

SYNAESTHETIC METAPHORS IN ENGLISH.

Carmen M^a Bretones Callejas.

University of California at Berkeley

& International Computer Science Institute, Berkeley.

bretones@icsi.berkeley.edu

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Abstract

Recent work in metaphorical analysis makes it clear that many of our most basic concepts (and our reasoning via those concepts) are embodied: Lived experiences in our bodies inspire and constrain the way we conceive and articulate many of our other experiences. That is exactly what metaphor is based on, i.e., on experiential, body-linked, physical core of reasoning abilities (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Metaphor has the capacity to “introduce a sensory logic at the semantic level alluding to a more complex scenario of interrelated meanings and experiences of the world” (Cacciari, 1998 p.128). One of the most common types of metaphoric transfer is synaesthesia, i.e., the transfer of information from one sensory modality to another.

I analyze this phenomenon in depth in this paper, taking my data from a corpus of 50 poems written by Seamus Heaney and analyzing examples such as: (1) **cold smell** (Digging, line 25), (2) **stony flavours** (From Whatever You Say Say Nothing, line 19) or (3) **coarse croaking** (Death of a Naturalist, line 26). After that I compare my data with Day's in his study of synaesthesia in English. Finally, I point out the idea of synaesthetic connections as possible physical base for the cognitive process that we call metaphor.

I. Introduction

This study is situated in a body of contemporary research in cognitive linguistics and other disciplines that seek to examine the mental resources used in understanding and reasoning about the world. Prominent among these resources, of course, is metaphor, helping people conceptualize the unknown or the abstract. Everyday metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), i.e., conceptual, not merely linguistic, largely invisible and productive, appear to have their origins in the experiences we have as human beings interacting in the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). They represent a cognitive device that allows us to think and experience one thing in terms of another, thanks to the mapping of conceptual structure from one mental domain to another.

II. Heaney's Preoccupations

The poetry of Heaney is well known for his special treatment of what is familiar, intuitive, every-day. In his lines Heaney makes the reader sense his words. Proof of that is the vast use of English adjectives referring to sensory experience found in his work.

We need to note two things that especially preoccupy Heaney at times. They are what he calls voice and technique. As he says (1980: 43):

“Finding a voice means that you can get your own feelings into your own words and that your words have the feel of you about them”.

Metaphor represents a way of handling the relative inability of language to account for, or directly express, the complexity of our perceptual experiences. He describes his own experience saying that words have a particular way of feeling associated to each of them

and the person articulating them. Also, that what one feels is not so easily transmitted. As Beck (quoted in Cacciari, 1998 p. 127) noted, linguistic metaphors are verbal devices based on a sensory logic at the semantic level, and this entails a movement from abstract to concrete. It also involves the introduction of affect and the notion of perceptual qualities. Metaphor, with its capacity to introduce a sensory logic at the semantic level, is a way to fill this gap, for overcoming the rigidity of plain,–straight-, meaning and experiences of the world.

Technique is another of Heaney's preoccupations. He says (1980: 47):

“[Technique]...involves the discovery of ways to go out of his normal cognitive bounds and ride the inarticulate: a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience and the formal ploys that express this in a work of art. 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.”

An important dimension of human conceptualization is obscured by the traditional distinction between mind and body. Conventional theories of mind reproduce this inherited distinction by not giving due regard to the role of the body in the mind (Johnson, 1987). Recent work in metaphorical analysis makes it clear that many of our most basic concepts (and our reasoning via those concepts) are embodied: Lived experiences in our bodies inspire and constrain the way we conceive and articulate many of our other experiences. But that is exactly what metaphor is based on, i.e., on experiential, body-linked, physical

core of reasoning abilities. Metaphor has the capacity to introduce a sensory logic at the semantic level alluding to a more complex scenario of interrelated meanings and experiences of the world” (Cacciari, 1998 p.128).

One of the most common types of metaphoric transfer is synaesthesia (Williams, 1976: 463), i.e., the transfer of information from one sensory modality to another. We can see, for instance, examples 1, 2 and 3 in the handout: (1) **cold smell** (Digging, line 25), (2) **stony flavours** (From Whatever You Say Say Nothing, line 19) or (3) **coarse croaking** (Death of a Naturalist, line 26).

1. 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.
(Digging, lines 25-27);

SMELL IS TEMPERATURE
SMELLING IS FEELING¹

2. Yet I live here, I live here too, I sing,
Expertly civil-tongued with civil neighbours
On the high wires of first wireless reports,
Sucking the fake taste, the **stony flavours**
Of those sanctioned, old, elaborate retorts:
(From Whatever You Say Say Nothing, lines 16-20);

A FLAVOUR IS A STONY OBJECT
TASTING IS TOUCHING

3. Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a **coarse croaking** that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
(Death of a Naturalist, lines 23-26);

SOUND QUALITY IS PHYSICAL TEXTURE
HEARING IS TOUCHING

As an illustration of what I am going to analyze let us use the following case, -maybe a little bit extreme, but representative of the phenomenon to be analyzed. Have you ever had a accident at home such as hitting his or her thumb with a hammer while doing housework, or any similar experience? How does it feel? Could we recollect the experience for a few seconds? What do you feel apart from pain? When this happens, what do you see, smell, hear taste or feel? Do you see stars? Do you see, maybe certain color, such as white, or bright white, or maybe everything in black, or even in black with white dots/stars, or in red, or in red with black dots, or red with cylindrical black stripes, etc. And, do you hear certain noise? Any kind of acute or sharp noise at the same time, or maybe something similar to birds chirping as in cartoons? Do you taste a certain distinctive flavor, maybe sour? We could keep talking about the possible connections of the sensory modalities created by a experience in an individual subject for hours, but let us go on to Heaney and his particular sensory experience.

Do not worry if you haven't, but it seems to be a common experience which many of us have had on at least few occasions. This seems to remind us of those comics or cartoons in which the cat always fell out of the window and in the next scene is sitting on the floor with little birdies flying around his head making short chirping sounds, bird sounds. It seems as if sensations coming from touch were combined with sensations from vision and hearing. Such sensory combinations, perceived through only one of the senses, -in the case we have just given, the sense of touch-, are the ones that interest me and the ones that I am going to deal with in this paper.

¹ FEELING is different from TOUCHING due mainly to its quality of passiveness. For instance, you cannot touch temperature, weather or air, but you feel them through your sense of touch.

I know that this seems to be an extreme situation in which “pain” can condition a sensation experienced in another sensory domain, and then be seen as an exceptional case caused by shock. But this is an example of the pattern of behavior we face in certain reactions to certain stimuli. Each person has those reaction levels at different stages. And we cannot measure how extreme or shocking certain perception is to an individual. That is where synaesthesia comes in. Etymologically from “syn”, - joined, together-, and “aesthesis”, - perception or sensation, i.e., the union of senses. The challenge here is to find out at what level is this phenomenon taking place and if we need a stimulus to either make it possible or just to make it noticeable or conscious,-because it would be pervasive to human conceptualization.

Synaesthesia, according to Cytowic (1995), is the involuntary physical experience of a cross-modal association, because the stimulation of one sensory modality causes a perception in one or more different senses. Synaesthesia appears to be a left-hemisphere function that is not cortical in the conventional sense, and the hippocampus is critical for its experience (Cytowic, 1995). It is then considered by many as a normal brain process that is prematurely displayed to consciousness in a minority of individuals. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*'s belief that synaesthetic perception is the rule is an extreme position. Though he would say that we are unaware of it only because scientific knowledge shifts the center of gravity of experience, so that we unlearn how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel.

III. Synaesthesia in Heaney's Poems.

The purpose of this paper is to show, through the analysis of Heaney's language, how those underlying structures in his conceptual system emerge in his poems, giving them a special "sensory" meaning. According to my research, this is shown by means of several underlying synaesthetic (Cacciari, 1998) conceptual metaphors (Lakoff, 1999) and my aim in this section is to analyze this phenomenon in depth.

In a corpus of 50 poems, chosen randomly from the complete poetic work of Heaney up to 1996, I have found 33 cases of synaesthetic metaphors. The conceptual metaphors highlighted in my study were:

HEARING IS SEEING (21%);
HEARING IS TOUCHING (21%);
SEEING IS TOUCHING (12%);
TASTING IS TOUCHING (6%);
HEARING IS TASTING (6%);
HEARING IS FEELING (6%);
SEEING IS HEARING (6%);
TOUCHING IS FEELING (3%);
SMELLING IS FEELING (3%);
HEARING IS SMELLING (3%);
FEELING IS SMELLING (3%);
TOUCHING IS SEEING (3%);
FEELING IS SEEING (3%);
TOUCHING IS TASTING (3%).

I propose that these metaphors could be “primary metaphors”(Grady, 1999), since there is a clear experiential correlation as their motivation and since other metaphors develop from them or share their “main meaning focus” or “scope of metaphor”, - as Kövecses calls it (2000: 81)². Each source domain highlights one or a limited number of aspects of a target. The scope of metaphor allows us to make maximal generalizations about the use of particular source domains, thus making it possible to discover new systems of metaphors as the one presented here.

We are able to propose a model of metaphoric transfer different to that established by Cacciari (1998:129), and to argue against Ullman (1964) and Cacciari (1998) when they say that the correspondence between modalities follows from the structure ‘more distinctive³ modality to less distinctive modality’. What Ullman calls ‘less differentiated senses’ would be smell and taste, the ‘more differentiated’ hearing and seeing. However, my ranking and Days’ ranking are different.

The reason why the senses are linked to the objective side of our mental life (Sweetser, 1990: 37) lies in the very nature of perception, which can be characterized by an accurate and reliable receptive manipulation of data. Some researches have suggested that vision is very important, more so than other senses. I disagree. The sense of smell is not weaker than that of other perception domains like hearing or vision (Ibarretxe, 1999, p.41). The connection between smell and memory is very strong. Heiz (quoted in Ibarretxe, 1999: 37)

² Conceptual metaphors have a “main meaning focus”, a major theme, so to speak. (Kövecses, 2000).

³ Distinct: relating to the features of a phoneme that distinguish it from other similar phonemes

has found that memories evoked by the sense of smell are more emotional than those evoked by other senses, including vision, hearing and touch.

IV. Analysis of Data

As we have mentioned before, Cacciari (1998) affirms that the main transfers in metaphors are those of the ruling sensory transfers. The metaphors found in Heaney show different information. The sensory transfer takes places from any sensory modality whenever we map conceptual structure from the source to the target domain. We could make extended comparisons between our data and the results showed by Cacciari (1999), but the general conclusions can be seen in the following diagrams:

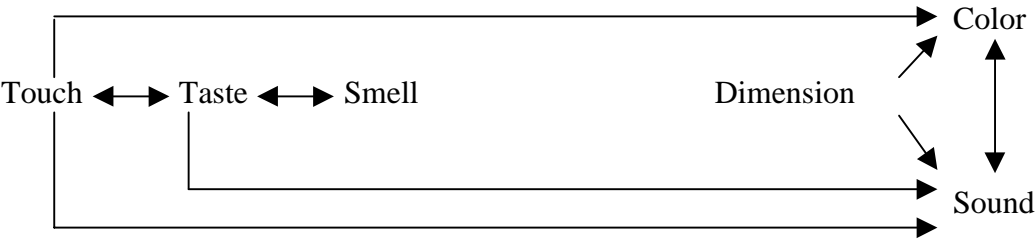


Figure 1. Model of metaphorical transfers among sensory modalities (Cacciari, 1998: 129 after Williams, 1976).

My analysis reflects a model of metaphorical transfer between the sensory modalities different from the one given by Cacciari. In Heaney, Cacciari’s order does not make sense; but the following diagram shows what Heaney is actually doing.

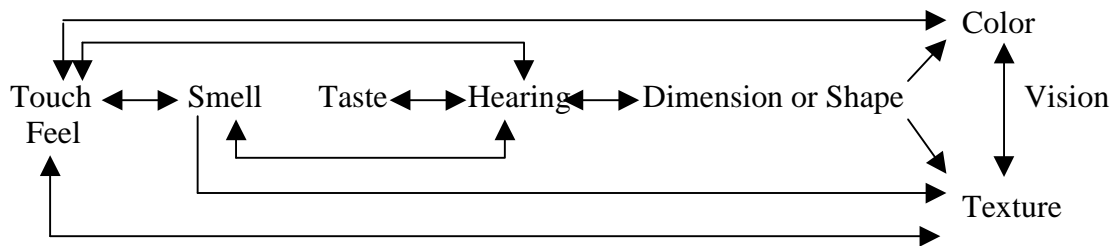


Figure 2. Model of metaphorical transfers among sensory modalities according to the data analyzed (50 poems by Seamus Heaney).

1. TOUCH is mapped onto (Cacciari, figure 1):

- taste, like in “sharp taste” (TASTING IS TOUCHING, 6%);
- color, like in “dull color” (in our analysis we attribute color to the domain of seeing SEEING IS TOUCHING, 12%)
- or sound, like in “soft sound”; HEARING IS TOUCHING-21%; HEARING IS FEELING, 6%).

According to Cacciari there are rare shifts to vision or smell, but our data shows the opposite. We find (look at figure 2):

- vision, like in “milky gleam”⁴, (SEEING IS TOUCHING, 21%)
- smell, like in “cold smell” (SMELLING IS FEELING, 3%)
- touch, like in “cold hardness” (TOUCHING IS FEELING”, 3%)

2. TASTE is mapped onto:

- Smell, like in “sour smell” (SMELLING IS TASTING, 0%)
- and hearing, like in “sweet music” (HEARING IS TASTING, 6%).

⁴ A gleam is a pale, clear light (Collins Cobuild Dictionary), a steady bright shine or a beam of light, especially one that is reflected, dim, or coming from an indistinct source (Encarta). So that, *milky* would attribute something more than whiteness to the light because a light (unless you specify it) is always supposed to convey that.

But according to Cacciari smell does not map onto:

- touch (“sweet hold”, TOUCHING IS TASTING, 3%) or dimension (SHAPE IS TASTING, 0%) or color (COLOR IS TASTING, 0%). We find backward direction in Heaney, -towards touch.
3. SMELL is not mapped onto any other sense according to Cacciari, but it is according to our data (“gauze of sound around the noise”, HEARING IS SMELLING, 3%; “inhale the absolute weather”, FEELING IS SMELLING, 3%).
 4. DIMENSION: Is mapped onto
 - Color, “flat grey”;
 - or sound, “deep sound”.

Cacciari mentions dimension without specifying texture or form. We did look for COLOR IS DIMENSION specifically or any other metaphor that identifies that quality in objects such as form, dimension and texture because we considered those included in vision or touch. The same happens with temperature, omitted by Cacciari (1998) and also by Day (1997), and considered here as feeling.

5. HEARING: transferred only to color (“quiet green” COLOR IS HEARING, 0%). This statement made by Cacciari is not right according to my data. We find hearing transferred to another sensory modality, vision, like in “Smoke-signals are loud-mouthed” SEEING IS HEARING, 6%. But not to color.

The problem of directionality in synaesthetic language has been mentioned by authors such as Ullman or Cacciari (1999). They show that the correspondence between senses is normally the one from the most distinctive modality (sight) to the less one (touch). But my analysis

suggests strongly that this is not the case. It is true that there is a systematic directionality in the mapping, but not showing that the meaning that the metaphor conveys is presented by a term that belongs to the highest in the scale of distinction, while the modifying term belongs to the lowest modality in the scale. It is true that a mapping from more accessible or basic concepts seems more natural, and is preferred to its opposite, as shown by Shen (1997: 51), but that accessibility will function according to the meaning intended or perceived, never according to more or less accessible sensory modalities.

V. Final analysis of Heaney's work

The following table (see below) reflects the percentages provided by the study of the English language made by Day (1996) and also my own percentages, obtained from the study of Heaney's work. The results do not match. The proportion of metaphors in Heaney having vision as primary sense is much higher than the one in Day. 'Seeing' is higher in proportion than 'hearing' as primary sense, -the most commonly used one according to Day. Touch has also much more significance in Heaney.

Regarding the synaesthetic use of the senses we must point out the fact that Heaney uses more touch, and in second place seeing (though the difference is small). Taste and smell are the senses less used by Heaney in both groups.

| Primary Senses | Synaesthetic Senses | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------|--------|-------------|----------|------------|--------------|
| | Hearing | Vision | Smell | Temperature | Taste | Touch/Feel | Total Primes |
| Hearing | n/a 6 | 80 12 | 1 3 | 86 X | 149 6 | 540 12 | 856 33 |
| Vision | 26 6 | n/a | 1 0 | 42 X | 38 0 | 135 12 | 242 18 |
| Smell | 7 0 | 14 0 | N/a | 3 X | 60 0 | 34 3 | 118 3 |
| Temperature | 0 X | 4 X | 0 X | n/a | 19 X | 8 X | 31 X |
| Taste | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 1 X | n/a | 6 6 | 7 6 |
| Touch/Feel | 3 0 | 2 3 | 0 0 | 0 X | 10 3 | n/a 3 | 15 9 |
| Total | 33 6 | 100 15 | 2 3 | 132 X | 276 9 | 723 36 | |

Table 1: Total Data of Synaesthetic Metaphors in English⁵ (in black) and in Heaney (in red) showing Day's (1996) and my data (percentages).

VI. Final remarks

According to the data analyzed two conclusions could be drawn. The first one is that synaesthetic metaphors are a category of primary metaphors that are basic in human perception and expression. The second one is that if we could generalize saying that the physiological process through which primary metaphors take place is synaesthesia, then we

⁵ Day's data was retrieved from both English printed texts and electronic texts, the alter of which CAME from sources including World Library's Greatest Books Collection (1991), the Oxford Text Archive, and Project

could reach the conclusion that the neurological phenomenon described in such, is the one generating the cognitive phenomenon known as metaphor. In other words, synaesthesia makes metaphor possible.

Finally, the results from the data studied by Cacciari, Day et al. do not match the results derived from Seamus Heaney's poetry, probably because the language used by Heaney is richer in the field of synaesthetic associations due to its peculiar creative quality. It could also be possible that the nature of synaesthesia in Heaney was not "normal", i.e., not experienced consciously, but rather concrete. That would mean that , Seamus Heaney was a synaesthete who really experiences these transfers of modality. In order to pursue this further I intend to send to the poet the tests used to determine the cases of synaesthesia by Cytowic, et al., then resend them to the poet one year later (as normally done in this kind of tests), and if the results are positive and consistent through time I will be certain about this last conclusion, which need a closer study and further research.

VIII. Annex:

- Synaesthetic Metaphors and extended mappings found in 50 Poems by Seamus Heaney:

4. 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.
(Digging, lines 25-27);

SMELL IS TEMPERATURE
SMELLING IS FEELING⁶

5. Yet I live here, I live here too, I sing,
Expertly civil-tongued with civil neighbours
On the high wires of first wireless reports,
Sucking the fake taste, the **stony flavours**

Gutenberg. It includes texts from Chaucer, Shakespeare, Merville and novels such those by Michael Crichton.

⁶ FEELING is different from TOUCHING due mainly to its quality of passiveness. For instance, you cannot touch temperature, weather or air, but you feel them through your sense of touch.

Of those sanctioned, old, elaborate retorts:
(From Whatever You Say Say Nothing, lines 16-20);

A FLAVOUR IS A STONY OBJECT
TASTING IS TOUCHING

6. Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a **coarse croaking** that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
(Death of a Naturalist, lines 23-26);

SOUND QUALITY IS PHYSICAL TEXTURE
HEARING IS TOUCHING

7. I **savoured the rich crash** when a bucket
Plummeted down at the end of a rope.
So deep you saw no reflection in it
A shallow one under a dry stone ditch
Fructified like any aquarium.
(Personal Helicon, lines 6-10);

SOUND QUALITY IS TASTE SENSATION
HEARING IS TASTING

8. Under my window, a **clean**⁷ rasping **sound**
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
(Digging, lines 3-4);

A SOUND IS AN OBJECT THAT CAN BE CLEAN OR DIRTY
HEARING IS SEEING

9. When you dragged out long roots from the soft mulch
A white face hovered over the bottom.
Others had echoes, gave back your own call
With a **clean** new **music** in it. And one
Was scaresome, for there, out of ferns and tall
Foxgloves, a rat slapped across my reflection.
(Personal Helicon, lines 12-17);

A SOUND IS AN OBJECT THAT CAN BE CLEAN OR DIRTY
HEARING IS SEEING

10. ‘They’ve hands for anything, these Germans.’
He walked back into the refining lick of the grass, behind
the particular judgements of captor and harbourer. As he
walks yet, **feeling our eyes on his back**, treading the air of the
image he achieved, released to his fatigues.
(Visitant, lines 10-14);

⁷ Controversy could arise from the treatment of the adjective *clean* as done in this and other examples. In this study the most salient meaning for *clean* is “any object *free from anything that dims lustre or transparency* (Oxford English Dictionary) or *free from dirt or impurities* (Encarta Dictionary)”. We consider that the most immediate sense these qualities come through is the sense of vision, and any other association to other senses is made possible thanks to synesthesia.

LOOKING AT SOMETHING IS TOUCHING IT WITH THE EYES
SEEING IS TOUCHING

11. He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their **cool hardness**⁸ in our hands.
(Digging, verso 14);

HARDNESS IS TEMPERATURE
TOUCHING IS FEELING

12. Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a **strong gauze of sound** around the smell.
(Death of a Naturalist, lines 5-7);

SOUND IS A STRONG GAUZE
SOUND IS A SUBSTANCE WITH TEXTURE
HEARING IS TOUCHING

13. Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a **strong gauze of sound around the smell**.
(Death of a Naturalist, lines 5-7);

SMELL IS A WRAPPABLE OBJECT
BEING AROUND IT IS WRAPPING IT
MAKING NOISE AROUND IT IS WRAPPING IT
A SOUND IS A WRAPPED SMELL
HEARING IS SMELLING

14. [...] The **air was thick with a bass chorus**.
Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
(Death of a Naturalist, lines 26-28);

HEARING A CHORUS IS FEELING THE AIR
HEARING IS FEELING

15. [...] The air was **thick** with a bass **chorus**.
Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
(Death of a Naturalist, lines 26-28);

A CHORUS IS A THICK OBJECT
HEARING IS TOUCHING

16. When you dragged out long roots from the soft mulch
A white face hovered over the bottom.
Others had echoes, **gave back your own call**
With a clean new music in it. And one
Was scaresome, for there, out of ferns and tall
Foxgloves, a rat slapped across my reflection.
(Personal Helicon, lines 12-17);

SPEECH INTEERACTION IS OBJECT EXCHANGE
SOUNDS ARE OBJECTS THAT CAN BE GIVEN BACK
HEARING IS RECEIVING OBJECTS

⁸ Due to the ambiguities of language or polysemy, we could find the case of this and other examples being perceived, instead of metaphorically, as two separate characteristics. That is, *cool hardness* as *cool and hard*.

17. My 'place of clear water',
the first hill in the world
where springs washed into
the shiny grass

and darkened cobbles
in the bed of the lane.
Anahorish, **soft gradient**
of constant, vowel-meadow,

after-image of lamps
swung through the yards
on winter evenings.
(Anahorish, lines 1-11);

SOUND QUALITY IS THE SHAPE OR STRUCTURE OF THAT LANDSCAPE
HEARING IS MOVING OR INTERACTING IN/WITH THE LANDSCAPE
SOUND IS THE LANDSCAPE
HEARING IS SEEING

18. 'They've hands for anything, these Germans.'
He walked back into the refining lick of the grass, behind
the particular judgements of captor and harbourer. As he
walks yet, feeling our eyes on his back, **treading the air of the**
image he achieved, released to his fatigues.
(Visitant, lines 10-14);

SOCIAL IMPRESSION IS VISUAL IMAGE
ACHIEVING AN IMAGE IS TRADING ITS AIR
VISUAL IMAGE IS A PHYSICAL MEDIUM THAT YOU CAN TOUCH
SEEING IS TOUCHING

19. I moved like a double agent among the big concepts.
The word 'enemy' had the toothed efficiency of a mowing
machine. It was a mechanical and distant **noise beyond that**
opaque security, that autonomous ignorance.
'When the Germans bombed Belfast it was the bitterest
Orange parts were hit the worst.'
(England's Difficulty, lines 1-6);

PREVENTION OF KNOWLEDGE IS A BARRIER TO SIGHT
KNOWLEDGE IS TRANSPARECY
KNOWING IS SEEING
HEARING IS SEEING

20. I moved like a double agent among the big concepts.
The word 'enemy' had the toothed efficiency of a mowing
machine. It was a mechanical and **distant noise** beyond that
opaque security, that autonomous ignorance.
'When the Germans bombed Belfast it was the bitterest
Orange parts were hit the worst.'
(England's Difficulty, lines 1-6);

A NOISE IS A DISTANT OBJECT
PERCEIVING A NOISE IS SEEING AN OBJECT AT CERTAIN DISTANCE

HEARING IS SEEING

21. On my first night in the Gaeltacht the old woman spoke to me in English: 'You will be all right' I sat on a twilit bedside listening through the wall to fluent Irish, homesick for a **speech I was to extirpate.**

I had come west to inhale the absolute weather. The visionaries breathed on my face a smell of soup-kitchens, they mixed the dust of croppies' graves with the fasting spittle of our creed and anointed my lips. Ephete, they urged. I blushed but only managed a few words.
(Stations of the West, lines 1-8);

SPEECH IS AN OBJECT THAT CAN BE ESTIRPATED
HEARING IS EXTIRPATING
HEARING IS TOUCHING

22. On my first night in the Gaeltacht the old woman spoke to me in English: 'You will be all right' I sat on a twilit bedside listening through the wall to fluent Irish, homesick for a speech I was to extirpate.

I had come west to **inhale the absolute weather.** The visionaries breathed on my face a smell of soup-kitchens, they mixed the dust of croppies' graves with the fasting spittle of our creed and anointed my lips. Ephete, they urged. I blushed but only managed a few words.
(Stations of the West, lines 1-8);

FEELING THE WHEATHER IS INHALING

FEELING IS SMELLING⁹

23. There was a sunlit absence.
The helmeted pump in the yard
heated its iron, **water honeyed**¹⁰

in the slung bucket
and the sun stood
like a griddle cooling
against the wall
of each long afternoon.
(Sunlight, verso 3);

FLAVOUR IS TEXTURE
TASTING IS TOUCHING

24. They are the seed cutters. The tuck and frill

⁹ When you use *inhale*, *smelling* is also implied. You cannot avoid smelling while inhaling.

¹⁰ This example shows ambiguity in the possible senses evoked and the possible mappings. *Water honeyed* could mean just *sweetened*, but it could also be characterized metaphorically as *having the texture of honey* or *becoming thicker (due to the heat of the sun, evaporation, etc.)*. We could find similar examples in 21 and 22: (21) *a milky gleam* could be not only mean *being as white as milk* but also *having the texture of milk*; (22) *watery white* could not only *having the colour of water*, but also *having the texture of water or being wet*.

Of leaf-sprout is on the seed potatoes
Buried under that straw. With time to kill,
They are taking their time. Each sharp knife goes
Lazily halving each root that falls apart
In the palm of the hand: a **milky gleam**¹¹,
And, at the centre, a dark watermark.
Oh, calendar customs! Under the broom
Yellowing over them, compose the frieze
With all of us there, our anonymities.
(The Seed Cutters, lines 5-14);

GLEAM IS TEXTURE
SEEING IS TOUCHING

25. The big missal splayed
and dangled silky ribbons
of emerald and purple and **watery white**.

Intransitively we would assist,
confess, receive. The verbs
assumed us. We adored.
(In Illo Tempore, lines 2-3);

COLOUR IS TEXTURE
SEEING IS TOUCHING

26. It was a day of **cold**
Raw **silence**, wind-blown
Surplice and soutane:
Rained-on, flower-laden
Coffin after coffin
Seemed to float from the door
Of the packed cathedral
Like blossoms on slow water.
(Casualty II, lines 1-8).

NOISE IS TEMPERATURE
HEARING IS FEELING

27. It was a day of cold
Raw silence, wind-blown
Surplice and soutane:
(Casualty II, lines 1-3).

NOISE IS COOKED FOOD
HEARING IS TASTING

28. Northern reticence, the tight gag of place
And times: yes, yes. Of the 'wee six' I sing
Where to be saved you only must save face
And whatever you say, you say nothing.

Smoke-signals are loud-mouthed compared with us:
Manoeuvrings to find out name and school,
Subtle discrimination by addresses

¹¹ A gleam is a pale, clear light (Collins Cobuild Dictionary), a steady bright shine or a beam of light, especially one that is reflected, dim, or coming from an indistinct source (Encarta). So that, *milky* would attribute something more than whiteness to the light because a light (unless you specify it) is always supposed to convey that.

Wit hardly an exception to the rule
(From Whatever You Say Say Nothing, verso 9-16);

CREATING VISUAL SIGNALS IS TALKING LOUD
SIGNALS ARE SOUNDS
SEEING IS HEARING

29. We are dispersed people whose history
Is a **sensation of opaque fidelity**¹².
(From the Land of the Unspoken, verso 9);

PREVENTION OF KNOWLEDGE IS A BARRIER TO SEE
KNOWING IS SEEING
FEELING IS SEEING

30. a late jet out of Dublin, its risen **light**
Winking ahead of what it hauls away
(The Flight Path II, lines 4-5);

A LIGHT IS AN OBJECT THAT HAULS AHEAD
SEEING IS HEARING

31. Equal and opposite, the part that lifts
Into those full-starred heavens that winter sees
When I stand in Wicklow under the flight path
Of a late jet out of Dublin, its risen light
Winking ahead of what it hauls away:
Heavy engine noise¹³ and its abatement
Widening far back down, a wake through starlight.
(The Flight Path -II, lines 1-7);

NOISE QUALITY IS A WEIGHT OF OBJECT
A NOISE IS AN OBJECT
FEELING A NOISE IS FEELING AN OBJECT
HEARING IS TOUCHING

32. The following for the record, in the light
Of everything before and since:
One bright May morning, nineteen-seventy-nine,
Just off the red-eye special from New York,
I'm on the train for Belfast. Plain, simple
Exhilaration at being back: the sea
At Skerries, the nuptial hawthorn bloom,
The trip north taking **sweet hold** like a chain
On every bodily sprocket.
(The Flight Path IV, lines 1-9);

HOLDING IS TASTING
TOUCHING IS TASTING

33. When all the others were away at Mass
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.
They **broke the silence**, let fall one by one
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:
Cold comforts set between us, things to share

¹² See example 16: "opaque security"

¹³ The interpretation here could be ambiguous. 'Heavy' could be considered as modifier of 'engine' only.

Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes
From each other's work would bring us to our senses.
(Clearances 3, versos 1-8)

SILENCE IS A BREAKABLE OBJECT
HEARING IS TOUCHING

34. As you plaited the harvest bow
You implicated the **mellowed silence** in you
In wheat that does not rust
But brightens as it tightens twist by twist
Into a knowable corona,
A throwaway love-knot of straw.
(The Harvest Bow, lines 1-6)

NOISE IS COLOUR
HEARING IS SEEING

35. Incomprehensible
To him, my other life.
Sometimes on the high stool,
Too busy with his knife
At a tobacco plug
And not **meeting my eye**,
In the pause after a slug
He mentioned poetry.
We would be on our own
And, always politic
And shy of condescension,
I would manage by some trick
To switch the talk to eels
Or lore of the horse and cart
Or the Provisionals.
(Casualty I, lines 21-35)

MEETING SOMETHING PHYSICALLY IS VISUAL CONTACT
TOUCHING IS SEEING

36. He had gone miles away
For he drank like a fish
Nightly, naturally
Swimming towards the lure
Of warm lit-up places,
The **blurred** mesh and **murmur**
Drifting among glasses
In the gregarious smoke.
(Casualty II, lines 24-31)

A MURMUR IS A BLURRED OBJECT
HEARING IS SEEING

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