

Lorna Hardwick interviewed the writer Seamus Heaney in London in September 2007, when he was over for the production of his play *The Burial at Thebes* at the Barbican. As well as being a Nobel Prize winner – he was a Laureate for Literature in 1995 – Seamus Heaney also has an Honorary Degree from the Open University. She started off by asking him what first attracted him to working with classical texts.

NB. Audio excerpts from this interview and a new introduction by Lorna Hardwick are available on the Practitioners' Voices in Classical Reception Studies website:
<http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/pvcrs/2016/heaney>

Seamus Heaney: I suppose it must have been, first of all, schooling, I mean, I did Latin at secondary school, I was as they say, good at Latin, so I had this, I had Virgil, Livy, a little bit of Horace and so on. Then, in my own particular case, I guess the Latin language had hieratic foundational quality because I grew up as a Catholic in the age of the Latin mass, so Latin was a kind of a ratified sacred tongue in that way. But, I mean, I'm just divining that. As the older I got, basically, it was a matter, I suppose, of self-improvement, because the classics, Latin and Greek literature is so deeply laid in subsequent western culture and literature. So being involved with poetry that went back to the source. Unfortunately, I don't know Greek but I've read Homer in translation, on and off, and eventually read the Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles mostly, and Virgil in Latin because I was very fond of Virgil as a student. But I think, the thing about the classics is that they can be travestied, if you like and mocked but they can't be outstripped or diminished or dodged. If it's war, you can't get more savage rendering of it than you have in Homer. If it's a question of the intermeshing of private conscience and public action, politics and conscience, if you like, you can't do better than Sophocles, I think. So, a matter of schooling and necessary clarification. I once said that the classics are like the longitude and latitude of consciousness in the West, they establish the first lines of thought and feelings.

Lorna Hardwick: And so far as the Greek material was concerned, you mentioned Homer. Were you attracted by the way in which Homer and the tragedians deal with certain themes or was it that you were drawn to them via a sort of intervening poetic tradition, as it were, you know, classicised Anglophone tradition?

Seamus Heaney: Well, unfortunately, I don't know Greek. And, in fact, I didn't come to Homer until probably in my late twenties. And then, even more so, in my forties, I met a translator called Robert Fitzgerald who had done Homer. I always had a sense of Virgil because I'd studied him because I knew him in translation better. But I think it's the, with Homer, it is the actual head-on first-worldness, this is the, I mean, everybody says it, it's the, who was the German critic called him naïve as opposed to sentimental, you're encountering the world for the first time? And, it's that complete at-homeness in the domestic worlds of the *Odyssey* and the extraordinary, not inflated, just elevation of the Iliad and the warrior culture there. So you have war, I mean, as Virgil says later on, arms and the man in Homer, it's more savage really than anything you get out of the trenches in the First World War, it's as fierce as documentary, it's almost as fierce as

contemporary violent movies, you know, so, there's something unremitting and shocking in the Homeric Iliad war material and there's something kind of deeply heart-breakingly familiar in the *Odyssey*, when the old dog recognises Odysseus when he comes back and so on and so forth. Anyway, I could go on.

Lorna Hardwick: Right. And so far as the Greek tragedies are concerned, I mean, you've worked with Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and Sophocles' *Antigone*, what lead you to choose those plays in particular?

Seamus Heaney: Well, undoubtedly, it was the conditions we were living in, or have lived in in Northern Ireland. They were intensified and made romantic and extreme from about 1968 to 1996 but anyone who grew up in the north of Ireland from their moment of consciousness was aware of, if you like, a public dimension to their lives, they were bonded into a group, one side or the other side. And they were also living in the, you know, a personal, private intimate, the theatre of your own conscience and consciousness. So, the demand for solidarity was there from the start with your group, and if you were growing into some kind of authentic individual life, the imperative for solitude or self-respect or integrity or self-definition was there also. So there was always that little, sometimes quite often, an ill-fit between the group line, the party line if you like, and the personal condition. And that is precisely what drew me to, certainly to the *Philoctetes*, where the hero, or he's not so much the hero, he's the young fellow, Neoptolemus is caught between the demands of loyalty and solidarity, he is a soldier on the Greek expedition and so he has to help the cause but in order to help the cause, he has to do something which infringes his own sense of truth and justice and self-respect, he has to tell a lie to this wounded man. So it's that friction between the demands of the group and the demands of the individual integrity. Same kind of thing in *Antigone*, I actually resisted *Antigone*. *Antigone* was done so often, it has become more a set of issues than an actual play. And, to tell you the truth that's one of the reasons I changed the title. I changed the title of *Philoctetes* or *Philoctetes* – because I wasn't quite sure how you pronounced it among other things – but mainly because it was being toured in Ireland, to certainly non-classical people, it was being brought into all kinds of parish halls and arts centres and, as my mother would call them, the common five-eighths were coming in to see it. So, there is a miraculous cure at the end of the play, *Philoctetes*, the wounded man is cured. So, I thought that phrase, the Cure at Troy, the word cure has for both sides in Ireland, north and south, it, there can be, if you like, faith healing cures or they can be miraculous cures at Lourdes and holy wells and so on. So it gave it that kind of, if you like, anthropological dimension. Similarly with the *Antigone*. *Antigone* is so politicised in Ireland over the last forty years, I mean, it's been politicised forever – well, about a hundred and fifty years anyway, in the west – but Conor Cruse O'Brien famously used the *Antigone* situation as an analogy for civil rights versus law and order in the nineteen sixties. And he warned that if you take the non-violent protest civil rights position, you are likely to unleash violence which is clear in *Antigone*. So the Bernadette Devlin figure in her politics in the nineteen sixties was the *Antigone* figure. People on the marches for civil rights where they're keeping faith with the kind of pieties of belonging to a different group, their domestic, their cultural, their hearth culture, if you like, was offended by the gerrymandering and so on. Anyway, that was present, and of course, that continued and

then, with the feminist movement, understandably, the treatments of Antigone became to be related very much to the vehemence of the women issue in Ireland, where there was a terrific understandable righteous fury. So there was a very high voltage, political voltage, hanging round the figure of Antigone. And, many seminars, you know, much political discourse, so the play was hijacked into, if you like, a discourse around the issues, into the cultural wars of the seventies and eighties and the early nineties. So I'm kind of tired of that, you know, in a way? Because when you thought Antigone, you thought all that.

And then, when I thought of this title, *The Burial at Thebes*, I mean, once again in Ireland, and I think everywhere in the world still, the word burial still retains a sacral first world force, it can't quite be ironised out of existence. And I wanted to call attention to that sacred side of Antigone's motives, but, also, there are several burials, Antigone is buried alive, she buries the body ritually of her brother with the dust. And, you know, it cuts in all kinds of directions. Deaths of the queen, of Haemon, of herself, Haemon also along with Antigone is buried in the cave. And it's an issue. And in fact, it was an issue in Northern Ireland, I mean, this was not at all in my mind when I did the play or gave it the title. But I've thought since of a moment, very close to my own home, during the hunger strikes in 1981, the second hunger striker to die in that IRA campaign of hunger striking was a guy called Francis Hughes whose parents lived very close, I knew his father, I knew his brothers and sister, I didn't know him. But he died in the Maze Prison and of course, it was highly emotional time. He was a little Billy the Kid killer no doubt, but, it was inflamed politically, so the army, the security forces took control of the, after he died, he died in the prison, they took control of the body and didn't allow any of the family or the local people who were near there, they delivered the body to Toomebridge which was a few miles away from his birthplace so there was kind of outrage at that. And it was the same kind of thing that, there was kind of Creon action there, where we're taking charge of this body of the traitor, if you like, and at the same time there was the Antigone laws of the dead, of the family, piety and so on. So, there was kind of analagous energy on the ground in the north of Ireland for all that.

Lorna Hardwick: I wanted to ask you about the way in which you approached the Greek theatrical conventions and the Chorus is an obvious example and it seems to me there's a difference between *Cure at Troy* and *Burial* in the way in which you do that. In *Cure at Troy*, for instance, you created some additional material for the Chorus which actually brought together the suffering of the different communities in the north of Ireland. The hunger striker's father that you've just referred to and the police widow in the funeral home and so on. And yet in the choral material for *Burial*, you didn't do that, was it because you thought that the Antigone story required something different or were there other reasons for your change?

Seamus Heaney: I thought that I made a mistake, actually, in *Cure at Troy*, introducing the pointed up relevant information, the kind of hook and eye to the present moment relationship. *The Cure at Troy* had a touch of, if you like, the adult education broadcast about it. I mean, I offended the conventions of Greek theatre by having a Chorus come on at the beginning and, you know, lay down the law about what you're going to see, you know, and I actually felt that, once again, that the audiences wouldn't know who the

blazes Heracles or Hercules was and that all this was necessary to, like a BBC Third Programme introduction to the first act of an opera, you tell them what's going to happen. So, I did that, that was the first thing I had ever done for the stage and I think it was an error, definitely. And then when I saw the thing and heard the thing on the stage, police widows, hunger strikers, I thought it was altogether too pious towards the audience and towards the situation so when I reprinted that chorus in *Selected Poems*, I left out that stanza. Mind you, there was a sort of offense in adding a chorus at all. But I did it and, when it came to the *Burial at Thebes* or the *Antigone* translation, I think it's a much more substantial piece of work and even through the medium of translation, I was using other translations but you can sense a different kind of engagement there. So I sped the choruses through a little bit, abbreviated the choruses, we don't have a dancing floor in a modern theatre, we tend to forget, I suppose, that in the Greek theatre, the fifty or so people on the orchestra, on the round arena down there, were at the centre of the attention, and the kind of fifteen thousand sometimes, ten to fifteen thousand people in Athens at these events, sitting up on high tiers looking down, and must have been a terrific spectacle, the dancing, so we don't have that. Nevertheless, I allowed myself, if you like, Poetry with a capital P in the choruses. And, even though they're condensed, I try to make them more intense. There's a kind of paradox however, I think, because if you have intense poetic utterance, it's actually probably more suited to a single voice, just for audibility's sake, do you know, for an audience listening. That's one of the kind of ironies that the, in this *Burial at Thebes*, that the material for the choruses which are my favourite bits, really, are probably likely, this is an unfortunate truth, to get lost maybe, in the utterance quite often, for the audience. I don't know how big a problem that is but I think it's a reality.

Lorna Hardwick: To what extent when you were creating those choruses for *Burial*, were you thinking in terms of a poetry which was not perhaps going to be accompanied by dance because one doesn't always have that kind of choreography but nevertheless was originally designed to be, you know, to be sung and part of a broader movement and yet you're also publishing it as a poetic text which people are going to read on the page, I mean, are there any tensions between those two functions, do you think?

Seamus Heaney: Well, I think, undoubtedly, reading it on the page, the tension I would feel or the antithesis is between the dialogue and the choruses. I mean, for better or worse, I'm of the age of Eliot, I grew up as an undergraduate with T.S. Eliot in my ears. Poetry and drama, the music of poetry, this, that and the other. And Eliot convinced me, not necessarily by practice but by his theory, that if you're going to have people speaking verse on the stage nowadays, you don't want colourful speech from them, you don't want fancy idioms, you don't want fine writing, it has to be, well, survive its own drabness in some sort of way. Or that's what I took him to be saying. So, the dialogue, this kind of metrical shape, the iambic pentameter, there's three stress line, the opening strophes of the play between Ismene and Antigone, if there is intensity, it's meant to be in pressure of utterance, you know, the, 'Ismene, quick, come here' [beating time] it's not the gorgeousness of speech and unfortunately, I'm at a loss because I don't know the Greek, if I were doing it from Latin, I would know far better, I would feel it, I would feel more responsibility, I suppose that the long and the short of it was, since I didn't know the

Greek, and it didn't know me, I wasn't as answerable, I didn't feel as answerable as I would have otherwise.

Lorna Hardwick: You mentioned the importance of translations to you, both in your initial encounters with Homer and with tragedy and also in your preparation of *Burial*, and I notice that the translations that you used for *Burial*, and you mentioned Jebb and Lloyd-Jones, for instance, I mean, they are very scholarly translations, did you feel it was important to use a scholarly translation as a step on the way towards creating your text? How did you go about deciding which translations you thought were valuable in that respect?

Seamus Heaney: Well, the Jebb, I knew, was old-fashioned and authoritative and I thought that that was important. I mean, the problem is if you look at a verse translation, or a very good verse translation, you know? Immediately, diction is always crucial, choice of words, you know, and so on. And you're yearning for the right one. Then you see it in somebody else's and that's very dangerous stuff because you're tempted to use it. I mean, this was my, to go back to another translation, with Beowulf, I mean, I stayed clear of a lot of good translations. A colleague of mine at Harvard, Bill Alfred, had done a prose translation in the Modern Library series, not well known, I came upon it, and I thought, God, that's wonderful, and I said, No, stay clear of that stuff, you know, because it'll affect you. So, the reason I took the Jebb as a kind of, well, well way back, the Loeb, the Lloyd-Jones thing is very un-rhythmic it's prose translation. Sometimes I peeked at David Green in the...

Lorna Hardwick: In the Chicago series?

Seamus Heaney: ...Chicago thing. I think it's wonderful, I mean, that's wonderful stuff but it's chaste, you know, it's you know, again not colourful speech. So I think it saves you a bit. The best thing of all I had in my experience of this was, when I was doing the *Philoctetes*, in the stack of the library in Harvard, I found a very, very old schoolboy's text, a completely literal translation, a crib used by sixth formers obviously to get them through their construing of the Greek, and it was actually more helpful almost than anything because it had the oddity and, as I say, the otherness of the Greek...

Lorna Hardwick: And preserved the shape of the language?

Seamus Heaney: Exactly. And the strangeness. So you wrestle your way through it. That was quite useful. But as we know, the theories, or debates about translation are founded on terrific principles on both sides, one saying, keep the strangeness of it, the other saying, you know, make it more, domesticate it rather than foreignise it. I think for the theatre, especially if you're like myself, not really in theatre, just somebody hired to do a job for theatre, the domesticating is easier, especially when you don't know the original language, I have to say.

Lorna Hardwick: Can I ask you then about your relationship with the whole process of staging? I mean, to what extent would you want to work with director, designers, actors through the rehearsal process and modify perhaps, the acting script as a result of that?

Seamus Heaney: I'd be happy enough to modify the acting script. I mean, I believe that you know, that is what it is, if you think of Shakespeare, that's an acting script. But I wasn't invited to work with the actors in the Abbey production. I could have, I suppose, worked with them in this Nottingham Playhouse one that went on a couple of years ago that's going on again now. But, to tell you the truth, I mean, my interest in it was to satisfy myself with an arch of writing, I felt in *The Burial at Thebes*, from the beginning to the end of the play, in my own feel for the thing, that there was a sort of tension and a forwardness and a balancing. In the *Cure at Troy*, I felt more it was a container for stuff, that there was so much blank verse and stuff that I didn't get an energy, I didn't get a sense of a, I use the word arch just out of the blue but from beginning to end, there's a singular holding action I felt in *The Burial at Thebes* that kept me going, I was able to believe in the doing of it as a piece of writing more, and I suppose, when all's said and done, that's really my interest in it, for better or worse, I'm quite happy for the director to do what she or he wants to do. I don't think I could contribute much, you know?

Lorna Hardwick: And do you ever feel, for instance, if you're present at the production of one of your plays and you feel, Oh, I'm surprised they did it like that, do you keep those feelings then to yourself or do you discuss with the director?

Seamus Heaney: Well, it's usually too late. I mean, the only time I went to the first production of this, the first production of the *Burial* was done at the Abbey, truthfully, I didn't wildly like it but it was all decided ahead of time. It was a French-speaking director from Quebec who was coming to the Abbey because an Abbey director had gone to Quebec to do an Irish play, et cetera, et cetera. She had the design set up with a Spaniard in Madrid and she had the costumes thought out and so on. But she unnerved me, I went in for the first read-around and she said she was going to set it during the Colonels' War in Greece. I said, What's the Colonels' War? And she meant the Colonels' dictatorship, you know. So I wasn't wild about that. I also wasn't wild about the costumes in the first Abbey production because the chorus was dressed like two Dick Tracey figures, they had long coats and hats and stuff. But I liked their speaking a lot so that was different. I really liked the production in Nottingham when I saw it a couple of years ago. I mean, I'm very old-fashioned. I like it to be like a Greek play, but this was in the round, it had people dressed in...

Lorna Hardwick: The Chorus moved and there was live music and...

Seamus Heaney: ...the Chorus moved around and, that's right, yeah. So, for better or worse, that's my inclination, yeah.

Lorna Hardwick: I think, going back to the Abbey production, some people had perhaps half expected that, you know, given it was commissioned for the Abbey centenary and so on, that the production concept might bring out the Irish context. I

mean, one could imagine almost, a civil war situation in Ireland you know, which would resonate very much with Irish tradition. Do you see your particular text as actually reaching out beyond any particular time or place or do you think that it can actually bring the two together, as it were?

Seamus Heaney: Well, as I was saying, by 2004, 2003 when I started this thing, you do a thing once in literature, the second time you do it, it's cliché, you know? So, you do a thing once in life, you do it a thousand times. I think of George Mitchell at the peace talks in the north of Ireland, think of the number of times he listened to Paisley and Martin McGuinness and all these people rehearsing their positions, John Hume, Trimble, that's politics, you keep on going about it. But, you know, you're gonna get fed up with it. So, the Irish question was imaginatively exhausted in a way, as far as I was concerned. But, the, I don't want to make heavy weather of the Iraq situation either but certainly the Bush situation, the coercion of the world into 'are you a patriot or are you not, are you with us or against us, are you for traitors within the ranks', any criticism was kind of traitorous and so on. It was more that Iraq world, post 9/11 world that I was aware of when I was doing this than the Irish situation. And, again, there's enough already in the text, He that has ears or she that hath ears, let them hear, there's enough there to be going on with. I did allow myself one faint vulgarity in that, I think Creon says, I'll sniff him out or I'll, some kind of Bushism, you know. And also, as, here we are talking about it, one of the problems is you say in principle, I believe in the text, this play can be heard for itself. True.

Lorna Hardwick: Yeah. We've talked about the question of the interfaces between ancient and modern, between theatre and society, between theatre and poetry on the page and so on. What about the interfaces that are triggered by classical material within your work as a whole? And how important do you think working with classical material, whether poetry or drama, has actually been in the context of your own journey as a poet?

Seamus Heaney: Well, the older I get the more important it is really, to tell you the truth. The Fourth eclogue of Virgil. Virgil I feel more at home with because I know the language and the sensibility attracts me, the elegy and so on, in the melody of the writing. But his earliest book is called *The Eclogues* and it's a kind of 'shepherds talking' but it's a kind of artificial world but it's, as it were, under a crystal dome, and it's very strange as a matter of fact. And he manages to let the world of civil war and danger and history into these things. So after the peace process started up, there's a 'Fourth Eclogue' of Virgil which is famously a vision of the future where it's a kind of Roman propagandist poem really about hoping that Octavia and Mark Antony (was it Mark Antony and Octavian's sister?), that the whole thing may produce a child that would integrate them, bring in a new world for the Roman enterprise but then, of course, was taken as an allegory of the birth of Christ by later Christian commentators, and it is a visionary future-seeking poem. So I used that after the peace process came to a kind of promising conclusion – not that you can conclude a process, I suppose, but it was proceeding hopefully – and that was very direct use of the stuff.

Lorna Hardwick: That was in *Electric Light*, the 'Bann Valley eclogue', yes?

Seamus Heaney: As in *Electric Light*, yeah, I called it the ‘Bann Valley Eclogue’. So that was very direct. I also translated the ninth eclogue there. But more recently, I did this Horace Ode, which is about being shocked by thunder and being thrown back and terrified and realising that the world was not totally reliable, it could be shaken to bits. So that was after the attack on the Twin Towers, I translated that. But I find on a more, at a deeper level, I grew up in a very religious household and I’ve a religious disposition but I also have done my best to secularise myself. And I find myself half way between them. I mean, I don’t believe in the dogmas but I have an impulse towards the transcendent. And I find that Book VI of the Aeneid, all those myths of the afterlife, I mean, they aren’t promising heaven or heavenly rewards or hell, they aren’t promising punishment, but they throw a shape on things that are mythologically and from a literary point of view, respectable, so I find there’s a kind of preparation in that material for last things, if you like.

Lorna Hardwick: Right. That’s very interesting. Here’s someone from a strongly Christian tradition...what generated your interest in, for instance, some of these mythological figures in your very early work? I’m thinking of poems like the Hercules and Antaeus poem in *North*, which was I think taking up something you’d done earlier on the subject of that myth. What do you think that these mythological figures can actually offer you in terms of poetic imagination?

Seamus Heaney: Well, the Antaeus figure was used by Yeats as an emblem of what he and Lady Gregory and Synge were doing, trying to get back to the actual folk language, the first credible mythological earthlife of the country, and he said - John Synge and I and Lady Gregory thought all that we did, all that we said, or something, must come from contact with the soil, from that contact, everything Antaeus-like, grows strong. And so, I’m afraid, in the early days of the civil rights movement, as someone from the nationalist minority side, from the quelled consciousness, if you like, of Northern Ireland, the unofficial life of the British statelet, if you like, Antaeus is the quelled earthlife and in the myth, Hercules or Heracles – Hercules as he was in that one – he is the imperium, he is the new god, he’s not the earth-god, he is the kind of Olympian figure or he’s a hero, at least out of the new world and he defeats Antaeus, not by throwing him down back on to the earth but by elevating him off the ground. In the story, Antaeus is disabled, not by being knocked down on to the ground, where he gets his strength back because he is born of mother earth, but he is disabled by being elevated into the air, into a new element, into a new dimension. So I thought it was a terrific myth of colonisation, you know, that if you ‘hammer a people’, in inverted commas, they will become bonded and resistant. And keep coming back at you. But if you educate them up into your culture, you bewilder them and leave them weakened. And I have to say that I am a complete example of the bewildered Antaeus. Because all my point of reference ‘til I was about in my twenties would have been in English literature – well, not all my points of reference, I overstate that – but the Antaeus figure, it wasn’t just because of the roots in the soil, Seamus digging and all that stuff. I mean, that was one part of it but the other part was the in-between ness, what happens to that when it enters another dimension, the dimension of

university life and English departments and Faber and Faber publishing and (at ease) in the BBC and so on and so forth.

Lorna Hardwick: I want to take up that point and perhaps look again at *Burial at Thebes* in terms of the poetic traditions that you're drawing on. Because one of the things I think you've said that you had done in *Burial* was actually draw on a tradition of Irish lament, you know, the lament for Art O'Leary, I won't attempt to pronounce it.

Seamus Heaney: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Lorna Hardwick: How important for you is the classical ground, as it were, as a way of actually bringing together a number of elements that make up your personal background and interests as a poet in terms of literary tradition as well as of religious and mythological significance?

Seamus Heaney: Well, I think your question actually puts it very clearly because I had never thought of that. But it is true, it's true enough, there is, when I think of the different modal, nodal things in the, this booklet, it started off with that. There's nothing left really of the *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire*, as it was called, *The Keening for Art O'Leary*, 'Mo ghrá go daingean tu! / Lá dá bhfaca thu / ceann tí an mhargaidh / thug mo chroí taitnearnh duit' [beating time] except the 'Mary, quick come here' [beating time]. I was able to get moving, I mean, that's very important, like the tuning fork that starts you going. So, if you like, there's nothing ethnic in the impulse there. There is something vestigial also of the Anglo-Saxon poetry in the first chorus, *Glory*, forgotten how it goes but it certainly has strong stress and a good bit of alliteration and I was thinking very consciously of Anglo-Saxon poetry and *Beowulf*. "Glory be to brightness, to the gleaming sun, Shining guardian of our seven gates, Burn away the darkness, dawn of Thebes, Dazzle the city you have saved from destruction". That and elsewhere in the choruses, there is that definite Old English groundwork at work. And plenty of iambic pentameter swimming through it. So I didn't think of it as bringing those things together, I didn't set out to do that, but it's, they are there, certainly.

Lorna Hardwick: And finally, obviously, I must ask you, are there any future plans to work again with classical material either in your poetry or in drama?

Seamus Heaney: No plans. Actually, I've gone on to a completely different direction, I've been enjoying myself in a completely different way doing something probably politically incorrect, that is, turning late mediaeval Scots into kind of modern English. Chaucer was modernised up by Pope and Dryden so that's my kind of headline. But there, a Scots poet called Robert Henrison who flourished in the fifteenth century, he wrote a sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Testament of Cresseid*. But he also wrote thirteen moral fables which are all about mice and frogs and toads and foxes and wolves and wily persons and there's a moral in them all, it's kind of come down from Aesop but they're written in this mixture of vernacular and elevated Scots diction and they're all rhymed and rhyme royal, seven line stanzas. So I've been doing that, it's

completely different kind of thing and I just hope that sooner or later Billy Connolly might be able to speak them for me.

Lorna Hardwick: Well, we shall look forward to that. Seamus Heaney, thank you very much indeed.

Seamus Heaney: Well, thank you, I'm very grateful to be able to contribute to the Open University action after being awarded that degree in the nineteen eighties. Thank you very much.
