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**Allusion and ambiguity in Seamus Heaney's  
"Blackberry-Picking"**

Jonathan P.A. Sell

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## Allusion and ambiguity in Seamus Heaney's "Blackberry-Picking"

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### Abstract

This paper subjects the function of allusion first to a stylistic and then to a more pragmatic analysis. It is argued that allusion is interactive and enables the construction of a community or culture in which the sender invites the receiver to share. In the case of Heaney's short lyric, it is shown how allusions to Keats at first sight persuade readers of the existence of a shared community with the poet that is founded on shared cultural experiences. However, this sense of community is problematised by the experiential disjunction between the allusively competent "you" to whom the poem is addressed and the "you" inscribed into the poem itself. This disjunction entails the alienation of the explicit addressee from the recollected experiences of the poetic persona as narrated within the poem, an alienation which mirrors that

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persona's forlorn incapacity to map onto the Ulster of his childhood the allusive pre-texts of English culture. Thus allusion throws into relief both what sender and receiver may have in common and what keeps them apart, while also offering the poet refuge in the ambiguity inherent in the twin possibilities of referential or associative readings.

**"Blackberry-Picking"**

*For Philip Hobsbaum*

Late August, given heavy rain and sun  
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.  
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot  
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.  
You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet  
Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it  
Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for  
Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger  
Sent us out with milk-cans, pea-tins, jam-pots  
Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our  
boots.  
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills  
We trekked and picked until the cans were full,  
Until the tinkling bottom had been covered  
With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned  
Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered

With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.  
We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.  
But when the bath was filled we found a fur,  
A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.  
The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush  
The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.  
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair  
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.  
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.  
(Heaney, 1980: 15)

## 1. Introduction

**T**he initial impetus behind this paper was an unease at the way both traditional students of allusion and intertextualists tend to seek a single and definitive meaning to explain a writer's use of allusion within a given text, as if interpretation were a question of Manichean decision-making, of choosing either this or that, where "this" and "that" are taken to be mutually exclusive. (note 1) The paper gained momentum when I discovered how intertextual theory and literary stylistics have relatively little to say about each other; thus it became an experiment in combining two approaches to literary texts. My main finding is that ambiguity, normally understood to be a semantic phenomenon where one signi-

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fier or chain of signifiers denotes two (at least) logically incompatible meanings, with the corollary that one or other of the possible meanings is relegated to a second place or rejected altogether, may also exist on the plane of Jakobson's functions. Thus, one meaning may pertain to one function, another to a second function, and, so long as a text provides sufficient signals to identify its twin functions, both meanings or interpretations may exist simultaneously and with equal validity. Seamus Heaney's poem "Blackberry-Picking" was selected as a test-case because its allusions have so far attracted little attention, especially its allusions to the poetry of John Keats. What is more, Heaney is a poet acutely aware both of literary and linguistic traditions and of his varying degrees of sitedness within them. (note 2 )It therefore seemed worthwhile to discover what the function of allusion might be in one of the poems from Heaney's first published collection, where the young poet was in search of a voice and an audience. Once the presence of allusion in "Blackberry-Picking" has been established, the possible functions of that allusion will be assessed according to current intertextual opinion; then an attempt will be made to systematise the allusive functions by applying Jakobson's functions of verbal communication. Finally conclusions will be drawn regarding the theoretical issues raised and the interpretation of Heaney's poem.

## 2. Allusion in “Blackberry-Picking”

### 2.1. *Wordsworth, Frost and Roethke*

“Blackberry-Picking” is one of a handful of lyrics in Heaney’s first published collection of poems, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), which have to do with his youthful encounters with the natural world. With respect to this handful, among which the most famous is the poem which gives the collection its title, it has become a commonplace of Heaney criticism to identify a distinctly anti-pastoral strain (Hart, 1992: 9-31) and/or a primordial debt to Wordsworth, whose guilt-ridden expoliations of a rowing-boat in Book I of *The Prelude* and of hazelnuts in “Nutting” were reprimanded by a minatory, animistic nature (Morri-son, 1982: 21-2; Corcoran, 1986: 47-8; Foster, 1989: 23; Roe, 1989: 166-70; Tamplin, 1989: 16-7; Hart, 1992: 26). The common burden of much of this criticism is that in such poems Heaney is charting by means of sexually charged metaphor “the end of innocence” (Corcoran, 1986: 48) and giving expression to “intimations of mortality” (Foster, 1989: 23).

Wordsworth’s “Nutting” may well be a topical forebear of “Blackberry-Picking”, but a summary review of Heaney’s lexis suggests that Theodore Roethke’s “Moss-Gathering” (1975: 38) is a rather closer literary relation, as hinted but not explored by Foster (1989: 21) and Hart (1992: 26). As well as

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in four distinct shared content-words or word-stems ("dark", "green", "thick", "flesh"), **(note 3)** Heaney coincides with Roethke in a three-word segment, "I always felt" ("felt" also appears in "Nutting": "I felt a sense of pain", l.51). Roethke's "I" "always felt mean" (l.9), whereas Heaney's "I" "always felt like crying" (l.22). The reaction of Roethke's "I" is outward-looking in so far as it recognises the hurt done to nature, while that of Heaney's is inward-looking, self-absorbed and disappointed. This distinction is reinforced by Heaney's refusal to infuse nature with any Wordsworthian "spirit"; Roethke, on the other hand, subscribes to the pathetic fallacy and speaks of "a desecration" comparable with Wordsworth's action of deforming and sullyng.

Robert Frost's "After Apple-Picking" (1986: 88-9) has also been touted as a close relative of Heaney's poem (Foster, 1989: 21; Hart, 1992: 26). Apart from the similarity in the title, Heaney repeats five of Frost's content-words ("grass", "keep[s]", "picking", "fruit" and "hands"). **(note 4)** Frost's less well-known poem "Blueberries" (1986: 78-81) has not been mentioned as a further possible influence. While its considerable length (105 lines) lessens the statistical significance of lexical repetitions, these are nonetheless sufficient in number to merit comment: twenty-seven of Heaney's words may be

traced in Frost's "Blueberries", where some of them appear several times. (note 5) There is also the tantalising recurrence of the "blue-" of Frost's blueberries in Heaney's striking reference to "Bluebeard", which shall be discussed in section 4.2. Moreover, on the level of theme, knowledge and desire are at significant conflict in both poems. One of Frost's speakers "wishes" he "knew half what [expert pickers, the Lorens] know" (ll. 60-1), his desire being for knowledge; Heaney's speaker "hoped [the blackberries]'d keep, knew they would not" (l. 24), his desire running counter to his knowledge.

It is natural that, as exercises of some kind or other in pastoral Wordsworth's "Nutting", Roethke's "Moss-Gathering", Frost's "After Apple-Picking" and "Blueberries", and Heaney's "Blackberry-Picking" all present us with characters who are reminiscing. It might further be noted that a verbal echo, whereby the same stem "stick" occurs in three distinct morphological combinations, links the poems of Frost, Roethke and Heaney: "My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree" (Frost "After Apple-Picking", l.1); "not to mention a stick", "a flower / Stuck into his berries" (Frost "Blueberries", ll. 19, 65-5); "The crumbling small hollow sticks on the underside mixed with roots" (Roethke "Moss-Gathering", l. 5); "our palms sticky as Bluebeard's" (Heaney "Blackberry-Picking", l.16). But overall,

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a statistician would be unlikely to judge the lexical findings so far discussed significant. After all, if several poets set about recounting their fruit-picking/-gathering exploits in the reworking of what appears to be a literary topic, it is hardly surprising that words such as "fruit", "picking", "hand", "green" and even "flesh" should crop up; nor is "grass" particularly unexpected, while the verb "keep" is so common in the language as a whole as not to draw attention to itself. Only the recurrence of "stick-" invites comment; the doubt is whether it is justifiable to remark upon more than its fortuitousness. In short, a family resemblance is not a sufficient condition for blood-relation.

## **2.2. Keats**

Corcoran suggests that Heaney's line "But when the bath was filled we found a fur" (l.18) "imitates the alliterative line of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with its four main stresses, three carrying the heavy alliteration" (1986: 44). It could equally well be said that Heaney's tenth line has a Keatsian cadence: "Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots" brings to my ear such a line-and-a-foot as "My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense". Although I am not concerned with metrical issues in this paper, this aural reminiscence seems to support what shall be my initial contention: if Heaney's "Blackberry-Picking" owes an allusive debt to a

single poet, that poet is Keats. It is an odd fact that while critics have cited Keats as a formative influence on Heaney in very general terms, when it has come to pointing out allusions in our poem they have rushed to Frost and Roethke, turning their backs on the very writer whose name has been intoned as Heaney's "early sponsor" (Hart, 1992: 129). O'Donoghue writes of the "sensuousness" (a key word in Keats criticism) of Heaney's language (1994: 4) as well as gesturing indirectly at Keatsian precedent for the non-standard forms adopted in their poetry by Kavanagh and Heaney and citing "the aesthetic of riskiness", most famously applied to Keats by Christopher Ricks in his seminal study *Keats and Embarrassment* (1984: 43-4). Hart meanwhile speculates that Heaney "yearns to declare with John Keats, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'" but is unable to do so as "his pastorals... show that truth and beauty are often violently at odds" (1992: 11), a truism of which Keats himself was not altogether ignorant, although Hart fails to mention the point. **(note 6)** Hart also refers to the "uncollected" poem "Reaping in Heat" which "imparts a melancholy tone to images of stubble fields and trilling birds (borrowed from 'To Autumn', the first poem Heaney could recite from memory)" (16), before later on claiming that "Keats was Heaney's original poetic father" (129). But neither Hart nor O'Donoghue make any sustained attempt to analyse Heaney's negotiation

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with Keats. No critic makes any mention of Keats in relation to "Blackberry-Picking".

But which addict of the *TLS*'s weekly "Author, author" competition would hesitate to suggest Keats as the author of twenty-four lines containing the following words: "sun", "ripen", "purple", "sweet", "wine", "stains", "tongue", "briar", "eyes", "hoarded", "glutting", "turn sour" (for occurrences in Keats see Appendix)? If "glutting" doesn't clinch it, a key-word for Keats, denoting a satiety that may be either (or both) physically pleasurable or emotionally painful (Jones, 1969: 264); **(note 7)** or if "clot", cognate of verb "cloy", "so often call[ed] upon" by Keats (Ricks, 1984: 144) does not tip the balance; **(note 8)** there still remains the remarkable allusive conflation of some of Keats's best-known lines, which argues Heaney's filial debt beyond any reasonable doubt. Heaney writes:

At first, just one, a glossy purple clot  
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.  
You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet  
Like thickened wine; summer's blood was in it  
Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for  
Picking.  
[...]  
... and on top big dark blobs burned

Like a plate of eyes. (ll.3-8, 14-5)

Compare Keats:

O for a beaker full of the warm South,

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

And purple-stainèd mouth, ... (“Ode to a Nightingale”, ll.15-8)

Ay, in the very temple of Delight

Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,

Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue

Can burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine; (“Ode on Melancholy”, ll.25-8)

In general terms, the two Keats extracts are concerned with drinking and eating respectively, whereas Heaney compares the experience of eating blackberries to that of drinking wine. As for details, there is obvious lexical coincidence; but also, Heaney’s comparison of the berry’s flesh with wine picks up on Keats’s periphrastically expressed desire for some Mediterranean red, while Heaney’s “eyes” make explicit the reference of Keats’s image of “beaded bubbles winking” (eyes wink; eyes may also be beady). **(note 9)** What is more, in “Ode on Melancholy” Keats connects eating and eyes directly when he enjoins the reader:

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Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,  
Emprison her soft hand and let her rave,  
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes. (ll.18-20)

It might not be too far-fetched to suggest that Heaney's "summer's blood" catches the warmth Keats associates with "the South" and mingles it with the physiological cause of blushing ("blushful Hippocrene"), namely the sudden surge of blood through the veins. [\(note 10\)](#)

Taking into account these allusion-rich lines and the other single word correspondences detailed in the Appendix, I think the poem's Keatsian pedigree is unquestionable. To the objection that such lexis is to be expected in poems that share (to a degree) topical concerns, the observation that Frost and Roethke do not employ the same words (as we have seen) should serve as a response. A more serious objection might be that such allusion only proves that Heaney has read a lot of Keats and that, consciously or not, the topic under treatment nudged him in the direction of words Keats had employed for similar topics. Certainly, it may well be true that Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on Melancholy"-as well as other "pre-texts" (Plett, 1991b: 8), for example "Ode to Autumn - give expression to the conflict between head and heart in the face of Nature, whose very promise of fulfilment is, in its tran-

science, redolent too of death (see Jones, 1969: 263-7); and true that “Blackberry-Picking” is taking the pulse of a similar conflict where maturity is a short step from corruption, as the head knows but the heart ever hopes otherwise (“Each year I hoped they’d keep, knew they would not”, l. 24). But the same topic also informs “Death of a Naturalist” and, to a lesser extent, “The Barn”, two poems which, as far as I can tell, contain not a single allusion to Keats, although the latter’s death of Keats may be significant (see section 4.2). The question that then arises is not merely why Heaney alludes to Keats, but why he alludes to him extensively in “Blackberry-Picking” and not elsewhere to like extent.

### 3. Intertextual interpretations

#### 3.1. Missed allusions

Allusions ([note 11](#)) may be marked explicitly, by means of performative utterances such as “I quote...”, or implicitly, whether phonologically (e.g. pauses) or graphemically (e.g. inverted commas). Unmarked allusion “has a *poeta doctus* as its author and requires a *litteratus doctus* as its receiver” (Plett, 1991b: 12-15). Recognition is achieved through the receiver’s (in our case, the reader’s) “allusive competence” (Hebel, 1991: 143). If there is no recognition, “the text misses its purpose, which

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consists in opening up dialogues between pre-text and quotation text" (Plett, 1991b 15). (note 12) In this way, allusions are always potential "stumbling-blocks" (Riffaterre, 1978: 6): if they are not overcome, communication breaks down, or at least one of (or part of) the messages the sender (in our case, the poet) had intended to communicate is not the message received by the receiver. This is of great significance, for instead of disrupting the alluding text's syntagmatic flow and guiding the reader upward onto "associative vertical context systems" (Hebel, 1991: 138), missed allusions leave the reader grounded in the task of finding a meaning that is purely literal or, in Jakobson's terms, "referential" (Jakobson, 1988: 38). With respect to Heaney's "Blackberry-Picking", if the allusions are missed, the reader will either have to take the poet's word that the picking of blackberries is just as described in the poem, or dismiss the description as a not very likely story. A purely referential reading only concedes worth to a poem in terms of a simplistic mimesis. It is how schoolboys read their set-texts and a reason why many of them never read again, for the words on the pages rarely resemble the world of their experiences (a point I shall return to). A poem whose only pretensions are straight depiction will be a slight thing indeed. Were "Blackberry-Picking" such a poem, Heaney would be offering the reader a bitter-sweet draft of glutinous nostalgia

as he recollects a modest rite of passage presided over by a truculent Nature.

### **3.2. *Imitatio veterum* and/or “anxiety of influence”**

Plett identifies four types of allusion: authoritative, erudite, ornamental and poetic (1991b: 12-14). Poetic allusion has four functions, the first of which is *imitatio veterum* or “affirmative intertextuality”, while Bloom’s “anxiety of influence” (“Do anything but imitate!”) is the second, “negative intertextuality” (19). By means of the former, “the author tried to position himself within an accepted order of literary works; he tried to partake of it even in the act of distinguishing himself from it” (Mai, 1991: 32); this is tantamount to Eliot’s notion of tradition and the individual talent. Now it could just be that the function of allusion in “Blackberry-Picking” is to permit Heaney to wheedle his way into the English canon on the back of paid-up member John Keats. **(note 13)** The poem would thus be an act of homage to the English tradition as well an application for inclusion in that tradition. Certainly for a young writer on the periphery, intertextual pandering to metropolitan taste is one way to secure an audience and find a publisher; in return, the literary metropolis is given license simultaneously to flatter itself on the boy from the sticks made good (and a Catholic, too!) and to persist in its institutional attitude of condescen-

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sion, while making sanctimonious noises in the direction of hybridity: an Irish Keats with fungus -how quaint! But as Morrison warns, "we will not begin to understand [Heaney's] work so long as we assimilate it comfortably in this way" (1982: 8).

And certainly there is plenty of evidence with which it is difficult to square such an interpretation. Heaney himself has been eloquent on the problematics of his relation to the English tradition and language, whether confessing to feeling torn between "words of the heart and hearth-language and the learned, public, socially acceptable language of school and salon" (Heaney, 1977: 398) or more aggressively taking it upon himself "to take the English Lyric and make it eat stuff that it has never eaten before... like all the messy, and it would seem incomprehensible obsessions in the North" (Heaney, 1973: 8). As Heaney himself once recognised, the question of tradition, far from being a merely literary matter of assonance, metre and the like, has become a "consideration of the politics and anthropology of our condition" (Deane, 1982: 69). This politics-poetry nexus is stated with certain venom in the much-quoted lines from "The Ministry of Fear": "Ulster was British, but with no rights on / The English lyric" (1980: 131). A poet so acutely aware (and inevitably so) of the links between language, literature and politics, a Catholic where the govern-

ing majority were Protestant, and one of the first-generation of Catholic schoolboys who were granted access to grammar school education ([note 14](#)) is bound to handle allusion with care, especially when an allusion may be conceived of as “a removable alien element” (Plett, 1991b: 9) in the alluding text, and when that “alien element” is English. Heaney’s objection to the word “British” in the title of Andrew Motion and Blake Morrison’s *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982), in which he was included, appears to be some sort of disavowal of any kind of belonging within a tradition that is defined politico-geographically rather than in literary terms.

Most critics coincide in identifying as the chief dilemma facing Heaney in his early work the problem of how to be faithful to the reality of life at one of the political, religious and dialectal margins of the United Kingdom while at the same time making that reality “directly and clearly intelligible to the ‘strange’ reader. It is a problem of translation” (O’Donoghue, 1994: 20). One such “strange” reader might have been Philip Hobsbaum, to whom “Blackberry-Picking” is dedicated. When in the body of a poet’s work dedications are so infrequent, it is worth while pondering the possible significance of those dedications that do exist. The salient facts about Hobsbaum are that he is English and was the mentor of the Belfast “Group”

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of poets (Michael Longley, Derek Mahon, James Simmons and Heaney himself). Thus a dedication to him of this Keatsian poem would be fitting on the grounds of the dedicatee's nationality and his standing to Heaney as a paternalistic guide in the same way that Keats has been claimed as Heaney's poetic father. Fitting, were it not for Heaney's misgivings about forming part of an alien tradition and for Hobsbaum's own advice (as recalled by Heaney) to the members of the group to "roughen" their diction: Hobsbaum "emanated... trust in the parochial, the inept, the unprinted" (O'Donoghue, 1994: 36). In short, to interpret the allusions to Keats as straightforward *imitatio veterum* when in fact Heaney suffered from "anxiety of influence" (for reasons to do with his sense of cultural and national identity, not now any romantic hang-ups about originality) seems inadequate. It would furthermore be odd to dedicate a poem so "alien" in diction to one who had encouraged Heaney to give voice to the autochthonous.

### **3.3. Parody**

Parody, or "inverted intertextuality" (Plett, 1991b: 19), is the third main function of literary allusion. (note 15) Indeed, some would argue that all allusion is parodic as it involves a dialogue between alluding text and pre-text which performe implies a weakening of the pre-text's authority, destabilises it,

and ultimately subverts the socio-political postulates on which it rests. This theoretical stance (which would convert practically all poets into parodists) is attained by “reduc[ing] parody to the intertextual by denying or overlooking the comic aspects of parody” (Rose, 1993: 180). As I shall argue later, possibly the prime function of allusion is necessarily not parodic. Certainly there is little of the comic in “Blackberry-Picking”! That Leech (1969) does not discuss parody is perhaps understandable, but the absence of allusion from his index is to be lamented. Reading between the lines, however, we might say that in order to rightly diagnose an allusion as parodic in function, we need to be on the look out for any one, or a combination of deviations, such as linguistic, historical, dialectal, graphological or register deviations (Leech, 1969: 36-53) that mark or “foreground” a departure from the normative linguistic background (56-8), be it everyday speech, or a piece of verse. As far as I can tell, the words Heaney borrows from Keats are in no way deviant (not obviously archaic, for example, nor impossible in Ulster speech). On the other hand, if Heaney’s intentions had been parodic, few poets expose themselves more generously to parodic attack than Keats. (note 16) Finally, since the words borrowed from Keats are precisely that, single words lifted from various sources rather than word-chains, there appears to be no sense in which a pre-text is actually altered on

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inscription into the alluding text. It is consequently hard to see how a pre-textual message might be undergoing transformation or subversion. A word-chain, by contrast, can easily be tampered with, for example, by addition, omission or substitution of an element or elements. It may then be suggested that more than any one particular text, it is Keats *per se* or *in toto* who is coming under fire; but once again the text has given no indication that such is Heaney's intention. (note 17) Nor can we deduce from our own reactions of, say, shock or surprise that the poem is parodic, for the poem does not shock or surprise us.

### ***3.4. An interpretative dead-end***

So far the possible interpretations open to the reader of "Blackberry-Picking" are the following: 1) the allusion is missed, the reader is forced to interpret on the syntagmatic level alone, and the poet's words have a plain referential or denotative function; or 2) the allusion is identified, the reader now shifts up a level to interpret connotationally or associatively, and the words constitute either an exercise in *imitatio veterum* or parody. For the reasons I have given, neither interpretation of Heaney's allusion seems satisfactory, while a straight referential function is hard to square with the poem's very allusiveness. What is clear is that a great deal depends on our skill

as textual archaeologists; indeed, the very nature of the poem is at stake. If the allusion is missed, if the presence of alien literary elements is not perceived, a mimetic relationship between the poem and the non-fictional world of reality imposes itself. If, in contrast, the allusion is recognised, the poem all at once draws attention to its own literariness, thus setting to one side any mimetic ambition in its affirmation that “the author’s intention is not to bring his audience to an immediate confrontation with reality, but only with mirrors of reality, i.e. literature” (Plett, 1991b: 15). What is more, the use of adjectives such as “enriched” (Hebel, 1991: 138) to characterise the textual archaeologist’s reading implies that such readings are to be preferred over the literal-minded schoolboy’s, the connotational/associative over the referential/denotative. In fact, so much depends on our choice of reading that it might be worthwhile looking for an alternative model of interpretation in which, perhaps, both the referential and the associative function may co-exist simultaneously and in tandem contribute to this short lyric’s rich complexity.

#### **4. A stylistic approach to allusion**

##### ***4.1. The linguistic function of allusion***

We have seen that if an allusion is missed, the words are taken at face-value, the horizontal syntagmatic flow of the text

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through the reader's mind is not interrupted, and a total correlation between the semantic unit and the objective world is presupposed. Thus, the function of the alluded words is, to adopt Jakobson's terminology, straightforwardly "referential", the focus is on the "context" (1988: 35-8), and language is being used "transactionally" (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1-2). However, as soon as we attempt to fit the function of recognised allusion into Jakobson's scheme, difficulties abound. At first sight, the most obvious function for allusion, the tapping into the literary heterocosm, to perform would seem to be the poetic function, the "focus on the message for its own sake" (37); but the very purpose of allusion is to divert the reader from the message on the page to somewhere else, whether a Kristevan intertextual déjà or the text's (or the author's) broader "historical and social coordinates" (Hebel, 1991: 139); the effect of identified allusion is precisely to divert the reader from the "message for its own sake". Is then the focus of allusion on the addressee, as the addresser tries to cajole readers into denying a referential function to the words confronting them? This would strain Jakobson's "conative" too much. Or again, allusion might be thought to be oriented to the contact, in the sense that if recognised by the addressee, communication may be established or prolonged. The difficulty with this is that missed allusion communicates in any case,

even if it communicates something different. So is allusion part of the code, in which case the marking of an allusion (“As Keats wrote...”, the use of italics or inverted commas, etc.) might be said to have a metalingual function permitting the addresser and addressee to “check up whether they use the same code” (Jakobson, 1988: 37)? But Jakobson’s code is essentially a matter of language, and as we have seen, allusion can be decoded linguistically without capturing any sense of the allusion’s connotational purport, that is to say, its significance beyond the literal. The last Jakobsonian possibility is that allusion is emotive in function and therefore oriented to the addresser, in our case the poet. The possibility gains substance when Jakobson’s function is subjected to Robinson’s refinement according to which “a speech act is said to mark the emotional state, personality, and *social identity* of the speaker” (Stern, 1983: 225; my emphasis). Yet a summary appraisal of the effect of allusion reveals that its function is “interactional” in so far as it is “involved in expressing social relations” (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1): conversational analysts “concerned with the use of language to negotiate role-relationships, *peer-solidarity*, the exchange of turns in a conversation, the saving of face of both speaker and hearer” (Brown and Yule, 3; my emphasis) would therefore consider allusion to have a phatic function. Such a conclusion is certainly at-

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tractive, especially when one considers that our poem has an explicit addressee and may therefore be treated as one side of a conversation which is focused on the poem's named receiver. But it is also vitiated by the objection stated above that a missed allusion still communicates in its own way. If the allusions had been marked, a phatic function might appear more reasonable, even if the query would then arise as to whether it was the allusion itself or the marking that was actually phatic in function. But the allusions in "Blackberry-Picking" are unmarked, and unmarked allusions are rather like the Fir Bolg man in his peaty sarcophagus—they cannot wink at the addressee or nudge him in the ribs to ensure that their connotational significance is captured. What is more, there may be those who have reached this point of my argument and are still unconvinced that any allusion to Keats exists, in which case am I to assume that I am the uniquely privileged, splendidly solitary *litteratus/receptor doctus*—that Heaney's poem is directed exclusively at me?

I think there is some other sense in which allusion is a code, by means of which the sender encodes a message for subsequent decoding by the receiver, or invites the receiver to bring to bear on the interpretation of the message similar contextual elements. For I take the overriding aim of allusion to

be that of forming a bond between sender and receiver which transcends the bond of simple mutual linguistic comprehension and seeks to establish on the basis of shared knowledge of conceptual systems (which, among other things, incorporate literary heterocosms) a relationship of cultural and/or social parity or identity between sender and receiver, writer and reader, poet and audience. In this sense, allusion serves the pragmatic goal of asserting mutual premises upon which meaningful communication can be set up. Any group defines itself in terms of things it has in common; allusions to those common elements give and reinforce a collective identity. For example, an immigrant living in a foreign country may well be fluent in that country's language (understand its linguistic code), but be helplessly non-fluent in its associative or connotational code, failing to spot, for example, a quotation from a famous author (and therefore failing to identify, say, ironic intention on the part of the person addressing him) or an allusion to a television comedy programme: a non-British person who offers the most comfortable chair in the room to a British guest may well be surprised to find his gesture receive the reply, "No, no, not the comfy chair!" In both cases, if the allusion is missed, the non-British person is reminded of his or her alterity. Allusion may also affirm social parity. For example, someone who says, "She could knock Scheherazade into a

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top hat!" is unlikely to be understood by someone of the same nationality but of a different social group who would have said, "She's got more rabbit than Sainsbury's!" In his interesting article on allusion in Thomas Hardy, Yelland cites Wheeler as arguing "that allusion in Victorian fiction, especially allusion to a small group of texts including *Paradise Lost*, *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible, had a cohesive effect of reminding readers how much they shared a culture" (1995: 28). In the same way, a certain group of people may be suspected of going to the opera not for the obvious reason, but rather to be able later to mark themselves off from the rest of society by making allusions to singer, plots or arias that the vast majority of the populace have never heard of. Analogously, it might be argued that television soap operas exist to give their legions of devotees something to talk about during lunch-hour or while waiting for the bus home. Talking is at the heart of society at large and of smaller groups within society. Without common interests to talk about, society and the manifold groups that constitute it would cease to cohere. Those common interests are often spoken of allusively, with the context from which they are drawn often being taken for granted or referred to elliptically. In all the foregoing examples, someone who is unconscious of the "semantic supercharge" released by allusion remains marooned on the other side of a "cultural gap" (Roger

D. Sell, 2000: 169). Allusion is therefore a code in the sense of a cultural insider-language: and allusive competence is a passport to society or community.

In the light of this, the ambit of Jakobson's "code" should be extended to include non-literal, connotational significance, namely that significance which is inaccessible without prior correct linguistic interpretation, but which goes beyond the parameters of that interpretation, taking a vertical associative leap and opening up vistas onto new connotational interpretations. (note 18) It might even be simpler to posit the connotational or associative as a new and self-sufficient function which makes reference to a new element in any linguistic act, viz. the community or the culture to which one interlocutor at least belongs and into which he or she seeks to include the other(s). The associative or connotational value of the literal words carries us from a contemplation of objective reality to an awareness of interaction with, or belonging to, a given national, social or cultural group or community. This associative function has a two-way effect: the sender seeks to include him or herself within the receiver's group, while the receiver recognises his or her own position within the sender's group. The end result of this function is a sense of shared identity, of community: it is a truly associative function in that it brings

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both sender and receiver into society. And this, I would suggest, is by far the most common use of allusion, much more prevalent than any parodic use; and it is decidedly not parodic. This takes us back to "Blackberry-Picking" and its dedicatee Hobsbaum.

#### **4.2. Two "I"s and two "you"s**

At this point we might wish to conclude that Heaney seems to be appealing to Hobsbaum for recognition as belonging to the same group, that of the *docti* (Heaney is the *doctus poeta*, Hobsbaum the *litteratus doctus*), and/or to be affirming that though one is Irish and the other English, they may both speak the same poetical language (that of Keats) and both partake of a common (English) culture. But I think this short lyric is more complex than that.

One allusion in "Blackberry-Picking" that I have not commented upon so far occurs in the second half of line 16, "our palms sticky as Bluebeards". The whole sentence reads:

[...] Our hands were peppered  
With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

Armed with our associative function, we can now ask at which group of potential readers the Bluebeard allusion is aimed? And to which group of people would the sender of such an

allusion belong? Leaving aside the fact that according to the tale it was Bluebeard's grisly wardrobe key that was sticky, not his own hands, (note 19) the allusion is remarkable in the first place for being literary. In other words, in what is at first sight a realistic poem, this simile has as its vehicle something distinctly non-real, the character from a fairy tale or a figure of pantomime. It is slightly incongruous, puerile even -perhaps the puerility of an adolescent who is beginning to tap into the sexual subtexts of tales such as Bluebeard's. By means of a kind of schoolboy *demi-entendre* that is casually, or calculatedly, enabled by the key / hand confusion, the internal rhyme "pricks... sticky" in combination with adjacent "palms" draws our attention to a possible hint of masturbation. In short, we may begin to discern the silhouetting by Heaney of a poetic *persona*, of a narrative "I" that is distinct from Heaney the poet writing the poem. O'Donoghue (1994: 50) has noticed the "child language" prevalent throughout *Death of a Naturalist*. In our poem, the words "blob" and "stinking" certainly have a childish air, as does the unaffected, paratactic style (e.g. ll.5-11), while "inked up" (l.8) sends us back to the school-room with its fountain pens, blotters and ink-wells. Furthermore, Corcoran points out that "the forced acknowledgement of actuality when the pickled blackberries ferment... 'It wasn't fair' [l.22] is the child's querulous, petulant recognition of in-

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evitability, the stamped foot with which he responds to a world which will never measure [up to] his desires" (1986: 48). In so far as the poem is literary coordinates are pastoral, it could additionally be pointed out that the pastoral mode itself is, or came to be, a "young" mode, the mode adopted by writers whose coming of age as poets coincides with their coming of age as people, with their acquisition of knowledge and loss of innocence (hence the pastoral's frequent slippage into elegy and satire).

The distinction between the poet writing the poem and the poem's poetic *persona* is central to Jakobson's comments on ambiguity:

[It] is an intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message, briefly a corollary feature of poetry. [...] Not only the message itself but also its addresser and addressee become ambiguous. Besides the author and the reader, there is the "I" of the lyrical hero or of the fictitious story-teller and the "you" or "thou" of the alleged addressee of dramatic monologues, supplications, and epistles (1988: 49-50).

This allows us to distinguish between Heaney the author and Heaney the fictive "I" of "Blackberry-Picking". It is an "I" who has tried to measure the natural world against its poetically mediated nature, only to find it wanting each time: the literary language deployed in this poem is alien to the empiri-

cal experience. It is an “I” privileged to have been schooled in the likes of Keats, but increasingly aware as another year passes and another can of berries rots, that nature and life do not exist in ever-ripe plenitude, contrary to what a schoolboy might read in his poetry text-books. This unremittingly prosaic reality is acknowledged in neighbouring poem, “The Barn”, where, unlike in Keats’s granary, there is no autumnal and varied plenty, just farming implements and sacks of corn, and no “winnowing wind” to freshen the stale air: “The one door meant no draughts / All summer when the zinc burned like an oven” (1980: 14, ll.8-9). In fact, compared with the other nature poems in the collection where the language is far more Teutonic, in the manner of Heaney’s admired Ted Hughes, and not alien to the experiences related therein, “Blackberry-Picking”’s Keatsian diction is unusual and shown to be inadequate. Cunningham has argued that English poets post-Eliot (more accurately, post-Prufrock) have sought to create their poetic *personae* intertextually on the basis of one or other of the two models of poet Prufrock suggests; this forging of identity he regards as a kind of “face-making” or *prosopoeia* (1997: 144); Hebel also claims that one intratextual function of allusion is characterisation (1991: 156). Viewed in this light, in “Blackberry-Picking” Heaney shows us a younger Heaney, steeped in the English lyric tradition, but coming to realise

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that that tradition, exemplified by Keats, cannot be reconciled with what he sees around him -and that "It isn't fair". We might note that in the line which gives voice to this complaint about the inadequacy of that tradition to be mapped onto the corner of reality which is the poem's concern, the hitherto regular iambic pentameter metre -the canonical English metre- is disrupted, as if by the stamp of a petulant foot.

So what of the addressee, Philip Hobsbaum? Now that the Keats allusions have been discovered to issue from the thoughts of a schoolboy, Hobsbaum's ability as *litteratus doctus* to interpret the allusions is suddenly cast in a less than certain light. This becomes especially clear when we notice that the "you" invoked explicitly in the body of the poem may refer to many people, but certainly not to Hobsbaum himself: "You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet / Like thickened wine" (ll. 5-6). In other words, a further ambiguity is enabled by the two "you"s, the one, Hobsbaum, inscribed in the poem's dedication, the other, an anonymous childhood companion of the poetic *persona*, inscribed in the body of the poem. The experience recounted in the poem is accessible to few other than boys, like the young Heaney (and, presumably, that second "you") who have been raised on farms in the country. This is not Hobsbaum's case. The "you" of line 5, both experiential-

ly knowing and yet grammatically impersonal, creates a socio-cultural community from which, together with Hobsbaum, many other readers (the present writer among them) will inevitably feel excluded, alienated: he and they are not embraced by the subsequent “we”s, “us” and “our”s of the poem. Thus the welcome mat of Keatsian allusion that we have been invited to cross, as if it marked the threshold of a cultural identity shared by all, is pulled from under our feet the very moment we step on it. It is as if Heaney the poet is saying that, yes, we may share a literary background, but that is all we share: our life-worlds are, in many particulars, very different, and in this particular case the culturally hegemonic Keats-type language is unable to transcribe Heaney’s childhood life-world.

Morrison considers that Heaney’s early volumes reveal him to be “blushingly torn between the lived and the learned”, so much so that “it is embarrassing for the reader” (1982: 28; note the Keatsian “blush” and Ricksian “embarrassing”). I would suggest that in “Blackberry-Picking” Heaney has already committed himself in favour of the lived, and that the reader is not so much embarrassed as intimidated or made vulnerable by having his experiential alterity brought home to him. Where allusion is more often deployed to assert parity between sender and receiver, here, in combination with

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the poem's alienating form of address, it serves to accentuate disparity.

Of course, none of this means that Heaney is criticising Keats personally, as it were, for being inadequate to address his Ulster experience. Nor is there necessarily any adverse judgement on Keats's aesthetic worth, his quality *qua* poet. Rather I understand Heaney to be taking Keats in this poem as representative of a mainstream literary language which, he suggests, should be discarded if any attempt at an empiricist and honest poetry is to be successful. In this regard one might quote the following lines from Heaney's translation ("Come Back Again") of a poem by Seán Ó Riordáin:

Unshackle your mind  
Of its civil English tackling,  
Shelley, Keats and Shakespeare.  
Get back to what is your own.  
Wash your mind and wash your tongue  
That was spancelled in a syntax  
Putting you out of step with yourself.

("Among Schoolchildren" in O'Donoghue, 1994: 28)

### **4.3. *Having your cake and eating it too***

By splitting Heaney the author and young Heaney the *persona*, we are now able to ascribe to the allusions in “Blackberry-Picking” both a strictly referential meaning *and* a connotational one. On the one hand, as long as the allusions are captured, the poem may be read both syntagmatically as we listen to the schoolboy, and associatively as we heed the words of the poet, where before the two readings were mutually exclusive. The schoolboy still believes that Keats -and all that he represents- may be mapped onto the natural world; the poet writing retrospectively and addressing Hobsbaum, shows that he cannot. This is that ambiguity I mentioned at the start of this paper which is not solely to do with “meaning” or even “significance”, and which is not just a question of semantics. Nor is it a simple matter of cognitive meaning or allusive competence, but something far more radical. In the same poem we hear two voices, each of which runs counter to the other, both of which must be heeded, and neither of which is privileged with respect to the other. On his autograph copy of “On Fame”, Keats wrote the proverb, “You cannot eat your cake and have it too” (Jones, 1969: 267); in “Blackberry-Picking” Heaney disproves his master. If the reader does fail to capture the allusions, or knowingly deactivates their conno-

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tational value, he or she is enacting the posture of Heaney's schoolboy and exhibiting a blind faith in mimesis, in the words of poetry (now taken to be Heaney's, not Keats's) to describe objective reality: to such a reader, the poem will seem a slight thing indeed.

## **5. Conclusions**

Allusion is a useful means to all sorts of ends, some of which deserve fuller investigation by both intertextualists and students of literary stylistics and pragmatics alike. Yet once a stylistic and pragmatic approach to allusion, however ramshackle, has been brought to bear on Heaney's "Blackberry-Picking", the poem is suddenly revealed as a guileful manipulation of voices and linguistic functions. It would be tempting for postcolonial critics to maintain that Heaney's rejection in the poem of the literary culture represented by Keats and the alienation to which Heaney consigns his readers (predominantly non-Irish) is politically motivated. Earlier we mentioned that the poem pivoted around the paternalist figures of Keats and mentor Hobsbaum. In the light of this, some might happily go one step further, weld together Lacan and postcolonialist theory, and argue that the poem is a challenge to the Name- or Law-of-the-Father administered from the Metropolis through ideologised public education or with the butt of a rifle. I would

not go so far. Indeed, my own view is that the poem is written as an act of deference to Hobsbaum's advice to steer clear of literary language and go for the local, the autochthonous: that is to say, in using allusion to expose the inadequacy of the "learned, public, socially acceptable language of school and salon" alluded to, Heaney is vouching to the wisdom of Hobsbaum's advice and, in rejecting that language, setting out his stall as a poet who will use "words of the heart and hearth-language".

What is certain is that the ambiguity achieved by the allusion in combination with the double *persona* of the sender and the disjunction between the "you" of the dedication and the "you" invoked in the poem is a useful strategy for evading responsibility for utterances or implications that might be interpreted as political. The creation of an allusive mask or face to hide behind (to save one's own face) when on the point of committing a "face-threatening act" such as a verbal attack on a colonial power may be of interest not only to postcolonialist theorists, but also to literary pragmatists. It may also be partly responsible for the difficulty critics have encountered when trying to pin down Heaney's true political allegiances: an allusive mask configures an elusive face. More generally, "Blackberry-Picking" illustrates on the one hand the capacity of al-

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lusion to disrupt the syntagmatic flow of a text, to free a text temporarily from mere literal referentiality, and furnishes on the other an instance of a poet assuming a fictive *persona*. In doing so, it dovetails neatly with Widdowson's formulations of that "avoidance of referential commitment" and "escape from ascribed identity and authority" which enable "the representation of new and non-conformist realities" (1987: 247) -realities that can only be pressed home once the reader has been persuaded that he and the poet belong to the same cultural group or community. In other words, the associative function of allusion allows Heaney to first construct a sense of community with his readers and then to show how that community needs to be enhanced with the transcription of new experiential circumstances. And it is to ears accustomed to Keats that Heaney's voice will sound so new.

**Appendix: Allusions to Keats**

I have only systematically traced what might be loosely termed "content words", that is to say, nouns, adjectives and (non-modal) verbs. Furthermore, I have only considered Keats's most obvious odes ("On Melancholy", "To a Nightingale", "To Sleep", "To a Grecian Urn", "To Autumn", "To Psyche" and "On Indolence") on the grounds that these are most likely to have been the fare of an Ulster grammar-school boy, and that, as a

sample of potential pre-texts they offer up enough evidence of Keatsian diction in Heaney's poem. In any case, on increasing the sample size, the probability of finding correspondences would also have increased, while the statistical significance would have diminished. All references are to Barnard's edition (1973).

***"late" (l.1)***

1. O **latest** born and loveliest vision far ("Psyche", l.24)
2. Too, too **late** for the fond believing lyre ("Psyche", l.37)
3. ...to set budding more, / And still more, **later** flowers for the bees ("Autumn", l.9)

***"sun" (l.1)***

1. ...the maturing **sun** ("Autumn", l.2)

***"ripen" (l.2)***

1. ... **Ripe** was the drowsy hour ("Indolence", l.15)
2. ... fill all fruit with **ripeness** to the core ("Autumn", l.6)

***"purple" (l.3)***

1. ...**purple**-stained mouth ("Nightingale", l.18)

***"green" (ll.4, 14)***

1. To what **green** altar...? ("Grecian Urn", l.32)

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2. ... some melodious plot / Of beechen **green**... ("Nightingale", l.9)

3. And hides the **green** hill in an April shroud ("Melancholy", l.14)

**"sweet" (ll.5, 21)**

1. ... no incense **sweet** ("Psyche", l.32)

2. ... thy incense **sweet** ("Psyche", l.46)

3. ... who canst thus express/A flowery tale more **sweetly** than our rhyme ("Grecian Urn", l.4)

4+5. Heard melodies are **sweet**, but those unheard/Are **sweeter** ("Grecian Urn", ll.1-2)

6. ... [I] guess each **sweet**/Wherewith the seasonable month endows / The grass ("Nightingale", ll.43-5)

7. ...she has not a joy -- / At least for me -- so **sweet** as drowsy noons ("Indolence", ll.35-6)

8. ...and plump the hazel shells/With a **sweet** kernel ("Autumn", ll.7-8)

**"wine" (l.6)**

1. ... its poisonous **wine** ("Melancholy", l.2)

2. The coming musk-rose, full of dewy **wine** ("Nightingale", l.49)

**“summer” (I.6)**

1. Singest of **summer** in full-throated ease (“Nightingale”, I.19)
2. The murmurous haunt of flies on **summer** eves. (“Nightingale”, I.50)
3. The blissful cloud of **summer**-indolence (“Indolence”, I.16)

**“stain” (I.7)**

1. ... purple-**stainèd** mouth (“Nightingale”, I.18)

**“tongue” (I.7)**

1. A burning forehead, and a parching **tongue** (“Grecian Urn”, I.30)
2. Though seen of none save him whose strenuous **tongue** (“Melancholy”, I.27)

**“grass” (I.10)**

1. ...couchèd side by side / In deepest **grass** (“Psyche”, II.9-10)
  2. They lay calm-breathing on the bedded **grass** (“Psyche”, I.15)
- The **grass**, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild (“Nightingale”, I.45)

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My head cool-bedded in the flowery **grass** ("Indolence", l.52)

**"eyes" (l.15)**

1. Our gloom-pleased **eyes** ("Sleep", l.3)
2. ... my willing **eyes** ("Sleep", l.5)
3. The wingèd Psyche with awakened **eyes** ("Psyche", l.6)
4. ...fragrant-**eyed**... ("Psyche", l.13)
5. Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous **eyes** ("Nightingale", l.29)
6. And feed deep, deep upon her peerless **eyes**. ("Melancholy", l.20)
7. The blissful cloud of summer-indolence / Benumbed my **eyes** ("Indolence", ll.16-7)
8. ... Ambition,... /... with fatiguèd **eye** ("Indolence", l.27)
9. Fade softly from my **eyes**... ("Indolence", l.55)

**"hands" (l.15)**

1. ...before me were three figures seen, / With bowèd necks, and joinèd **hands** ("In-dolence", l.2)

**"hoarded" (l.17)**

- 1.... curious conscience, that still **hoards** / Its strength for darkness ("Sleep", ll.11-2)

***“berries” (l.17)***

1. Make not your rosary of yew-**berries** (“Melancholy”, l.5)

***“glutting” (l.19)***

1. Then **glut** thy sorrow on a morning rose (“Melancholy”, l.15)

***“turn sour” (l.21)***

1. ... and aching Pleasure nigh, / **Turning** to poison while the bee-mouth sips (“Melan-choly”, l.24)

***“lovely” (l.23)***

1. O latest born and **loveliest** vision far (“Psyche”, l.24)

***“keep” (l.24)***

1. Where beauty cannot **keep** her lustrous eyes (“Nightingale”, l.29)
2. ... like a gleaner thou dost **keep** / Steady thy laden head (“Autumn”, ll.18-9)

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1. I should like to thank Patricia Lynch and Roger Sell for their kind comments on earlier drafts of this article.
2. I am being deliberately evasive here. The purpose of this paper is not to enter into postcolonial quicksands or to address the complex question of Heaney's political allegiances; nor is the paper even intended primarily as a contribution to Heaney studies. At the same time, the paper's conclusions about the use of allusion may be of use to, among others, both postcolonial critics and Heaney specialists.
3. In this note and notes 4 and 5, the numbers are line numbers. Shared words: "dark": H(eaney) 14, R(oethke) 2; "green": H 4, R 2, 8; "thick": H 6, R 3; "flesh": H 5, 21, R 12.
4. Shared words: "grass": H(eaney) 10, F(rost) 12; "keep-": H 24, F 21, 22; "pick-": H title, 8, 12, F title, 27; "fruit": H 21, F 29; "hand-": H 15, F 30.
5. Shared words: "heavy": H(eaney) 1, F(rost) 4; "rain": H 1, F 103; "-berries": H 2, 16, F title, 3, 14, 45, 50, 61, 62, 65, 73, 85; "ripe-": H 2, F 6, 7, 46; "first": H 3,5, F 5; "green": H 4, 14, F 6; "hard": H 4, F 21; "thick-": H 6, F 20; "leave-": H 7, F 29; "pick-": H 8,12, F 27, 71, 81, 84, 85, 91, 102 (x2); "wet": H 10, F 83; "grass": H 10, F 10; "-fields": H 11 (x2), F 35; "top": H 14, F 62; "big": H 14, F 3, 43; "burn-": H 14, F 12, 17; "eyes": H 15, F 43; "hands": H 15, F 26, 56; "fresh": H 17, F 65; "bush": H 20, F 13; "fruit": 21, F 22, 70, 79, 104; "turn-": H 21, F 58, 94; "always": H 22, F 14, 42; "each": H 24, F 64, 87; "year": H 24, F 10, 52, 72, 81; "keep": H 24, F 32, 78, 88; "knew": H 24, F 60, 70, 72.

6. Indeed, the shift from the first paragraph's boisterous enjoyment of Nature's bounty to the second paragraph's disabusement of such optimism seems quintessentially Keatsian.

7. "Glut" is a word Heaney carries with him, turning up, for example, in his recent poem "Known World" in lines of a distinctly Keatsian flavour:

At the still centre of the cardinal points  
The flypaper hung from our kitchen ceiling,  
Honey-strip and death-trap, syrup of Styx  
Sweating swart beads, a barley-sugar twist  
Of glut and loathing... (ll.33-7)

8. Where in Keats things are in danger of cloying, early Heaney finds them already clotted: "frogspawn that grew like clotted water" in "Death of a Naturalist" (l.9); "the half seed shot and clotted" in "At a Potato Digging" (l.16) (1980: 12, 21).

9. Keats originally had "clustered" for "beaded" (Barnard, 1973: 655) -a cluster of bubbles akin to Heaney's "knot"-like "purple clot".

10. For Keats and blushing see, famously, Ricks's *Keats and Embarrassment* (1984), especially 19-49. Heaney's "Requiem for the Croppies" has as its most poignant line, "The hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave" (1980: 33, l.12).

11. The literature on quotation and allusion and the distinction (if any) between them is vast and dense. Both Plett (1991b) and Hebel (1991) provide full bibliographies. My use of the term allusion coincides with what Hebel refers to as "quotational allusion".

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**12.** It is always unwise to speak in terms of a text missing its purpose, as if a text might be ascribed a single and definable purpose. As I shall argue later, Heaney's poem uses allusion to cloak his meaning in an ambiguity which may be resolved differently by the two receivers inscribed into the poem. See section 4.2.

**13.** I do not wish to claim that Keats himself was a metropolitan writer as a postcolonial critic would understand the term. Rather I would suggest that at some point the metropolis co-opted Keats in the ongoing process of composing its own cultural identity.

**14.** See Corcoran (1986: 11-42) for a succinct account of Heaney's background and education.

**15.** Plett's fourth function is "relativistic intertextuality", a sort of kaleidoscopic mixture of alluding text and pre-text(s) in which neither has priority over the other, in which everything is shifting, nothing is fixed, and which thus defies interpretation: "if fixed conventions cease to exist and give way to a multitude of equally valid positions, positive and negative evaluation are both immaterial" (1991b: 19).

**16.** Ricks cites Aldous Huxley's "Frascati's" (from *Leda*, 1920) as a delightful, if respectful, example (1984: 115).

**17.** For signals of parody, see Rose (1993: 37-8).

**18.** I have adopted Leech's distinction between "meaning" and "significance" (1969: 39-40).

**19.** For the tale's history and English version (1729), see Opie & Opie (1980: 133-41).