

making me for the smallest whisker of a second  
 want to tuck the blankets round you,  
 sparing you the waspish November chill.

## PAUL MULDOON

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### A TELEGRAM FOR SEAMUS HEANEY\*

“It was far from it he was reared,” I hear my da volunteer  
 of a neighbour who’s taken a trip to Rome  
 and eaten pasta, Lord have mercy, in the shape of women’s ears,  
 while I sit today in a motel room

in Clemson, South Carolina, and cheer  
 as, one by one, the networks pick up the news from the Stockholm  
 in which, however far from it you might have been reared,  
 you’ll surely find yourself at home.

I imagine you taking in yet again the *Vasa*, that great warship  
 they lifted from the harbour-bottom, a three-story block of bog oak  
 that sank even as it went down the slip

filled with the bounty of Sweden. I imagine your making us see  
 as if for the first time not only the sailors’ platters and purses and pikes  
 but, wonder of wonders, the shapes of warships in the limbs of trees.

\*Editor’s Note:

This sonnet was written at the Ramada Inn in Clemson on the evening of October 5, 1995, following a poetry reading in the Self Auditorium of the Strom Thurmond Institute, Clemson University, and the announcement that Seamus Heaney had won the Nobel Prize for literature. The poem was revised and faxed to *The Independent* (London) from the English Department before Mr. Muldoon’s departure the next morning and is reprinted here with his permission, a counterpoint to R.A.H.’s point, “The Clemson Experience.” — W.K.C.