piece, or Walcott's invented organic community growing amongst coral "colonnades," a center and inner essence is defined. Throughout the poems discussed, an enigmatic sense of unreality hangs over the imagery and tone of many of the readings. Glissant's idea of the plantation as a fantasy, an "emanation," seems to spread beyond that topos, and attach in some way to architectural space in general, given the reveries each poet enters on occasion. Yet these reveries usually serve to remind the reader-listener of the underlying historical and political grounds every architectural structure or canonical "House of Literature" rests upon.

Architecture, and memory's crucial role as a means of animating form with regard to the handling of elegy, will be the central topic of the final chapter on the poetry. Heaney and Walcott often allude to earlier poets who have worked in the genre, echoing aspects of their texts. Thus the notions of literary memory and homage are important as well. Once more, the controlled invocation of the spatial creates the necessary circumstances for the imaginative investigation of matters relating to time.
Chapter Four: Elegiac Architecture

As John Ruskin declared, “We may live without [architecture] and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her.”¹ An elegy, literally a ‘mournful poem’ or lament, from the Greek elegos, structures memory of the dead through formal directives. All elegies are ‘monumental’ and thus architectural, designed in some sense to celebrate, commemorate, and house memory in an enduring fashion. Sharing with architectural structures the ability to be read, the elegy preserves a remembered presence. As argued in previous chapters, Heaney and Walcott frequently use architectural imagery as a means of exploring temporal concerns, and the elegy provides an example of poetic architecture that also involves the reader-listener in the process. In a way reminiscent of the mnemonic arts of memory, they often encourage us to imaginatively enter the poem, and to move through the figurative stanzaic ‘rooms’ remembering. Their elegies and homages are often built around architectural or spatial metaphors which can assume a mimetic function in relation to aspects of the formal design.

Jahan Ramazani notes how the elegiac genre is both a “literary construct,” and in psychoanalytic terms, a “mimesis of mourning.”² Melancholy and consolation form an “interplay” present in both ancient and modern instances.³ Ramazani suggests that Heaney’s elegies show a dialectical movement occurring between the two extremes—the “grief and reason” Brodsky speaks of—an argument that also holds true for Walcott.⁴ This structuring principle is often evoked. However, while concerned with lamenting human loss and praising achievement, any tribute to the memory of the deceased marks a paean to the rebuilding and sheltering power of poetry itself. In the line of Horace’s “aere

¹ Ruskin 234-35.
³ Ramazani 31.
"perennius" motif, the elegies of Heaney and Walcott are set to outlast the purely material construction through the orientation toward time. Each maintains a strong awareness of the tradition of poetic making to which he contributes.

The threefold process of memory formulated by Giambattista Vico is important in regard to the manner in which Heaney and Walcott construct their elegies and homages: "memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship."5 W. H. Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" provides a classic instance where remembrance, imitation in stanzic structure and a fresh sense of order come together in a unified design. Poetic voice is involved in this restoration. In elegy, states Walcott, "the voice becomes a vessel of the lost voice—whether Hardy on Swinburne, or Auden on Yeats."6 The poet may actively search out the voice’s presence in the architecture or landscape associated with the lost spirit he is lamenting. This occurs a number of times in the poems under discussion.

Heaney and Walcott frequently focus on what a person implicitly symbolized in their elegies: their ideals and credentials as creative beings located within a particular order. Thus a continued use of the architecturally inflected "language of forms" occurs in order to pay homage to their memory. As discussed in chapter three, certain architectural forms have elegiac qualities to them, becoming topoi for Heaney and Walcott, though they often alter this character through the restorative tropes they employ. The importance of historical and temporal associations connected with various sites is again strongly asserted in their work.

* * *

Heaney states of his childhood that it was, "full of death: only the first couple
of times scary and strange." All that "submerged life and memory" comes through in his poetry, along with an acceptance of death as "just an ordinary fact of life." Implying mastery, these assertions are based in a memory uniting the perfunctory with the mysterious: "This business of sitting all night in the wake-house, it's inscrutable as the Red Indians, an inner system of courtesy and honour and obligement." Decorum is associated with a particular architectural form here, as house becomes "wake-house." By extension, poetic form is converted into something more by the turn to elegy; it too relies on an "inner system." The forms of life translate death into a language that gives it a dimension of order. In his elegies Heaney keeps this dimension constantly moving for the reader-listener, defying the threat of atrophy in his aesthetic designs, making memory serve. Transporting the eye and ear, form generates a narrative 'quickening.'

In "The Folk Singers," death is undermined by lyric power. Heaney praises elegy through association with music's ability to restore, and raise spirits. The singers are heard: "Re-turning time-turned words, / Fitting each weathered song / To a new-grooved harmony" (DN 42). "Death's edge," asserts the speaker, "Blunts on the narcotic strumming." Poetry's ability to vex mortality through form is celebrated, as in "Requiem for the Croppies," Heaney's first "public elegy" according to Ramazani. The idea of form as a living, insurgent force is also caught. Heaney tropes this elsewhere in connection with architecture. On Vinegar Hill the rebels perish in their "Terraced thousands" (DD 12). But the spirits lay claim to the landscape as barley grows "up out of the grave" from their pockets. The speaker's earlier description holds: "We moved quick and sudden in our own country." Heaney's lines rehearse in their form what they signify, each turning up the ground again to bear the "quick" of ancestral memory to the

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7 Corcoran, Seamus Heaney 14, 15.
8 Corcoran, Seamus Heaney 15.
9 Ramazani 336.
reader-listener. Helen Vendler calls this a "resurrection-motif." She also draws attention to how the use of sonnet form also functions as a reclamation on Heaney’s part. It affirms, she states, "that the old aristocratic genres have life in them yet, and may be translated into poems defending rural values." The sonnet repeats in its bounded, "fatal conclave" a meeting locked in the landscape’s memory like a turn of season, or the return of each line in rhyme. Remembrance, imagination and invention, to recall Vico’s definition of memory, are interwoven in the gesture.

A link to ancient forms on the landscape is made in “Cairn-maker,” dedicated to the Irish painter Barrie Cooke. In this homage, consisting of four squat quatrains, a vernacular architecture is symbolized by the cairns the speaker recalls Cooke making: “Unexpected hives and castlings / Pennanted” with rushes and flowers (WO 39). Robbing “stones’ nests,” and “dress[ing] some stones with his own mark,” cairn-building becomes a primordial metaphor for art’s transformations. The logic behind the “language of forms” of ancient Celtic systems of land-use is echoed in Heaney’s tribute. Distinctive stones, cairns, ring-forts, and high crosses were vital in the layout of field boundaries to reaffirm ownership. As Orla Murphy writes: “The Irish language not only represented a code through which every mark on the land could be signified, defined and elaborated; it also provided for the people a way of weaving themselves into the land, through their own names and stories.” Following their forebears, Cooke and Heaney continue this process in the symbolic language of art.

In "Funeral Rites," from *North*, the ceremonial aspects defining the form of

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11 Orla Murphy, “Building in the Irish Landscape,” Becker, et al. eds. 37. The social relationship to the land altered with the advent of the English Plantation, almost vanishing during the nineteenth century. See also Heaney’s “Land,” where the ‘stepping’ of a field is described, recalling old Irish treading and perambulation ceremonies. The persona then raises a cairn. A self-elegiac quality is present, as he is leaving the place, and a correlation between the cairn, a scarecrow, and the poem itself is made: “This is in place of what I would leave” (WO 11).
an Irish funeral are made a central issue by Heaney, as the architectural becomes a
door into both memory, and archaic times. Set in three parts of eight, seven and
five quatrains respectively, the use of enjambment proves significant:

I shouldered a kind of manhood,
stepping in to lift the coffins
of dead relations.
They had been laid out

in tainted rooms,
their eyelids glistening,
their dough-white hands
shackled in rosary beads. (N 6)

The emphasis that falls on “tainted rooms” reminds us of the even ‘layout’ of the
lines in the stanzaic formation. Framed in the opening quatrain, the speaker’s
body is metaphorically cast as an architectural foundation, “shouldering”
responsibility, stepped in like a door-pillar. Each part begins with a similar door
image. Throughout, the speaker observes details of the mourning process in a
detached manner. Kissing the “igloo brows” of the dead in these rooms prepares
the reader for the perverse domesticity of “neighbourly murder” in part II.

The speaker declares: “we pine for ceremony, / customary rhythms,” as a
funeral cortège is envisaged “winding past / each blinded home” (N 7). A proper
realization of “ceremony” lies out of reach, bringing the firm undertaking:

I would restore
the great chambers of Boyne
prepare a sepulchre
under the cupmarked stones.

The speaker imagines himself as an architectural passage-grave restorer. 12 He
implies that the chambers are in ruin, and he will represent the original form anew.
This restoration finds its figurative equivalent in the poem’s space. A vision is
embarked upon as Heaney begins inventing, re-troping the elegiac, imagining

12 A passage-grave is a “megalithic tomb in which the tomb-chamber is approached by a passage.” See
Craig and Glin 113.
how “family cars / nose into line,” and the “whole country tunes / to the muffled drumming // of ten thousand engines” (N 8). He imagines a collective sensory immersion in the “slow triumph / towards the mounds.” The part finishes with the procession’s serpent-like head on the threshold of the tomb, framed in its “megalithic doorway.” Heaney’s restoration of the chamber tomb as a monument works to make the structure a space where human symbolically meets the divine.

In part III the cortège departs. Using an idiomatic phrase, the speaker evokes the poetic decorum of another epoch to describe the grave’s closing: “When they have put the stone / back in its mouth.” The sexualized imagery of the tomb’s penetration by living forces with the body implies that the ceremony has brought a shared respite, the “cud of memory / allayed for once, arbitration / of the feud placated.” Yet it is the re-entry of imagination into the native recesses of the chambers that marks the way Heaney sees the ritualistic power of poetry triumphing, turning elegiac ruin into a site of transformation. This becomes a vision shared, as the speaker pictures those driving north, “imagining those under the hill.” The tomb houses the dead, ennobled by association, “disposed like Gunnar / who lay beautiful / inside his burial mound” (N 9). In an Orphic defiance of death, his tongue refuses to be stilled:

Men said that he was chanting
verses about honour
and that four lights burned
in corners of the chamber:
which opened then, as he turned
with a joyful face
to look at the moon.

Gunnar’s “chanting” precipitates the translation into the afterlife, made coincident with the chamber’s sudden opening toward space. Symmetrical placement of the “four lights” in the chamber’s “corners” suggests a final intersection in the elegiac architecture, as the final room in his ‘passage-grave’ is
traversed, line by line.

The world-opening prospect of poetry is celebrated in "Funeral Rites." Heaney implies that the restoration of forms to affirm enduring values carries its own imaginative and ethical imperative. In Field Work, a collection he has described as "full of public elegies," form's redress is felt strongly in terms of his poetic architecture. The dedications to several poems appear almost incised in stone, reinforcing the monumental aspect. "The Strand at Lough Beg" bears the epitaph: "IN MEMORY OF COLUM MCCARTNEY" (FW 17). Heaney again works through memory and imagination to invent something of lasting meaning from the violent sectarian killing of his cousin. He restores McCartney to the rural territory he knew, centering on an architectural image in Lough Beg: "Church Island's spire, its soft treeline of yew." The tone remains unsettled, however. Guns "fired behind the house" are recalled, and matters of voice and its governing: "talkers in byres. / Slow arbitrators of the burial ground." Related to bower, a "byre" is a cow-house, here made strange by Heaney. These places sheltered the surreptitious "old language of conspirators," the speaker infers to McCartney, and the incongruous strains of the pastoral elegiac mode Heaney employs—"marigolds [...] spent cartridges"—are made still darker in nature.

In the final verse Heaney carries the memory of McCartney's murder over to the strand at Lough Beg, reenacting the moment of death: "I turn because the sweeping of your feet / Has stopped behind me" (FW 18). The turn is also explicitly to Dante (who supplies the epigraph) in the last lines, as the speaker prepares the body for paradise, emulating Virgil in Purgatory, Canto I:

I dab you clear with moss  
Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud.  
I lift you under the arms and lay you flat.  
With rushes that shoot green again, I plait  
Green scapulars to wear over your shroud.

13 Cole 99.
The laying out arranges McCartney’s body in the bier of the poem’s formal architecture. Like the “Laureate Hearse” of Milton’s Lycidas, the lineaments of form restore, putting things into proper symmetry in memory through invention. At once vestment, a bandage and wings, the “scapulars” imply a healing transformation. In Purgatorio Cato tells Virgil to gird Dante’s waist with a reed, though Heaney chooses an image of plaiting, which carries with it the rhetorical charge of ploce in the repetition of “green.” Both girding and plaiting are apt metaphors for the restorative work of memory in the elegy, organizing and securing through form. But this treatment of McCartney–constricted within a Dantesque translation–is also seen as problematic by Heaney in a later poem. As the bitter remarks of the McCartney figure to the persona of “Station Island” demonstrate, Heaney visualizes what he creates here as an over-estheticized ‘house’ as well: “you whitewashed ugliness and drew / the lovely blinds of the Purgatorio / and saccharined my death with morning dew” (SL 83). He fears that his re-ordering urge may have been too successful.

A bridge image dominates the opening of “A Postcard from North Antrim,” composed in memory of Sean Armstrong and comprising nine seven-line stanzas. Heaney details the bridge in terms which allude to his own lines, going on to use it as an underlying metaphor for the poem’s whole shifting structure:

A lone figure is waving
From the thin line of a bridge
Of ropes and slats, slung
Dangerously out between
The cliff-top and the pillar rock.
A nineteenth-century wind.
Dulse-pickers. Sea campions.

A postcard for you, Sean,
And that’s you, swinging alone,
Antic, half-afraid,

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15 Adams 116.
In your gallowglass’s beard
And swallow-tail of serge:
The Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge
Ghost-written on sepia. (FW 19)

Symbolizing the unreconciled death of Armstrong in Heaney’s mind, the liminal bridge image is maintained throughout the elegy. Reading the postcard picture functions as an imaginative crossing point into memory and history.

His life ended by a “pointblank teatime bullet,” Armstrong’s death presents another macabre domestic incident, while echoes of Purgatorio again arise as the speaker seeks to ‘carry over’ his charge: “Get up from your blood on the floor. / Here’s another boat / In grass by the lough shore” (FW 20). A dialogical bridge to other, past voices is formed by bringing them in as presences. The gallows humour-tinged shouts of onlookers at Henry McCracken’s hanging are recalled next to the speaker’s entreaties to Armstrong to sing the old stories. Evocation of those tones proves more elusive, however: “something in your voice / Stayed nearly shut.” Voice is figured as filled with chambered recesses to which the poet must work to gain access. He thus sets about paying homage: “Your voice was a harassed pulpit / Leading the melody / It kept at bay.” He declares: “It was independent, rattling, non-transcendent / Ulster—old decency // And Old Bushmills.” The lines are loaded with images from Armstrong’s past, as if for the journey to the afterlife: “Soda farls, strong tea, / New rope, rock salt, kale plants. / Potato-bread and Woodbine.” But the breath remembered by this catalogue, given the authority of the city itself, comes to haunt another threshold depicted like a ruin awaiting transformation: “Wind through the concrete vents / Of a border check-point. / Cold zinc nailed for a peace line.” Wind figures for his spirit in this evocation of an ‘acoustic architecture’ that Armstrong partially inhabits. In the last stanza his memory is consecrated through a warmer association as the speaker recalls how, “Crowded on your floor, / I got my arm round Marie’s
shoulder / For the first time.” The voice now gushes: “‘Oh, Sir Jasper, do not touch me!’ / You roared across at me, / Chorus-leading, splashing out the wine.” Armstrong observes the speaker as he inaugurally ‘girds’ his future wife with his arm, foreshadowing his own reluctant enclosure in Heaney’s elegiac form. Voice thus marks a final crossing in restored memory, raised like a glass, or the roof at this party whose floor Armstrong holds. He is heard a last time, at least in a “Ghost written” sense, “roar[ing] across” at the speaker, as if calling from the swaying rope bridge that opens the poem.

Though Heaney refers to Armstrong’s voice as a pulpit, the lasting image is of the ritualistic joy of communal festivities. This public warmth is maintained in the first stanza of the three-part “Casualty.” But the pub where Louis O’Neill drinks is decimated in a bomb-blast. Recalling their conversations on fishing and poetry, the speaker still feels his presence: “my tentative art / His turned back watches too” (FW 22). Heaney returns him in his lines, restoring his memory. “[B]lown to bits” for breaking a curfew, O’Neill’s death follows the shooting of thirteen Catholics in Derry, a fact recorded on the local building walls: “PARAS THIRTEEN […] BOGSIDE NIL.” Heaney remembers this graffiti in his elegiac architecture with a documentary realism, though he now begins to shift into a visionary mode of recall, the temporal opened up by the spatial emphasis.

Part II describes the funeral of the thirteen in surreal images: “Coffin after coffin / Seemed to float from the door / Of the packed cathedral.”

The common funeral
Unrolled its swaddling band,
Lapping, tightening
Till we were braced and bound
Like brothers in a ring.

As with McCartney and Armstrong, whose bodies were figuratively girded by Heaney’s verse forms, a similar encircling ensues through the cortège’s swathing action. As the speaker pieces the narrative of O’Neill’s demise back together this
ominously toned communality is exploited through architectural imagery. "I see him turned / In that bombed offending place," he exclaims, though the vision of his "cornered outfaced stare" is "turned" or troped in Heaney's elegiac form as well. O'Neill was lured to the tavern as one of the "warm lit-up places" he coveted. As the speaker, back inside the bar in his memory, ponders how culpable the dead man could be held for breaking the curfew, and the "tribe's complicity," a ghost-voiced rejoinder is heard: "'Puzzle me / The right answer to that one'" (FW 23). The recall in memory, and restoration of this architectural topos in the poem, allows Heaney to continue in his imagination the discourse they once shared.

Using cortège imagery similar to "Funeral Rites," Heaney begins part III with a confession that he missed O'Neill's burial. But a 'passage' is worked out in reflexive terms through the invention of a consolatory trope. Acting as a metaphor of transformation, the moving line of funeral walkers are described as "Shoaling out of his lane." Heaney lets this 'line' lead him back into a memory of fishing. Taken out in O'Neill's boat one dawn, the speaker remembers how the "line lifted, hand / Over fist." He recalls how he "tasted freedom" with him in this experience: "To get out early, haul / Steadily off the bottom, / Dispraise the catch" (FW 24). An association with poetic making is evoked:

As you find a rhythm
Working you, slow mile by mile,
Into your proper haunt
Somewhere, well out, beyond...

The gist of their earlier pub conversations meets in a shared poetics emphasizing communion. Heaney brings his elegy to an enigmatic point of 'crossing' here, mimetically gesturing at infinity with the word: "beyond..." and the use of ellipsis. An opening out onto (white) space occurs, not unlike the troping of Gunnar's tomb as finally 'unroofed' in scope. But the run-on of "beyond..."
also represents a confrontation with silence. W. David Shaw observes that
elegists are faced with silence when struck by either the “inexpressible,” or the
“unspeakable.” In “Casualty” the latter predominates due to the way O’Neill
died, but as Heaney runs out this line, the two factors combine. The final three-
line stanza casts O’Neill as a “revenant” of memory, a “Plodder through
midnight rain,” so that he lives on outside the elegy on the threshold of Heaney’s
imagination. Directed to his memory, the parting imperative—“Question me
again”—insists upon this connection, an extension of their tavern rapport.

A determination to frame the unspeakable rather than mourn the loss of
expression marks “The Singer’s House,” where the potential ruin is restored in a
different light. Heaney wrote the poem in the wake of a sectarian bombing attack
which forced the cancellation of a recording session he was due to attend with a
musician friend. His response signals defiance of such a curtailing of art and life,
the eight quatrains affirming the title in lyric design as a formidable power. They
channel the strength of association sounded in specific names, a force felt in the
initial spatializing invocation: “When they said Carrickfergus I could hear / the
frosty echo of saltminers’ picks” (FW 27). He imagines it, “chambered and
glinting, / a township built of light.” The name is that of an Irish coastal castle and
its surrounding town, here foregrounded in pronunciation and imaginatively
altered in the ‘chamber’ of the quatrain. Yet the speaker asks where the new
forms and names are going to rise from: “What do we say any more / to conjure
the salt of our earth?” It is this loss that is potential cause for lament as well: “So
much comes and is gone / that should be crystal and kept.” Heaney turns to the
word-forms as a means of reconnection, garnering them in his lines.

Carrickfergus Castle is reconfigured in the blank verse of Heaney’s ‘house,’ a
move preceding his sounding of another name at the singer’s home:

16 W. David Shaw, Elegy and Silence: The Romantic Legacy (Lethbridge, Alberta: U of Lethbridge P.
So I say to myself *Gweebarra*
and its music hits off the place
like water hitting off granite.
I see the glittering sound
framed in your window,
knives and forks set on oilcloth,
and the seals’ heads, suddenly outlined,
scanning everything.

The sound finds its form in the window’s framing, an epiphanic moment that creates a freshened perspective, at once familiar and strange. Framed in turn, or “outlined,” the seals were once seen differently: “People here used to believe / that drowned souls lived in the seals. / At spring tides they might change shape.” They become emblems of form’s malleability when worked on by a directed art, such as that practised by the singer.

Lovers of music, they hark to his siren-song, swimming in for the one:

who might stand at the end of summer
in the mouth of a whitewashed turf-shed.
his shoulder to the jamb, his song
a rowboat far out in evening.

Placement in this framed position argues for an imagining of sound as shaped in the poem’s stanza, or ‘standing place.’ The punning image of the singer’s “shoulder to the jamb” presents him at work, in the same manner as Heaney’s words, enjambling his quatrains, making them sing.¹⁷ The poem’s final quatrain recalls how the singer was always about his work when the speaker first came.

He tells him: “Raise it again, man. We still believe what we hear,” as the raising of melody is accorded a quasi-mythical power of incantation. A determination is urged, to believe in art, despite the elegiac circumstances that pervade life. As in “A Postcard from North Antrim,” the raising of voice is given the function of bridging. The poetic architecture encourages the connection.

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¹⁷ ‘Jamb,’ from the Old French *jambe*, or ‘leg’ refers to a side post or side of a doorway, window or fireplace.
A passage from Elizabeth Bishop’s “At the Fishhouses” is clearly echoed in “The Singer’s House,” where the seal responds to the speaker’s singing of Baptist hymns, his curiosity piqued. As Bonnie Costello notes, Bishop’s detailed description of the five fishhouses anticipates the “spiritual Fortress the speaker evokes later […] when she sings ‘A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,’” and suggests a faith in solidity shaken by the sea’s elemental flux. But Heaney’s visionary assertion of Carrickfergus shrinks down to the turf-shed and the rowboat. These humble forms symbolize a knowledge that can also be counted upon to uplift. Like Bishop and her seal, Heaney looks to the singer to be “a believer in total immersion.” This is also an encouragement to emulate Bishop in her sense as maker; her “trust in poetic form and its abnegation of self” (RP 184). Heaney’s analogy of the row-boat to the vehicle of song plays upon the notion of (lyric) craft by borrowing again from Purgatory, an idea crucial to his elegy for Lowell.

Spatial motifs cleave to the craft metaphor in “Elegy” aided by images of line-casting, word-weaving and design. Consisting of fourteen quatrains, the emphasis falls on Lowell as maker, “the master elegist / and welder of English,” riding on the “swaying tiller” of himself (FW 31). Heaney calls him: “helmsman, netsman, retiarius,” a designer of girding forms (FW 32). Alluding to Dante, Lowell is figured as a “night ferry / thudding in a big sea,” his poetic vessels subject to alteration from within: “the whole craft ringing / with an armourer’s music.” His impact on poetry is felt in the course he set “wilfully across / the

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21 A “netsman” in the gladitorial sense, a retiarius may refer also to a rope or net-maker. Cf. Heaney’s “Full Face” essay: “That fourteen-line stanza or blank sonnet which he used compulsively during the years after Near the Ocean was an attempt to get nearer the quick of life, to cage the minute” (P 221-22).
ungovernable and dangerous.” Heaney sets Lowell’s memory in a properly ordered form, as this heavily endstopped line pays homage to a singular vision. Imitation and invention constantly inform his elegiac architecture. The final verses gravitate to Glanmore to partake of a moment, “opulent and restorative” in a farewell by the gate, where he gives the last word to Lowell: “I’ll pray for you.” As in “Casualty,” the form is left open with his echoed voice, balanced on the threshold of memory.

* * *

An association of particular architectural forms with a poet occurs in another quatrain-based elegy, a figure ultimately troped spatially himself. The description of the bronze statue of a Great War soldier in the first two quatrains of “In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge” sets in motion a dialogue between (monumental) forms, in order that Heaney can probe hidden recesses in memory. The “loyal, fallen names on the embossed plaque” the speaker remembers reading as a boy on the “Portstewart prom” are reflexively quoted in reference to Ledwidge, who once courted there, and placed as the elegy’s epitaph: “KILLED IN FRANCE 31 JULY 1917” (FW 59). Heaney continues to search out enigmatic resonances in other structures within which he discerns the genius of Ledwidge lingering. He remembers his haunts, near Slane: “the May altar of wild flowers, / Easter water sprinkled in outhouses, / Mass-rocks and hill-top raths and raftered byres.” The outhouse image recalls Joyce’s Ulysses, and these instances of vernacular architecture are given an organic piety, confirming them as precious sites.

Enigmatically these spatial ruminations are connected with Ledwidge, who carries such topoi with him in memory (and perhaps in his own verse forms). They inform that “haunted Catholic face, pallid and brave,” in his “Tommy’s uniform […] Ghosting the trenches with a bloom of hawthorn / Or silence cored from a Boyne passage-grave” (FW 60). Another architectural site he has inherited, the
Boyne tomb relates to the frozen image of the bronze soldier earlier, anticipating his fate. Yet, bringing his voice in, a central crux of the elegy is the distress Ledwidge feels at being designated: “‘a British soldier while my country / Has no place among nations.’” As Ioan Davies states, Heaney is drawn repeatedly to “riven situations,” violent combinations of stress and strain both buttressing and disordering Irish lives historically. The phrase pinpoints an irresolution, a crisis state of affairs from which Heaney dialectically taps energy.

The identification of Ledwidge with the poem’s ‘situation’ is an indirect corollary of his identification with its sites, architecturally figured-forth in the disembodied presence he evokes; a final silence of the inexpressible. In the third to last quatrain his ‘riven’ condition is alluded to: “You were rent / By shrapnel six weeks later.” The penultimate quatrain provides the crucial tie-in, however:

\[
\text{In you, our dead enigma, all the strains} \\
\text{Criss-cross in useless equilibrium.} \\
\text{And as the wind tunes through this vigilant bronze} \\
\text{I hear again the sure confusing drum}
\]

As Vendler notes, this “enigma” results from complications of “the human social personality—that one and the same person can be a Catholic and a British soldier, a poet and a fighter, a lover of the Irish countryside and a war-victim in Ypres.” But matters are made more complex by the relation between architecture and form the elegy dramatizes in its emphasis on criss-crossing tensions. Bringing us to a specific vantage point, Heaney’s image metaphorically depicts Ledwidge’s body like a building, a skeletal framework drawing in the previous sites and structures by analogy. The next lines return the focus to the bronze statue, but in a way which implicates it with these places in monumental form. An echo of the “aere perennius” motif—the monument set to outlast bronze—can be heard, as Heaney raises the question of whether the elegy itself escapes the “useless

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23 Vendler 64.
equilibrium” expressed in Ledwidge’s predicament.

With *The Haw Lantern*, vernacular architecture continues to be used as a topos by Heaney in the elegy, aiding memory. In “The Stone Verdict,” Heaney imagines his father standing in the “judgment place” of the afterlife awaiting his fate (*HL* 17). A “lifetime’s speechlessness” behind him, in the second stanza his self-containment becomes a mythic incarceration in the speaker’s eyes:

> 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
> 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.

Enacted by the reticent poet-son who himself fears saying too much, the standing place of the stanza marks the transformative space wherein his own breath, as inspiriting force, stands in for the lost father. Reminiscent of the unroofed wallstead in “Squarings,” discussed in chapter two, the house ruins evoke an elegiac silence suffused with memory and presence.24 Their forms are given hints of an electrical current in the ‘earthing’ metaphor. Lines from “The Hermit” are recalled. The father is also depicted “like a ploughshare / interred to sustain the whole field / of force” (*SI* 109).25 The “cairn / Of his apotheosis” is invented, and charged with meaning by Heaney’s elegiac architecture.

In contrast to this charged silence, the architectonic resonances of a cryptic voice are evoked in the blank sonnet, “In Memoriam: Robert Fitzgerald,” which remembers this poet and translator of classical verse. Like “Bone Dreams,” the

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24 Other ancient stone structures are recalled. Cf. Heaney’s comments on the ‘non-verbal’ male world of his father: “My father was a creature of the archaic world, really. He would have been entirely at home in a Gaelic hill-fort […] the houses I associate with his side of the family, belonged to a traditional rural Ireland.” He describes his mother as “more a creature of modernity.” Cole 93.

25 Cf. how “Land” translates cairn and man into a single earthed “listening post,” a prevalent trope in the “Lightenings” sub-section of “Squarings” as well. For example, see poems iv (*ST* 58) and v (*ST* 59).
speaker takes the reader-listener on a journey into an ancient form. The entry to
the poem occurs in a doubled, reflexive metaphorical sense, as an artifact is
architecturalized through the “language of forms” Heaney relies upon:

The socket of each axehead like the squared
Doorway to a megalithic tomb
With its slabbled passage that keeps opening forward
To face another corbelled stone-faced door
That opens on a third. There is no last door,
Just threshold stone, stone jambs, stone crossbeam
Repeating enter, enter, enter, enter.
Lintel and upright fly past in the dark. (HL 22)

Entry brings us into the passage-grave over a threshold that keeps receding, a
sensation caught in the way the third line propels both voice and eye in extended
fashion, holding them in suspension. The octave’s layout evokes a labyrinth
mirroring the tomb’s architecture as repetition of words like “face” in the next
line, and “door” create sensations of doubling-back in a maze, confusing the ear
as much as the eye. Repetition develops momentum as the opening of each door
is matched by an intensification of the stone image: from “stone-faced” to
“threshold stone, stone jambs, stone crossbeam.” The impatient mantra of
“enter” draws the reader-listener into the poem’s formal unison of voice and
structure. A sense of formal acceleration is developed.

The octave’s directed intensity girds the reader-listener for the sestet’s release
and its concordant metaphor:

After the bowstring sang a swallow’s note.
The arrow whose migration is its mark
Leaves a whispered breath in every socket.
The great test over, while the gut’s still humming,
This time it travels out of all knowing
Perfectly aimed towards the vacant centre.

An evocation of perpetual motion is made by the speaker. Fitzgerald’s soul is
symbolized by the arrow, but also the questing trajectory of his thought.26 The traces of "whispered breath" are also the inspiring revenants of his voice. Out of the tomb's claustrophobic density comes a freeing of events onto another temporally-attuned plane of regard. The architectural becomes the enabling metaphor for this transition. Heaney again gestures beyond the frame of imagining: "out of all knowing." He designs his sonnet to order Fitzgerald's memory in a new perspective, as the spatial is opened out by his imagery.

The sonnet sequence, "Glanmore Revisited," begins with an elegy for Tom Delaney under the name "Scrabble." Heaney tentatively walks us inside the cottage in his opening lines: "Bare flags. Pump water. Winter-evening cold. / Our back might never warm up but our faces / Burned from the hearth-blaze and the hot whiskeys" (ST 31). Here the sonnet itself also feels like "An old / Rightness half-imagined or foretold." The same insular ordering coheres in form to seal the memory against the elements: "whatever rampaged out there couldn't reach us, / Firelit. shuttered. slated and stone-walled." A securing of Delaney's memory is achieved through this spatial emphasis. Glanmore becomes a topos in Heaney's work with the return, yet the wary testing of this potential home's suitability found in the first "Glanmore" sequence is still apparent. In the second poem, "The Cot," the speaker declares: "We're on our own / Years later in the same locus amoenus" (ST 32). In "Lustral Sonnet," though, he reflects on how he came into his "own / Masquerade as a man of property." revealing suspicion towards inhabiting such a "pure form" (ST 35). The notion of 'breaking and entering' is queried in the sestet: "Only pure words and deeds secure the house." The symbolic placement of the elegy over the lintel of the sequence acts as a reminder of the dangers of letting the spirit become too complacent.

With the last sonnet, "The Skylight," this ruminative mood is decisively broken as the octave-sestet divide is used to express an architectural transition that riddles death and pays new homage to Delaney’s memory. The attic becomes a space of transformation figuratively corresponding to the sonnet’s:

You were the one for skylights. I opposed
Cutting into the seasoned tongue-and-groove
Of pitch pine. I like it low and closed,
Its claustrophobic, nest-up-in-the-roof
Effect. I like the snuff-dry feeling,
The perfect, trunk-lid fit of the old ceiling.
Under there, it was all hutch and hatch.
The blue slates kept the heat like midnight thatch.

But when the slates came off, extravagant
Sky entered and held surprise wide open.
For days I felt like an inhabitant
Of that house where the man sick of the palsy
Was lowered through the roof, had his sins forgiven,
Was healed, took up his bed and walked away. (ST’37)

The octave describes the writing space almost like a chamber of Boyne, the comfortable incarceration extended metaphorically into the hermetic “trunk-lid fit” of the lines themselves. As in the Fitzgerald elegy, Heaney exploits his volta to the full, his effects of enjambment and caesurae suddenly revitalized to contrast the octave. The alteration, like the volta, marks a “pure deed” as it breaks into the speaker’s writing den, upsetting the old order. This addition of the skylight becomes a metaphor for the renovation of spirit, framing a healing that trumps mortality. Delaney partakes of this roof-opening by association—similar, once more, to the unroofing of Gunnar’s tomb. Heaney’s “tongue-and-groove” sonnet form thrusts an old, well-worn lair into the symbolic light of renewal.

Architectural analogies are again used by Heaney in “The Sounds of Rain,” to elucidate and articulate the memory of critic Richard Ellmann. An ‘ell’ is an old form of measurement, and this congruous element in his name is played upon. The five six-line stanzas make up three parts, the first and third simply one stanza
each, the second, three. Through this formal ordering Heaney measures his voice into units of breath and silence, volumes that pay tribute to Ellmann’s spirit. The lament begins:

An all-night drubbing overflow on boards
On the veranda. I dwelt without thinking
In the long moil of it, and then came to
To dripping eaves and light, saying into myself
Proven, weightless sayings of the dead.
Things like He’ll be missed and You’ll have to thole. (ST 48)

Within the lines themselves a preoccupied ‘dwelling’ also occurs: the sporadic build-up of o sounds, (culminating in the line overflow of “thole”) with “on” and “to” is of a piece with the inturned voice mouthing the old phrases.

In Part II a memory shift into other times occurs, and further voices and places are evoked: “It could have been the drenched weedy gardens / of Peredelkino.” From Pasternak, the reverie shifts to “Athens Street where William Alfred stood /
On the wet doorstep, remembering the friend / Who died at sixty” (ST 49). Their words offset the speaker’s brooding as the final part revises the first:

The eaves a water-fringe and steady lash
Of summer downpour: You are steeped in luck,
I hear them say. Steeped, steeped, steeped in luck.
And hear the flood too, gathering from under,
Biding and boding like a masterwork
Or a named name that overbrims itself.

Now merely a “summer” rain, a metaphorical sense of the “veranda” as transformed into a ‘stoup,’ or basin for holy water, emerges. Ellmann’s name—literally ‘measure-man’—is gestured at in a way that suggests how the nature of his character paradoxically resists containment. The “masterwork” implies a comparison of Ellmann to an architect, a ‘master-builder,’ and he honors this angle in his formal approach. The architectural (in parts I and III) frames the entry the speaker makes into a temporal reverie in the middle part, and this helps reorder his perspective in a consolatory light.
Another master, Mandelstam, is recalled elegiacally through the structural vibrations of voice in "M." from The Spirit Level.

When the deaf phonetician spread his hand
Over the dome of a speaker's skull
He could tell which diphthong and which vowel
By the bone vibrating to the sound.

A globe stops spinning. I set my palm
On a contour cold as permafrost
And imagine axle-hum and the steadfast
Russian of Osip Mandelstam. (SL 57)

The sounding of the skull evokes an image of tuning forks: both the phonetician and the speaker "vibrating" in symbiosis with the presence of language. By his use of "dome" Heaney extends the imaginative plane further, invoking the skull as the temple of this linguistic resonance, an inwardly echoing space. The skull is transformed into a model for the world, a "globe," attuned to the memory of Mandelstam whose presence is felt in the depths of this vaulting. An image of train wheels halting on tracks is called to mind, recalling his death in a transit camp near Vladivostok. The speaker animates his memory through the "axle-hum" and the "steadfastness of speech articulation" he traces in the "Russian."

If the pen-name initial of the title comes to rest in the full naming of the last line, it also suggests how Heaney's form structures his own voice architecturally to hit off the intoned name and resound. Together the two quatrains make up the halves of a tuning fork pitched to the key of "M" that give us pause, adjusting the ear properly to his memory.

It is no accident that "M" precedes "An Architect." In this elegy memory again functions as a means for remembrance, imaginative shift and invention. The six tercets are extended to their limits by the demands of Heaney's line scheme. Yet the form remains sure throughout due to the controlling influence of voice which exacts a clean 'passage' for the eye and ear. An underlying empathy is
shared with the architect, generating a colloquial tone. The opening line: “He fasted on the doorstep of his gift,” implies a penchant for extremes and the way his talent, while steeped in tradition, still hungers for further challenges (SL 58). A metaphorical connection of his life and work to the elegiac form memorializing him is also established. For he now inhabits the speaker’s “doorstep,” the threshold of memory the line represents. He is framed in the tercet: “Exacting more, minding the boulder / And the raked zen gravel.” This image of ascetic refinement is abruptly changed by the reminder: “But no slouch either // Whenever it came to whiskey, whether to / Lash into it or just to lash it out.” The alliterative mellifluousness of the central line gives the ‘water of life’ a honeyed resonance in the mouth and ear, anticipating the transition to the coastal setting and the architect’s final dissolution into essence.

The speaker describes the architect as “Courtly always, and rapt, and astonishing,” and these epithets lead into another allusive memory:

Like the day on the beach when he stepped out of his clothes
And waded along beside us in his pelt
Speculating, intelligent and lanky,

Taking things in his Elysian stride.
Talking his way back into sites and truths
The art required and his life came down to:

Blue slate and whitewash, shadow-lines, projections,
Things at once apparent and transparent,
Clean-edged, fine-drawn, drawn-out, redrawn, remembered…

The first line also surprises in its excess. Taking advantage of the liminal state evoked by the memory, Heaney re-imagines the architect as a mythical sea god, drawing him into a specific literary tradition.27 Like the poet himself in the way he re-enters “sites and truths,” the art and life are seen as joined together. Taking impetus from Milton’s description of Lycidas as a builder of the “lofty rhyme,”

27 The architect’s portrayal hints at a Titan; a boundary-ruler, in the tradition of Oceanus in Jonson’s Masque of Blackness, Daniel’s Tethys’ Festival, Milton’s Comus and Keats’s Hyperion. See Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton, Classical Myths in English Literature (New York: Rinehart, 1952) 328.
the speaker praises the intimate knowledge of the “language of forms” the
technique of this “Genius of the shore” revealed.28 The changing shapes on the
palimpsests of imagination and drawing board mark access to a space where
possibilities are “drawn-out” with a hydraulic, protean ease. This last line
represents the inexhaustible reach of the formal process—“organic and
contrived” in character—prompting a resort to the elliptic signifier once more.

Heaney senses a “higher mood” in the strain behind the architect’s strain, to
again invoke Milton, and his own words regarding the deep listening in to voice
certain poetry encourages: “As if the ripple at its widest desired to be verified by
a re-formation of itself, to be drawn in and drawn out through its point of origin”
(CP 52).29 The tercet is left open to signify the eddying strains of this “re-
formation,” itself a drawing board alive with the things of a shared language. The
speaker imagines the architect still caught up in his ideas in the last lines:

Exit now, in his tweeds, down an aisle between
Drawing boards as far as the eye can see
To where it can’t until he sketches where. (SL 58)

He epitomizes a disappearance into the work itself; a self-effacement into form
that is made to figure for a final projection into death. It is a death transformed by
Heaney’s use of the void as a charged blankness the architect, lost in insight over
a slate somewhere, will one day illuminate by design. Loss is undercut by vision.

In “Audenesque,” Heaney’s elegiac tribute to Brodsky, the stanzaic
architecture is foregrounded through self-reflexive imagery. But Heaney’s poetic
language is again concerned with structuring memory and contemplating
temporal issues. Choice of meter, timing, contains the greater part of the homage:

Joseph, yes, you know the beat.
Wystan Auden’s metric feet
Marched to it, unstressed and stressed,

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28 Milton 120, 125.
29 Milton 122.
Laying William Yeats to rest.30

[..............................]

Its measured ways I tread again
Quatrain by constrained quatrain,
Meting grief and reason out
As you said a poem ought.

Trochee, trochee, falling: thus
Grief and metre order us.
Repetition is the rule.
Spins on lines we learnt at school

Repetition, too, of cold
In the poet and the world,
Dublin Airport locked in frost,
Rigor mortis in your breast.

Iambic tetrameter lightens the “tread” of the “metric feet” creating an ambiguity around the image of constraint. The quatrain dimensions become emblematic of Brodsky’s rigorous way with form, but also his ability to transcend convention. Auden’s plea to Yeats: “With your unconstraining voice / Still persuade us to rejoice” is alluded to in the speaker’s words.31

The orderings of “Grief and metre” reveal how memory is enclosed by the elegy, the quatrains repeating a block structure that the “locked in” condition of Dublin Airport emulates. Heaney writes in an obituary that could be seen to complement the poem: “But the print is what we have left of him now, and he will survive behind its black lines, in the pace of its poetic meter or its prose arguments, like Rilke’s panther pacing behind black bars with a constancy and inexorability set to outpace all limit and conclusion.”32 Marking the “prison of

31 Auden 248.
his days,” Heaney’s own forms praise in turn. They take account of the desire to “outpace,” as caught in another quatrain: “Jammed enjambements piling up / As you went above the top.” The same impulse is celebrated in Ellmann and the anonymous architect. Fighting stasis, Heaney’s architectonic form allusively references Brodsky’s life and poetics, keeping faith with the notion that to go “above the top” first requires constraint if it is to have meaning.

In two recent elegiac poems Heaney continues to turn to the architectural as a way of engaging formally with his subjects and their legacies. “On First Looking into Ted Hughes’s ‘Birthday Letters’” appeared a few weeks prior to the poet’s death. In section two Heaney reads the poem as a structure of initiation:

I read it quickly, then stood looking back
As if it were a bridge I had passed under–
So intimate in there, the tremor-drip
And cranial acoustic of the stone
With its arch-ear to the ground, a listening post
Open to the light, to the limen world
Of soul on its lonely path, the railway lines
Shining in silence, the railway child in me
Stepped in so deep in unshadowed apprehension
I felt like one come out of an upper room
To fret no more and walk abroad confirmed.33

Heaney combines textual reading with the architectural here, as discussed in chapter one. His own stanza becomes a place to stand reflecting on the experience. By extension, a sense of the stone’s “cranial acoustic” is transferred into his own form. The “listening post[s]” of “Land” and “Squarings” are recalled in the evocative coining of “arch-ear,” which envisages the poetic framework as an ‘acoustic architecture,’ an open, threshold form. In the transition of the bridge metaphor to the “upper room” an imaginative rebirth occurs for the

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speaker through memory of the “railway child” inside. The final lines leave us with an affirmation similar to that of “The Skylight,” “Funeral Rites,” and other elegies which effect a passage through stone-like density into light’s release. Heaney works the elusive material of memory in the confines of formal process to a point where this opening-out may occur.

A final elegy, “A Hyperborean,” shows Heaney adopting a different angle of approach. However, he again makes his choice of form a part of the homage, as an architectural connection metaphorically creates the scene:

Ruined temples. Poetry. Zbigniew Herbert,
The inside of your head was a littered Delphi
Where satellites and eagles sailed in orbit
Above the god’s besieged hill sanctuary
And the oracle was the one thing still uncensored,
The via sacra a via crucis partly
And partly actual stone, the untransfigured
Hill itself. You were a Hyperborean.34

Addressing the memory of Herbert, who died in 1998, the speaker again sounds the name like a tuning fork, as in “M.” But the opening line refers reflexively to Heaney’s own use of sonnet form as a model as well, its specific “temple in the hearing” evoked once more (PW 32).35 Herbert is associated with the “oracle,” the egg-shaped stone of the omphalos, centrally placed in Delphi. However, in his head it merges into an image of Calvary (whose etymology lies in the Latin and Greek words for ‘skull,’ calvaria and golgotha). The radical fusion informs his “uncensored” lyric voice the speaker implies, as “One of those at the back of the north wind / Whom Apollo favored and kept going back to.” This is the Poland whose winter silence he would fill, keeping “summer’s promise” alive. His poetic voice acted as a civilizing instrument: “You learned the lyre from him and kept it tuned.” The tuning was made to the “satellites and eagles,” twinned

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35 Cf. Heaney’s comment in “Atlas of Civilization” on Herbert: “The ground-hugging sturdiness which he recognizes and cherishes in archaic buildings has its analogue in his own down-to-earthness” (GT 56).
signals on an ancient frequency. The sonnet structure is Heaney’s homage to Herbert’s work, “the exactions of its logic, the temperance of its tone, [the] equanimity of its recognitions” (GT 54). Yet these factors present in the form act in accord with the totality of the poem as a whole. Justice is accorded to Herbert’s memory in the ordering of the elegiac architecture, restoring the ‘temple’ in a proper perspective, while giving matters a new turn.

As Mandelstam states: “To build means to contend with the void, to hypnotize space.” In the majority of elegies discussed here Heaney invokes architecture as a metaphor enabling him to achieve this goal. In fact, spatial imagery becomes vital if the temporal truths of memory are to be poetically realized in the poems. As in the use of the Boyne chambers, evoked several times, the architectural is often associated with the ceremonial. He uses a combination of imagery and form to make metaphors of bridging, crossing, girding and framing active in the remembering voice’s encounter with the dead. In the Field Work elegies in particular, Heaney develops a relationship between specific places and remembrance that allows him to evoke visionary scenarios. But in homages such as “Cairn-maker” and “The Singer’s House,” a ritual awareness of sites as topoi for memory is evident as well. Several of the elegies test the limits of language, form, and Heaney’s powers of invention when faced with silence. Consistent throughout is the way architecture is involved in a process of animating and transforming memory.

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Elegy proves a genre conducive to exploring the relationship between architecture, form, and memory in Walcott’s work as well. His verse often argues for a certain monumentalization and recovery of internal order, represented in the

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36 Along analogous lines, the sonnet acts to keep a “trustworthy poetic canopy” over our heads, the “essential function” performed by the Herbert corpus in Heaney’s comparison of him to Atlas (GT 70).
homage of formal structure. Remembrance, revision and re-invention are also key elements, as he draws on Dante and Whitman among other poets to lament lost friends and causes. Architectural imagery is deployed as a means of evoking other time-periods, as well as organizing memory in his poems of "mournful tribute," as Ramazani terms the elegiac homage.\(^{38}\) The trust in form is keyed differently from Heaney's. Walcott's stanzaic patterns in his elegies are more unpredictable. He rarely uses the sonnet form. Apart from, "Homage to Edward Thomas" (and in a sense, "A City's Death by Fire"), his one elegiac variation on the essential template is "Ohio, Winter," dedicated to the poet James Wright. The observer picks out "clenched, white / barns" on the winter landscape \((SG\ 59).\) Walcott's form imitates Wright's characteristically variant line scheme.\(^{39}\) The result is an elegiac architecture less recognizable as a sonnet, but lyrically true to Wright's memory in its logic.

A focus on the spatial enclosure necessary to memory is foregrounded in "'O Trees of Life, What Are Your Signs of Winter?'" Written for "E. S." and consisting of two nonce stanzas of unequal length, the poem begins disarmingly as Walcott's lyric persona confides: "So, suddenly, when he died, / She wanted this blue vase / They'd seen in a show-window" (C 47). This sets in motion a reflexive dialogue between forms that are made to carry the weight of memory, as the vase takes on an emblematic power. The mourning woman, her "vision glazed with shock," states: "'Place this on a ledge / in winter, it irradiates Stockholm.'" Walcott alludes to "Anecdote of the Jar," by Stevens here, and taking on a metaphysical quality the ornament is identified with consciousness:

> Distracted? Our knowledge
> Revolves in a blue sphere.
> Passionate of breath
> We cloud a little dome.

\(^{38}\) Ramazani 31.

So I imagine her
This winter at a window,
Shawled, in an empty room
With two forgetting children,
In the blue globe I brought
Her when he died, her thought
Whirled rootlessly like snow.

The "blue sphere" is made to encapsulate a world, its constraining bubble
talismanic of grief, like the seaside trinket, a "toy grotto," in Heaney's "Station
Island," that "housed the snowdrop weather of [a] death / long ago" (SI 67). The
grieving woman lives inside the memory, a form symbolized by the "room" in the
globe. Formally the stanzas point to the way architectural containment is vital to
remembrance. The elegy's "mimesis of mourning" frames a process locked in
thrall to winter, the memory ruminatively enclosed and repeated in its form, as the
speaker "enspheres all circumstance" in his imagination. Walcott's stanzas turn
his own recalled thoughts over, an aspect of the conceit about them.

A transformation of Walcott's melancholy into consolation is more apparent
in an elegy set in New York City. A journey out of stasis is navigated over the
three parts. Written for John Robertson, "A Village Life," shows Walcott's form
taking on a sprawling, discursive quality, as a trawl through the city's winter
depths is remembered. A mounting sense of alienation from the city acts as the
correlative to the numb despair felt in the wake of Robertson's death. From a
room overlooking Greenwich Village, we are drawn into the setting:

Through the wide, grey loft window,
I watched that winter morning, my first snow
crusting the sill, puzzle the black,
nuzzling tom. Behind my back
a rime of crud glazed my cracked coffee-cup,
a snowfall of torn poems piling up
heaped by a rhyming spade.
Starved, on the prowl,
I was a frightened cat in that grey city. (G 5)

The spatial emphasis is directed toward an evocation of the past. Through such
images architectural spaces organize the details of the speaker's experience, framing his memories. The breaking of the rhyme scheme in the last line, to return only sporadically, signifies the improvised trajectory the rest of the elegy will follow as the speaker's ennui, homesickness and sense of loss are described. A strong empathy with the dead arises where roles are reversed: "All that winter I haunted / your house on Hudson Street, a tiring friend, / demanding to be taken in, drunk, and fed." He describes how his own stare in a "frosted pane" appears devoid of actual "self-reflection." This uncanny detachment reflects the death's impact: "since that winter I have learnt to gaze / on life indifferently as through a pane of glass" (G 6). Signifying his pain and a sympathetic death in turn, the self-erasure in the mirroring glass becomes a motif.

In part II, a descent into familiar mythopoeic territory takes place. Walcott makes the Underground an analogue for Hades, an idea his stage version of The Odyssey also uses. He uses metamorphic effects to shape the imagery:

Your image rattled on the subway glass
is my own death-mask in an overcoat;
under New York, the subterranean freight
of human souls, locked in an iron cell,
station to station cowed with swaying calm,
thunders to its end, each in its private hell,
each plumped, prime bulk still swinging by its arm
upon a hook. You're two years dead. And yet
I watch that silence spreading through our souls (G 6)

Driven by the steadily building intensity of the lines and the incessant push-pull motion of caesurae, the subway system becomes a metaphor for dehumanization: "locked in a system, ridden by its rail, / within a life where no one dares to fail" (G 7). Walcott's use of rhyme reappears, compounding the notion of a closed social circuit. Coming to Times Square the riders emerge, "blind from the blast of

40 For the "mechanism" of the descensus ad inferos in Omeros, and in Heaney's work, see the brief but illuminating overview by David L. Pike, entitled: "The Descent into History, or Beyond a Modernism of Reading: Heaney and Walcott." David L. Pike, Passage Through Hell: Modernist Descents, Medieval Underworlds (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997): 248-259.
daylight, whirled / apart like papers from a vent.” evoking an image of the Sibyl’s leaves blown asunder by the cavern doors in the Aeneid. With growing frequency the speaker begins referring to a generalized “we,” a strategy for including the reader-listener in the form’s momentum more implicitly. This gives Walcott’s mythic tone in the narrative a force that makes his imitation tap collective as well as individual memory, relating us to Robertson. The descent into this subterranean architecture and the “iron cell” of the car to encounter his shade, is portrayed as a test that must be endured if his spirit is to be carried over, restored.

The persona’s equation of mourning with a feeling of being (architecturally) oppressed by New York subsides in part III. Having passed through remembrance and revision, departure from the city for a pastoral idyll is troped. Walcott’s placement of caesurae and the use of enjambment now has a retarding effect, easing the prosodic tension previously generated:

Going away, through Queens we pass
a cemetery of miniature skyscrapers. The verge
blazes its rust, its taxi-yellow leaves. It’s fall.
I stare through glass,
my own reflection there, at
empty avenues, lawns, spires, quiet
stones, where the curb’s rim
wheels westward, westward, where thy bones…

Montana, Minnesota, your real
America, lost in tall grass, serene idyll. (G 7-8)

The tombstoned city of the dead alluded to in the second line is left behind, a move stressed in the falling away of the lines to a new transparency of glass. The speaker’s reflection returned to him, his gaze becomes the vehicle of a refreshed clarity, that alights on “quiet / stones.” His mind ranges in homage to Robertson, whose soul is imagined translated out of the city into the ideal forms of a “real /

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41 An echo of Lycidas lines 154-56: “Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding Seas / Wash far away, where’er thy bones are hurl’d […].” Milton 124.
America. lost.” As the run-on line beginning “wheels westward” implies with ellipsis, the motion is without end: towards another “vacant centre,” in the words of Heaney’s Fitzgerald elegy.

Architecture also assumes negative connotations for Walcott in “Elegy,” from The Gulf, concerned with freedom’s demise in America. “[W]e miss you, Liberty,” proclaims the speaker (G 63). The West Indies is figured as a “hammock swung between Americas,” in this extended political metaphor with its allusions to Che’s death, black singers in bear traps, and the fate of Native Americans. Grief is monumentalized in the demeanour of the citizenry: “no face can hide / its public, private pain, / wincing, already statued.” In the last of the five stanzas an image of a ‘house’ is framed through metaphors which open out onto history:

and yearly lilacs in her dooryards bloom,
and the cherry orchard’s surf
blinds Washington and whispers
to the assassin in his furnished room
of an ideal America, whose flickering screens
show, in slow herds, the ghosts of the Cheyennes
scuffling across the staked and wired plains
with whispering, rag-bound feet,

while the farm couple framed in their Gothic door
like Calvin’s saints, waspish, pragmatic, poor,
gripping the devil’s pitchfork
stare rigidly towards the immortal wheat. (G 63-64)

Taking his cue from Whitman’s “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” this structure is treated as a phantasmagorical site which transforms through cinematic blends into a Grant Wood painting. The “flickering screens” help the metamorphosis which devolves onto the couple in their door-frame, inseparable from the vernacular American “Gothic” of the setting. Frozen in the quatrain’s form, the imagery alludes to a rigor mortis of self-righteous ideology in their stance, with its lifeless outlook on a visionary landscape. A bleak energy emanates from Walcott’s choice of form in “Elegy,” as architecture takes on a
presence re-housing historical victors against the spectral memory of those left like the Cheyennes, moving, displaced.

Ideals die like sentient beings in Walcott's eyes, and architecture is the metaphor for a grievous loss of potential in another elegiac poem delving deep into history, as collective 'epic memory.' Where "A City's Death by Fire" heralds change, chapter sixteen of Another Life, entitled "The Cement Phoenix," laments the new form Castries takes as it is rebuilt. Earlier, in chapter five, the persona recalls watching:

on black hills of imported anthracite
the frieze of coal-black carriers, charbonniers,
erect, repetitive as hieroglyphs
descending and ascending the steep ramps,
building the pyramids (AL 29)

The symbolic achievement of these pyramids lies behind his lament for what could have been; a city built on transformed principles along classic, yet radically new lines.42 Opening the chapter, the aftermath of the fire is depicted:

Meanwhile to one metre, in the burnt town
things found the memory of their former places,
that vase of roses slowly sought its centre
like a film reeled backward, like
a poltergeist reversed. (AL 103)

In the first line Walcott plays on "metre" to evoke a worksong, though the architectonic relation to form is caught in as well, in the measurement of Castries' re-ordering, and his own scansion. An outline of this 'reversal' continues:

"frames drew their portraits like a closing rose, / laces resumed their spinsterish precision / and parlours were once more varnished, sacrosanct." The old habits of mind are resumed as well.

As the speaker turns to the reconstituted architectural forms of Castries itself, he imagines the former 'language' of the city altering into an unfamiliar, brutally

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42 The aftermath of the fire is described earlier in terms which imply this creative spirit of re-design: "A landscape of burnt stones and broken arches / arranged itself with a baroque panache" (AL 84).
inflected dialect. His tone contracts with suppressed rage. A fresh death is felt in the style of this new architectural dispensation:

Apartment blocks whitened the air,
cul-de-sacs changed their dialect patronyms
to boulevards and avenues,
the cement phoenix rose.
All day in the gutted roads of the new city
the cement mixers snarled American, white-faced
the city entered its half-century.

The way these apartment blocks ‘whiten’ the sky makes them into skeletal outcrops on the landscape, Castries, a “gutted” architecture laid prone beneath. Fears that a ‘colonial backwater’ is merely being recreated surface: “Slowly she rose, the New Jerusalem / created in the image of The Commonwealth Today. / a hearty brochure from Whitehall.” The speaker casts himself as a prophet unrecognized in his own land, anatomizing the fresh fall of Castries to the forces of Babylon. He invents an Old Testament context for his faith, refusing to accept the messianic, history-making promise of the cement design spread before him.

Walcott’s own stanzaic ‘blocks’ sit in elegiac repose as the potential for transformation fades. They monumentalize lost hope, the death of his dream (a city devoted to art from the ground up). A sudden lacuna in the middle of one verse signifies this absence, a space set in juxtaposition to such ‘progress’:

New cement blocks
five or six stories high
in their didactic Welfare State severity,
boulevards short of breath
confronted the old town.
From the verandah of the old wooden college
I watched the turning pages of the sea. (AL 104)

Offset in the form, just as they are out of place in the landscape in Walcott’s eyes, the image of blank, faceless buildings suggest “blocks” freely hovering in isolation from the community. The endstopping denotes a precarious balance, the words, like concrete dominoes, apt to topple at a touch. In the metaphor of the
boulevards as "short of breath." Walcott's sense of how the city's architectural language is now infected by negative forms is asserted. The speaker, as in a war-zone, smells "Burnt flesh. Our blitz was over too." Persisting in uncovering historical parallels to describe the symbolic magnitude of the calamity witnessed, he feels "the voices of children" under his feet: "Saul has slain his thousand, / David his ten thousand." Beyond the Biblical parallel, the fire's decimation is seen to have a typology in the Middle Passage, and the Holocaust. The "voices" inform the lines with memory; the vessel of Walcott's voice carries their "feet" in the connective strains of his elegiac architecture.

The lament thus extends in design to invoke a diasporic community: "The bones of our Hebraic faith were scattered / over such a desert, burnt and brackened gorse." Walcott draws in the elegiac forms of ancient Egypt once more as the speaker imagines: "shoes / of cherubs piled in pyramids / outside the Aryan ovens." Re-imagined as funerary monuments to the Holocaust dead, he then proceeds to overlay the imagery to refer to the coal pyramids on the Castries wharf. Though a Dantesque encounter with a ghost poet and fellow "exile," one of the "survivors of the death-camps and the soap-vats," takes place, the onus remains on the architectural deformation of the city as it is resurrected (AL 105).

Having to "watch the visionary glare / tarnish to tin," infects Walcott with an almost inconsolable melancholy, expressed in the tormented interconnections his persona makes.

Architecture is again made emblematic of the rise of a negative modernity that threatens the sanctity of the West Indies in "The Virgins," one of several poems in Sea Grapes using Frederiksted as a setting. The port's innocence is lamentably corrupted by materialistic values, figured as a death. Over nineteen unrhymed lines, the imagery moves listlessly in the tread of the speaker's feet we follow:

Down the dead streets of sun-stoned Frederiksted,
the first freeport to die for tourism,
strolling at a funeral pace, I am reminded of life not lost to the American dream, but my small-islander’s simplicities, can’t better our new empire’s civilized exchange of cameras, watches, perfumes, brandies for the good life, so cheaply underpriced that only the crime rate is on the rise in streets blighted with sun, stone arches and plazas blown dry by the hysteria of rumour. (SG 10)

The port becomes anthropomorphic, its ruin envisaged as a martyrdom to the misplaced cause of tourism. A debased *translatio imperii et studii* is apparent in the speaker’s version of cultural “exchange” under the aegis of this new empire. Foreign-styled architecture is singled out: “A condominium drowns / in vacancy,” and this elegiac strain is matched in “Frederiksted Nights,” where a survey ensues from a derelict café: “a library full of dead books, / houses, the ochre poorhouse, a hotel, / banks. It is simply another town” (SG 12). In the end, the speaker’s voice simply trails out as he succumbs to the same lethargy he has been narrating, in lines leading, “to the dock, / the rain-hazed horizon / and the corpses of poems.” Infected fatally by melancholy, the poem elegizes itself.

These mournful poems refuse us a reorientating passage out of their brooding dimensions, that final surge of invention restoring memory in a proper order. A consolatory elegiac architecture reappears when Walcott pays a visionary tribute to a precursor poet. In “For Pablo Neruda,” a reflexive meeting round the memory of his voice is generated, comparable in imagery to the encounter with the Yeatsian figure in Heaney’s “The Master,” who “dwelt in himself / like a rook in an unroofed tower” (SI 110). Through five unrhymed stanzas, varying between eight and eleven lines in length, the spirit of Neruda is traced on metaphorical planes of ascent, followed by descent. The speaker first imagines himself a castaway, “walking on sand […] this poem is accompanying me on sand,” attuned to the “mute roar / of the staved in throat / of the wreck” (SG 60).
This wreck figures for Neruda’s body, a ruined form whose sound echoes on with Orphic persistence, as the speaker asks: “Why this loop of correspondences, / as your voice grows hoarser / than the chafed Pacific?” Generating an image of upwards movement, the “loop” matches the spiraling ascent tracked in the stanza, as Neruda’s voice is compared to condor feathers, “falling soundless as snow on / the petrified Andes.” Walcott lifts the reader-listener to a giddy encounter with an “emissary in a black suit, who / walks among eagles,” in sublime fashion:

Hear the ambassador of velvet open the felt-hinged door, the black flag flaps toothless over Isla Negra. You said when others like me despaired: climb the moss-throated stairs to the crest of Macchu Picchu, break your teeth like a pick on the obdurate, mottled terraces, wear the wind, soaked with rain like a cloak, above absences (SG 60-61)

This “door” is both a mouth and a dwelling place, an acoustic structure conflating Neruda’s tonal characteristics of voice with a setting at once artificial and natural. The Chilean poet’s advice is remembered as the speaker arrives at the voice’s source to undergo a process of initiation.

The penultimate stanza maintains the lofty vista as the speaker communicates his homage in the hawk-like retreat, stating: “for us, in the New World, / our older world, you become / a benign, rigorous uncle” (SG 61). Neruda’s poetry is cited for the way it opens the ear to Octavio Paz and the “sand-rasped / mutter of César Vallejo.” With the last verse a return to lower regions occurs. Neruda’s acolyte embraces his place in the lineage in an image of Promethean suffering: “we were all netted to one rock / by vines of iron, our livers / picked by corbeaux and condors.” A “new word / brotherhood” is celebrated in legacy as he
imagines speech sounds alighting on the "crests of the snowblowing ocean," and filling the "round fish mouths of our children." "For Pablo Neruda" organizes a connection with voice as an elemental literary construct in memory, an enduring spirit Walcott's elegiac homage transforms into an affirmation of his own powers. The organic architecture of the poet's dwelling gives Walcott a site for the process of imagination to center on. The "wreck" of earlier is refigured from its ruined condition, Neruda's voice resonating in the expanded tones of Walcott's, a 'vessel' of the lost presence.

In his offering Walcott celebrates Neruda's standing in a New World tradition of writing encompassing South America and the Caribbean. Relatedly, Eric Roach, a West Indian poet with whom he shares a possibly even stronger affinity, becomes the subject of an elegy shaped around the idea of voice that explores the depth of his stature. Architecture plays a centering role for memory once again, and is used to expand metaphorically on the motifs that characterized his work. As with Walcott, Roach, who committed suicide by drowning in 1974, sought in his poetry a combination that would hold good for West Indian culture: a fusion of local traditions with European influence able to prove a paradigm of a new, hybrid sensibility. His forms, while conventional, are inhabited by "his own West Indian voice," and articulated with "the passion of an independent consciousness," as Chamberlin observes.\textsuperscript{43} This was also a "divided consciousness" on many levels, split crucially between "hope and despair," a factor the elegy exploits. Roach's concern with the future direction of West Indian life is expressed through architectural metaphors at one stage. As Chamberlin quotes, he insisted (in a trope Walcott also deploys), that West Indians "must erect (their) own bungalow by the sea out of the full knowledge of

\textsuperscript{43} Chamberlin 107.
the architecture of English places and cottages.” Walcott’s defiantly Caribbean pastoral elegy, references this form in its imagery and structure, drawing powerfully on the local and the foreign in order to house his memory.

Formally, the elegy is organized around a refrain heard five times over its eight stanzas, a repeated denial which opens as painfully as an old wound:

I didn’t want this poem to come from the torn mouth,
I didn’t want this poem to come from his salt body,

but I will tell you what he celebrated:

He writes of the wall with spilling coralita from the rim of the rich garden, and the clean dirt yard clean as the parlour table with a yellow tree an ackee, an almond a pomegranate in the clear vase of sunlight (SG 64)

The first stanza seems haunted by an image of Roach that vies with an invocation of the still singing head of Orpheus, both connections resisted as if to defer the elegy’s onset. In not coming from the “torn mouth” of the “salt body,” the poem’s one single line foregrounds the place the speaker’s memory of Roach actually does spring from. A simple domestic catalogue is remembered in the speaker’s outline, revoicing Roach’s pure registering of local surroundings in a setting that could be Trinidad or Tobago where he lived, or anywhere in the West Indies. The yard may also represent a (former) plantation yard, center of the slave experience in colonial times, as much as the “bungalow” mentioned above. Layers of meaning are implied in Walcott’s usage and the slightly obsessive

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44 Chamberlin also quotes from a Roach poem, “Letter to Lamming in England,” the tercet: “Here we are architects with no tradition, / Are hapless builders upon no foundation / No skilled surveyors mark our forward road.” Chamberlin 105.
sounding repetition of “clean” in association with this example of vernacular architecture.

Foreshadowing Achille’s elegiac underwater excursion in *Omeros*, Walcott uses an old, communally integrating euphemism for Roach’s death in the next stanza: “He went swimming to Africa, / but he felt tired.” In this way he “chose […] to reach his ancestors.” References to other sources also expand the picture. The refrain comes again in the fourth stanza, met with the response: “but, doesn’t the sunrise / force itself through the curtain / of the trembling eyelids?” Walcott’s metaphorical equation of his speaker’s body with a ‘house’ is marked as an awakening of responsibility to the hopes of the future, set to translate the static images of slave plantations and degradation into new terms. The sunrise acts as an incentive to re-imagine the “jaws of the sugar mules,” as they “ruminate and grind like the factory.” Pain attaches to the imagery Roach invokes in his poems and the speaker must recall in turn, pain that makes his plain style, like the facts of history (and the death) a burden hard to bear:

I did not want to hear it again,
the echo of broken windmills,
the mutter of the wild yams creeping
over the broken palings,
the noise of the moss
stitching the stone baracoons,

but the rain breaks
on the foreheads of the wild yams,
the dooryard opens the voice
of his rusty theme,
and the first quick drops of the drizzle
the libations to Shango
dry fast as sweat on the forehead
and our tears also. (SG 65)

While he hears “the echo of broken windmills,” the nod to *Don Quixote* hints at

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45 Notably when the echoes of “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” present in the title attach to the “spilling coralita” image. Cf. Part three: “In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash’d palings, / Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green.” Moore, ed. 171.
how Roach’s idealistic hopes for a revised West Indian society were dashed over time. The images lie like ruins taken from his poem, “I am the archipelago,” where the islands are: “Buffeted, broken by the press of tides.” “[A]ll the tales come mocking me,” Roach writes, “Out of the slave plantations where I grubbed / Yamm and cane.” Yet the sense of desolation alters with the speed of a tropical weather change in the next stanza, as Walcott’s elegy travels upwards toward fresh pastures.

The image of the mouth that began the poem reappears bequeathed to a local genius of place: “The peasant reeks sweetly of bush, / he smells the same as his donkey / they smell of the high, high country.” He suggests Makak from Walcott’s play, Dream on Monkey Mountain, or Sancho Panza. But in an action reminiscent of Whitman’s hermit and his song of the “bleeding throat,” he wipes his hand across the “tobacco-stained / paling stumps of his torn mouth,” and rinsing with the “mountain dew […] spits out pity.” Walcott pursues this note and in the final stanza returns to the framing mechanism of the dooryard:

I did not want it to come,
but sometimes, under the armpit
of the hot sky over the country
the wind smells of salt
and a certain breeze lifts
the sprigs of the coralita
as if, like us,
lifting our heads, at our happiest,
it too smells the freshness of life.

Mixing the bitter and earthy with the sweet, the memory of Roach is transmuted into coralita sprigs. The sprigs grow overflowing onto the “wall” Roach “writes of,” to reiterate the earlier stanza, forming a bier, monument in kind to the living culture of a West Indian “sweetness and light” he craved. Out of ruinous circumstances, Roach’s death is symbolically elevated from being another blow

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46 Qtd. in Chamberlin 108. Cf. lines from The Bounty, poem 20, “something of weight in the long indigo afternoon, / the yam vines trying to hide the sugar-wheel’s ruin” (B 48).
inflicted on a broken land to an action with its own logic and meaning; a dissolution into forms that spring eternal. Homage to the memory is paid by erecting a poetic architecture built on a reconciliation of Roach's "hope and despair" and the types of knowledge and tradition he believed held the answer to stagnant thinking.

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The reader-listener's sense of the elegy as a mediating event testing death's power against that of art and the imagination, an architecture wherein the "vessel of the lost voice" can be evoked, is even more acute when the poem in question begins life as a eulogy, praising the deceased. Walcott's "R. T. S. L." turns his self-consciousness to advantage through a reflexive troping, making for an improvised quality, as the oratorical aspect of voice is ironically textualized. Lowell's skeletal initials in the title are followed by a further epitaphic inscription: (1917-1977). Formally, the four unrhymed stanzas progress in length from six to thirteen lines. Each one, matching an initial, anatomizes a facet of the death whose reality is symbolically undermined by the imagined release of Lowell's translucent spirit at the poem's end. The architectural site of the church is a constant factor in the speech, as the motif of enclosure and its breach is invoked throughout by spatial metaphors.

In the first stanza, the speaker squares off against death: "As for that other thing / which comes when the eyelid is glazed" (SAK 36). He goes on to imagine Lowell's demise, how "they open the heart like a shirt / to release a rage of swallows [...] the brain / is a library for worms." Against these images he draws attention to his own reading, equating it with the moment when "everything became so stiff" in Lowell's passing: "so formal with ironical adieux, / organ and choir." Wondering, "at what moment in the oration / shall I break down and

47 Cf. the closing lines of "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" which read: "I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring." Moore, ed. 178.
weep," the prearranged inevitability of it all brings an afflicted self-composure to the proceedings. But the tone lifts with the return of an image: "the startle of wings / breaking from the closing cage / of your body." Lowell's fist relaxes, "unclenching / these pigeons circling serenely / over the page." Veering sharply away from the potentially maudlin, Walcott offers a glimpse of transformation.

Lowell's form 'breaks' in these metaphors, a passage figuratively imagined in the final stanza. The evacuation of spirit is troped as a form of translation:

and,  
as the parentheses lock like a gate  
1917 to 1977,  
the semicircles close to form a face,  
a world, a wholeness,  
an unbreakable O,  
and something that once had a fearful name  
walks from the thing that used to wear its name,  
transparent, exact representative,  
so that we can see through it  
churches, cars, sunlight,  
and the Boston Common,  
ot needing any book. (SAK 37)

Closure of the "parentheses" brings about a reformation, a hieroglyph shaped in the "unbreakable" guise of an "O" that is the correlative of Lowell's voice, an Orphic mouth still singing, enthralled. Walcott envisages Lowell's spirit leaving his form as a primal logos, wherein signifier and signified are reunited in "exact" representation of self. The eulogy communicates this gist, in a structure through which we now see clearly, after the dark, mournful sentiments beforehand.

In Midsummer XXXII, Walcott devotes an elegy to Lowell, the poet imagined as a genius loci of Boston. In this poem written in the semi-rhyming long line scheme characteristic of the collection, architectural imagery acts as homage through a 'Lowellization' of space. Visionary associations are opened out:

The sirens will keep on singing, they will never break  
the flow of their one-voiced river to proselytize:  
'Come back, come back!'; your head will roll like the others,  
the rusted, open-mouthed tins with their Orphic cries.
The city of Boston will not change for your sake. (M 45)

Allusions to Walcott's discomfort in America and hankering for the Caribbean can be read here. Both a self-reference and a call to the Lowell who will not return, "your head" is ambiguous, as the "tins" are finally anonymous vessels of the Orphic voice. "Cal's bulk haunts my classes," he states, and as in "R. T. S. L." an anatomization takes place as his "shaggy, square head" and his hands are re-imagined: "repeatedly bracketing vases / of air." 48 This shaping implies a form-making impulse, but Lowell's head with its "petal-soft voice that has never wilted" is given the primary Orphic significance at this juncture. The head revisits sites through imagery borrowed from such poems as "For the Union Dead," "Skunk Hour," and "The Opposite House." Police car lights keep a "red eye on colored neighborhoods." The speaker's reverie retains a mythical dimension:

The sirens go on singing, while Lowell's head rolls past the Harvard boathouse, and his Muse roars for the Celtics in the Irish bars.
They move in schools, erect, pale fishes in streets;
transparent, fish-eyed, they skitter when I divide,
like a black porpoise heading for the straits,
and the sirens keep singing in their echoing void.

Walcott inserts his own presence within the imaginative flow of the lines, a reflection of the manner in which the crowds "divide" before his amphibious figure punningly "head[ed]" for other waters. An awareness that he is carrying on a broader poetic lineage is apparent in subtext. While Lowell may haunt his "classes," he maintains his own relation to the Orphic ideal of voice as well.

In Walcott's homage to Robert Fitzgerald, Midsummer, XXXIII, the subject is also depicted as a spirit of place. Fitzgerald's presence is imagined hovering around the army tents during the siege of Troy. He is depicted as 'lost in translation,' and an architectural referent becomes a door into language, and an abstract temporality. Initially a textualized landscape is evoked, mapped onto his

48 Cf. the "shaggy top of Mona high" in Lycidas. Milton 121.
Those grooves in that forehead of sand-colored flesh
were cut by declining keels, and the crow’s foot
that prints an asterisk by unburied men
reminds him how many more by the Scamander’s
gavel fell and lie waiting for their second fate.
Who next should pull his sword free of its mesh
of weeds and hammer at the shield
of language till the wound and the word fit? (M 46)

The speaker imagines Fitzgerald’s forehead becoming emblematic through his
reading of Homer, the travails of his art printed on a face that has itself become
translated, to become the poetry. Portraying him as a Vulcan-like craftsman whose
skill as a maker has cleared the field of challengers, Walcott generates a sense that
he is troping the “shield” of Fitzgerald’s face ekphrastically. The next line, “A
whole war is fought backward to its cause,” reinforces this enigmatic notion. As
in Heaney’s elegy to Fitzgerald, Walcott’s homage demands a leap of
imagination.

In Walcott’s conception, attuned closely to Fitzgerald’s creative memory, the
events of the Trojan war are fixed in a parallel reality, a world he translates him
into through the Iliad. It is a liminal territory, filled with revenants of the dead:

Last night, the Trojan and the Greek commanders
stood up like dogs when his strange-smelling shadow
hung loitering round their tents. Now, at sunrise,
the dead begin to cough, each crabwise hand
feels for its lance, and grips it like a pen.
A helmsman drowns in an inkblot, an old man wanders
a pine-gripped islet where his wound was made.
Entering a door-huge dictionary, he finds that clause
that stopped the war yesterday; his pulse starts the gavel
of hexametrical time, the V’s of each lifted blade
pull from Connecticut, like the hammers of a piano
without the sound, as the wake, reaching gravel,
recites in American: “Arma virumque cano…”

Reminiscent of Philoctetes, the “old man” is also Fitzgerald, entering the
"dictionary" as a temple of his translator's art. With this monumental architectural signifier Walcott depicts an entry into translation as a temporally orientated process, animated by Fitzgerald's spirit. The war over, Walcott sets time flowing forward, as his "pulse" locks into a scansion steering toward a New World. The "wake" becomes a metaphor for a voice that has turned "American" in cadence, though his Virgilian strain survives the move. Given the knowledge that Fitzgerald passed away a year after Midsummer was published, this textual afterlife is made coincident with the translator's mortal crossing over into a finally timeless empire.

The face becomes a means of approaching and memorializing voice in Walcott's "Eulogy to W. H. Auden," from The Arkansas Testament. Parallels with Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" arise as the homage is also a type of imitation. Like Auden, Walcott employs three parts, relying often on six-liners and quatrains. However, what first distinguishes the poem from Auden's and links it with the Lowell eulogy is the self-assured reflexivity of the speaker apparent from the opening lines, catching those gathered within the cathedral into his tones:

Assuredly, that fissured face
is wincing deeply, and must loathe
our solemn rubbish,
frrown on our canonizing farce
as self-enhancing, in lines both
devout and snobbish.

Yet it may spare us who convene
against its wish in varnished pews
this autumn evening;
as maps remember countries, mien
defines a man, and his appears
at our beseeching. (AT'61)

50 Appended with the words: "Read at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, October 17, 1983."
51 The comparison is less sure in parts one and two. Auden's first part consists of four six-liners, one five-liner and a single couplet refrain, compared to Walcott's eight six-liners. His second part is made up of one ten-liner, Walcott's nine quatrains. However, both third parts comprise six quatrains.
Walcott’s formal architecture places those assembled under the influence of Auden’s “fissured face.” An aspect of that visage, the “lines / devout and snobbish” signify both the rows of mourners and the lines of elegies, written or intended. They reflect the orderly bearing, or “mien” of the deceased who generously tolerates this “beseeching” from his presiding sphere.

In the third stanza the image of Auden’s face is expanded upon: “Each granite feature, cracked and plain / as the ground in Giotto, is / apt to this chancel.” Working the “language of forms,” both Giotto’s painting and the altar-area of the cathedral converge in a space of elemental reference. But Walcott may also be playing on the Latin origin of “chancel,” cancelli, meaning ‘grating’ to suggest the elegiac forms that may ensue, his own verse included. The “wry mouth bracketed with pain” suggests a textualizing process in motion, the housing of Auden’s visage in ordered paeans exemplified in Walcott’s own voicing:

For further voices will delight
in all that left the body of
the mortal Auden
centuries after candlelit
Kirchstetten freed its tenant of
Time and its burden

Modifying Auden’s words in the guts of his own living form, Walcott equates the dead man’s body with the cottage in Kirchstetten, which now figures for the corpus of his poetry in its deserted architecture; the museum that preserves memory in the textual echo of voice. Auden’s presence takes shape as a shade the mourners are then asked to reflect upon, as “stricken with the light / of his strange calling” they contemplate their own individual fates in the wake of the death (AT 62). The speaker projects an imagined scenario: “once we leave this darkened church / and stand on pavements in the night [...] and move on / to selfish futures.” Auden’s form ghosts those who were once followers: “our
footsteps echoing in the dark / street have, for their companion, / his shadow with us.” Implying a poetic force as well, the shade is figured benignly marking the meter of receding feet in Walcott’s analogy, carried into further designs.

The departing feet carry Auden’s shadow into new forms and places in a topographical dispersal recalling the earlier elegy’s image of Yeats, “scattered among a hundred cities.”52 Yet Walcott’s six-liners (and overall verse form) argue vehemently for Auden’s containment against the threat of chaos and final darkness, signified in a censorious analogy: “you [...] knew war, like free verse, is a sign / of awful manners.” A protective, sheltering impulse is revealed in the last stanza of the part:

Tonight, as every dish deploys
from sonar peaks its amplified
fireside oration,
we keep yours to ourselves, a voice
internal, intricately wired
as our salvation.

In a move that internalizes Auden’s voice as a spirit of “oration” preserved within, the power of form associated with him is preserved in the cell of the self. A current that must not be permitted to fail, the voice is kept alive in the inner sanctum of the elect, reflecting the process outlined in the concise ‘wires’ of Walcott’s elegiac architecture.

Walcott takes a less defensive angle in his second part, though an allusion to possessing Auden’s poetry through English is made. Formally, his quatrains continue to frame Auden’s memory in a befitting manner as a shift in setting to the West Indies is made. In keeping with the opening image, the speaker imagines a face once again changing, like a beach, as the “fissures made by speech / close” (AT 62-63). He envisages how “Geese following earth’s arc / will find an accurate Indies / in the lime-scented dark” (AT 63). Where in his second part

52 Auden 247.
Auden envisions poetry as a river that "flows on south [...] it survives, / A way of happening, a mouth," here the West Indies figure for such a destination. The birds symbolize not only the migratory flow of poetries, but in a broader sense, language. The speaker refers to "conjugations" made over, yet "still based on the beat / of wings that gave their cast to / our cuneiform alphabet." Walcott's overarching trajectory of poetic thought extends from the New York cathedral to another architectural space. He remembers the Methodist chapel in Castries, from which flowed, "down still colonial streets, / the hoisted chords of Wesley." These "chords," in an image of a well being drawn, "were strong as miner's throats," and define this site where he made his first "communion [...] with the English tongue" (AT 64). A fusion then occurs:

It was such dispossession
that made possession joy,
when, strict as Psalm or Lesson,
I learnt your poetry.

With the trimeter marking out the memory in blueprint, learning the "Master" by heart becomes another translatio imperii et studii redeeming the sins of his "Empire."

Auden's Christian disposition affects Walcott's imagery of churches in the eulogy and its consequent form. His final part, consisting of elegiac quatrains, re-casts the analogous part of Auden's elegy for Yeats. Where Auden imagines Yeats laid to rest, the "Irish vessel [...] Emptied of its poetry," here the speaker presents his shade first absorbed into New York's architecture and then freed:

Twilight. Grey pigeons batten
on St. Mark's slate. A face
startles us with its pattern
of sunlit fire escapes.

Your slippered shadow pities
the railings where it moves,
brightening with Nunc Dimittis

53 Auden 248.
the city it still loves.

These "fire escapes" and "railings" the shade "moves" against allude to designs that blend in poetic form. A refuge in the text of the city's spatial "language of forms" is figured—an extended metaphor for the Auden lines (like those of his face) Walcott reads by analogy. Through this trope an aspect of his vibrant presence is imagined residing within the city's architecture.

A quickening in the eulogy's 'passage' now occurs, as in oracular tones the speaker makes three demands. He first implores: "O craft, that strangely chooses / one mouth to speak for all." Walcott's conception of the "vessel of [...] voice" carrying others onward is reiterated. The next plea: "O Light no dark refuses," opens up a correspondence with divine spirit, and form, whose etymology is related to sparkling or gleaming (as noted in the introduction). A third appeal is made: "O Space impenetrable, // fix, among constellations, / the spark we honour here." The collective entreaty to these aspects—"craft [...] Light [...] Space"—marks a reflexive invocation to poetic form's enshrinement of memory, and the gearing of Walcott's own language towards an enduring temporal permanence. The closing image continues the migrating "craft" motif, a figure for poiesis and a vision of a funeral barge moving down the East River. The "mouths of all the rivers / are still," in homage, while the "estuaries / shine with the wake that gives the / craftsman the gift of peace" (AT 65). In lines seeking the serene lyric moment of 'still motion' Walcott's final quatrains hold Auden's image in the act of release, fixing his charged "spark" in the poetic firmament. A mastery over time is asserted, for which the architectural setting has created the conditions.

The homage to Stephen Spender, "Elsewhere," is composed in longer lined elegiac quatrains, which begin rhyming abab, then gradually move into more complex variations. Again Walcott reflexively tropes his own form as part of the internal imagery, collapsing aesthetic distance in a single poetic architecture.
Throughout the poem a dislocated "Somewhere" is invoked. Auden's "arbitrary spot" from "The Shield of Achilles," is recalled. The first of the ten quatrains invokes the "Barbed wire enclosed" space from that poem: "Somewhere a white horse gallops with its mane / plunging round a field whose sticks / are ringed with barbed wire" (AT 66). The speaker states in the fourth quatrain: "Somewhere a page / is torn out, and somehow the foliage / no longer looks like leaves but camouflage." A gradual narrowing in on a confined architectural space occurs, as this textual analogy provokes an image of "a writer lying with his eyes wide open / on mattress ticking, who will not read / this, or write. How to make a pen?"

Dystopic images of a world where censorship is the norm ensue, before an irruption of the prison cell imagery into the form itself takes place:

Through these black bars
hallowed faces stare. Fingers
grip the cross bars of these stanzas
and it is here, because somewhere else

their stares fog into oblivion
thinly, like the faceless numbers
that bewilder you in your telephone
diary. Like last year's massacres. (AT 67)

Making his lines and quatrains the "black [...] cross bars" that represent cells and their windows, the framing imagery combines the spaces of 'elsewhere' and 'somewhere' inside one inherent form: "it is here." This internment, though defined in the present moment, is made symbolic of countless others as Walcott invokes the historical through the spatial. Like Heaney's "The Unacknowledged Legislator's Dream," the reader-listener's position is suddenly foregrounded. Spender's work is honored in this breaking down, his own activism a negation of the distancing effect of art, set in opposition to those who would make "a career of conscience," as the last verse goes on to imply.

Walcott's self-reflexive engagement with his own text as a place where the

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54 Auden 597.
“vessel of the lost voice” is re-imagined in a formal architecture is apparent in his “Italian Eclogues” for Joseph Brodsky.55 This six-poem sequence from The Bounty, each consisting of a nonce stanza of between twenty and twenty-five extended lines, uses the poet’s love for Rome and Venice to order his memory in a series of topoi. Walcott also carries Brodsky’s spirit across to the West Indies. Eclogue i opens with the speaker traveling: “On the bright road to Rome, beyond Mantua” (B 64). When the elegy first appeared two paintings of houses by Walcott accompanied it, evoking the “stone farms in character” the speaker passes as he drives.56 Brodsky’s lines and images are re-read into the landscape, giving voice to surrounds imbued with the words of earlier poets:

nouns from a schoolboy’s text, Virgilian, Horatian, phrases from Ovid passing in a green blur, heading towards perspectives of noseless busts, open-mouthed ruins, and roofless corridors of Caesars whose second mantle is now the dust’s and this voice that rustles out of the reeds is yours.

Language and architecture become metaphorically interpenetrated in the speaker’s transport as a reverie unfolds around his invoked presence. Brodsky’s voice will outlast these ruins, “aere perennius,” girded in evergreen reeds, “still in Italy. / Yeah. Very still.” Mixed with such drollery is an appreciation for the architectonic achievement: “To every line there is a time and a season. / You refreshed forms and stanzas.” Brodsky’s reverence for poetry’s raw materials leads Walcott to equate him with a natural force impacting upon the terrain.

As in the eulogy for Auden, architectural elements are merged with the shade of the departed in eclogue ii, set in Venice, Brodsky’s resting-place. Watermark, his meditation on the city, is recalled in Walcott’s handling of the imagery of

water, light, and shadow:

Whir of a pigeon's wings outside a wooden window,
the flutter of a fresh soul discarding the exhausted heart.
Sun touches the bell-towers. Clangour of the cinquecento,
at wave-slapped landings vaparetto's warp and depart
leaving the traveller's shadow on the swaying stage
who looks at the glints of water that his ferry makes
like a comb through blond hair that plaits after its passage,
or book covers enclosing the foam of their final page (B 65)

Walcott reads the physical makeup of Venice in remembrance of Brodsky. A
sense of elasticity between forms is asserted as water is given a metamorphic
power. As in the Fitzgerald homage, the metaphor of the book as an architectural
signifier is used, the speaker imagining: "The windows of a book spine open / on
a courtyard where every cupola is a practice / for your soul encircling the coined
water of Venice." Concordantly, Venice responds in homage: "The bells of the
campaniles' deranged tolling / for you who felt this stone-laced city healed our
sins." It is the book's form that provides the doubled trope of correspondence
that reading offers here, however: "Off the ferry, your shade turns the corners / of
a book and stands at the end of perspective, waiting for me." As in the ending of
"An Architect," a vista of limitless potential is affirmed. Walcott declines to visit
Italy, stating in an interview that he fears falling too in love with the country.
Thus he can picture Brodsky's shade patiently waiting for him in a celestial city
of his own imagining, framed in the permanence of these lines. Through spatial
imagery, Walcott asserts a control over the temporal within the visionary realm of
his elegy.

Eclogue iii moves into the Italian countryside again, a "landscape of vines
and hills," though Brodsky's original homeland is simultaneously called up. The
clouds take on architectonic meaning, an idea of unraveled perspective
developed in their shapes which, "change angrily when we begin to associate
them / with substantial echoes, holes where eternity gapes / in a small blue door"
In the fourth eclogue the relentlessly poetic landscape shifts to the seacoast and a translation of voices into natural phenomena returns. Montale is muttered by the “foam out on the sparkling strait,” while Brodsky’s “echo comes between the rocks, chuckling in fissures / when the high surf vanishes” (B 67). A catalogue uniting the Mediterranean and Caribbean seas is reflexively paid out: “These lines flung for sprats or a catch of rainbow fishes, / the scarlet snapper, parrot fish, argentine mullet, / and the universal rank smell of poetry, cobalt sea.” Poetic sustenance is harvested in Walcott’s imagining, as the speaker inhales:

weeds like hair swaying in water, mica in Sicily, 
a smell older and fresher than the Norman cathedrals or restored aqueducts, the raw hands of fishermen their anchor of dialect, and phrases drying on walls based in moss. These are its origins, verse, they remain with the repeated lines of waves and their crests, oars and scansion, flocks and one horizon, boats with keels wedged into sand, your own island or Quasimodo’s or Montale’s lines wriggling like a basket of eels.

Poetry is animated from a fisherman’s metaphorical perspective, the ceaseless quasi-musical rhythms of work held up against the “cathedrals” and “restored aqueducts” as paradoxically “older and fresher.” Again, the architectural emphasis is necessary to give Walcott’s temporal evocation of the dynamic and classic “origins” of verse a deeper context.57

In eclogue v, a fresh vista is defined that offers homage to Brodsky’s classical and neo-baroque leanings. The analogues are literally spelt out:

My colonnade of cedars between whose arches the ocean

57 A side-tradition of pastoral is apparent in the use of the shepherd-fishermen brotherhood. Virgil’s Eclogues were emulated by the Italian Renaissance poet Sannazaro (1458-1530), who transformed the shepherds into Neapolitan fishermen. See Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, Classical Mythology, 5th ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995) 568. Walcott continues the hybrid tradition, and makes himself a poet-fisherman. The speaker tells Brodsky he is “going down to the shallow edge to begin again,” in the final lines, “with a first line, with an old net, the same expedition. / I will study the opening horizon the scansion’s strokes of the rain, / to dissolve in a fiction greater than our lives, the sea, the sun.” Walcott’s fisherman looks to the trusted ways, relying on the “old net” as a metaphor for form’s container, the image of dissolving in a “fiction” equating with dissolution in work and life, as well as death.
drones the pages of its missal, each trunk a letter embroidered like a breviary with fruits and vines, down which I continue to hear an echoing architecture of stanzas with St. Petersburg’s profile, the lines of an amplified cantor, his tonsured devotion. (B 68)

The tree-trunks are re-made as letters in a devotional book, bearers of conventional emblems of poetic inspiration, the evergreens of laurels, myrtles and ivy, along with the berries of fruit Walcott plucks once more. These pastoral echoes come through the resonant, arched “colonnade” also sounded by the ocean, making the elegiac form here the organic correlative to Brodsky’s “architecture / of stanzas.” His memory is re-ordered and stored in a topos located as both text and a place in the landscape that the speaker can enter into and read. Shaped in neo-classical allusions, the lines though retaining “St. Petersburg’s profile” are given the fluid properties associated with his voice. A cloud copies his writing stance, recalling a “conduct whose metre and poise were modelled on Wystan’s, / a poetry whose profile was Roman and open.” The imperious ethic revealed in Brodsky’s espousal of form is again compared with a city and a face.

A “colonnade” of lines, Walcott’s monument in verse represents a form open to ocean, tradition and Brodsky’s voice. It acts as a springboard for the next restorative endeavour: “I am lifted above the surf’s missal, the columned cedars, / to look down on my digit of sorrow, your stone.” In the sacrosanct construct of the poem, the speaker can become an eagle bearing the “acorn” of the poet’s heart. “towards Russia […] that restores / you past the Black Sea of Publius Naso / to the roots of a beech tree.” The power for this imaginative flight is attributable to a sublimity of voice he draws from Brodsky: “I am lifted with grief and praise, so / that your speck widens with elation, a dot that soars.” The mortal full-stop that ended the life is spatialized metaphorically by Walcott to become a building, part of the “echoing architecture” which is Brodsky’s legacy; a projection of
spirit borrowed from the title of his last collection, *So Forth*, to suggest an eternal ellipsis. As in Heaney’s elegies which end this way, a temporal opening-out occurs.

The references to cedars in the fifth eclogue may have a further purpose in giving Walcott’s sequence a West Indian flavor. In the closing poem conifers are evoked, and more architectural metaphors appear: “The vault / increases, its ceiling crossed by bats or swallows / the heart climbs lilac hills in the light’s declension” (*B* 69). The speaker watches a figure like himself, “a man nearing his own house./ The trees close their doors, and the surf demands attention.” Marvell’s “Bermudas,” with its paradisal Lebanese cedars, is echoed in Walcott’s overall theme, and contains a similar “vault” image:

‘And in these rocks for us did frame
A Temple, where to sound his name.
Oh let our voice his praise exalt,
Till it arrive at heaven’s vault’.58

Here the “Temple” is at once a cave, and the resounding poetic form itself, as time is kept in the “English boat” through “falling oars.” Brodsky’s voice comes through as a pantheistic spirit in Walcott’s version, filling the St. Lucian skies:

The lion

of the headland darkens like St. Mark’s, metaphors breed and flit in the cave of the mind, and one hears in the waves’ incantation and the August conifers, and reads the ornate cyrillics of gesturing fronds as the silent council of cumuli begins convening over an Atlantic whose light is as calm as a pond’s and lamps bud like fruit in the village, above roofs, and the hive of constellations appears, evening after evening, your voice, through the dark reeds of lines that shine with life.59

With the Vigie headland taking on Venetian characteristics, the “hive of constellations” re-envisages the mind’s cave (whose “metaphors […] flit” like

58 Marvell, “Bermudas” 17.
bees) as a primordial “vault,” expanded infinitely. Brodsky’s voice is made the daimon of this temple Walcott builds in the hearing, as the girding forces of form order his memory amid the “occluded sanctities” of these, his “accurate Indies.”

Like Heaney, Walcott looks to earlier poems—by Whitman, Milton, Dante and Marvell—as a means of strengthening the range of associations present in his elegiac architecture. A concentration on “hypnotiz[ing] space” is also apparent, in order that historical and temporal issues can be raised. The architectural acts as a frequent site where an entry into other, imaginative realities is made. Past and present are brought into visionary contact with one another, as in “A Village Life” and “The Cement Phoenix.” As he writes of Frost: “The poem does not obey linear time; […] it is, when it is true, time’s conqueror, not time’s servant.”

The interwoven process of memory is a constant factor in Walcott’s elegies, eulogies, and homages. While a complex melancholy pervades many of his lyrics, the elegies prove generally consolatory in the final passage they work out, converting despair to a commemorative faith in renewal. When the focus moves away from actual people to dwell on issues of historical injustice, neo-colonialism and the rise of ‘brutal’ architectural tendencies in the West Indies—as in “Elegy” and the Frederiksted poems—his ability to imagine a way forward is less sure. There is a sense that Walcott identifies with the structural forms he defends, in the same way he sees himself as a keeper of the faith in his laments for makers such as Lowell, Auden and Brodsky. He draws those voices and forms into a Caribbean context in many cases, creating hybrids where memory and tradition (the pastoral elegiac, for example) intersect, and through the poem, an architectonic conception of the “lost voice” is extended to a whole, ‘vaulted’ world in the imagination.

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John Hollander, in a reference to Justus George Lawler’s critical approach.

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60 “Road” 15.
states: “The true poet [...] employs scheme as trope [...] Great poetry is always making a kind of parable of its formal structures.” In the elegiac architecture of Heaney and Walcott, a strong aspect of this “parable” quality is realized. Both poets stretch the confines of their chosen forms at various points, implying that a travel beyond these limits is commensurate with death as perpetual release. In a process that frequently appears to bear out Vico’s formulation of memory, a reorientation of perspective often follows on from the work of remembrance, imagination or imitation, and invention in their elegies. They often trope a dynamic ‘passage’ that structures the reader-listener’s encounter with the memory of the departed. This follows from the way Heaney and Walcott create spatial and architectural topoi in regard to various individuals, giving their representations a vibrant quality, particularly with regard to voice. These places are ‘built on’ in the imagination of each poet, and in the language of their elegies, as a way of engaging with time and memory. In the process, memory gives poetry a transformational power to build a lasting monument, changing the place of mourning into one of restoration. The elegies of Heaney and Walcott move to riddle our preconceptions of death inside imaginary architectural and spatial constructs, where, to echo Ruskin’s phrase, we are compelled to remember.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this thesis I stress how architecture is central to the way Heaney and Walcott not only conceptualize poetry, but to the imaginative process of many poems. Each regards architecture and poetry as made up of resonant forms that are ideally animated, rather than static in nature. When represented in the poetic language of Heaney and Walcott the architectural ultimately takes on a spatio-temporal depth and power of suggestion. They repeatedly shift from the spatial dimension to the temporal realm to explore the possibilities latent in history and memory. The architectural provides the centering place, the formative topos, from which the process begins.

In chapter one I outline how Heaney’s and Walcott’s use of architecture as a metaphor enables them to talk about poetry in specific ways as a temporally orientated structure of consciousness. For Heaney, this threshold structure is subject both to the pressures of imagination and of physical reality, in the notion he borrows from Stevens. Heaney and Walcott place themselves within a broader temporal discourse of making, a “history of […] craft” and technique, crowned by abstract notions of the ‘temple’ or unfinished ‘cathedral’ to which they see themselves contributing. This overarching vision relates to teleological design; the final, humanistic cause that they believe poetry should realize. Heaney and Walcott also use architecture as a means of confronting cultural matters. A political dimension emerges in the relationship they see between the actual language, and the “language of forms,” that defines and redefines their respective societies.

The turn to an abstract notion of voice as an implicit authorizing presence draws in aspects of tone, style, perception, and accent, though a connection to history also underlies these considerations. As Heaney states regarding
Mandelstam: "Everything—the Russian earth, the European literary tradition, the Stalin terror—had to cohere in an act of the poetic voice" (P 218). The assertiveness that establishing poetic voice requires creates a metaphorical link with originary architectural forms, as seen in the examples of the tower, cave, and church. Over-identifying voice with the "perfected form" may prove dangerous, however, as Heaney observes in Yeats's case. Walcott, while less wary of this phenomenon, sees poetry as creating an inevitable enclosure for the writer which equates to dwelling in the world. The idea of objects as "temples of the spirit" also becomes apparent in this chapter, a notion each poet extends into broader spatial realms, as reading architecture emerges as a means of temporal engagement frequently involving a dislocation from quotidian reality.

In chapter two I examine how Heaney and Walcott each re-imagine home as a point of departure for a figurative dwelling in poetry, maintaining an ambivalent view toward the architecture of Ireland and the West Indies respectively. The alienation from constraining forms is carried over into a sense of restless movement through the world. Iain Chambers speaks of this experience in more general terms, as a "mode of inhabiting time and space not as though they were fixed and closed structures, but as providing the critical provocation of an opening whose questioning presence reverberates in the movement of the languages that constitute our sense of identity, place and belonging."1 In the case of Heaney and Walcott, the poet often acts as a "questioning presence" as well, entering into the imaginary life evoked by specific architectural places and sites. The 'ghosted forms' of home often recall buried histories, evoking matters of collective and personal memory within the metaphysical dimensions of each poem.

Heaney and Walcott portray themselves as 'ghosts' on occasion, and these

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1 Iain Chambers, Migrancy, Culture, Identity (London: Routledge, 1994) 4.
personae—able to slip between realities, and defy the constraints of space and time—are the outriders of imagination. Haunting the places of home, however, always involves a reciprocal haunting, whether it be associated with the ‘house of fear’ in Omeros, the mind’s cell in “Return to D’Ennery, Rain,” or the bleak, setting of “A Northern Hoard.” In the poems I examine, Heaney and Walcott often use almost Gothic imagery as minds become blackened vaults, barns loom with unnameable dread, and architecture becomes associated with an oppression of the soul. Part of the ‘inbetween’ status they evoke in their poetic personae leads to a receptivity to sensations of the uncanny, that is also the projection of an unhomely state of mind. This extends to allude to the often problematic histories of their respective cultures.

This sensitivity to the ambiance of built structures and architectural or architecturalized objects is again apparent in the third chapter, where I discuss various forms of center evoked in the verse. Poetry’s historical legacy as a space of representation emerges as a factor with regard to the treatment of country houses and estates. These topoi focus the imaginations of Heaney and Walcott to different degrees. Walcott, in particular, reveals a complex attitude toward the Great House and its legacy. The “questioning presence” of each poet is once more discernible in their awareness of the often violent and historically traumatic memories associated with different sites. They often expose dark and enigmatic centers, as architecture acts as an imaginative ‘door’ into other temporalities. Aspects of visionary immersion, or reverie, are common in these poems. Alongside the tower, each poet invokes archetypal architectural structures—the bone-house, Mycenae fortress, the coral ‘kingdom,’ the slave-hold—and these represent primal origins and sources. In a Jungian sense, they are images of influential ‘‘energy
centers' with connections to the collective unconscious. Heaney extends the search for beginnings into language itself through various words, looking to summon their energies, while Walcott, at times, treats the Great House as a symbolic wellhead of possibility.

In the final chapter I explore how architecture and memory are inextricably linked in the elegies of Heaney and Walcott, a factor relevant to their homages, and the eulogy. Through their various personae, they each continue to assert a fluid motion between realities within the imaginary realm of each poem. In Walcott's poetry the voice strongly emerges as a cipher for the spirit regarding the lament and celebration of poets. Heaney also makes an association between voice and certain architectural places and sites as vestigial memory. The concern with absence, as Maurice Blanchot writes of Rilke, is frequently countered by the celebration of presence, with regard to the dead in this case. Architecture is emblematic of those "things" Rilke praises, subject to the "pure gravity of forces which is repose in the web of influences and the balance of movements." Walcott, in his "Italian Eclogues," for example, finds Brodsky's voice everywhere translated into an 'afterlife.' But Walcott's speaker bears out Rilke's lines as well: "There is not one thing in which I do not find myself; / It is not my voice alone that sings: everything resonates." In several cases, each poet mimetically gestures at the idea of a poetic architecture, but at a deeper level the formal fusion of imagery and structure becomes a way of engaging time and memory once more.

Future areas of research in relation to architecture and Heaney and Walcott

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4 Qtd. in Blanchot 151.
might look in more detail at some of the specific issues raised in this thesis. How architecture informs each writer’s thought about language, poetics, and politics is an ongoing source of concern, due to the complexity of elements present in their work. The connection of each poet with the respective histories of representing architecture and the landscape in their cultures, discussed in chapter three, also offers scope for further inquiry. Other studies might concentrate in more detail on those structures and sites that appear with less frequency in the poetry than many of the recurrent features I examine. In Heaney’s case, these would include such ancient places as the rath or hill-fort, and the vernacular architecture of lookout and ‘listening-post.’ In regard to Walcott, places such as the plantation yard, and the various forts left by the British and French on St. Lucia and other islands (especially in Omeros), carry a powerful significance. These examples conceal ‘other’ hidden histories for Heaney and Walcott as well. The recurrent usage of hotel imagery in Walcott’s work, and his relationship to different cities, would benefit from further interpretative analysis. Throughout Heaney’s and Walcott’s poetry and poetics, references to confinement and prisons appear. Investigation into the sources of this preoccupation, and the prevalence of the ‘spatial uncanny’ in their writing might yield interesting results. Finally, a more extensive comparative analysis of the descencus ad inferos motif in the poetry, along the lines laid down by Pike, would undoubtedly prove valuable in critical terms. There is much scope for further inquiry.

In conclusion, I offer the image of the Ailwee Caves Visitors’ Center in Burren, County Clare, Western Ireland, designed by A. and D. Wjechert in the late

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5 Cf. Walcott’s statements: “If you use a political metaphor, I would say that every poet is imprisoned in a system that is himself, that he is juiled in himself, and that that effort to get out of that jail is the struggle he has or the defiance he has in having the guts to use the next word without the safety or the cliché of repetition. […] The inner prison that exists is one that’s outside and yet is inside the totalitarian regime. […] whether it’s Mandelstam or Herbert or Milosz or even Seamus Heaney in the conflict in Ireland, there is an inner prison that one recognizes in oneself, and one is both judge and prisoner.” Montenegro. Baer, ed. 143.
seventies. The Center is modeled closely on the human ear. Lying flat on the terrain, its curvilinear form creates an entrance to the labyrinth of caves beneath. As John Olley writes, “it first channels the visitors into a kind of acoustic chamber—the reception and tea-room—before conducting them down the narrowing cochlear passage to the cavities beneath the cranium of the mountain.” The exterior of the structure is clad in the same limestone as the deeply fissured hillside, seeming to grow organically out of the earth. Inspired by Neolithic passage graves, the structure could have been designed by Heaney, and it is intriguing to think how he would read its form, and enter into the ‘underlife’ discerned there. Walcott, on the other hand, might see how the center also resembles a nautilus shell, sounded by voices, returning their echoes, “listening to the landscape.” For Heaney and Walcott, many architectural structures are “listening posts,” resonating to inform the imaginative process, and conducive to the temporal orientation which all poetic language involves. The Center epitomizes the argument of this thesis: how each poet metaphorically puts his ear to the grounds of history and memory, sounding creative possibilities through the framework of the architectural.

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