

**“Twinged by different musics” – the use of dialect and  
heteroglossia in contemporary Northern Irish translations of  
poetry**

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## Abstract

This thesis focusses on three poet-translators from Northern Ireland – Ciaran Carson, Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin – investigating how and why they choose to insert Hiberno-English dialect and other kinds of language variety (heteroglossia) into their translations of poetry. I examine one text for each translator, all published around the turn of the millennium: Carson's *The Inferno* (2002), Heaney's *Beowulf* (1999) and Paulin's collection of translated poems, *The Road to Inver* (2004).

I use a cognitive stylistics approach and close textual analysis to consider the impact of the translators' linguistic choices on the reader, highlighting how the use of dialect and heteroglossia signals the interpretive qualities of translation. I demonstrate how these texts deviate from the language we might expect in canonical texts – and how they underline the extent to which English is made up of varied discourses, styles and registers. However, I question whether this pluralising of English can be read in line with 'postcolonial' uses of translation in Ireland, and suggest that a more nuanced interpretation is necessary. Focussing on what Roger Fowler termed 'mind-style', I propose that we should view these translators' linguistic choices as a form of *personal* exploration via the translation process. Finally, I highlight the *creative* potential of these translations: the superimposition of language varieties, environments and temporalities enriches these texts, demonstrating linguistic enhancement over time.

In concentrating on target text stylistic choices my research ultimately suggests that translated texts can be *more* not less marked than their source texts, contradicting received norms in translation studies. I highlight how personal cognitive circumstances influence translation style, creating idiosyncratic texts (idiosyncrasies foregrounded via the comparability of translations). Finally, I emphasise the particularity of the translator's position in the modern (Northern) Irish context, adding nuance to our understanding of the role(s) of literary translation in Ireland.

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## Referencing notes

All Oxford English Dictionary (OED) references are to the OED Online:  
[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)

All web addresses, including OED entries, were last accessed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018.

Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV), 1971.

Original publication details of reprinted texts are given in the main text (where relevant), but not in the bibliography.

If a translation is being discussed, then the translator is given as the author in the main text and bibliography. Where a text (which has been translated) is discussed in its own right, the translator is credited in the bibliography but the text is given under the name of the source text author.

Where the terms 'ST' and 'TT' appear (in quotation) they denote 'source text' and 'target text' respectively.

Throughout the thesis, I have used double inverted commas to indicate quotations, and single inverted commas for (non-quoted) meanings, or to introduce key terms.



**“Twinged by different musics” – the use of dialect and  
heteroglossia in contemporary Northern Irish translations of  
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## **Chapter 1 – “An unstructurable sea”: Northern Ireland, translation and linguistic choice**

### **1.1 Introduction – a linguistic dilemma**

At the Blackbird Book Club in December 2010 the Belfast poet Ciaran Carson gave a reading of his work, and talked about his interaction with the languages he learnt as a child: Irish, learnt at home, and English, learnt playing with other children. Carson explained: “always in my mind I’m slightly uncertain whether I speak Irish or English, or whether I know the language at all, either Irish or English” (Culture Northern Ireland, 2011: n.p.)<sup>1</sup> – he is “twinged by different musics”, in the words of Tom Paulin which I have used for the title of this thesis (2004: 66). Carson acknowledges that his uncertainty relates not only to language, but also, through this, to his allegiances, his history, his past, and to Ireland – these are all features, he says, of “our selves, our identity” (Culture Northern Ireland, 2011: n.p.). Carson then proceeds to read to his audience, but this linguistic uncertainty lingers: it colours both his reading that night, and his poetry more broadly.

Carson’s testimony is personal – his background is particular; few individuals in Northern Ireland are bilingual as he is. However, the broader issues he raises can be seen as symptomatic of his Northern Irish background, and are key for this thesis, which considers how context, particularly linguistic context, can influence translation style. I am concerned with the issues that exercise Carson; namely, what is it to make linguistic choices in literature, and, specifically, in translated literature? How does a writer come to understand the language they use? How might linguistic choices relate to a writer’s understanding of their identity, experiences and history?

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<sup>1</sup> Carson’s memoir, *The Star Factory*, gives another account of his relationship with these languages (1997: 269-70). The Blackbird Book Club is part of an Open Learning course run by Queen’s University Belfast.

In concentrating on the implications of language choice and its relation to identity, my focus is on the style of a translated text. I will focus in particular on dialect as a socio-culturally bound aspect of style and language, and on linguistic variety – which the Russian theorist and critic Mikhail Bakhtin termed “heteroglossia” (1981: 271).<sup>2</sup>

The specific focus of this thesis, then, is the use of dialect and heteroglossia in contemporary Northern Irish translations of poetry. My primary objective is to try to understand how and why dialect and heteroglossic language are used by three contemporary Northern Irish poets in translations published around the turn of the twenty-first century.

The three poets in focus are Ciaran Carson, Tom Paulin and Seamus Heaney, and I will examine one translation, or collection of translations, by each poet: Carson’s translation of Dante, published as *The Inferno* (2002), Paulin’s collection of translated poems, *The Road to Inver* (2004), which includes translations from a wide range of mostly European poets, and Heaney’s translation of the Old English epic, *Beowulf* (1999).

Essentially, I consider the unusual instances of dialect and heteroglossic language observable in these three translations, and explore how these linguistic choices may be related to the translator’s experiences and understanding of their context.

This study argues for the particularity of the Northern Irish situation. It embeds the history of Northern Ireland within the complex cultural history of Ireland, but argues that the recent experience of the North is politically and socially distinct from that of the rest of Ireland, given the history of the last hundred years: the partition of Ireland (1920), the civil unrest in the North, known as ‘the Troubles’ (1969 – mid-1990s), and the Good Friday Agreement (1998) with the subsequent political wrangling (persisting to this day).

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<sup>2</sup> 1.3.3 examines Bakhtin’s concepts.

In highlighting this particularity of context, I am stressing the importance of the impact of the Northern Irish situation on these translators, and, thereby, on their translations. I am emphasising that the style of the translated text can be related to the individual translator, to their context, and, specifically, to their cognitive processes of understanding their context. It is a basic premise of this study that language betrays individuality – as Mona Baker has said: “it is as impossible to produce a stretch of language in a totally impersonal way as it is to handle an object without leaving one’s fingerprints on it” (2000: 244). This thesis investigates these linguistic ‘fingerprints’.

In exploring these issues I am highlighting the importance of discussing the particular – there is merit in adding nuance to the picture of translation in Ireland by considering these translators operating in very specific cultural circumstances. Perhaps more importantly, such an investigation adds to our understanding of what writers may be doing when they translate – and asks us to think about how we read the complex language of translated texts.

Finally, this thesis responds to the creativity of the language in these translated works. Throughout this study I will suggest that linguistic tension may be artistically productive: I hope to demonstrate that an engagement with complicated linguistic circumstances (in Ireland, but potentially beyond Ireland) may result in imaginatively audacious works of literature, and that the process of translation can facilitate this creativity.

In establishing the key concerns of this study, this chapter will first provide some information contextualising the issue of translation in Northern Ireland, and will explain some key terms: ‘style’, ‘dialect’ and ‘heteroglossia’. It will outline the theoretical framework underpinning this study – drawing on postcolonial scholarship, polysystem theory, descriptive translation studies and beyond – and will set out the methodology, which draws significantly on cognitive stylistics, and therefore on close textual analysis. Finally, I will set out the five research questions around which this thesis is structured, and will provide an outline of

the arguments to be pursued in the three chapters, before returning, ultimately, to Carson's expression of linguistic confusion and polyphony.

## 1.2 Background – the “unstructurable sea”

### 1.2.1 The unstable state – the origins of ‘the Troubles’

Derek Mahon described the seemingly futile role of the poet in Northern Ireland in the latter decades of the twentieth century:

Somewhere beyond the scorched gable end and the burnt-out buses  
there is a poet indulging  
his wretched rage for order –  
[...]  
an eddy of semantic scruples  
in an unstructurable sea (in Ormsby, 1992: xv).<sup>3</sup>

The Good Friday Agreement,<sup>4</sup> signed in 1998, is generally regarded as introducing some “order” to this “unstructurable sea” – bringing to an end the period of violence and social unrest known as ‘the Troubles’, which started in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. The conflict was ostensibly over Northern Ireland’s status, and was between those who thought that it should remain part of the United Kingdom, and those who felt that there should be a united Ireland. The conflict in Northern Ireland has been variously characterised as relating to religion (Catholics against Protestants – primarily a *cultural* rather than theological distinction), nationality (British or Irish), or territory (nationalist against unionist, or, at the more extreme end, republican against loyalist).<sup>5</sup> Despite these stark binary oppositions, the reality of the situation was significantly more complicated, and both ‘sides’ were affected by the violence. From 1969, 3,601 people were killed in Northern Ireland in Troubles-related incidents, and – conservatively – an estimated further 40,000 were injured (Fay et al., 1999: 201).

The causes of the Troubles are long-standing, and complex. In 2018, Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK),

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<sup>3</sup> Ormsby echoed Mahon in the title of this anthology, *A Rage for Order: Poetry of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (1992; first published in 1979).

<sup>4</sup> It is also called ‘the Belfast Agreement’. I will refer to ‘the Good Friday Agreement’ (the name used in common parlance) throughout.

<sup>5</sup> See Nic Craith (2002) for discussion of binary oppositions in Northern Ireland.

with a devolved administration, the Northern Ireland Assembly, which has responsibility for devolved affairs. Northern Ireland only came into existence, however, as recently as 1920. In the centuries prior to this there had been significant settlement in the north of Ireland from England and Scotland from the early 1600s, in a process known as ‘the plantation’ (Nic Craith, 2002: 34-37) – Roy Foster notes that Ireland was “intensively colonized” from the start of that century (1989: 59). Constitutionally, the whole island of Ireland was ruled by the UK following an Act of Union which took effect in 1801 (Foster, 1989: 282-84; 605).

In Ireland the challenge to this jurisdiction initially took the form of ‘home rule’ campaigns throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but resistance became increasingly violent, and 1919 – 21 the British army and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) fought the Anglo-Irish War (Fay et al., 1999: 51-52). As a response to the unstable situation in Ireland, the Government of Ireland Act (1920), enacted by the UK, divided the island in two: the north-eastern six counties (Antrim, Armagh, Derry,<sup>6</sup> Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone) made up the new state of Northern Ireland, and the remaining twenty-six counties constituted the Irish Free State (Nic Craith, 2002: 9; Fay et al., 1999: 52). An Irish Republic was not declared until 1949 (Foster, 1989: 566-7).

Partition did not bring the desired stability to the island. The boundaries of the new state had been drawn to form “the largest area which could be comfortably held with a majority in favour of the union with Britain” (Darby, 1997: 27) – Northern Ireland included not the nine counties of the existing province of Ulster,<sup>7</sup> but merely the six counties listed above. After a period of (relative) calm, from the 1960s, protest marches (emulating the civil rights movement in

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<sup>6</sup> There is no ‘neutral’ term for the town and county of ‘Derry/Londonderry’. Darby notes: “the first term is favoured by nationalists, the latter by many unionists. Derry is the term commonly used by both communities in the city itself” (1997: 28). Like Darby I use the term ‘Derry’ “without political implication” (ibid.).

<sup>7</sup> One of the four provinces of Ireland, Ulster is made up of the counties Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan, together with the six counties of Northern Ireland. The term ‘Ulster’ is sometimes used to refer to Northern Ireland (Darby, 1997: 218), most often by unionists (Nic Craith, 2002: 7). I will use the terms ‘Northern Ireland’ and ‘the North’ to refer to the six-county state, and ‘Ulster’ the nine-county province.

America) were organised to counter discrimination against Catholics. As the violence around these protests increased, the British Army entered Northern Ireland in 1969 (initially with a remit to protect Catholics – Darby, 1997: 33; cf. Nic Craith, 2002: 11). Their arrival prompted the re-formation of the Provisional IRA, which violently clashed with the British Army over subsequent years. Amidst this persistent instability, the Northern Ireland government was abolished in 1972, and direct rule reintroduced from Westminster (Darby, 1997: 33; Nic Craith, 2002: 11).

At this point, Northern Ireland “was set on a path of escalating violence which peaked in the 1970s but which was to continue almost unabated until 1994” (Fay et al., 1999: 59). The period of the Troubles was characterised by violent clashes between paramilitary groups from both sides (republican and loyalist), and the police and army. “No faction or political grouping in Northern Ireland ha[d] a monopoly on suffering” (Fay et al., 1999: 4), and most of those killed were civilians (Fay et al., 1999: 201). Those most severely affected by the conflict were from the poorest communities (Smyth and Fay, 2000: 134).

In the mid to late 1990s (following ceasefires from paramilitary groups in 1994 and 1997), the peace process in Northern Ireland slowly progressed, culminating in almost two years of negotiations between the political parties and the British and Irish governments, and, finally, in the Good Friday Agreement of 17<sup>th</sup> April 1998 (Fay et al., 1999: 65; Nic Craith, 2002: 12). Referenda in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in May 1998 endorsed the Agreement, which addressed issues including a devolved assembly with power-sharing, and significant constitutional change: the Republic of Ireland withdrew its territorial claim to Northern Ireland (Fay et al., 1999: 65). The Agreement also addressed British troop reductions, paramilitary prisoner releases and targets for decommissioning paramilitary weapons, all stubbornly complex topics (Fay et al., 1999: 65; Mulholland, 2002: 142-5).

The situation in Northern Ireland was not fully resolved via the Good Friday Agreement, and a further agreement – the St Andrew’s Agreement – was signed



by all of the political parties in Northern Ireland in 2006.<sup>8</sup> This agreement finally led to devolution in May 2007. Power-sharing remained in place for almost ten years, but divisive issues persist – the Assembly collapsed in January 2017 over accusations of corruption (over an energy scheme), and, latterly, the status of the Irish language in the North (O’Carroll, 2017: n.p.).<sup>9</sup>

One of the complexities in explaining the origins of the Northern Irish conflict is that strongly affirmed myopic narratives – particularly about the past – are part of the enduring problem. There is little consensus about key events; “Selected collective memories have acquired a symbolic consequence” (Nic Craith, 2002: 29). Máiréad Nic Craith illustrates this by analysing conflicting narratives of the plantation: on one side, many nationalists view the plantation as an act of dispossession (of land, livelihoods, and wealth), whereas the British viewed the plantation as a process of modernisation, and unionists may even view it as a “form of internal migration” (Nic Craith, 2002: 37; see also 34-41). The very question of whether colonisation did or did not occur in Northern Ireland is disputed and divisive.

Translation activity thus occurs in the context of a state which was born out of divisions and conflict. It also takes place in a state which, despite a cessation of violence (initially in 1994), has continued to experience significant disputes about the role of each community, and their cultural symbols<sup>10</sup> – including the role of history and language.

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<sup>8</sup> This Agreement *included* the DUP (Democratic Unionist Party), the most hardline unionist party, which refused to join negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement (*The Scotsman*, 2006: n.p.).

<sup>9</sup> This description is accurate as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Historically contentious issues have included parades, most often by unionists (creating violent flashpoints and requiring significant policing support), the display of national flags, and the role of the past (McDonald, 2013: n.p.).

### 1.2.2 Cultural impoverishment – language division and colonisation

Beyond the death toll – and the physical, economic and psychological impact of the conflict (see Fay et al., 1999; Smyth and Fay, 2000) – the Troubles significantly affected and diminished social and cultural life in Northern Ireland. John Wilson Foster has stated that the Troubles poisoned not just the body politic but also the body social and the body intellectual (2015: 133); this has been echoed by Northern Irish writers. Writing after the IRA ceasefire in 1994, Heaney said “The quarter century we have lived through was a terrible black hole” (2002: 45); the following year he would refer to this impoverishment as “life-waste and spirit-waste” in his Nobel lecture (1995: n.p.).

One of the societal effects of the Troubles was the extent to which cultural signifiers, such as language, became bound up in the conflict itself, in views of the past and in the maintenance of a polarised society. Language scholar Tony Crowley says that during the period of the Troubles “semiotic paranoia and antagonism at the cultural level was the corollary of sectarian violence” (2005: 183); the signs of one community (unionist or nationalist) were resisted by the other, and thereby gained greater significance. Language was one such ‘sign’. The partition of Ireland rendered the use of Irish in the North a “highly political issue” (Crowley, 2005: 180). English, the language of the British state, was set in opposition to Irish, later the first official language of the Republic of Ireland, employed by republicans, and therefore duly banned from use in broadcasts by the BBC (Crowley, 2005: 180-182).<sup>11</sup>

At the level of the general society, then, language functioned as a shibboleth, signalling participants of particular social groups, and was perceived as being closely linked to identity: political, religious or sectarian. Such signals crept into the poetry: Heaney’s well-known lines figure this “semiotic paranoia” in terms of naming in ‘Whatever You Say Say Nothing’ (1975: 57-60; the very title a slogan

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<sup>11</sup> The success of Irish in the Republic has been “dismal” (Crowley, 2005: 164); English is effectively the common language.

from paramilitary posters of the time – Mulholland, 2002: 81). In Heaney’s poem, “Norman, Ken and Sidney signalled Prod / And Seamus (call me Sean) was sure-fire Pape” (1975: 59), while Carson’s ‘Opus Operandi’ describes the giveaway of pronunciation: “the shibboleths of *aitch* and *haitch*” (1993: 60, italics in original; allegedly ‘aitch’ for Protestants and ‘haitch’ for Catholics). Gordon McCoy notes that these codes have not been eradicated by the Good Friday Agreement: the “image of the Irish language as a Sinn Féin shibboleth has changed little” (2006: 175)<sup>12</sup> – see, too, Aodán Mac Póilin’s research on the hostile views of some Protestants towards the Irish language, or “Taig Talk” (2000; in Northern Ireland ‘taig’ is a pejorative term for a Roman Catholic – Share, 2003: 324).

So, whilst the use of English in Northern Ireland is “almost universal” (Nic Craith, 2002: 124), the language picture is not wholly straightforward. The Good Friday Agreement sought to acknowledge and protect linguistic variety in Northern Ireland, recognising:

the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland (Gov.uk, 1998: n.p.).

This high-profile nod to linguistic heritage (“cultural wealth”) attempted to put a positive spin on the issue of language choice which had long been so divisive.

Since 1998, the profile of Irish has increased in Northern Ireland (McCoy, 2006: 151), and there have been more opportunities for Protestants to learn the language (McCoy, 2006: 159-60), although funding has recently been removed for children’s Gaeltacht courses (O Muiri, 2018: n.p.). Ulster-Scots – a dialect form<sup>13</sup> ‘claimed’ by unionists in recent decades (Crowley, 2005: 198-200) – has also come to prominence (partly as a result of its unexpected inclusion in the Good Friday Agreement – Crowley, 2005: 201). The status of these language varieties remains vexed: if the use of Irish (by republicans) was seen as political

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<sup>12</sup> Sinn Féin is an Irish republican political party which was affiliated with the IRA, although the nature of this affiliation is disputed (Fay et al., 1999: 11-13).

<sup>13</sup> Ulster-Scots is now branded a separate minority language, under the European Charter for Lesser Used Languages (Crowley, 2005: 200).

during the Troubles (Crowley, 2005: 193-4), now Ulster-Scots is often thought to be used by unionists as a political tool, or a means of claiming indigenous identity (as a means of unionists and loyalists articulating a *Protestant* linguistic heritage – Nic Craith, 2002: 108; Crowley, 2005: 198-203). One recent barrier to the resumption of power-sharing has been the issue of an Irish Language Act, and whether Ulster-Scots should be accommodated in this act (McDonald, 2017: n.p.).

The presence of these different language varieties reflects the extent to which the linguistic history and the politics of language in Ireland are intimately tied up with the experience of various stages of plantation and colonialism, postcolonialism and anti-colonialism “with all of the attendant difficulty, violence, and bitterness” (Crowley, 2005: 7).<sup>14</sup> Maria Tymoczko and Colin Ireland describe the linguistic effect of multiple historical invasions, which brought a diverse range of influences to Ireland – from the Celts (various Celtic dialects), British clerics (Latin) and Vikings (diverse Scandinavian dialects), to the Anglo-Norman conquest, which brought a combination of French, Occitan, Welsh, Flemish and English at the end of the twelfth century (2003: 1).<sup>15</sup> From the 1600s onwards the plantation brought a different set of linguistic influences to the north of the island in the language varieties spoken by the English and Scottish settlers (cf. Nic Craith, 2002: 35). The English settlers, for example, came from East Anglia, Northampton, London, Devon and West Somerset, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire (Nic Craith, 2002: 130); the incoming language was thus already heterogeneous (there is a parallel with the heterogeneous language arriving in North America in the same period, which, indeed, later, via patterns of emigration, came to be influenced by the heterogeneous mix in Ireland – Harris, 1984: 133).

There is of course significant overlap here with issues of translation, often one major facet of the colonial encounter – as Tymoczko has said, translation is “one

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<sup>14</sup> The application of ‘postcolonialism’ in the Irish case is very complex – see 1.4.2.

<sup>15</sup> The invasion of the Celts occurred in the third or second century B.C.; the Vikings’ first raid was in 795; Christianity was taken up by the middle of the sixth century, bringing Latin-learning with it (Tymoczko and Ireland, 2003: 1-5).

of the most significant means by which one culture represents another (1999a: 17). According to Tejaswini Niranjana, “translation [...] shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism” (1992: 2). Tymoczko explains that whilst translation was used as a means of oppression by the English in Ireland from the Tudor period onwards (1999a: 19), it was also later used by the Irish during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a way of redefining their nation – translation became “not simply a locus of imperialism, but a site of resistance and nation building as well” (1999a: 21). As Declan Kiberd says, “to translate Ireland was but another way of bringing it into being” (1996: 624). This renders any consideration of translation in Ireland a particularly interesting nexus of historically resonant issues of language choice and identity (famously explored in Brian Friel’s *Translations*, 1981).

Today the language picture in Northern Ireland continues to change. Even at the time of the Good Friday Agreement other “ethnic communities” were acknowledged (Gov.uk, 1998: n.p.) – by 2005 Crowley identified more than thirty language communities in Northern Ireland alone (2005: 211). This immigration, old and new, particularly from Hong Kong, the Subcontinent, Poland, the Baltics and Africa (Agee, 2011: xxvi) necessarily dilutes – if only to a mild degree – the indigenous cultural binarism.

In the North, then (as in many other contexts involving civil conflict and/or colonisation), the choice and use of language is not a neutral activity, but an enterprise with symbolic power. Language carries not only the weight of successive invasions, but also the burden of the roles it has played in the polarised discourse surrounding the Troubles (and since 1998). As a result, the language used in Ireland today is the product of a language history which is more complex than a binary (if fraught) interaction between English and Irish, as the situation has often been characterised. It might also be expected that the sensitivity to language use observable in the work of these poets is closely related to their exposure to such a linguistically tense and freighted background; this thesis will explore the influence of this background on translation style.

### 1.2.3 Social polarity and figuring identity

John Darby says that there is a preoccupation with ideas of ethnic purity in Northern Ireland, but that “The myth of purity is indefensible. Northern Ireland, like most places, is a community of mongrels” (1997: 39). Nic Craith, too, has examined the extent to which social polarity in Northern Ireland – the “two traditions” (2002: 1) – has been, in some senses, ‘constructed’ in light of political concerns (2002: 3). Nic Craith asserts that “divisions between groups are not solely a consequence of theological differences” (2002: 71), they have also been fostered *culturally*, via a heavily segregated society. Thus, even if, to some extent, polarities have been artificially constructed, the segregation of key aspects of life in Northern Ireland cannot be ignored. Social polarity was compounded by the sectarian violence and divisive structures in society (such as the convention of not marrying outside one’s religious denomination – Nic Craith, 2002: 71; Mulholland, 2002: 1). Although we might wish to believe that the situation has changed in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement, recent research shows that society is still deeply divided: children of different religious backgrounds still typically attend separate schools (integrated schools enrolled under 7% of pupils in 2017 – Nolan, 2017: n.p.), and housing is often heavily segregated – true during the Troubles (Nic Craith, 2002: 13), but largely unchanged nearly twenty years later (Nolan, 2017: n.p.).

In the midst of this polarity, however, Carson’s comments indicate the possibility that some individuals are not merely affected by division, but influenced by multiple, co-existing identities and affiliations. The Good Friday Agreement permitted a version of these multiple identities, stating that it was “the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose” (Gov.uk, 1998: n.p.).<sup>16</sup> Whilst this does not move very far beyond conceiving of identity in polarised terms (only in terms of ‘British’ or ‘Irish’ affiliations), the statement does at least acknowledge

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<sup>16</sup> This has become unexpectedly pertinent following the Brexit referendum as many in the North are applying for Irish (and therefore EU) passports (BBC News Northern Ireland, 2016: n.p.).

that these identities can co-exist in the same geographical place – multiple concepts of identity in Northern Ireland are possible simultaneously (cf. O’Toole, 2018: n.p.). It also recognises that individuals from Northern Ireland may have been multiply influenced – by both British and Irish cultures – and may feel several different (even conflicting) pulls on their identity.

Chris Agee notes that in allowing this identification with both nations, the North is “inescapably multinational” (2011: xxvi) – the hint at the possibility of hybrid identities is perhaps the first step in a less oppositional mode. It is a sense of hybrid possibilities, a move away from an automatically oppositional stance, which is central to this thesis. I am interested in a less binary conception of identity in Northern Ireland, and how more complex concepts of identity might be reflected in linguistic choices in translation.

#### **1.2.4 Three ‘Northern Irish’ poets**

Given the contentious nature of defining identity, the labelling of my chosen poets is not without risk in a place whose status and ownership was, and is, so disputed, and where any of the labels ‘British’, ‘Irish’, ‘Ulster’ or ‘Northern Irish’ could in theory be used.

I am using the term ‘Northern Irish’. Agee sets out his definition of ‘Northern Irish’ poets as having to satisfy one of the following:

- 1) born, raised and resident in Northern Ireland; 2) born, raised but no longer resident in Northern Ireland; 3) neither born nor raised in Northern Ireland, but resident there for a substantial period, with a clear presence in the Northern literary scene and/or published work informed, in whatever way, by life in the North (2011: xxv).

This is clearly a loose definition of ‘Northern Irish’ identity, however in a context of complex identity politics, this definition feels appropriately flexible. Two of these three poets have moved locations (Heaney and Paulin), and they all differ in birthplaces, residency experiences and interactions with the languages of

Ireland: under Agee's definition Carson fulfils criterion (1), Heaney criterion (2), and Paulin criterion (3). They are all, however, routinely included in studies of poets from Northern Ireland: see, for example, Corcoran (1992); Hufstader (1999); Kennedy-Andrews (2008); Carvalho Homem (2009); Schwerter (2013). Several studies – see Quinn (2008), or Corcoran (1992; 1999) – have acknowledged the particular sensitivities around labelling these poets, particularly as at one stage Heaney took a position *against* being defined as Northern Irish (demonstrating commitment to a sense of the literary culture of Ireland as a whole – Corcoran, 1999: ix). I am persisting with the label, however, not to fix the identities of these poets, but to stress the particularity of the translation context.

By even briefly considering the backgrounds of these poets we can see that their formative experiences, their cultural positioning, their affiliations and literary worlds differ significantly.

Heaney (1939 – 2013) was born in Mossbawn, Co. Derry (Northern Ireland) into a rural, Catholic family. Heaney said that until his early teens he “dwelt entirely in the womb of religion” (in O’Driscoll, 2008: 471), and, in later years, although no longer practising, he remained attached to the “archetypal patterns” religion offered (in O’Driscoll, 2008: 472). Although Heaney spoke Irish, he was not from a bilingual background, but learnt it at school (Heaney, 1999a: xxiii) – something he described as having “counter-cultural implications” (in O’Driscoll, 2008: 314). Despite producing a type of poetry which so many critics have linked to place (as Wes Davis says of Mossbawn, “that place is still the center of his poetic world, its omphalos” – 2010: 325), Heaney later worked for a time in the United States (at Harvard). In the early 1970s he moved to live in the Republic of Ireland (thus he meets criterion (2)); however, he was celebrated and buried in Co. Derry following his death in 2013. Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995 (Davis, 2011: 328). Whilst his poetry does not ordinarily directly address his personal politics, on his inclusion in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982) he wrote the oft-quoted ‘An Open Letter’, including the gently warning lines: “be advised / My passport's green. / No glass



of ours was ever raised / To toast *The Queen*” (Heaney, 1983a: 9; italics in original). However, Heaney was far from an outsider in the British literary system, becoming Professor of Poetry at Oxford University (1989 – 1994). In terms of translation, his work was largely from other European languages, including from dead languages, into English, rather than a consistent interaction with Irish-language texts, although he translated the ancient Irish poem *Buile Suibhne* (as *Sweeney Astray*, 1983b), and, as Justin Quinn notes, “throughout his whole career [he] has tried to connect his poetry with the Irish tradition” (2008: 150). Heaney’s other major translations include: *The Burial at Thebes* (2004; a version of Sophocles’ *Antigone*), *The Testament of Cresseid and Seven Fables* (2004: translating the Middle Scots of Robert Henryson) and, a posthumous publication, *The Aeneid: Book VI* (2016).

In contrast to the more itinerant Heaney, Carson was born in Belfast in 1948, and has lived there all his life – criterion (1). He was born into a Catholic family (Carson is now lapsed – Edemariam, 2009: n.p.) who spoke Irish in the family home in the Falls Road area of Belfast.<sup>17</sup> As outlined earlier, however, he learnt English at the same time and so was “doubly marked out” in terms of language (ibid.). Carson became a Traditional Arts Officer for the Arts Council before his shift to poetry and his career at Queen’s University, Belfast (as professor, and Director of the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, 2003 – 2015). Despite his bilingualism, Carson publishes primarily in English. However, he often betrays the influence of Irish in English, and has translated from Irish to English, primarily *The Táin* (2007) – an early Irish epic poem – and *The Midnight Court* (2005), translating Brian Merriman’s eighteenth-century work, *Cúirt an Mhéan Oíche*. Translation makes up a significant part of his oeuvre – he more habitually translates from other modern European languages (most often French) into English. He produced versions of Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé for *The Alexandrine Plan* (1998a), returning to Rimbaud for *In The Light Of* (2012). In his most recent collection – *From Elsewhere* (2014) – he translates another French poet, Jean Follain, including his own ‘original’ poetry (“Translations of the translations” – 2014: 13) with these works.

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<sup>17</sup> The Falls Road is a predominantly Catholic and nationalist area of Belfast.

Amongst these poets, Paulin has perhaps the most distinctive background. Whilst he is routinely included in studies or anthologies of Northern Irish or Irish poets (Davis, 2010; Schwerter, 2013), he was born in Leeds, in 1949, but as a child moved with his parents to live in Belfast (in 1953). Despite this, Davis finds that Paulin has been associated “more closely than almost any other poet of his generation with the political life of Ulster” (2010: 574). Paulin’s upbringing was Protestant, in contrast to Heaney’s and Carson’s Catholicism. More than a religious fervour, however, he demonstrated an intellectual interest in recuperating a sense of a radical Protestant heritage in Ireland (Goodby, 2000: 223), alongside an ability to (poetically) criticise aspects of unionism (Goodby, 2000: 224-5). Beyond his original verse he has published widely on the connection between politics and literature, and specifically on the relation of politics and *poetry* (Paulin, 1992), and edited *The Faber Book of Political Verse* (1986). Paulin has lived in England since the time of his university education (from 1967), teaching at Oxford until his recent retirement (he thus comes under criterion (3)). He translates from a wide range of European and dead languages into English, although rarely from Irish (which he does not speak). Paulin’s translations have not been as central to his oeuvre as those of Heaney or Carson. His major translations have been plays: most recently a version of Euripides’ *Medea* (2009), but also *Seize the Fire* (1990b; a version of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*), and *The Riot Act* (1985; a version of Sophocles’ *Antigone*). Paulin’s 2012 collection *Love’s Bonfire* included a central section comprising fifteen translations of Walid Khazendar’s Arabic poetry, extending his work from *The Road to Inver*.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of translation histories, Anthony Pym has argued that “the details of private lives should be pertinent only to the extent that they explain what was done in the field of translation” (1998: 167). Of course, such details cannot *fully* provide an explanation, but they can *help* to explain translator choices. Including these biographical elements illustrates the differences between the individual formative experiences of these poets – and guards against generalising

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<sup>18</sup> Three of these fifteen translations appeared in *The Road to Inver*.

representations in this muddy linguistic context. I am arguing in this thesis that the socio-cultural experience of the individual translator can be said to be reflected in the style of translation produced. To this extent, I will propose that these background details are in fact foregrounded, are writ large in the linguistic and stylistic choices evident in the translations.

### **1.2.5 Northern Irish poetry**

Davis has noted that Irish poets have produced “one of the most vibrant and engaging bodies of poetry written in English in the post-war era” (2010: 1). Agee singles out in particular an “efflorescence of *Northern* poetry that has dominated recent critical perception of the art in Ireland” (2011: xxviii, my italics; cf. Brearton and Gillis, 2012: ix). Over the last century, Northern Ireland’s strong lineage of poets has included older, well-known voices (Louis MacNeice, John Hewitt), and long-established poets such as Michael Longley, Heaney, Derek Mahon, Carson, Paulin, Medbh McGuckian and Paul Muldoon. More recent voices include Gearóid Mac Lochlainn, Colette Bryce, Sinéad Morrissey, Alan Gillis, Leontia Flynn and Nick Laird.

Agee notes the key influence of Heaney – suggesting that by the mid-1980s he was fast becoming the most celebrated poet in the Anglophone world (2011: xxxii) and that in his wake “the critical perception of ‘Ulster poetry’ went global. Northern Ireland came to loom large on the map of world poetry” (ibid.). The body of scholarship on the fruits of this “efflorescence” of Northern Irish poetry is extensive – see, for example, Corcoran (1992; 1999), Hufstader (1999), Goodby (2000), Campbell (2003), Kennedy-Andrews (2008), Quinn (2008) and Brearton and Gillis (2012).

Although my focus is poetry, Northern Ireland is not without significant playwrights or novelists – in particular crime novelists have had great recent success (Armstrong, 2010). But it is, perhaps unusually, the poets who are best

known on the literary scene, and indeed beyond it, particularly in the case of Nobel Laureate Heaney, or TV pundit Paulin.<sup>19</sup>

The literary renaissance in Northern Ireland dates roughly from the late 1960s. This period saw the particular combination of the extension of secondary and higher education to a broader range of social classes under the 1947 Education Act (Davis, 2010: 12; Ormsby, 1992: xv), and the rising sectarian violence (as the Troubles began), which fostered “the emergence of new voices just as those voices began to seem most necessary” (Davis, 2010: 12). Davis claims the Belfast poets, drawing on the example of the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, had the confidence to “write in voices that declared their native place” (ibid.).

Although the emergence of this generation of poets is “not separable from Ireland’s own ‘troubled’ history” (Brearton and Gillis, 2012: x), it is also not neatly explained by it. The role of poetry in conflict situations has frequently been explored (see, for example, Williams, 2011: 59-63). Agee finds that during that period in Western Europe “no other group of poets experienced anything approximating the ferocity of the Troubles” (2011: xxxi).<sup>20</sup> However, certainly Heaney’s star was already in the ascendant well *before* violence broke out (Agee, 2011: xxx), and at least as much emphasis has been placed on the creative energy of the ‘smallness’ of Northern Irish society (the “confined cultural space” of the North – Agee, 2011: xxix; cf. Longley, 2017: n.p.) as on the impact of the Troubles. Frank Ormsby in fact says that when violence broke out again in 1968-69 “an *already vigorous* poetic community” reflected it (1992: xvi; my italics): the creative energies of these poets cannot wholly be reduced to their conflicted milieu.

It is, however, impossible to write about the poets operating in this period without addressing their engagement with this charged context. There is not

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<sup>19</sup> Paulin was a regular contributor on BBC2’s *Newsnight Review* (British Council, no date: n.p.).

<sup>20</sup> There were prominent instances when Northern Irish poets responded directly to local events – for example Michael Longley’s ‘Ceasefire’ (in Davis, 2010: 369-70), published a few days before the IRA ceasefire in 1994, while rumours of a cessation were circulating.

space here to provide comprehensive analysis of this engagement. That hugely complex area has been tackled in studies including Hufstader (1999), Smith (2005), Kennedy-Andrews (2008), Quinn (2008), and numerous edited collections (for example, Campbell, 2003). I will make just a few pertinent observations.

As Muldoon saw it, the poet's task came with high ethical risks in the Irish context: can he or she "adequately reflect the complexity of the Irish political situation *without* becoming a propagandist?" (2008: 43; italics in original). Agee contends that during the Troubles "holding one's breath in the changed atmosphere was not an option" (2011: xxx) – Heaney acknowledged this pressure to pronounce: poets were "pressed, directly and indirectly, to engage in identity politics" (2002: 60). Longley, Heaney's contemporary, observed that in the early days of the Troubles at least, poets were in a bind: accused of exploitation if they wrote about the Troubles, and evasion if they avoided it (as described in Ormsby, 1992: xvii). Again, the poetry echoes this pressure – in Paulin's 'A Nation, Yet Again' political circumstances "force the poet to play traitor / or act the half-sure legislator" (2004: 65).

In the critical hinterland the nature of these poets' political engagement is contentious. Commentary on Heaney has often highlighted his *lack* of willingness to take a public position on the Troubles (see, for example, Johnston, 2003: 116). However, his poetry often engaged seriously and at length with the situation in the North – particularly *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975), *Field Work* (1979) and *Station Island* (1984). Attention has often focussed on whether he was, at times, guilty of mythologising the violence in Northern Ireland (that is, giving it, in Blake Morrison's words, "historical respectability" – in Johnston, 2003: 113). In the narrative of Northern Irish poetry, Carson's vehement objections to *North* have been oft-repeated – he viewed the collection's mythological distance as effectively apologising for or glossing over the violence in Northern Ireland (Johnston, 2003: 114). Still, *North* is considered one of Heaney's seminal works, and Seamus Deane in fact viewed it as investigating precisely the relationship between the poet and political context (1976: 203). Quinn presents Heaney's

positioning positively: “In a violent and volatile zone, Heaney’s poems try to achieve balance and reconciliation” (2008: 132).

Interestingly, although a very different poet, Carson, too, typically shies away from public comment. Interviewing him in 2009, Aida Edemariam observed that he “never pans back to look at the whole picture, at the politics and general context” (2009: n.p.). She reports the following exchange:

‘I’m not that interested in ideologies,’ he says. ‘I’m interested in the words, and how they sound to me, how words connect with experience, of fear, of anxiety.’ No responsibility? ‘I don’t think so, no. Your only responsibility is to the language’ (ibid.).

Of course, Carson’s earliest poetry appeared in a different era to that of *Wintering Out* or *North* (late 1980s rather than early 1970s). Compared to the mythological reach of Heaney’s bog-poems, Carson’s poetry is more closely affiliated with the day-to-day reality of Troubles-era Belfast – since he is an urban poet it was perhaps to be expected that his poetry would display this effect, given the physical impact of the Troubles on the capital. Thus, whilst Carson’s work has seldom been read as direct political intervention, it does engage poetically with the Troubles’ everyday impact. Early collections in particular – *The Irish for No* (1987) and *Belfast Confetti* (1989) – are concerned with the very fabric of the conflicted city: the cartography of Belfast, disappeared buildings, barricades and the Peace Lines,<sup>21</sup> paramilitary activities and the paraphernalia of modern counter-insurgency warfare – the ever-present bomb-disposal teams and surveillance helicopters.

Elmer Kennedy-Andrews has depicted the postmodern “discontinuous or broken forms” of Carson’s verse as relating to the breakdown of society the poet observed in Belfast during the Troubles: “A broken style reflects a fractured society” (2008: 205; cf. Corcoran, 1999: 179). She suggests the fragmentation of his work could be viewed as “a form of dissemination, a scattering of origins, centre, identity, presence and belonging” (2008: 213) – with Carson, she

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<sup>21</sup> Peace Lines are physical barriers between the Protestant/loyalist community and the Catholic/nationalist community in certain areas in Northern Ireland (CAIN, 2018b: n.p.).

contends, identity is never fixed or resolved (2008: 223; John Goodby notes the critical preoccupation with notions of “identity” in the work of the Northern poets – 2000: 2).

In contrast to commentary on Carson’s or Heaney’s poetry, one of the most common criticisms of Paulin’s work is that it is “more directly concerned with politics than it is proper for poetry to be” (O’Donoghue, 1992: 171). Outside of poetry Paulin is known as a “memorably vituperative critic” (Goodby, 2000: 221). He frequently takes the political as his focus in literature: exploring the literary culture of English dissent (*Crusoe’s Secret: The Aesthetics of Dissent*, 2005), examining William Hazlitt’s “radical” literary style (1998) and even editing a collection of Hazlitt’s writing (with David Chandler, 2000). Shane Murphy has said that his “fervent engagement with issues affecting Northern Irish society has established him as the foremost political poet of his generation” (2003: 196). His position in terms of Northern Irish politics is complex; in terms of *language* he has passionately championed the vernacular of Northern Ireland (*A New Look at the Language Question*, 1983a), and became involved in the intellectual effort to support an *Ulster* claim to Irish language and heritage (elements of this creep into the same work: 1983a: 12-13; 16-17). Goodby underlines Paulin’s nuanced treatment of the complex but oft-neglected *Protestant* experience in Northern Ireland (2000: 286-90; again, this is meant primarily in cultural, rather than theological, terms). Specifically, his interest was in the “historical recovery of the radical origins of Ulster Presbyterianism”, looking back to the republicanism of the eighteenth-century United Irishmen and a point of Catholic and Protestant unity (Goodby, 2000: 223; both Catholics and Protestants were involved in the United Irishmen, a movement which ultimately sought to overthrow British rule in Ireland).<sup>22</sup> Paulin’s political positioning has often made headlines, but typically not in relation to Northern Ireland: his interventions on the subject of Israel led to public condemnation (Davis, 2010: 575).

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<sup>22</sup> The United Irishmen initially sought parliamentary reform in Ireland, but, subsequently, the removal of British rule. Their 1798 rebellion was duly quashed by the British (Foster, 1989: 259-80).

My aim is not to chart the public response of these poets to twists in the political situation in Northern Ireland, but rather to probe their work as a personal response to socio-cultural context, expressed through linguistic choice. It is, however, pertinent that these poets make their linguistic selections in translation against the background of this complex – and public – dialogue between literature and the political situation in Northern Ireland.

### **1.2.6 Three translations**

I am focussing on one translation (or collection of translations) by each of Heaney, Carson and Paulin. If there is a gender bias here, it is in no way desired. There is a strong line of female poets in Northern Ireland (including McGuckian, Morrissey, Flynn and Bryce) – notably, Morrissey won the 2014 T.S. Eliot Prize for *Parallax* (2013), the 2017 Forward Prize for *On Balance* (2017) and she was the inaugural Belfast Poet Laureate (2013 – 14). However, in selecting the poets for this thesis, I was constrained by the translated texts available. Whilst translation is common amongst Northern Irish poets (Longley, Mahon and Muldoon all translate, as well as Heaney, Carson and Paulin), it is not so common amongst the women poets (the causes for this are unclear and would merit further exploration) – Morrissey has not published any works in translation, and McGuckian has principally translated from the Irish.

On this last point, in my selections I have intentionally steered clear of the Irish-English language pair. I wanted to move away from a focus on the binary interaction of these languages (with the associated “intimate knowledge of betrayal” – Riordan, 2014: xxxi) – and wanted to consider instead the use of dialect and other language varieties. Translations from Irish to English or vice versa dominate existing accounts of translation in Ireland (Tymoczko (1999a), Cronin (1996), Quinn (2008: 143-160); see, too, 1.4.2). There is merit in offering a different slant on translation in (Northern) Ireland, so I deliberately selected works which did not involve this language pair. Thus, I excluded other



translations by Heaney (*Sweeney Astray*, 1983b), and Carson's translations of *The Táin* (2007) and *The Midnight Court* (2005). I also excluded works translating other living Irish-language poets – including Muldoon's repeated translations of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill (*The Astrakhan Cloak*, 1992; *The Fifty Minute Mermaid*, 2007), and McGuckian's translation, with Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, again of Ní Dhomhnaill's work (*The Water Horse*, 1999). However, these works of course provide the essential backdrop to my readings here, and, as Quinn has quite rightly said, "The native poetry of Ireland can come through Greece as easily as through the west of Ireland" (2008: 145) – shifting the focus from the Irish-English language pair does not remove the central consideration of (Northern) Irish matters.

Within these parameters, then, I selected three works published roughly around the same time – *Beowulf* (Heaney) in 1999, *The Inferno* (Carson) in 2002, and *The Road to Inver* (Paulin) in 2004. All were published following the Good Friday Agreement (1998), although Paulin's collection spans the years from 1975 – 2003,<sup>23</sup> and, as Heaney's introduction makes clear, he originally worked on a translation of *Beowulf* in the mid-1980s (1999a: xxii). My rationale in selection was that these texts were likely to have been affected by a similar period of history in Northern Ireland, technically emerging after the Troubles, but influenced by them.

These texts have been translated from a range of languages (and by poets with different political, religious, cultural and linguistic affiliations), and, therefore, move the debate on from the binarism that might characterise a discussion of, say, a translation of *The Táin*. This factor ultimately proved key in selecting these three poets and their translations – an examination of the "strange discordant noise" (Carson, 2002: 186) of these translations can advance our understanding not only of translation, but of the depth and range of contemporary Northern Irish poetry more broadly, against a backdrop of the vicious "local row" (Kavanagh in Davis, 2010: 92).

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<sup>23</sup> Some of Paulin's translations were published elsewhere before they reappeared in *The Road to Inver* in 2004 – see Appendix 1 for repeat publication details.

### 1.3 Style, dialect and heteroglossia

#### 1.3.1 Style and foregrounding

As Paul Simpson has noted, choices in style “are motivated, even if unconsciously, and these choices have a profound impact on the way texts are structured and interpreted” (2004: 22). This study is concerned with motivated choices in translation style.

In considering what is meant by the ‘style’ of a text, the available definitions are broad. Katie Wales offers a very flexible definition of ‘style’ as the “perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking” (2001: 371). Jean Boase-Beier elaborates: “style has ceased to be viewed only in terms of its linguistic features and has come to include such issues as voice, otherness, foreignization, contextualization and culturally-bound and universal ways of conceptualizing and expressing meaning” (2006a: 1-2). I propose to adopt this very open interpretation of ‘style’. This thesis will deal primarily with certain linguistic features (such as dialect forms), and I will argue both that each of these translators has a “distinctive” style, and that these translations are stylistically distinct from one another, but I will also consider issues including otherness, foreignization and the expression of meaning.

Some aspects of literary texts are viewed as more significant than others – Peter Stockwell considers this establishment of significance to be partly a subjective process (some features will appeal more to certain readers<sup>24</sup> according to their interests), and partly textual, related to the cues provided by the text (2002: 14). The term ‘foregrounding’ has been applied to this concept of significance by critics from the time of the Prague Circle Structuralists (see Garvin’s translation of Mukařovský, 1964: 19), through to cognitive linguists such as Stockwell (2002: 14). Foregrounding – the demarcation of significance – is achieved by “*deviations* from the expected or ordinary use of language” (Stockwell, 2002: 14;

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<sup>24</sup> Different types of reader are discussed in 1.5.1.

italics in original). This deviation might, for example, be achieved via particularly creative metaphors, a striking use of repetition or innovative metrical patterns, which seem to be “an invitation to make meaning” (Fowler, 1996: 100). Of course, context remains crucial – we might consider consistent alliterative patterns an unusual factor in modern poetry, for example, but would not be surprised to find them in an Old English epic such as *Beowulf* (Stockwell and Minkova, 1998: 61); stylistic features are therefore not usually inherently ‘deviant’ (Eagleton, 2007: 49).

### 1.3.2 Dialect

The focus of this thesis originated through a combination of Stockwell’s textual and subjective factors. On the one hand, my study is prompted by the unusual observable stylistic features of these translations; the use of dialect and heteroglossic language (the cues provided by the text). I start with an observation of these factors and seek to describe the effects on the reader, and how and why they may have been used by the translators. There is also, however, a subjective element in this selection: as I am a translator from Northern Ireland, the use of dialect in translated literature is of personal, as well as academic interest, especially given its links to identity.

B.J. Epstein defines dialect as “a kind of language used by a specific group at a specific time in a specific location” (2012: 245). Wales suggests “a variety of language associated with subsets of users: in a geographical area [...] or with a social group” (2001: 105; there is clear overlap here with what is called a ‘sociolect’, a variety of language distinctive of a particular social group – Wales, 2001: 362). The term ‘vernacular’ is also often used interchangeably with the term ‘dialect’ (cf. Wales, 2001: 405).<sup>25</sup> Both Wales’ and Epstein’s definitions link dialect to locale and thereby to the political and socio-cultural context, and the history of language use particular to an area (with all of the attendant concerns

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<sup>25</sup> Paulin prefers ‘vernacular’ as it is without the “archaic, quaint, over-baked remoteness” of ‘dialect’ (ed. 1990: xi).

around personal affiliations and identity). In places such as Northern Ireland, where language use is contentious and partisan (and even relates to claims of heritage – see 1.2.2), the implications of employing a dialect form are particularly loaded.

The dialect form to be investigated is ‘northern Hiberno-English’. ‘Hiberno-English’ is a broad term largely used to denote “those varieties of English which were and are spoken, and sometimes written, in Ireland” (Welch, 1996: 244). Terence Dolan refers to Hiberno-English simply as “the language of everyday use in Ireland” (2012: xx). *Northern* Hiberno-English, then, is the type of Hiberno-English spoken in the north of Ireland (Harris, 1984: 115-118).<sup>26</sup>

John Harris also offers further linguistic differences *within* the North: ‘Ulster Scots’ (spoken in the north and north-east), ‘South Ulster English’ (spoken in the extreme south) and ‘Mid Ulster English’ (between the two) – Harris, 1984: 116. Such descriptions demonstrate the issues in defining the borders of language varieties; the status of Ulster-Scots is often disputed (Nic Craith, 2002: 108), and Harris here includes it as a sub-category of northern Hiberno-English. I am not concerned with these endless sub-categories – I am simply interested in the way English is spoken in the north of Ireland.

Northern Hiberno-English is a particularly hybrid form – a “macaronic dialect” (Dolan, 2012: xx; cf. Harris, 1993: 140); that is, containing a mix of languages.<sup>27</sup> It reflects the lengthy interaction between the English and Irish languages in Ireland, but also the influence of the Scots and English spoken by the planters of the seventeenth century (Harris, 1993: 140 – of course, these planters themselves spoke different language varieties; see 1.2.2). As northern Hiberno-English reflects these “historical conditions that are [...] peculiar to the area”,

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<sup>26</sup> The term ‘Ulster-English’ is interchangeable with ‘northern Hiberno-English’ (cf. Nic Craith, 2002: 124); I will use the latter term as I am referring to Northern Ireland, not Ulster, in this thesis. Hiberno-English was previously referred to as ‘Anglo-Irish’ (Nic Craith, 2002: 129).

<sup>27</sup> ‘Macaronic’ denotes language “containing words or inflections from one language introduced into the context of another” (OED Online).

Harris finds that it “warrants separate consideration” from the types of Hiberno-English spoken in the rest of the island (1984: 115).

This thesis accords it this “separate consideration”. The instances of dialect explored in these translations will include examples of non-standard syntax (“strip *you* it off again”; Carson, 2002: 232, my italics; the additional pronoun often occurs in the English spoken in Ireland – Harris, 1993: 157),<sup>28</sup> and niche dialect terms (“treacherous *keshes*”; Heaney, 1999a: 45, my italics; meaning “a make-shift bridge [...] across a river or bog” – Dolan, 2012: 142).<sup>29</sup> Acknowledging Dolan’s description of Hiberno-English as an “everyday” variety of language, I will also emphasise the use of colloquial phrases (“you think *there’s no manners on me*”; Paulin, 2004: 9, my italics),<sup>30</sup> and culturally-bound references, such as Paulin’s fleeting allusion to a symbol of loyalism, the red hand, in ‘Table’ (in his use of “my right hand, loyal” (2004: 74); the red hand is used on loyalist flags – O’Neill, 2010: n.p.). At times differing elements combine: Paulin’s translation of Paul Verlaine, ‘The Skeleton’, opens, conversationally, with: “Two pachles both stocious are lurching back / over a battlefield” (2004: 10) – here “stocious”, meaning “very drunk” (Dolan, 2012: 241) is perhaps more easily understood; “pachles” is much more obscure (meaning a “useless person” – Share, 2003: 239).

Even though these poets may reach for Hiberno-English phrases as a matter of instinct (Fowler notes that dialects, and indeed idiolects and sociolects, reflect “*who you are*” – 1996: 189; italics in original), I want to argue that instances of specific dialect forms in literary texts, including in translations, occur as a result of authorly *choice* (Simpson, 2004: 22; of course the ‘author’ is the translator in the case of translations).

In terms of literary choice, it is relevant that dialects are traditionally considered not just non-standard, but *sub*-standard. Linguistically speaking, Standard

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 2 (2.2.2.4).

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 2 (2.2.2.2).

<sup>30</sup> Dolan says “put manners on yourself” means “behave yourself” (2012: 159).

English is a dialect as much as any other (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998: 3); however, *socio-linguistically*, Standard English “has the status and power associated with the higher classes of British society” (Jeffries, 1993: 23). In contrast, in common parlance a dialect is a “substandard, low-status, often rustic form of language” associated with groups who are “lacking in prestige” (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998: 3).

Most of English literature has been written in Standard English (Wales, 2001: 107); as Sidney Greenbaum notes, “only the standard language has an established orthography” (1996: 14). Dialect forms have therefore typically been unexpected in literature (and this contrast allows them to become foregrounded). However, Lesley Jeffries stresses more recent developments: “As well as being more colloquial, the language of twentieth-century poetry has also been more daring in its stretching of the rules of English, whether rules of grammar, semantics or text structure” (1993: 5; see also 22-38). And in the twenty-first century there is a notable dialect poetry ‘scene’, including such prominent poets as Liz Berry, Tony Harrison, Simon Armitage, Kathleen Jamie and Jackie Kay.

But for all these shifts, texts which choose to use the vernacular are still notable – for example, *The New York Times*’ review of Lisa McNerney’s *The Glorious Heresies* (2015, set in Cork) identified its “impenetrable local idiom” (Stasio, 2016: n.p.); colloquial speech patterns of a particular area are still of note, especially in an increasingly globalised publishing market. So, whilst Simpson (2004: 98-9) and Elena Semino (2002: 29-30) highlight the debate in contemporary stylistics about the extent to which a literary register exists at all (and, therefore, whether it is possible to deviate from it), in practice most readers approach literature with a set of expectations about the type(s) of language which will be used.<sup>31</sup> This being the case, issues of orality and non-standard language will be key concerns in this study.

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<sup>31</sup> See also de Waal (2018) on UK publishing’s persistent under-representation of working-class and regional voices (including voices from Ireland).

Pertinently for this study, the first significant use of Hiberno-English in literature in Ireland occurred via the process of translation. In 1899, during the Gaelic Revival (the Irish cultural resurgence of the 1890s and early 1900s – Foster, 1989: 446-8), Douglas Hyde published a series of translations – renditions of Irish folk tales translated into Hiberno-English.<sup>32</sup> Although Hiberno-English had been developing for centuries, these were the “earliest attempts at representing the language in any proper sense” (Crowley, 2005: 160). Around the same time, other translation efforts (by J.M. Synge and Lady Gregory) also prioritised translation into Hiberno-English.

Of course, these efforts could hardly have been expected to safeguard the future of the dialect. By 1983 Paulin described (with more than a hint of Romanticism) the “near-anarchy” of Hiberno-English:

many words are literally homeless. They live in the careless richness of speech, but they rarely appear in print. [...] many readers are unable to understand them and have no dictionary where they can discover their meaning. The language therefore lives freely and spontaneously as speech, but it lacks any institutional existence and so is impoverished as a literary medium. It is a language without a lexicon, a language without form (1983a: 13).<sup>33</sup>

Recent publications address the lack of a “lexicon” – including Dolan’s *A Dictionary of Hiberno-English* (2012; first published in 1998), C.I. Macafee’s *A Concise Ulster Dictionary* (1996) and Bernard Share’s *Slanguage: A Dictionary of Irish Slang* (2003, first published in 1997) – but tensions and complexities remain in dealing with oral forms of language in literature.<sup>34</sup> I will explore how readers might respond to primarily oral forms being captured in written text, and why these poets include these ‘low-status’ language varieties in what might be regarded as a highly ‘literary’ activity (translation) – how non-standard forms may deliberately be used to subvert canonical texts. Whilst I noted above that stylistic features are not usually *inherently* deviant, oral forms of language and

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<sup>32</sup> Hyde was President of the Gaelic League, an organisation founded in 1893 to promote the Irish language.

<sup>33</sup> There are interesting tensions here: celebrating variety and diversity in linguistic form seems tied to a need to define and prescribe.

<sup>34</sup> More recently, online communities have become fast-moving ways in which vernacular language trends can be recorded – I use these resources in Chapters 2-4.

certain vernacular constructions, such as “craychur” (a phoneticisation of the word ‘creature’, mimicking a Northern Irish accent – Paulin, 2004: 4), and “you shitehawk” (a creative Irish term of abuse – Carson, 2002: 151),<sup>35</sup> come fairly close to this line.

Finally, some brief comments are required on the link between translation studies and dialect. Studies which examine the use of dialect in the *translated text* appear to be rare. Occasionally studies examine how translation *from* minor language varieties can bolster such forms by drawing attention to their literature (Munday briefly discusses translation from a “minority language” – Punjabi – into English – 2016: 216-9). Typically, however, analyses of the use of dialect in translation explore the *challenges* dialect forms pose for the translator, or suggest potential strategies for addressing culture-specific language in the source text, for example via compensation or finding equivalents (such as in Berezowski, 1997, and Epstein, 2012).

This thesis suggests an alternative perspective: one which focusses not on the challenges to be addressed (the source text dialect),<sup>36</sup> but on the positive aspects mined by the individual translators in the act of inserting dialect into a target text. In this study, dialect is not presented as a problem requiring a strategy, but suggested as a linguistically and artistically interesting and enriching choice – one which offers an alternative picture of the ways in which translation can function.

### **1.3.3 Heteroglossia and dialogism**

Although this study initially focusses on the use of dialect, I will ultimately address the mix of language varieties *beyond* the use of dialect. I argue that one factor in the unusual experience of reading these translations is this linguistic

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 2 (2.2.2.7) and Chapter 4 (4.2.2.1) respectively for further analysis of these terms.

<sup>36</sup> The impact of linguistic variety in the source texts is explored in Chapter 4.



mix – strikingly different in each translation. Take, for example, the following passage from Carson’s translation:

*‘Pappy Satin Papish Satan Alibi!’*  
barked Pluto in his fluent poppycock,  
which made me look for backing to my rabbi.

‘Fear not the jargon-ridden jabberwock,’  
he said. ‘Whatever power he has, he’ll not  
prevent my man from climbing down this rock.’

He then addressed the word-befuddled sot:  
‘Down, you overgrown pup! And shut your gob!  
Or go and tie your larynx in a knot!’ (2002: 43; italics in original).

The passage includes unusual compounds (“word-befuddled”), colloquialisms (“sot”, “overgrown pup”, “go and tie your larynx in a knot”), and vernacular (“shut your gob” – ‘gob’ is widely used in Hiberno-English).<sup>37</sup> It also includes an intertextual reference (“jabberwock” recalling Lewis Carroll’s nonsense poem ‘Jabberwocky’, from *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1871). Aristocratic language (“my man”)<sup>38</sup> jostles with the language of another religious culture (the Jewish term “rabbi”), modern terms (“backing”, “jargon”) and nonsense (“*Pappy Satin Papish Satan Alibi!*”). Even this nonsense contains unusual items: “*Papish*” is a derogatory word used in Northern Ireland to describe Roman Catholics (Share, 2003: 237).

In short, the translation seems remarkable as much for the mix of language varieties, as for the instances of common Hiberno-English vernacular (“shut your gob” or “*Papish*”); indeed, here the dialect is overshadowed by the complex mix. Which of these elements is the most jolting will to some extent depend on the individual reader: I am drawn to the colloquialisms, but others might gravitate towards the intertextuality (and, here, the anachronism of the ‘Jabberwocky’ reference). In this passage we cannot contend that certain aspects are foregrounded, as that would require some sense of a consistent base style against which these elements appeared (Stockwell, 2002: 14). Ultimately, the

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<sup>37</sup> Dolan defines ‘gob’ as “beak; mouth” (2012: 117). Whilst it is used in many parts of the UK, it was probably originally borrowed from the Irish (OED Online).

<sup>38</sup> “My man” could be interpreted as aristocratic discourse, or a term of endearment: this phrase itself contains a potential mix of language types.

shifting texture of this passage – and of these translations – is such that it is the *unevenness* itself which is of note; as I will claim later, unevenness is foregrounded (and, again, such unevenness is not typically examined by existing studies).

In seeking to describe the layers of language varieties appearing in these texts (as in the passage above), I will draw on Bakhtin's concepts of 'heteroglossia' and 'dialogism'. Bakhtin is no longer the figure of reference that he once was; his work was fashionable amongst linguistic and literary critics in the 1980s and 1990s, when enthusiasts used his ideas to "open up and pluralize literary texts" (Fowler, 1996: 150). His theories are nevertheless still invoked in literary studies (for example in narratology), and his work has been used by many stylisticians, including Semino (2002). It is worth remembering, too, that his thinking sits behind that of some of the founding figures of translation studies, the Prague Structuralists<sup>39</sup> – although it is not often invoked in the context of contemporary translation studies (for exceptions see Millán-Varela, 2004, and Klinger, 2013; 2015).

Bakhtin coined the term "heteroglossia" (1981: 271) to describe the internal stratification of languages – not simply their stratification into dialects, but "into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth" (1981: 272). For Bakhtin, heteroglossia is a linguistic fact, but it can also be represented in literature.

The examination of heteroglossia links back to the investigation of dialect as a non-standard form of language. Bakhtin positions the use of heteroglossia in literature in contrast to "centripetal forces in socio-linguistic and ideological life" (1981: 271). He views the literary use of heteroglossia as an ethical act emphasising linguistic diversity, and diversity of point of view or position, as expressed or embodied in language (1981: 291-2). I will also use Bakhtin's term

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<sup>39</sup> The Prague Structuralist group included Roman Jakobson, René Wellek and Jan Mukařovský.

“dialogism”, which describes the *relation* of language varieties within texts – languages that “mutually and ideologically *interanimate* each other” (1981: 47; my italics).

Bakhtin’s theories remain useful when describing linguistic heterogeneity, and articulating the effects of a specific linguistic mix in a literary text. In Semino’s reading of Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘Poet for Our Times’, for example, she uses Bakhtinian concepts (particularly heteroglossia) to explain the “range of potential effects of the poem” (2002: 47). Specifically, a Bakhtinian perspective allows Semino to draw out how the language of Duffy’s poem can articulate both the pretensions *and* creativity of journalistic writing – exposing the multiple complexities of language use in the poem. Similarly, using Bakhtin’s terms allows me to think about what we might learn from the relation between language varieties in these texts – for example, in Carson’s passage, the implications of borrowing the term “jabberwock” from a nonsense poem, and re-employing it in a translation of a canonical epic such as *The Inferno*, alongside a Jewish term – “rabbi” – prompted, I suspect, by “rabbia” (which appears a few lines later in the Italian – Kirkpatrick, 2010: 56).<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, Bakhtin’s theories allow me to think about why a translator might produce a text which is so ostentatiously plurivocal.

Although Bakhtin described heteroglossia as a characteristic of the novel form, it *can* be applied to poetry (as stressed by critics including Semino, 2002, Michael Eskin, 2000, and Helga Geyer-Ryan, 1989), and can enlighten our understanding of language use in these translations in particular. Frequently in this thesis, then, the discussion of the unusual use of dialect will develop into an examination of heteroglossia and dialogic language. I will examine the implications of this heterogeneous language for questions of linguistic purity or neutrality (these poets are always aware that language betrays its previous uses and users), but I

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<sup>40</sup> “Rabbia” means ‘rage’ (translated by Kirkpatrick as “fury” – 2010: 57). We might note that the leap from “rabbia” to “rabbi” is as nonsensical and capricious as the language of ‘Jabberwocky’ – and the happy coincidence that “poppycok” and “jabberwock” both relate to nonsense as well as (half-)rhyming.

will also consider the *creative* potential of this “repertoire / of signals” (Carson, 2002: 147).

Taking all of these elements together, then, in a place where language is symbolic and culturally powerful, and where it may embody a political position, an understanding of identity or the past, I will argue that the use in translation of particular elements of language – northern Hiberno-English dialect and also heteroglossic or dialogic language – is a form of language statement. I will argue that it is both an expression of personal sitedness (embeddedness within a particular culture), and yet also of hybridity (the acknowledgement of multiple linguistic influences). And that it arises because it reflects a society which is non-homogeneous, which has itself been multiply influenced; a place where questions of identity are fraught and where language is complicit in such questions.

## **1.4 Theoretical framework**

### **1.4.1 Multidisciplinarity**

Pym has indicated that scholars should “feel free to move between [...] paradigms, selecting the ideas that can help [them] solve problems” (2010: 165). Accordingly, this thesis is multidisciplinary; it will bring together aspects from disparate theoretical areas (ranging from polysystem theory and postcolonial (translation) theory to cognitive stylistics) to understand and explain the use of dialect and heteroglossia in these texts.<sup>41</sup> Whilst none of the theories invoked here can alone be expected to explain the observable features of these translations, they each have relevant elements to offer.

### **1.4.2 Postcolonial translation studies – Ireland and Northern Ireland**

The term ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies describes “the move from translation as text to translation as culture and politics” (Munday, 2016: 198) – the term was coined by Mary Snell-Hornby, and taken up by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (1990). Tymoczko observes that the cultural turn highlights the particular contexts of new translations: “the ways in which translations are not merely replacements or substitutions but new textures, new constructions” (1999a: 281). This focus on the interrelation of the translated text and its culture led to fresh possibilities for translation studies, including the exploration of translation and gender, translation as rewriting (how translation relates to power and patronage in the target culture), and translation and postcolonialism (see Munday, 2016: 197-221 on these areas).

Niranjana’s *Siting Translation: History, Poststructuralism, and the Colonial Context* (1992) was key in stressing translation’s role in the asymmetrical power

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<sup>41</sup> Following Stockwell, it could even be described as “transdisciplinary” – bringing together and adapting existing theories to create a new unique blend (2009: 27).

structures of colonialism (1992: 2) – but also how translation studies itself was characterised by an “absence, lack, or repression of an awareness of asymmetry” (1992: 9). Although Niranjana’s focus is how translation constructs the ‘East’, the rise of postcolonial translation theory also facilitated investigations of translation within *Western* colonial contexts. This is, however, not without its controversies. Jahan Ramazani highlights the racial tensions and hierarchies *within* postcolonialism, saying that for some postcolonialists “to cede Yeats [or, by extension, other Irish writers] a curricular place within a field cleared for once-subjugated peoples of different colors and ethnicities would be to allow a form of colonial reoccupation” (2001: 22). Nonetheless, despite such tensions, postcolonial translation theory has stretched to explore the use of translation in Ireland (see Tymoczko, 1999a; Cronin, 1996).

This study takes as its theoretical springboard the work of these theorists. Tymoczko’s work explores the translation of early Irish texts into English in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (using systems theory, literary theory and linguistic theory) – she emphasises the centrality of translation in Ireland’s shifting power relations, at the heart of processes of representation and cultural exchange. Michael Cronin’s study (1996) of the “variety and scale” (1996: 2) of translation practices in Ireland from the Middle Ages until the 1990s is the most detailed history so far of translation on the island. He addresses the omissions and distortions in previous attempts to describe Ireland’s cultural history.

In building on these studies I am focussing in particular on translation practices in Northern Ireland, an area that has not been fully considered despite the particularly complicated linguistic context (see 1.2.2). Cronin does briefly theorise the fact that “translation itself became a privileged mode of interrogation” in Northern Ireland against a backdrop of rising violence, when “fixed identities were being questioned” on both sides of the border (1996: 169), and he offers a brief model. Cronin suggests translation operates: firstly as a dialogue with Irish (an internal and personal dialogue, as well as an external one), secondly as “a release from the tense bipolarities of conflict” (1996: 181), and finally as a means of addressing the conflict, albeit indirectly (*ibid.*). I will

return to Cronin's template later in this thesis, but he does not discuss translation by Northern Irish poets at length beyond this model.

So, for all that a great number of Northern Irish poets have been "drawn by the lodestone of translation" (Cronin, 1996: 181), the only sustained examination of translation in a Northern Irish context is Rui Carvalho Homem's *Poetry and Translation in Northern Ireland* (2009) – and this has been criticised for merely confirming existing interpretations of these poets' work (Quinn, 2010: 262-3). Carvalho Homem's study covers five poets (Heaney, Mahon, Longley, Muldoon and Carson), positioning their translations within their broader oeuvres. Whilst it offers an overview, it does not provide extensive close textual analysis of the language of the translations themselves, or consider what these writers are doing in particular instances of translation.

Other examinations of Northern Irish translation are relatively rare. Quinn covers the work of poets from Northern Ireland in his essay on Irish poetry and translation (exploring Longley's and Mahon's translations of the classics – 2008: 154-158) – but here he concentrates on negotiations between Anglophone Irish poetry and the Irish language, and I am moving away from this language pair. Quinn has in fact claimed that translation "from languages other than Irish is of marginal interest for the understanding of contemporary Irish poetry written in English" (2012: 341, although he does examine a few "exceptions" – *ibid.*). I disagree with Quinn, and translation from other languages is a central concern here, in part to deliberately diversify the ways in which we think and write about the literature produced in (Northern) Ireland.

Other individual studies have tackled single texts or poets – see, for example, Matthew Reynolds on Carson's Dante translation (2003; 2008) – or alternative perspectives: Stephanie Schwerter examines the intertextual use of Russian poetry in the work of three Northern Irish poets, including Paulin's translations from the Russian (2013). Scholarship on Heaney's *Beowulf* translation is most often from an Old English studies perspective (Jones, 2006; Magennis, 2011). Most in-depth analysis of the poetry of Carson, Heaney and Paulin sits in (Irish)

literary studies and therefore concentrates on translation as a side issue (for example Kennedy-Andrews, 2008; Corcoran, 1999).

This study offers what Carvalho Homem's cannot: it looks closely at a few texts in order to think about why certain linguistic choices in translation might matter – for the reader and for the translator. My thesis does not offer Carvalho Homem's survey-like view of the whole of Northern Irish poetry, but in choosing a zoom lens it looks in detail at how translation may function for these poets, at a particular point in Irish history. Crucially, it thinks about what these works may tell us about the role of *translation*, as much as about this Northern Irish poetry.

#### **1.4.3 Beyond postcolonialism – hybridity and stylistic variation**

In acknowledging the debt to existing studies of translation in Ireland, I am building on, but also moving away from, postcolonial narratives. Postcolonial translation theory has been hugely influential in demonstrating the ways in which the languages of Ireland have been affected by years of colonisation, linguistic repression and revival, and how translation has been used in the construction of national identity (Tymoczko, 1999a: 21). However, there are also significant constraints inherent in a postcolonial approach, with its typical emphasis on binary oppositions ('coloniser' and 'colonised', 'native' and 'invader' and so on).

In concentrating on Northern Ireland as a context for translation, I am acknowledging more complex narratives and representations of identity. This is a place where the very use of the term 'colonisation' is disputed,<sup>42</sup> and, where, as Quinn has observed, the attitudes of the 'colonising' society and the 'colonised' are extremely nuanced (2008: 5). In contrast, Goodby observes "postcolonial criticism's general lack of discrimination with regard to Ireland" (2000: 325; cf. Ramazani, 2001: 21-3).<sup>43</sup> A postcolonial approach *is* useful in establishing the

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<sup>42</sup> See 1.2.1 on the plantation.

<sup>43</sup> See, too, Goodby (2000: 285; 325-6) on postcolonial complexities in the Irish situation.



complicated role translation has played in the oppression and creation of a national identity in Ireland. But it does not easily speak to other (more recent) complex interactions with language via translation – for example the use of translation in contexts where language choices remain fraught, but are *not* explicitly or straightforwardly performing cultural oppression or resistance.

Beyond translation studies, other critics have acknowledged the limits of a ‘traditional’ version of postcolonial theory, particularly its application in an Irish context. I will draw on the work of postcolonialists, such as Colin Graham (2001), who advocate a move away from the binarism of traditional postcolonial studies, emphasising instead “transcultural movements and interactions” (Graham, 2001: 93). Graham endorses critiques of postcolonial nationalism which subvert the very idea of ‘the nation’ as itself a colonial structure – this “allows postcolonialism to sidestep a persistent positioning with the colonised against the coloniser” (2001: 92). Whilst, for Quinn, issues remain here – there is “no glimpse of the theoretical and imaginative work to be done after the concept [of the ‘Irish nation’] has been dismantled” (2008: 2) – still, Graham’s interpretation of shifts in postcolonial theory is encouraging for those seeking a more nuanced application of postcolonialism to the question of translation in Ireland.

Crucial for postcolonial (translation) studies is the concept of the ‘hybrid text’ – in effect using newly forged language (often by bilingual subjects) to explode dominant, conventional literary structures and models – see Snell-Hornby (2006: 95-6) on, for example, Chinua Achebe’s “new English”, and Salman Rushdie’s “remaking” of English. Postcolonial theorist Samia Mehrez characterised this hybrid language as “culturo-linguistic layering” (1992: 121), arguing that in plurilingual, postcolonial texts “translation becomes an integral part of the reading experience” (1992: 122).<sup>44</sup> Taking his cue from Rushdie, G.J.V. Prasad emphasised the potential *gains* of hybridity, seen in “the pollinated and enriched language (and culture) that results from the act of translation – this act

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<sup>44</sup> Mehrez primarily uses translation here as a metaphor – the reading experience is “perpetual translation”, excluding monolingual readers (1992: 122). Prasad says that similarly for all Indian English writers “the very act of their writing [is] one of translation” (1999: 41).

not just of bearing across but of fertile coming together” (1999: 41). These perspectives at the intersection of translation studies and postcolonial theory again suggest a positive world beyond binarism, and emphasise creativity (note Prasad’s language of fecundity: “pollinated”, “enriched” and “fertile”).<sup>45</sup>

The focus on linguistic variation in translated texts is increasing. Reynolds has suggested that the cultural hegemony of North America and Western Europe might be challenged by translations which employ a mix of language varieties, by translations which operate not between standard language varieties but into “varied styles and dialects” (2016: 87). In his language Reynolds echoes elements of Lawrence Venuti’s high-profile discourse on the introduction of marginal language varieties into translation (2008: 20) as a strategy to counteract, amongst other things, homogenising tendencies in English-language literary contexts (2008: 5). Reynolds emphasises that there is already movement towards these translation practices, but less discussion of the *function* of these stylistic shifts (2016: 87). I intend to consider the function of linguistic variation in my texts.

#### **1.4.4 Polysystem theory, the individual translator and translational stylistics**

This focus on the style of the *translated* text itself is a relatively recent development in translation studies (Munday, 2016: 98). Under Gideon Toury in the mid-1990s descriptive translation studies set out to investigate the norms and “trends of translation behaviour” (Munday, 2016: 176). Toury’s work took off from polysystem theory – the phrase ‘polysystem’ was used by Itamar Even-Zohar in the 1970s to describe all of the literary systems present in a given culture. In a translation studies context, it allowed translated literature to be conceptualised as one of these literary systems, and, crucially, a system interacting with, and influencing, other systems in the polysystem. Tymoczko, for

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<sup>45</sup> See Munday (2016: 212-213), and Snell-Hornby (2006: 95-100) on hybridity and ‘in-betweenness’ in postcolonial translation studies.

example, uses a polysystem approach to describe and explain the importance of developments in Irish literature (including translations) for English literature (1999a: 135-136). Given the focus on a very specific cultural context, then, this study is significantly indebted to polysystem theory – as Edwin Gentzler identifies, one significant advantage of the theory is that it “integrates the study of literature with the study of social and economic forces” in history (2001: 119).

However, the emphasis in this thesis on the individual translator in their context was not something initially explored by polysystem theory. Theo Hermans famously described polysystem theory as “ferociously abstract and depersonalized” (1999: 118):

the struggle is waged by competing norms and models rather than by individuals or collectives who stand to gain or lose something by the outcome (ibid.).

Similarly, Pym has contended that “In strong systems theory [...] the systems themselves do things, as if they were people” (2010: 72). However, he observes that more recently, in other systems approaches, “*people are portrayed as doing things* within systems of constraints” (ibid.; my italics). This more individual-centred approach to systems theory allows the potential for the translator’s personal relationship with the language they use to play a role in the translations they produce. This focus on the translator-as-individual (and the impact of, as Pym has it, “human liberty” – ibid.) is the crux of this thesis.

Again, this is a ‘turn’ in translation studies – as Munday observes, the “stance and positionality of the translator have become much more central in translation studies” (2016: 235). Hermans, for example, says that “all translating can be seen to have the translator’s subject position inscribed in it” (2014: 286). We can chart the increasing focus on the role of the translator, via, for example, Andrew Chesterman’s essay ‘The Name and Nature of Translator Studies’ (2009); Munday also notes the prominence of Venuti’s theories of domestication and foreignization, and translator invisibility (2008), and increasing focus in general on the ethics, sociology and reception of translation (2016: 222-248).

With one eye on the interventionist role of the translator, ‘translational stylistics’ has allowed for a comparison of the source and target texts in order to identify elements which seem to be particular to the translator (see Malmkjaer, 2003; 2004, and Baker, 2000). Boase-Beier suggests that ‘translational *poetics*’ extends this analysis to explore *how and why* the translator made these specific choices (in reconstructing the poetics of the source text – see 2015: 90-91).<sup>46</sup> Some studies have examined the distinctiveness of particular translations or translators: Gabriela Saldanha has explored the use of foreign words in translations (into English) by Peter Bush and Margaret Jull Costa (2011),<sup>47</sup> Munday has analysed the work of Latin American translators, including Harriet de Onís and Gregory Rabassa (2008), and Hilary Brown has examined the work of the eighteenth-century German translator, Luise Gottsched (2012). However, many if not most studies focus on the *loss* of ‘markedness’ in the transfer to the target text (see, for example, Kenny, 2001, or Malmkjaer, 2003; Munday uses the term ‘markedness’ as stylisticians would use the term ‘foregrounding’, to describe patterns which stand out – 2016: 99). Indeed, the loss of markedness is typically seen as one of the norms of translation – Antoine Berman of course famously contended that choices in translation overwhelmingly remove or deprioritise variation or unusual features, including *reducing* heteroglossia and polysemy (2004: 280-289). My study, on the other hand, focusses on the *introduction* of markedness into the target text, challenging such norms.

Munday suggests that the key questions remaining for translation studies in relation to the study of the distinctive style of the translated text include hypothesising the *motivations* behind linguistic selections, and “how far the unconscious (as well as conscious) choices may in fact be due to factors in the translator’s environment, including education and the sociocultural and political context in which they operate” (2016: 100).

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<sup>46</sup> Wales argues that ‘poetics’ can mean the making of art of any genre (2001: 305).

<sup>47</sup> Developments in corpus-based studies increasingly make such analyses possible: Saldanha’s analysis is corpus-based.

In addressing Munday's questions, this study, then, follows on from polysystem theory, descriptive translation studies and translational stylistics (or poetics), but seeks to examine an *increase* in markedness or distinctiveness in these translated texts – and to relate this markedness to both the translator in question, and their socio-cultural context. Whilst acknowledging that markedness is not automatically a positive characteristic, I want to use an examination of the increase in distinctiveness to think about what translation *can do*, rather than its apparent “tendances déformantes” (Berman, 1985: 71; its “deforming tendencies” – Berman, 2004: 280).

## 1.5 Methodological approach

### 1.5.1 Cognitive stylistics

Throughout this thesis I will be adopting an approach based on cognitive stylistics (or cognitive poetics). Stockwell suggests that “cognitive poetics offers a means of discussing interpretation whether it is an authorly version of the world or a readerly account, and how those interpretations are made manifest in textuality” (2002: 5). As I investigate the use of dialect, and the stylistic variation of these texts, I am interested both in how these elements relate to the reader’s experience moving through the text, and how they relate to the socio-cultural context and personal experiences of the translators. In this sense, I am interested in both ‘readerly’ and ‘authorly’ interpretations.<sup>48</sup>

Cognitive stylistics emphasises the extent to which context is embodied in *style* – Boase-Beier has written that style is “determined in part by a cognitive state which has absorbed historical, sociological and cultural influences” (2006a: 147). Developments in cognitive science (particularly in cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology) have had significant implications for literary study – cognitive stylistics draws on these advances, applying these developments to how we think about the interpretation of literary texts (Stockwell, 2009: 26). In line with the influence of cognitive science across the humanities, Boase-Beier identifies a “cognitive turn” (2006a: 71) in translation studies, roughly coinciding with the turn of the millennium, which eventually began to acknowledge “context as a cognitive entity” (2006a: 73) and the fact that “language involves the mind and the mind is concerned with culture and context” (2006a: 9). Taking a cognitive stylistics approach allows me to concentrate on certain stylistic choices in translation as the product of a translator in, and shaped by, the (Northern) Irish context.

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<sup>48</sup> ‘Readerly’ and ‘authorly’ are likely to derive from Roland Barthes’ *lisible* and *scriptible*, described in *S/Z* (first published in 1973), with *scriptible* works requiring the reader’s input to produce meanings (Barthes, 1990: 4).

Cognitive stylistics also permits a focus on the 'mind-style' of the author (here the translator). Roger Fowler defines mind-style as "the world-view of an author, or a narrator, or a character, constituted by the ideational structure of the text" (1996: 214). In using the term "ideational", Fowler follows Michael Halliday's definition: "the speaker or writer *embodies in language* his experience of the phenomena of the real world" (in Fowler, 1996: 31; my italics). The concept of mind-style, therefore, links the observable linguistic features of the text (whether use of personal pronouns, adjectives, specific images, or any other feature) to the writer's individual context, or – to be specific – to their *cognitive experience* of their context: where and when they live(d), their social circumstances, and events they may have experienced (for example, the tense, polarised decades of the Troubles).

This personal angle is important – as I noted above, the agency of the translator is central to this thesis – and, in fact, Boase-Beier notes that it is in stylistic choice that the influence of mind can most clearly be seen (2006a: 72). Adopting a cognitive stylistics approach, and the idea of mind-style, links the linguistic features of these texts to the personal worlds of these poets. I am arguing that there is merit in viewing stylistic choices in translation as a reflection of context, and as reflecting the cognitive processing and exploration of context (particularly linguistic context). As Clive Scott has said, stylistic choices, whilst often ideological, can also relate to "our own personal maps of language [...] the idiosyncratic ways in which we [...] possess our own language" (2008: 26). As we have seen, this focus on how the translator may use the process of translation – for example for self-reflection – and how they are themselves implicated in stylistic choice, is not something that translation studies routinely focusses on (see 1.4.4).

So far I have suggested what cognitive stylistics might offer us in terms of the focus on the translator, but a focus on reading is also essential. A cognitive approach is now well established in stylistics: "readerly effects, emotions and significances in literary engagement are now regarded as part of the legitimate

ground of stylistic study” (Stockwell, 2013: 263). Of course, there are different types of reading, and different types of reader, and the interpretive frameworks we bring to texts differ significantly (Verdonk, 1993: 117). It is part of the rich afterlife of a text that different readers produce these different readings; any attempt to analyse textual affects must take account of this (I will investigate the different layers of interpretation available to readers from different geographical locations in Chapter 2). Stockwell makes a further distinction between “natural reading” (for example how we read in our leisure time) and analysis (2013: 265), suggesting that we cannot perform both types of reading at the same time (2013: 264-8). I prefer to think of this as the reader zooming in and out of detailed thinking about literature (even when reading ‘naturally’ I would not ordinarily miss the occurrence of an unusual dialect word, although I might increase my level of readerly attention). In any case, there is not a very significant gulf between the literary scholar and the reader of a collection of translated poems such as *The Road to Inver* (2004).

In fact, as Boase-Beier has indicated, stylistic analysis is an inevitable part of the reading process; as readers we *want* to read style: a “reader looks for meaning in style” (2006a: 27). And readers of translated poetry might be said to be particularly attentive to stylistic features (cf. Boase-Beier, 2011: 62). So, when the reader is confronted by those “stocious” “pachles” from ‘The Skeleton’ (Paulin, 2004: 10), they come ready to read them.

### **1.5.2 Close reading and re-reading**

Cognitive stylistics is rooted in the observable features of the text – “the practical analysis of literary texture is placed at the forefront of study, rather than being an offshoot or consequence of it” (Stockwell, 2002: 60). Thus, a cognitive stylistics approach is built on close textual analysis.

The close reading of literature is usually traced back to critics such as I.A. Richards and William Empson in the 1920s and 1930s (Barry, 2002: 15; 29-30).



Such critics focussed in particular on the precise verbal details of individual texts, an approach which often (but not exclusively) tended to work by “isolating the text from history and context” (Barry, 2002: 15).<sup>49</sup> The decontextualised approach many felt was advocated by Richards, Empson and others effectively became the norm in the study of literature in Britain from the 1930s to the 1970s in the form of “practical criticism” (and, in parallel, in the United States in the form of “New Criticism” – Barry, 2002: 30).

More recently most stylisticians have come to view all writing as social discourse where “the words used and the meaning of the words used cannot be divorced from their relevant contexts” (Verdonk, 1993: 2). And in the period since the 1960s and 1970s other theoretical perspectives have come to the fore – including psychoanalysis, gender studies, cultural studies, structuralism and post-structuralism – offering alternative perspectives for reflecting on literature, and often moving away from an approach which focusses primarily on ‘the words on the page’ (see Barry, 2002: 15). Terry Eagleton has, in fact, contended that literary criticism is currently something of a dying art, with most students focussing on “content analysis”, and ignoring the fact that “the language of a poem is *constitutive* of its ideas” (2007: 2; italics in original).

I am not adopting a decontextualised approach. However, as Stockwell has said, “Particular readings are important [...] it is in the detail of readings that all the interest and fascination lies” (2002: 2). Close textual analysis allows me to bring out the lexical patterns in these texts, emphasising their stylistic nuances and complexity. As Eagleton explains, “There are several different ways of saying ‘Take a seat’, but only one way of saying ‘The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass’” (2007: 21); this thesis, then, is about the detail. The value of in-depth literary analysis is that it:

illuminates featural effects that might be vague, hard to articulate  
or define, very subtle or faint, or at the very edge of or even below

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<sup>49</sup> David West disputes this view (2013: 17): West claims Richards explored the mental process behind the act of reading a text (2013: 120), and he thus views Richards as a “historical antecedent” for contemporary cognitive stylistics (2013: 130).

the level of consciousness, but which nevertheless have an effect in the overall reading experience (Stockwell, 2013: 267).

Speaking in favour of the study of 'World Literature', Franco Moretti has contended that close reading is no longer satisfactory as an approach as "it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon", and therefore the approach is only compatible with a view of the world which says that very few texts matter (2000: 57), whereas today's literature is a "planetary system" (2000: 54). However, I would add a shade of nuance: close reading does not say that *only* a few texts matter, but that these particular texts can tell us something especially interesting or different. As Joseph North says, literature does not *only* matter as a "total system" (2017: 114) – and a focus on particularities and nuances may be particularly welcome in the Irish context (Tymoczko, 1999a: 30-32; Goodby, 2000: 325).

Accordingly, I am investigating the nuances of language use in these translations: for instance, the use of the word "troubles" in the hands of a Northern Irish writer (in Heaney's *Beowulf*; see Chapter 4, 4.3.2.3), a fleeting meeting between Irish vernacular and the parlance of the landed gentry (in Carson's *The Inferno*; see Chapter 3, 3.2.2.4) or the intertextual use of a Hugh MacDiarmid phrase in a translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (in Paulin's 'Unavoidable'; see Chapter 3, 3.2.2.6).

Close textual analysis allows me to demonstrate how very minor shifts from standard usage are sustained throughout these texts, building to a distinctive style across each translation (for example, the effect of a particularly Hiberno-English use of prepositions in Heaney's *Beowulf* – Chapter 2, 2.2.2.1). Close reading also allows me to draw out the unique stylistic characteristics of these translations rather than producing a homogenising account. Finally, in focussing on stylistic idiosyncrasies I want to highlight that we do not traditionally evaluate the language of translated texts except *as translations* – that is to say, we primarily examine the language of a translated text in terms of how the

linguistic choices relate to issues of equivalence, without looking beyond such matters (cf. Scott, 2006: 32).<sup>50</sup>

On a practical note, textual analysis will not appear in stand-alone sections, but will weave through the discussion in each chapter. The three texts are not analysed in a consistent order, but rather the sequencing in each section changes to suit the material at hand. This arrangement allows readings to unfold, and permits multiple re-readings as the argument progresses – I will also layer analysis of the linguistic variety (heteroglossia) in these translations on top of the examination of the use of dialect and geographically bound language. It seems to me that this process of re-reading, of pausing to re-examine lexical items, is characteristic of reading these translated works. This re-processing of unfamiliar lexical items, or of shifting meaning, requires a process of “conceptual overhaul” (Simpson, 2012: 359).<sup>51</sup> So, too, my return to passages previously analysed will facilitate these moments of ‘conceptual overhaul’, building a sense of the layering of meaning and interpretive possibilities in these translated texts.

### **1.5.3 Target text focus**

Although I am suggesting that we should look beyond local issues of equivalence, when a work of literature is translated, it ought to be acknowledged as such – as Kirsten Malmkjær sets out, the very decision to translate induces a particular relationship with the source text (2004: 15). However, as Cronin explains, focussing on comparisons of source and target texts “ignores the fact that most people who read a translation do so because they do not speak the source language” (1996: 2). The concentration on comparisons of source and target texts within translation studies can be inward-looking, and exclusive – often

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<sup>50</sup> As an exception see Saldanha (2011) on target text analysis revealing the translator’s art (2011: 237).

<sup>51</sup> See too van Peer (1986; 2007) on heightened difficulty in the language of the text slowing the reading process.

keeping out, or of little interest to, those who cannot access the source language.<sup>52</sup>

In this study I will refer to the source texts – and alternative translations – where this is particularly illuminating, or helpful in underlining the particularity of the lexical choices of these poets. However, I am primarily concerned with the relation of these target texts to the audience(s) receiving them, to the poets creating them, to their compositional context, and to the factors affecting their translation – accordingly I will focus on the target texts.

It is relevant that these writers are first and foremost well-known poets – this informs the translations they produce and how they are received. Translations by these poets are likely to be read for their own value precisely because of their perceived originality, rather than as a mere conduit to the original author. These factors place considerable emphasis on the translations themselves, and their place in the target culture, rather than on their interaction with a source text. A study which is interested in writers choosing to engage in translation, and which considers lexical and stylistic choices in relation to individual identity and context, is best served by a primary focus on the products which result from the translation effort.

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<sup>52</sup> Few readers (including critics) are likely to be fluent in the eleven original languages of Paulin's collection – Paulin himself does not speak all of them and often works from English translations (2004: iv).

## **1.6 Research questions and chapter breakdown**

In exploring the concerns set out in this chapter, I have structured this thesis as a response to five research questions:

1. Is there a specific style of translation displayed by these Northern Irish poets?
2. How does the use of dialect in these translations affect the reader experience?
3. Are these translations deliberately subversive in their use of language?
4. Why might these translators choose to engage in the act of translation?
5. Does dialogism in these texts have the potential to bring about renewal?

The questions will be addressed over three chapters.

In Chapter 2 I will respond to research questions one and two – that is:

1. Is there a specific style of translation displayed by these Northern Irish poets?
2. How does the use of dialect in these translations affect the reader experience?

I will consider the use of dialect in these translations from the perspective of the reader. In the first section I will focus on the lexical patterning in these texts, and the extent to which instances of dialect are foregrounded. I will emphasise that this creates an unexpected, strange reading experience (differently strange in each translation) – the geographical specificity of the language has a dislocating effect. In the second section I will investigate the theoretical and ethical implications of choosing to use dialect in translation, examining Venuti's depiction of translation as a form of "ethnocentric violence" (2008: 16). Finally, I will also consider the extent to which the lexical patterns and variety in these texts can be viewed as suggesting multiple interpretive possibilities.

In Chapter 3 I will respond to research questions three and four – that is:

3. Are these translations deliberately subversive in their use of language?
4. Why might these translators choose to engage in the act of translation?

I will consider whether the use of dialect is a subversive intervention, undermining Standard English and challenging our perceptions of the language appropriate for canonical texts. In focussing increasingly on the linguistic *variety* of these texts I will explore how English is pluralised, considering these translations as a form of postcolonial resistance. But I will then draw on contemporary postcolonial theorists to examine how the use of dialect and heteroglossia in these texts may respond to the more recent situation in (Northern) Ireland. In the second section, this chapter considers the lexical choices of these poets as a process of *personal* intervention and exploration – responding to personally resonant concerns which are traceable through their other works. I suggest that the process of making lexical choices in translation offers a space for these poets to think about their own relationship with the language they use.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I will respond to research question five:

5. Does dialogism in these texts have the potential to bring about renewal?

Throughout Chapter 4 I will focus on the creative potential of the interaction of languages, and how this dialogical interrelation is emphasised by the structural compression of these poems. Drawing on Muldoon's notion of 'concomitancy' in Irish literature (2008), I propose that the mix of different language varieties in these works can, in fact, suggest *similarity*, and the interconnectedness of different worlds. Ultimately, in this chapter I will suggest that these translations can be thought of as palimpsests; that is, texts where multiple languages and traces of languages and other cultures can be found, a testament to cultural riches and "the language's hidden wealth" (Heaney, 1999b: 16). The layering of language can be viewed as enhancing and enriching, for these texts and for the individual lexicons of these poets.

## 1.7 Conclusion

In Paulin's 'Chuckling it Away' (translating Heinrich Heine) the narrator describes how he is "twinged by different musics" (2004: 66) – affected by multiple pulls of belonging (affiliated to both Ireland and England; indeed, there are significant synergies between the narrator's position, and that of Paulin himself – see 1.2.4). Similarly, Carson's statement, quoted at the outset of this chapter, also paints a picture of confused allegiances, locating him somewhere between Irish and English, open to both, but not clear where he really belongs. We could take Carson's or Paulin's position as analogous to the state of the translator more generally – in a median position between the source and target texts, and languages, and unclear of his or her loyalties. I do not wish to reduce these poets' linguistic trials to a clichéd sense of tension between source and target affiliations. Rather, in this thesis, I will emphasise the productive and *creative* aspects of this linguistic confusion and openness to linguistic variety. Chris Jones has observed that Heaney's translation of *Beowulf* fits into a wider narrative in his work: "that of coming to terms with a sense of linguistic binarism, and reconciling the twin poles of a literary inheritance" (2006: 11). Whilst I am wary of such conclusions of linguistic 'reconciliation',<sup>53</sup> I agree that the translation is a step away from binarism, and that it responds to Heaney's personal linguistic experiences and background. I would argue, in fact, that linguistic selection in translation is one means of processing these experiences, and that all of these points can be extended to Carson and Paulin, albeit to different degrees. Such an interim position, whilst personally enriching, can also be artistically so. The use of dialect and heteroglossia in these texts can be viewed as subversive, and can be used to undermine ideas of linguistic purity. But such stylistic devices also creatively expand the parameters of these texts and the individual lexicons of these poets. Ultimately, the use of "different musics" (Paulin, 2004: 66) in these translations offers these poets a more nuanced way of artistically exploring and understanding that most central and complicated concern: "our selves, our identity" (Culture Northern Ireland, 2011: n.p.).

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<sup>53</sup> See also Jonathan Bate on this 'reconciliation' (2010: 47).

## Chapter 2 – Visible dialect and the problem of interpretation

### 2.1 Introduction

A most disturbing strange discordant noise

(Carson, 2002: 186)

[...] every language is as Greek  
to him as his is double-Dutch to us

(Carson, 2002: 218)

As with these excerpts from Ciaran Carson's *The Inferno* (2002), this chapter concerns an encounter with unexpected, strange or startling language, and questions of intelligibility. Dante's travels through *The Inferno* are a journey in understanding, as much as a physical progression; Dante must decode, surmise, question, consider and appraise. Similarly, the reader of the three translations I am considering – Carson's *The Inferno*, Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf* (1999) and Tom Paulin's *The Road to Inver* (2004) – must be prepared to travel and decode. The worlds of these texts, and the language presenting them, are often unfamiliar and unusual, just as *The Inferno* is an unknown, constantly surprising environment. The "disturbing strange discordant noise" of these texts – the northern Hiberno-English dialect they employ, and, beyond this, the lexical variety they display – compels the reader to engage in ongoing linguistic comprehension. At times even language familiar to the reader becomes unusual or uncertain; everything begins to look like "Greek" or "double-Dutch". The active engagement required to process the language of these texts, and their idiosyncrasies, draws the reader into a consideration of the status of these texts as translations, and the prominent role of the translator in generating the "discordant noise". It is ultimately through an encounter with difference (Greek, double-Dutch and more) and a Dantesque process of decoding, that we are invited to view the interpretive possibilities inherent in the act of translation.



This chapter responds to the first two research questions I set out in Chapter 1, namely:

1. Is there a specific style of translation displayed by these Northern Irish poets?
2. How does the use of dialect in these translations affect the reader experience?

The chapter will begin by examining distinctive lexical patterns in the translations – the instances of foregrounded dialect – and the effect this may have on the reader.<sup>54</sup> I will highlight the dislocation that arises from the use of dialect in the target texts, examining the words, phrases, syntax and cultural signifiers that generate the geographical particularity of these translated works. Analysis will demonstrate that these lexical choices in their opacity, or their opposition to standard usage, complicate the reading experience – they “invite audiences to interpretation” (van Peer et al., 2007: 198).

The second section engages with the broader ethical concerns raised by the foregrounding of stylistic elements in the target texts. I will examine what has been written by the translators themselves about their intentions in using dialect in their translations, and the relationship they perceive between this dialect and the source texts. This will involve a discussion of the ethical considerations around the ‘reconquering’ of a foreign text to make it relate to a contemporary target audience – or, as Lawrence Venuti has it, the “ethnocentric reduction” of the original to target language values (2008: 15). I will critique the extent to which such theories – including Venuti’s domestication and foreignization (2008: 15-16) – can helpfully be applied to these texts, given their multiple potential audiences (British, Irish and more), and therefore whether such terms are useful in describing actual translations and their relation to their readers.

Finally, in examining these translators’ choices – their idiosyncratic lexical selections – I will consider these translators as readers, and explore their

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<sup>54</sup> See 1.3.1 and 2.2.1 for further discussion of foregrounding.

interpretive relation to the source texts. I will touch on the lexical range in these translations as a sign of interpretive possibilities in these texts – and in translation more generally.

## 2.2 Reading dialect

### 2.2.1 The “strange discordant noise”: textual effects

As set out in Chapter 1, this thesis concerns the use of northern Hiberno-English: “the language of everyday use in Ireland” (Dolan, 2012: xx). In the sections which follow (2.2.2.1 – 2.2.2.10) I will use close textual analysis to illustrate the particular styles of these translated poems, and the ways in which they are distinctively marked.

Jean Boase-Beier stresses the particular demands made of the reader of both poetry and translations. She asserts: “In poetry, even elements that would not be considered to be repeated in prose are more noticeable, and more likely to be seen as a stylistic device” (2011: 129); even standard patterns of language can appear heightened. Similarly: “translation enhances literary characteristics, leading to a translated text being more creative, and demanding more creative reading, than an untranslated text” (2011: 62).<sup>55</sup> Boase-Beier suggests that the way in which translated texts, and poetry, work means that we perceive a particularly heightened style, and that this asks more of the reader. If we accept Boase-Beier’s assertions, it would follow that translated poetry could be described as a particularly demanding genre.

The deliberate heightening of language is key for this study. As explained in Chapter 1, ‘foregrounding’ relates to the significance conferred upon particular aspects of a text, and relates to unevenness, with “some features attracting more attention than others” (Boase-Beier, 2006a: 130); cognitively this obliges the reader to engage fully with the text (*ibid.*). In the view of Willie van Peer, Jèmeljan Hakemulder and Sonia Zyngier, foregrounded language (“deviation”) relates to the strangeness or unexpectedness discerned by the reader: “the incongruity that readers and listeners *perceive*” in the language of a text (2007: 198; italics in original). Of course, ‘the reader’ is, in itself, a problematic concept –

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<sup>55</sup> For further discussion of creative reading see 2.3.3.2.

Boase-Beier notes that “the effects [of the original] are different for each reader and potentially for each reading” (2011: 100); of course, this is also true of readings of the translated text.

However, this leaves us with the problem of generalising about idiosyncratic interpretations. There have been empirical studies of the reading experience, specifically, the effects of foregrounding – see, for example, van Peer et al. (2007). In that work, Study 1 considers the effects of six different versions of a single line of poetry, ranging from a highly foregrounded line to one with no foregrounded features. The authors found that level of foregrounding reliably predicted the degree of foregrounding effects seen in the readers’ responses (2007: 205-206). So, whilst we cannot say that all readers will always provide identical interpretations of a given text, it is possible to point to elements of a text and highlight how, in deviating from a norm (such as a grammatical norm), or from a stylistic pattern in the text, these elements draw attention to themselves and create specific effects.

Therefore, in highlighting the potential effects created by the prominent use of dialect terms, syntax and grammar in these translations, I will concentrate on the ways in which these elements complicate or disrupt a smooth reading experience. I will also illustrate the layering of effects: some potential interpretations or effects will only be available to certain readers with specific knowledge, or with access to a particular cultural framework.<sup>56</sup> I will suggest that the layering of different potential meanings is, in fact, part of the interesting complexity of these texts.

For each text I will concentrate first on lexical patterns, and then consider how certain stylistic choices made by these poets may appear to relocate these texts. The analysis set out in this initial section (2.2) will provide a basis for the discussion of ethical positions in the second half of the chapter (2.3), where the visibility and unusual nature of the lexical choices will be linked to the

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<sup>56</sup> For example, political allusions to Northern Ireland in Paulin’s collection (see 2.2.2.8).

manipulation inherent in the act of translation, and the degree of interpretation required by the reader.

Finally, in describing these linguistic patterns and effects, I am asserting that these translations both demand, and reward, this process of close reading.

### **2.2.2.1 Reading *Beowulf***

I will start with Heaney's translation of the Old English epic *Beowulf*, as, of the texts I am considering, this translation has received the most attention on account of its dialect elements. *Beowulf* is an Anglo-Saxon tale of legendary heroics. Its author is unknown, and the date of its composition is disputed – its manuscript dates from the tenth or eleventh century, but it may have been composed as early as the eighth century (Bate, 2010: 47).<sup>57</sup> Written in heavily alliterative verse, it provides a particular challenge for translators, who have nonetheless lined up to tackle the work – their recent ranks include: Michael Alexander (2001; first published in 1973), Michael Swanton (1997; first published in 1978), Kevin Crossley-Holland (1982; an adaptation for children), R.M. Liuzza (2013; first published in 1999) and J.R.R. Tolkien (2014; published posthumously).

Hugh Magennis' survey of the reception of Heaney's *Beowulf* notes the popularity of the translation upon publication, but observes that some reviews were not wholly supportive of the translation's Irish diction (2011: 161; Katie Wales defines diction as "all the lexical items in a text or as used by an author" – 2001: 108). Magennis describes Heaney as honing "a kind of writing that is in one sense the antithesis of global" (2011: 162), developing a particularly local voice.

The distinctive style of this translation is most noticeable in the Hiberno-English dialect terms and idiomatic phrases, and in that local voice which colours the text (Wales defines this sense of voice as "'one who speaks' in a narrative", rather

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<sup>57</sup> See Bjork and Obermeier (1998: 13-34) for analysis of these issues.

than the idea of perspective or point of view – 2001: 406). Of course, the sense of *Beowulf* as having a particular voice (a “certain strangeness in the diction” – Heaney, 1999a: xxix) may have been reinforced by Heaney reading his own translation – this recording makes it easier to ‘hear’ the poem in a Northern Irish brogue. The fact that Heaney highlighted distinctive linguistic elements in his translator’s introduction (1999a: xxv-xxx) has also perhaps guided interpretations of the text.

Throughout Heaney’s translation, northern Hiberno-English dialect terms are woven into the rhythms and patterns of the alliterative work, and therefore carefully stressed. To take one example, *Beowulf* describes Grendel’s final moments: “He is hasped and hooped and *hirpling* with pain, / limping and looped in it” (1999a: 31, my italics). The dialect word, “hirpling”, is followed by its approximation in Standard English: “limping” (the OED Online defines ‘to hirple’ as “to walk lamely”, mainly used in Scottish and northern dialects).<sup>58</sup> The rhyme across the phrase (“hooped” and “looped”), the alliteration and the repetition of words meaning ‘to limp’ stress the repetitive, patterned nature of a limping gait. The double syllables of “hirpling” and “limping” in the middle of the single stresses of “hooped”, “hasped” and “looped” draw attention to their pairing – they break the pattern as a limp breaks the regular beat of a walk, in a moment of iconicity (literature can be considered iconic in that “its form may strive to imitate in various ways the reality it presents” – Wales, 2001: 193). The dialect word is particularly emphasised: third in an alliterative trio of adjectives, none of which are standard descriptive terms in modern English (although the others are perhaps more comprehensible).

Similarly, when the news of *Beowulf*’s death is finally given, the narrator describes the raven: “how he *hoked* and ate” (1999a: 95, my italics) – Bernard Share says that “hoke” is used in Ulster, meaning to “dig, scoop out, rummage

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<sup>58</sup> This demonstrates some of the linguistic influences on northern Hiberno-English (see 1.2.2, and Maguire, 2012: 69).

through” (2003: 155).<sup>59</sup> Here again, the dialect term is emphasised by the alliteration leading to it across the phrase (and into the next line, where “how he” is repeated). In this instance the overall image is unsettling: in the next line we discover that the raven has been hoking and eating from the body of the hero, Beowulf, himself – the use of the colloquial “hoke” seems almost disrespectful in this context (C.I. Macafee, for example, defines a “bin hoker” as a person who rummages through bins – 1996: 174). Here, the startling image is reinforced by the unusual lexical selection.

This pattern repeats throughout *Beowulf*: dialect terms are consistently drawn into alliterative sequences – seen again in the line “from Unferth the boaster, less of his *blather*” (1999a: 31, my italics), with blather meaning “nonsense” (Share, 2003: 29), and the dismissive dialect term emphasised at the end of the line.<sup>60</sup> In all of these examples, the combination with the alliterative elements may weave the dialect into the overall patterning of the text, but it also throws stress onto the atypical lexical items. As Boase-Beier has observed, patterns are an obvious way to foreground, but “Breaking the pattern can foreground [particular elements] even more, if the pattern is first established strongly enough to attract the reader’s attention” (2006a: 128), as happens in different ways in these examples. Heaney’s dialect terms give him a wider range of alliterative options, and they help to reinforce the alliterative patterning of the text, but in so doing they also receive more textual emphasis. For the reader, not all of these terms would be equally inaccessible, or strange. “Blather” will be more easily understood from the context (and is more widespread in use), whereas “hirpling” or “hoked” may be less easily intuited. In all cases, the presence of a word not automatically decoded signals difference.

This sense of difference is indicated from the outset of Heaney’s *Beowulf*. The opening line is much discussed for the challenge the first word (“Hwæt”) poses to translators (see, for example, Flood, 2014: n.p.). Heaney renders this as “So.”

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<sup>59</sup> Again, the word is Scottish (of German origin – Share, 2003: 155), but is familiar locally to Heaney (1999a: xxix-xxx).

<sup>60</sup> “Blather” (or “blether”) is used in Scottish and northern dialects (OED Online).

(1999a: 3) – a single-word sentence, rather than the start of a longer sentence, as in the original (seen opposite the first page of Heaney’s translation). The use of “so” in this way sets the colloquial tone and voice for the work. “So” of course exists in Standard English, but it is not usually employed in this fashion as a stand-alone phrase, and not typically as the first word in a classical epic (early in *Beowulf* Heaney repeatedly uses “so” to open sentences – see 1999a: 6-8, where it is used five times).<sup>61</sup> Of course translators (like other authors) often seek to capture the reader’s attention through an arresting opening, precisely as Heaney does here (cf. the discussion generated by the opening of Emily Wilson’s *The Odyssey* (2017), specifically her translation of “polytropos” as “complicated” – Miller, 2017: n.p.).

Following this opening gambit, about ten lines later the narrator introduces Shield Sheafson’s son, Beow, describing his birth as a gift from God to a struggling people:

[...] He knew what they had *tholed*,  
the long times and *troubles* they’d come through (1999a: 3; my italics).

Here, Heaney brings the dialect verb ‘to thole’ (meaning to “suffer, endure, put up with” – Dolan, 2012: 252),<sup>62</sup> together with “troubles”, not a dialect word, but, in combination, or to a reader with Northern Ireland in mind, a nod to the conflict there (the Troubles).<sup>63</sup> We may also note the colloquial contraction in “they’d” (for ‘they had’). In contrast, Alexander’s well-respected translation offers a less remarkable series of lexical choices:

[...] the griefs long endured  
were not unknown to Him, the harshness of years  
without a lord (2001: 3).

The word “trouble” (or its variants) echoes throughout Heaney’s translation – see, for example, “time of trouble” and “troubled time” only a few hundred lines later (1999a: 8). This lexical tic could be read as an ongoing subtle reference to

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<sup>61</sup> Heaney’s justification for “so” in terms of equivalence with the original is considered in 2.3.1.

<sup>62</sup> Again, “tholed” shows the effect Scottish settlers had on northern Hiberno-English (Maguire, 2012: 69). Heaney’s use of “tholed” is explored further in 3.2.2.1.

<sup>63</sup> Heaney’s *Beowulf* was first published in 1999; the first IRA ceasefire was in 1994, with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998.



the hostilities. We might even conclude, with Terry Eagleton (1999), that the cycles of violence seen in *Beowulf* have their parallels in the Northern Irish situation – I think this linguistic repetition has a role to play in facilitating this type of modern analogy (I will examine these links with the political situation in Ireland more fully in Chapters 3 and 4). For now, what is important is that this talismanic reference appears on the opening page of the epic.

This initial section of *Beowulf* ends with: “That was one good king” (lauding Shield Sheafson – 1999a: 3). Once again, the placement of idiomatic language (concluding both the line and the tone-setting opening section) brings emphasis. This phrase is unusual on two counts; firstly, Standard English would more usually say ‘a good king’, rather than the ‘one good king’ – Alexander gives the more familiar “He was a good king!” (2001: 3).<sup>64</sup> Secondly, ‘that’ is often used as a demonstrative in Hiberno-English dialect where ‘this’ (or in this case another word, for example, ‘he’) might be more usual, as in the phrase “That’s a fine morning” (Dolan, 2012: xxvi).<sup>65</sup> Heaney’s conversational phrase concludes the opening passage in the same vernacular vein as it started with that informal “so”.

In short, by the time the reader has finished the first fifteen lines of Heaney’s translation they have encountered dialect words and idiomatic expressions and syntax which set the tone for the rest of the work, and which announce a particularly northern Hiberno-English voice. It is a signal of intent.

Even given all of this, Chris Jones contends that there is a “low rate of frequency” for the dialect terms which bring an “Irish colouring” to Heaney’s *Beowulf* (2006: 232 – he estimates one occurrence in every 160 lines). However, although Magennis acknowledges *Beowulf* is largely written in Standard English (2011: 162), he says this Standard English is insistently inflected by the usage of Heaney’s local speech area (ibid.) – for Magennis the language is “more thoroughly and consistently Irish than many commentators appreciate” (2011:

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<sup>64</sup> Heaney describes the use of “one” here as “Ulster vernacular” (1999b: 16).

<sup>65</sup> ‘That’ is not usual as an intensifier in Standard British English, but *is* used in *American* English (‘that was one hell of a burger’).

168). Beyond the dialect words, many of the individual phrases Heaney uses also convey a Northern Irish voice in their underlying idiomatic grammar (albeit that in the main the translation uses the grammar of Standard English – Magennis, 2011: 167). Heaney’s grammatical deviations are not routinely considered (perhaps as Heaney’s introduction guides us to focus on the dialect words themselves).

When Hrothgar leaves the mead-hall before Grendel’s attack we are told he “had *to be away / to his night’s rest*” (1999a: 22; my italics) – here the phrase ‘to be away to’ is an idiomatic substitute for ‘to go’ (cf. Macafee, 1996: 10). Similarly, the coastguard declares: “*I’m away to the sea*” (1999a: 12; my italics), and before diving into the lake, the narrator says Beowulf “was impatient *to be away*” (1999a: 49, my italics; here meaning ‘gone’ – Macafee, 1996: 10). When Beowulf urges Wiglaf to inspect the dragon’s treasure he says “Away you go” (1999a: 86; cf. Alexander’s formal “Make haste” – 2001: 98). Alexander does use “be away to his night’s rest” (2001: 25) for Hrothgar’s departure, but he does not repeat the structure, whereas Heaney’s use of it accords with other choices in his translation. Each instance is likely to feel a little strange, and the alert reader may even pick up on the repeated unusual construction.

When Shield’s funeral is described at the start of the epic, treasure is loaded on top of him, and we are told “it would travel *far / on out into* the ocean’s sway” (1999a: 4, my italics). The line split here draws attention to a characteristic of Hiberno-English which John Harris calls “prepositional chaining”, in which “complex directional and locational meanings are expressed by combining different prepositions” (1993: 173). The convoluted example given by Harris is “Come on out from in under the table” (ibid.), but less extreme instances are used throughout Heaney’s work – for example “the boat was on water, / *in close under* the cliffs (1999a: 9, my italics). In contrast, Liuzza’s prosaic “moored under the cliffs” (2013: 67) and Alexander’s description of the boat *moving* “hard in by headland” (2001: 10) are not as excessive as Heaney’s sequence, which responds only to the factual “bāt under beorge” (literally ‘boat under [a/the] cliff’) in the original (Liuzza, 2013: 66).

Paul Simpson observes that “we anticipate sense units and we search out and process first (what look like) complete units” (2012: 359). In the example given above, the line appears to end with “would travel far” (which would make sense), but reading on we realise that the phrase is actually the idiomatic “far on out”. The structure of this phrase mirrors the semantics (“on out” extends the travel into the next line). The usual phrase shifts as reading progresses, becoming odder; the “sense unit requires a conceptual overhaul” (Simpson, 2012: 359). The reader’s attention is drawn to the unusual phrasing (and hence to linguistic difference) in this overhaul, as also occurs with the phrase “had to be away / to his night’s rest” (1999a: 22; in contrast, Alexander’s use of this phrase does not carry over the line break). Although at times Alexander’s language may *seem* similar, his choices (and, similarly, Liuzza’s) do not require an equivalent “conceptual overhaul”.

These non-standard grammatical instances are clearly not as obviously unusual as the dialect terms explored above. However, as Peter Stockwell has said, even elements which are “at the very edge of or even below the level of consciousness” can affect the overall reading experience (2013: 267). In essence, although each instance may be minute, the *cumulative* effect of these deviations from Standard English helps to generate the distinctive local voice of the work.

#### **2.2.2.2 *Beowulf* – locating the poem**

Beyond the use of dialect terms and idiomatic grammar, specific aspects of *Beowulf*’s setting are also described in terms particular to Ireland.

When Grendel starts his attack on the Geats we are told: “he journeyed on ahead / and arrived at the *bawn*” (1999a: 24, my italics),<sup>66</sup> and when Hrothgar describes the local monsters, he pictures them living on “windswept crags / and treacherous *keshes*” (1999a: 45). Both “bawn” (a particularly talismanic word for

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<sup>66</sup> Note again the prepositional chaining. “Bawn” is used multiple times: 1999a: 18; 43.

Heaney – see 3.2.3), and “kesh”, have particular historic resonances. “Bawn” is the anglicised word for dwellings built by the English planters in Ireland (or “a fortified enclosure”, from the Irish “bábhun”<sup>67</sup> – OED Online). “Kesh” means a “bridge [...] across a river or bog” (Dolan, 2012: 142). However, more controversially (politically), it also suggests the name of an infamous prison in Northern Ireland, Long Kesh (subsequently ‘the Maze’ – *ibid.*), which was used to house political prisoners, including the hunger strikers of the 1980s.<sup>68</sup> The appearance of the word “maze” some five lines later (in a “maze of tree-roots” – 1999a: 45) seems to reinforce the political sense of this passing allusion. Alexander’s less marked choices highlight the particularity of Heaney’s options: for “bawn” Alexander selects “hall” (2001: 28 – and, later, “dwellings”, 2001: 48), for “keshes” he has “fen-paths” (2001: 50, mirroring the Old English “fengelād” – Liuzza, 2013: 136), and the “maze of tree-roots” becomes “crag-rooted trees” (2001: 50).

Such references are reinforced by some of the more modern turns of phrase in Heaney’s translation which (as with “troubles”) seem to position the text at a particular moment in Irish history. When Beowulf explains the wars between the Swedes and the Geats he relates how “Hostilities broke out”, describing the sons of the Swedish king as “refusing to make peace”, “campaigning violently” and “setting up / terrible ambushes” (1999a: 78). At this point Alexander selects “broke into bitter war”, “they would not keep / peace”, “active in war” and “plotted many / a treacherous ambush” (2001: 88). Here Heaney’s language echoes the discourse around the Northern Irish conflict; in particular, “refusing to make peace” carries the tone of failed conflict negotiations in a way that “would not keep peace” does not. Similarly, “campaigning violently” might be said to echo the campaign of violence adopted by the IRA – and then loyalist paramilitary groups – during the Troubles (and is more specific than Alexander’s “bitter war”). These phrases are clearly not *dialect*, but in evoking a particular type of discourse they are tied (in a different way) to location. Each of Heaney’s

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<sup>67</sup> Dolan spells this “bábhún” (2012: 19).

<sup>68</sup> Ten republican prisoners died after going on hunger strike in protest at having their status as ‘political prisoners’ removed (Mulholland, 2002: 107-9; 112-14).

selections is not unique to the Northern Irish situation,<sup>69</sup> but the accumulation of such phrases throughout the text reinforces the general sense of allusion to the “local row” (Kavanagh in Davis, 2010: 92).

Of course, not all of these reference points will be equally available to every reader. The link between “keshes” and “maze” is perhaps the product of a Northern Irish *reader*, as much as a Northern Irish translator. This reinforces the extent to which, as Paulin said, dialect terms may become a “secret sign” when inserted into literature (1983a: 18). They are the literary equivalent of a knowing wink.

These elements which are so closely bound up with Irish history and politics reinforce the dialect terms which are stressed throughout: “hirpling”, “hoked” and “blather”, but also, for example, “keen” (1999a: 77), meaning “wail shrilly over the dead” (Dolan, 2012: 141; a keen is also an “Irish funeral song” – OED Online),<sup>70</sup> and “wean” (1999a: 77, meaning a child – Dolan, 2012: 263).<sup>71</sup> In this way, *Beowulf* is subtly recalibrated for an Irish context; Heaney “re-presents and re-positions *Beowulf* in a new cultural setting” (Magennis, 2011: 162).

The complicated mixture of worlds within *Beowulf* will be taken up in Chapter 4. In that chapter I will also explore the *temporal* mix: the historical nature of many of Heaney’s lexical choices makes them *seem* somehow more authentic, as if closer to the Old English original – for example, Heaney uses the word “sept” (1999a: 54), meaning “a subdivision of a clan”, originally in Ireland (OED Online). This sixteenth-century word post-dates the time of *Beowulf* but may – superficially at least – seem fitting given its historical nature and, in Heaney’s translation, its Irish resonance.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> “Ambush” appears in both translations, however as a particular paramilitary tactic used in Northern Ireland, in Heaney’s translation it matches the language reflecting the hostilities.

<sup>70</sup> Alexander, too, uses “keens” at this point (2001: 88). Heaney uses it throughout his own work – for example “the keening sea” in ‘Synge on Aran’ (1991a: 39).

<sup>71</sup> “Wean” was originally a Scottish word (Share, 2003: 344). Dolan spells it “wain” (2012: 263).

<sup>72</sup> The same could be said of the (anglicised) Old Irish word “brehon” (1999a: 48).

### 2.2.2.3 Signalling Heaney's lexical variety

At this juncture I should highlight the lexical variety in Heaney's work beyond the use of Hiberno-English dialect. Dialect words mingle with historical terms – “wassail” (1999a: 6; “lively and noisy festivities” – OED Online), or “howe” (1999a: 87; a “tumulus or [burial] barrow” – OED Online).<sup>73</sup> Occasional borrowings from other languages (“accoutrement” (1999a: 67) or “reconnoitre” (1999a: 76), both from the French) mix with, for example, Old English: “a thane” (1999a: 28; meaning “a man [in Anglo-Saxon England] who held land granted by the king or by a military nobleman” – OED Online).

Most prolifically there are also modern terms and phrases – “hanger-on” (1999a: 10) or “press-ganged” (1999a: 76) – and frequent colloquial expressions familiar to a modern-day reader: “Be on your mettle now” (1999a: 22), or “get the better / of” (1999a: 91). It is the inclusion of these colloquial phrases alongside the idiomatic dialect syntax and terms set out above that gives the work what Magennis calls its “texture of a vernacular” (2011: 168).

Prominent in this linguistic mix is Heaney's use of kennings. Wales defines a kenning as a “descriptive metaphorical compound, in the diction of [Old English] poetry”, for example “head-gem” for “eye” (2001: 228). Whilst metaphorical compounding is regarded as particularly characteristic of Old English poetry, it can also be seen more recently than *Beowulf*, for example in the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Heaney acknowledges the influence of Hopkins: 1999a: xxiii).<sup>74</sup> Although compounds obviously still exist in modern Standard English (for example ‘bedroom’, ‘night-time’ or ‘homeland’),<sup>75</sup> the *metaphorical* element of a kenning sets it apart from more standard compounds – descriptive compounding “is usually associated with literary language” (Wales, 2001: 74).

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<sup>73</sup> “Howe” is still present in Northern English (OED Online).

<sup>74</sup> See 3.3.3.2 for discussion of Heaney's idiosyncratic use of kennings.

<sup>75</sup> In English, compounds can be nouns (‘greenhouse’), adjectives (‘waterproof’) or verbs (‘push-start’) – Wales, 2001: 74.

Of course, it is difficult to avoid kennings in translating Old English poetry (cf. Ezra Pound's kenning-heavy translation of 'The Seafarer', 1963), but Heaney seems particularly wedded to the form. In *Beowulf* Heaney's kennings include, for example, "sky-roamer" (1999a: 89, meaning dragon) and "terror-monger" (1999a: 25, denoting the monster, Grendel). These kennings are densely packed into the text, and enhance its strangeness. Their prevalence draws attention to a type of special, literary language which is actively created – new words are fashioned out of other words. These words differ significantly from standard compounds used either in modern life, or, usually, in modern literature (and often use sound repetition – rhyme, assonance and/or alliteration – as in "terror-monger" above). Kennings thus look noticeable, *and* are also harder to read, and therefore more noticeable still – they slow our progress through the text (see van Peer on such "retardation" – 1986: 2). I will expand upon the lexical variation in Heaney's text throughout Chapters 3 and 4.

The odd or unexpected lexical features of Heaney's *Beowulf* are, in a sense, signalled from that initial "So" (1999a: 3). Heaney's recourse to specific northern Hiberno-English dialect terms and syntax, the combination of these with other literary devices (alliteration, placement at or across line breaks), his use of kennings and the introduction of lexical variety "hinders ease of communication" (van Peer, 1986: 2). The translated text creates persistent demands of the reader. Whilst the "search for overall sense" (Simpson, 2012: 359) is not ultimately *thwarted* – the narrative arc remains comprehensible – the reader's progress is challenged, retarded and complicated throughout.

#### **2.2.2.4 Reading *The Inferno***

*The Inferno* is a world away from *Beowulf*. The original Italian text, Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia*, was written in the early 1300s (set in 1300), and reflects the societal shifts of the contemporaneous Florentine world, from which Dante was exiled (Kirkpatrick, 2010: xi-xxxiii). The *Commedia* is a single poem – one hundred cantos divided across three separate parts: the *Inferno*, the

*Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*. Published in 2002, Carson's translation covers only the *Inferno*, describing a fictionalised journey through hell, suffused with details of the acrimonious Florentine context. Dante's narrative poem was composed in *terza rima* – that is, using a rhyme scheme with end-rhymes as follows: *aba bcb cdc...* – posing a significant challenge to the aspiring translator (Kirkpatrick, 2010: lxxxiv-civ). Nonetheless, the *Inferno* seems to bewitch translators – since Carson's translation there have been prominent new versions by Robin Kirkpatrick (2010, first published in 2006), Clive James (2013) and Philip Terry (2014) and there are even collections of Dante translations (see Griffiths and Reynolds, 2005, or Halpern, 1993).

Carson's version is characterised by northern Hiberno-English dialect terms, and colloquial turns of phrase. In a similar fashion to Heaney, specific dialect words are apparent throughout. A few examples will suffice. Dante describes, for example, the inhabitants of the fourth circle who “*girned* and roared” (2002: 44, my italics) – ‘to girn’ means to “cry, whine, or whimper” (Dolan, 2012: 113), also sometimes written ‘gern’ or ‘gurn’, and with versions still present in Northern English and Scots dialects (Macafee, 1996: 145). Later in the text Virgil describes how Corybantes conceals “the girning of her bairn” (2002: 96; meaning ‘her baby’s cries’). Here, the Hiberno-English term is paired with “bairn”, a Scots or Northern English dialect word, still used in Northern Ireland (Macafee, 1996: 13). The pairing of dialect terms (and the consonance) underlines their inclusion.

In Canto XXXI, Nimrod is referred to as a “head-the-ball” (2002: 218): whilst Share says that this simply means “fool” (2003: 150), Terence Dolan suggests this odd Hiberno-English formulation means a “crazy, happy-go-lucky sort of person” (2012: 128).<sup>76</sup> When Nimrod speaks, Dante describes how “the awful *gub* began to roar and bawl” (2002: 218; my italics). Here Carson uses “gub” as a variant of another dialect word, ‘gob’ (meaning “beak; mouth” – Dolan, 2012: 117). The term was used previously in Canto XXII, describing Hogshit, another

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<sup>76</sup> Paul Muldoon revealed that Heaney's son, Michael, referred to his father as “head-the-ball” (2013: n.p.) – Muldoon was struck by the “over-familiarity” of the term (ibid.).



monster, “from whose gub two tusks stuck out” (2002: 149).<sup>77</sup> “Gub” stands out partly as it is a non-standard spelling of a more common word: ‘gob’ is used in slang across much of the UK and Ireland (OED Online). In (repeatedly) selecting the lesser-spotted variant, Carson is deliberately gesturing to the local (in pronunciation, as much as spelling).

Carson also twists Nimrod’s famously nonsensical line (“*Raphèl mai amècche zabì almi* – Kirkpatrick, 2010: 278; italics in original), towards the local: “*Yin twa maghogani gazpaighp boke!*” (2002: 218; italics in original). Carson explains his “further garbling” of Nimrod’s words as a mix of Ulster-Scots (“yin twa”, meaning ‘one two’), pseudo-Gaelic Irish (“maghogani gazpaighp”: Hiberno-English mocking the intonations of Irish) and Ulster English (“boke” meaning vomit) – Carson, 2002: 290-1. Here multiple Irish language varieties are explicitly brought together to represent linguistic confusion.

As with Heaney’s translation, different words will be differently intelligible – from this selection, “gub” will be decipherable (as ‘gob’ appears across variations of slang in English); “head-the-ball” perhaps less immediately comprehensible (Carson added an endnote citing Share’s definition – 2002: 291). Nimrod’s line will be incomprehensible to most readers, but it is designed to be so (it *may* function as an in-joke for Irish readers).

As with *Beowulf*, here, too, attention is also focussed on dialect terms via placement and combination with other literary devices. In Canto XXII the wretch says one of the ten devils is “going to scalp my scabby *bap*” (2002: 151; my italics), with “bap” meaning “head” (Share, 2003: 15). Both the multiple forms of alliteration through the phrase (with ‘scalp’ and ‘scabby’) and the placement of “bap” at the conclusion of a line, ending on a plosive, highlight the dialect word, in a similar fashion to Heaney’s use of dialect in alliterative sequences (2.2.2.1).

In the final Canto, when Dante meets the three-headed Satan, we are told that:

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<sup>77</sup> Later Virgil tells Pluto “shut your *gob!*” (Carson, 2002: 43; my italics) – Carson’s uses of multiple variants of the same word are explored in 3.2.2.4.

He worked his three mouths like a *flax machine*  
and in each set of teeth he *scutched* a wretch (2002: 239; my italics).

This is an unusual simile with a particularly (Northern) Irish slant: linen (made from flax) was one of Ireland's and Belfast's most important industries (Mulholland, 2002: 11-12). In Carson's translation "scutched"<sup>78</sup> – the specific verb for the dressing of materials like flax (OED Online), but also meaning to "beat, smack" (Share, 2003: 284) – continues the unusual metaphor, and provides consonance with "wretch". We might also interpret this consonance as mirroring the sound of beating, in a moment of iconicity. In this example, the unusual dialect word is emphasised via the *combination* of the unexpected metaphor with the consonance and iconicity. Prompted by the original Italian (where the sinners are chewed "a guisa di maciulla" – Kirkpatrick, 2010: 306; "maciulla" means a scutch), Kirkpatrick uses "as flax combs do" (2010: 307), and Steve Ellis uses a similar metaphor to Carson: "as you'd rake flax / with a scutch" (2007: 205). However, neither translation achieves the consonance and iconicity of Carson, and so the textual effects are not as striking. Carson responds to the Italian prompt, but amplifies the local effect in his translation.

In *The Inferno*, Hiberno-English speech patterns are captured not only via specific vocabulary, but also in idiomatic turns of phrase. In Canto XIV when faced with Capaneus, Dante asks Virgil "who is *the big man* there [...]" (2002: 94, my italics; "the big man there" is repeated later in Canto XVIII – 2002: 123). Although this could be a literal description, 'the big man' is also a phrase used widely in (Northern) Ireland as a term of endearment (as in "Alright, big man!").<sup>79</sup> Additionally, however, in Northern Irish politics, it was a nickname for the Reverend Ian Paisley (perhaps the most famous unionist politician of the Troubles).<sup>80</sup> The layers of meanings here and across *The Inferno* (literal, colloquial or cultural) will be differently available to different readers – this

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<sup>78</sup> Carson earlier refers to a "scutching mill" (2002: 157). Paulin also uses this term to champion the sounds of Belfast vernacular, saying it "ought to be possible [...] to found a national literature on this *scutching* vernacular" (2003: 239; my italics).

<sup>79</sup> In *Your Pocket*, the online guide to Belfast phraseology, cites the similar "Alright big lad!" (2018: n.p.).

<sup>80</sup> An article on Paisley in *The Belfast Telegraph* opens with: "The controversial 'Big Man' of Northern Ireland politics" (McGurk, 2014: n.p.).

instance gives some indication of the potential richness of the text. A reader who *can* access all of the available potential readings may also be struck by this very multiplicity and layering.

If Carson's work seems to replicate local speech patterns, then some of the most notable uses of dialect appear in the more aggressive or confrontational scenes. Dante challenges the shade in Canto XXXII: "Who are you, that *gives out* such abuse?" (2002: 226, my italics; 'to give out' means "to criticise, to scold" – Dolan, 2012: 115). Later in the same passage Dante challenges the shade again:

[...] 'You'd better tell me *who you're called*  
or else *I'll scalp your noggin* piece by piece' (2002: 226; my italics).

Here "noggin" means "head" (Coughlan, 2017: n.p.) – rendered comprehensible for those not in the know via the verb "scalp".<sup>81</sup> In this example "who you're called" is also non-standard usage (as opposed to 'what you're called' or 'who you are'). In the previous tercet, the shade tells Dante to "give my head some peace" (2002: 226) – a common Northern Irish phrase meaning 'leave me alone'. Depending on the reader, what may also spring to mind is the contemporaneous (to the time of publication) BBC Northern Ireland television programme *Give My Head Peace*, which satirised the sectarian and political situation in Northern Ireland.<sup>82</sup> In passages such as these, the convergence of colloquial phrases with scenes of aggression could be said to link the local vernacular with adversarial or even sectarian positions.

Throughout the translation, Carson's use of contractions adds to the impression that he is replicating the flow of ordinary speech (for example "what good's that to me [...]?" – 2002: 210). Very occasionally, Carson also disrupts Standard English syntax to replicate elements characteristic of the dialect – in Canto XXXIII Ugolino's children implore their father to remove their flesh: "strip *you* it off again" (2002: 232, my italics). Here Carson inserts the personal pronoun, instead

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<sup>81</sup> None of Dolan, Macafee or Share cite "noggin" in this sense. The OED suggests "noggin" was originally boxing slang (OED Online).

<sup>82</sup> *Give My Head Peace* was broadcast by BBC Northern Ireland between 1998 and 2008.

of leaving the more usual 'strip it off again'.<sup>83</sup> Harris notes that with imperatives in "some types of Irish English [...] it's quite usual to find the pronoun being given explicit expression, as in 'Go you on!'" (1993: 157).<sup>84</sup> In this instance, the unusual syntax is emphasised by the emotive context; the additional pronoun underlines the horror of the situation (children begging their own father to eat them rather than starve). Finally, the devil, Buckybeard, asks "You want for him to talk / some more?" (2002: 150). Here there are overtones of pressure, torture or extortion, the standard question structure is curtailed (instead of the more usual 'do you want him to...?'), and the idiomatic 'for' is inserted (Harris, 1993: 141), giving a sense of the colloquial. Once again, use of non-standard syntax and idiomatic expressions converges with an aggressive scene, potentially reinforcing a link between language type and situation in the reader's mind. It is worth noting that such lines may also sound like 'translationese'; Carson's contorted syntax in *The Inferno* often (knowingly, I would suggest) gives a sense of this, and it is possible that, for some readers, the unusual Hibernicisms may at times blend into these other syntactic oddities.

#### **2.2.2.5 *The Inferno* – locating the poem**

Beyond the dialect terms and idioms, Carson's translation is situated in a landscape which relates to the Northern Irish context, with its partisan environment and sense of conflict and division.

There are elements we typically associate with Ireland, for example many different bogs: the "stinking bog" (2002: 37), a "horrible bog" (2002: 49), and even "some Irish bog" (2002: 216). Against this landscape, this "bogland with its stinking atmosphere" (2002: 58), the physical space is described in terms usually reserved for areas in conflict. It is a "series of defensive spaces" (2002: 119), and Dante encounters different zones: an "increasingly contentious zone" (2002: 7)

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<sup>83</sup> Similarly, some spirits instruct Virgil: "Come you alone" (Carson, 2002: 54).

<sup>84</sup> Paulin gives "Go you on back now" as an example of Northern Irish vernacular which resonates for him (ed. 1990: xxi – note again the prepositional chaining).

or a “murky prison zone” (2002: 66). There are frequent representations of conflict, with references to “the riot and the carnage” (2002: 68), a “field of torture” (2002: 63), a “new regime of torture” (2002: 37) and an “unspeakably embittered conclave” (2002: 45). The language highlights measures of partition and dividing lines; in Canto XI the second precinct is “segregated into private cells” (2002: 73), and in Canto XVIII there are “military barriers on every side” (2002: 119), “actual frontiers” (2002: 121) and devils form a “demon cordon” (2002: 120). Many of these instances in their modern media-speak (“conclave”, “contentious zone”) seem to situate the poem in the modern age, and in a site of (sectarian) conflict. There are very few equivalents for these elements in Kirkpatrick’s translation – exceptions are “new forms of torment” (2010: 49) where Carson selects “new regime of torture” (2002: 37) and “The massacre, the mindless waste” (2010: 85) where Carson has “the riot and the carnage” (2002: 68). Carson frequently inserts these particularly marked elements, with their associated suggestions of civil conflict, societal discord and division.

Amongst these phrases Carson repurposes “beyond the pale” (2002: 74). The phrase is now used figuratively, meaning something that is “outside the limits of acceptable behaviour” (OED Online). It originated however, with English colonial rule, and initially related to *physical* boundaries: in an Irish context, the Pale was the part of Ireland under English rule: the “eastern strip running from Dundalk to Dublin” (Foster, 1989: 4). To go ‘beyond the pale’ was to move from civilized English rule to the uncivilized lands of the Irish. In Carson’s translation, the phrase specifically refers to “those who haunt the slippery bog” (2002: 74) – Carson intensifies both images by drawing them together. Injecting the colonial phrase ‘beyond the pale’ into a text patterned with the effects of conflict brings a specific Irish twist to the language of war used here, albeit with a different temporal emphasis than “contentious zone”.

The language of dispute and division in *The Inferno* extends to the societies and individuals Dante encounters; this conflicted landscape is peopled with

“troopers” (2002: 100), “rebel brothers” (2002: 220),<sup>85</sup> and “a man who wants your vote” (2002: 198). Society is partisan and mistrusting; Dante speaks of “my clan’s concerns” (2002: 68), and the need to “broker / peace” (2002: 68), meanwhile Minos advises Dante: “mind with whom you be” (2002: 31, note the idiomatic syntax of ‘you be’ – Harris, 1993: 162). In the Third Circle, Dante cries:

what holds the future for the citizens  
of my divided city? Is there one just man  
in it? Or are they all sectarians? (2002: 40).<sup>86</sup>

The spirit’s response is similarly marked by opposition and division:

Long will they hold their banners to the skies,  
and load the other side with burdens sore,  
and other subtle torments improvise (2002: 40).

This sequence is patterned with language which could be read as evoking life in Belfast during the Troubles: from the “divided city” with its “sectarians” and language of factions (the “other side”), to the “banners” (members of the Orange Order typically parade with banners)<sup>87</sup> and the improvised “torments” of the last line – during the Troubles Improvised Explosive Devices (in effect, homemade bombs) were the commonplace weapons of war (Carr, 2017: 46). Parades were a hugely contentious issue in the years before Carson published *The Inferno* – see Mulholland on the particularly divisive Drumcree parade in Portadown in the late 1990s (2002: 138-9).<sup>88</sup> A comparison with Kirkpatrick’s translation highlights the socio-political particularity of Carson’s language. For the second passage Kirkpatrick translates:

For quite some time they’ll hold their heads up high  
and grind the others under heavy weights,  
however much, for shame, these weep and writhe (2010: 53).

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<sup>85</sup> “Rebel brothers” would be understood in an Irish context as being republicans, fighting for Irish independence.

<sup>86</sup> “One just man” is an intensifier in the same vein as Heaney’s “one good king” (2.2.2.1).

<sup>87</sup> The Orange Order was formed in 1795 to defend Protestantism in Ireland. Orangemen take part in year-round parades, climaxing on 12<sup>th</sup> July, commemorating William of Orange’s victory at the Battle of the Boyne (1690). Banners are also carried in republican parades (which are less prevalent). See, too, Mulholland (2002: 7-11) and CAIN (2018a: n.p.).

<sup>88</sup> Carson refers to the parades in Portadown in *The Twelfth of Never* (1998b: 57).

This passage conveys some sense of tribal oppression, but not the specific context conjured by terms such as “banners” and “improvise”. Some will of course find that such allusions in Carson’s text interfere inappropriately with Dante’s classic work to make irrelevant local comments – I will explore this ‘manipulation’ of the text in the second half of this chapter.

Most of these elements (a single reference to a “zone”, or “clan”) could not realistically be read as a direct allusion to the situation in Northern Ireland (as with “troubles” on the first page of *Beowulf* – Heaney, 1999a: 3). The cumulative effect, however, although not over-wrought, is a slow-build to significance. Local colloquialisms are reinforced by their use in confrontational situations, and by the characterisation of the setting as a place of division and strife. If, as readers, we are prepared to find the landscape of *The Inferno* strange – given both its temporal distance (set in 1300), and its fantastical setting and conceptual framework (describing devils, sinners, and the circles of hell) – the characteristics of the Irish landscape and the particularities related to the Troubles add a further twist. In this translation, Carson takes an anticipated strange context, and makes it stranger still.

Of course, some culturally specific aspects of Carson’s translation are only likely to be picked up by a reader familiar with the Northern Irish context. Interpreting “banners” as an allusion to Orange Order parades, hearing the ghost of Ian Paisley in “the big man”, and glimpsing a local BBC comedy programme in “give my head some peace”, are the product of a (Northern) Irish background. These cultural artifacts would only really ‘speak’ to a reader for whom they are habitual. Other elements, however – the sectarians, zones, divided cities and people in opposition – are more common images of Northern Ireland, and therefore more widely intelligible as such (although perhaps still relatively opaque to an American reader, for example). It is also worth acknowledging that the allusions to the Troubles in Carson’s translation are not as all-pervasive as in much of his original poetry, for example *Belfast Confetti* (1989) or *The Twelfth of Never* (1998b). And Terry’s more recent translation (*Dante’s Inferno*, 2014) contains many more overt references to the Northern Irish conflict (including

explicit allusions to the hunger strikes – 2014: 144-146). It is worth noting, too, that Carson does not crowbar Irish references in everywhere: Cerberus “whines” (rather than “girns”) in Canto IX (2002: 61), and “dreary fen” occurs one line after “melancholy bog” in Canto VII (2002: 48), suggesting a very different geographical spot (typically the low-lying areas of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire – OED Online). For all the socio-cultural specificity of *The Inferno*, then, Carson uses a judicious hand, balancing his cultural references against the other unusual elements of his translation.

#### 2.2.2.6 Signalling Carson’s lexical variety

As with *Beowulf*, Hiberno-English is not the only ‘voice’ in this text, which is notable for the range of language varieties. Although this is true of all of these poets, to a greater or lesser extent, plurality of tongues particularly comes to the fore in Carson’s translation. Colloquial phrases like “bloody awful situation” (2002: 90) rub up against archaic exclamatory interjections (“Then lo!” – 2002: 19) and inverted syntax: “also satisfied / will be the wish that you’ve been keeping secret” (2002: 64). Cultural borrowings, for example “visage” (2002: 16, from the French) or “diktat” (2002: 68, from the German), mix with other language varieties, such as “nowt” (2002: 69, from Northern English) or “on their butts” (2002: 211, from American English). Technical terms or rare usages abound – including “assize” (2002: 37, an Old French word for a trial or legislative sitting – OED Online) and “palisade” (2002: 43, originally a Middle French word meaning “a fence made of wooden pales or stakes [...] forming an enclosure or defence” – OED Online). But these terms mingle with more modern choices – “cul-de-sac” (2002: 1), “hyper-frenzied” (2002: 127) or “baby-babble” (2002: 222) – and with expletives and scatological language: “smeared with shit” (2002: 124) and “their buttocks’ crack” (2002: 134). There are intertextual references – “jabberwock” as explored in Chapter 1 (1.3.3), and three early references to the “wasteland” (2002: 2; 4; 11 – recalling T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, 1922). Explicitly modern cultural references creep in, too: “herbal essence” (2002: 28), the name of a shampoo, or “twiglet” (2002: 85), literally a small twig,



but also a well-known brand of snack. Carson also makes language morph: in describing a beast who “will entangle them to death” (2002: 5), he makes a usually passive verb active.

Finally, Carson’s poetry engages in linguistic play, re-examining puns and clichéd phrases: “The short of it / is much too long” (2002: 88), and “odious odours” (2002: 71). Phrases often seem near to familiar language, but differ in unexpected ways: for example, “his sightless retinue” (2002: 41 – playing on the proximity of ‘retinue’ to ‘retina’, and bringing together “sightless” with imagery relating to eyesight), or “Over her dead *bones*” (2002: 137, my italics, instead of ‘dead body’). These phrases require additional readerly engagement (often involving “conceptual overhaul” – Simpson, 2012: 359). Again, it is possible that some readers will assume that some of these expressions or reformulations are Hiberno-English.

This multiplicity and interaction of language varieties will be explored further in Chapters 3 and 4, but it is important to highlight these clashing tongues, and to note that Hiberno-English dialect, often opaque or unexpected in itself, competes for ‘air-time’ with the text’s other voices. The reader processing the poem’s Northern Irish colloquialisms and geographical or cultural references does so against a backdrop of shifting, competing voices.

#### **2.2.2.7 Reading *The Road to Inver***

Finally, I will turn to Paulin’s work. *The Road to Inver* (2004) is a collection of sixty-two translated poems (and one original poem), primarily by European poets writing within the last two centuries (including Arthur Rimbaud, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Francis Ponge). Paulin occasionally ventures further afield (translating the Palestinian poet, Walid Khazendar) or further back in time (including the ancient Greek dramatist, Aeschylus) – for a list of the translated poems with their source texts see Appendix 1. Paulin translated these works between 1975 and 2003 – *The Road to Inver* includes all of his translations from

this period, alongside “dozens” of new translations (2004: fly-leaf). Many of the translations were published previously (Paulin, 2004: iv), with some even appearing in multiple previous locations: for example, eight of the translations appeared in Paulin’s collection *Fivemiletown* (1987), and four of these were initially published in *The Faber Book of Political Verse* (1986), which Paulin edited (further details of repeat publications can be found in Appendix 1). In *The Road to Inver* each translation appears without the original poem, and with only the surname of the original author beneath the new title.

Paulin is known for his attachment to the vernacular, and the direct, colloquial tone of his poetry. His tract, *A New Look at the Language Question* (1983a) is a call to arms, encouraging other writers to use Hiberno-English. It is not surprising that Paulin’s own translations are coloured by these forms (including dialect terms, grammatical particularities and orthographical representations of local accents), and that they often significantly disrupt the reader’s encounter with the text.

Compared to Heaney or Carson, Paulin more consistently introduces Hiberno-English grammar and syntax into his translations (homogenising disparate sources in a way that simply does not occur with *Beowulf* or *The Inferno*). Most of these instances are not radical shifts, but minor deviations from standard grammar, which nonetheless draw attention to themselves. As I noted with Carson’s work, Hiberno-English sometimes introduces a redundant personal pronoun after a noun (Dolan, 2012: xxvi). This can be seen throughout Paulin’s poems: in “this rogue *he* doesn’t preach with the bishop’s permission” from ‘Prologue’ (2004: 24; my italics), or “Dante *he’d* to leave home” from ‘The Emigration of the Poets’ (2004: 46; my italics) – this last example contains both the additional personal pronoun and a contraction. ‘The Coastguard Station’ opens with: “Henry Snodden *and me* *we’ve* nearly forgotten” (2004: 11; my italics). Here Paulin’s strategies are layered for effect: the additional pronoun is deliberately placed in the first line, and combined with the slangy use of “and me” (rather than the more correct ‘and I’). The sentence is also in the historic present (often used in conversation to tell a story – Wales, 2001: 188). The

combination and prominence of these effects signals the type of colloquial, non-standard voice the reader can expect to encounter in this translation of Eugenio Montale's 'La casa dei doganieri'.

Other northern Hiberno-English grammatical 'abnormalities' crop up throughout. In 'The Road to Inver', the driver admits "I worried / what would happen my children" (2004: 70) – the preposition 'to' is "often omitted where it would appear in [Standard English]" (Dolan, 2012: 253). A reader may stall briefly as the omission is processed. In 'The Poem as Monument', the narrator-poet imagines that

– *whenever* priests and Vesta's holy virgins  
design a ritual pause a hush  
my fame will be visible on that hill (2004: 21; my italics).

The Standard English tendency would be to use 'when' here to describe a single moment, but, as Harris notes, one of northern Hiberno-English's non-standard tics is "the use of the conjunction *whenever* to mean simply 'when' without any implication of repeated action" (1984: 132).<sup>89</sup> Such idiomatic instances wrong-foot subconscious anticipations, thus delivering *to some readers* "the jolt that one experiences as grammatical expectation is confounded" (Boll, 2013: 81). These instances may only occur once and are often not dramatic; they are nuanced and remain close to Standard English. Nonetheless, or potentially owing to this proximity, they require a pause, and a "reorientation in interpretation" (Simpson, 2012: 359).

Elsewhere, Paulin approaches parody, employing orthographical representations of local Irish accents (Paulin is of course not the first writer to play with the orthography of dialects – cf. the poet Benjamin Zephaniah portraying Jamaican speech patterns, and the novelist Irvine Welsh using Edinburgh vernacular). In 'The Albatross' one of the mariners on deck "laughs at the poor *craychur*" (2004: 4, my italics – a phonetic spelling of 'creature'), and the narrator's beat-up Toyota in 'The Road to Inver' is "what they call a *cyar*" (2004: 71, italics in

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<sup>89</sup> Harris' example, observed in Belfast, is: "My husband died whenever I was living in the New Lodge Road" (1984: 132).

original).<sup>90</sup> In these representations, Paulin replicates difference *within* (Northern) Ireland, between northern or western accents and those in, for example, Belfast. A reader with experience of Irish speech will understand that different accents are being portrayed, *and* that a point is being made about rural and urban speech patterns, in a place where as much can be told by *how* someone speaks, as by what they say (see 1.2.2). A reader without this direct experience will still comprehend (via the italics and unorthodox spelling) that accents are being imitated, and that difference is being signalled.

Interjections are used throughout to imitate Northern Irish accents and speech patterns – for example in ‘My Name’, the narrator says his own name “sticks / *aye* sticks like a burr” (2004: 16, my italics), and ‘March, 1941’ ends with “*ack* it might not mean disaster” (2004: 73; my italics). Both “aye” and “ack” replicate the sentence-fillers of everyday speech. Often Paulin combines effects – in ‘The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath’, the narrator conjures life on a typical street: “cigarette butts carriers bus passes *ackhello*” (2004: 51, my italics). Paulin captures the local vernacular voice by orthographically combining the colloquial interjection with the greeting (and a general, breathless lack of punctuation).

The colloquial voice is one of the most striking elements of Paulin’s translations. As in Carson’s text, contractions replicate the flow of speech; however, the use is more sustained and the effect more pronounced in Paulin’s work, and seems to be deliberately so, given Paulin’s placement of these instances. In ‘The Coastguard Station’, the narrator is afraid that “very soon that unused field / *’ll* be sold as sites” (2004: 11, my italics). The contraction is emphasised as it falls at the start of a line; the reader’s eye is drawn to the awkward abridged form. In ‘Le Crapaud’ the narrator observing the toad asks “*why’m* I disgusted” (2004: 43, my italics), and in ‘The Swan’ the eponymous creature is described as “a plodder – wally – *’s* a lunkhead” (2004: 87, my italics).

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<sup>90</sup> The insertion of a ‘y’ in words like ‘car’ occurs particularly in rural parts of Northern Ireland (see Sounds Familiar, the spoken English archive – British Library, no date). ‘Cyar’ also occurs in, for example, Jamaican English.

Part of the strangeness for the reader is seeing a literary text spell out the well-worn contractions of ordinary conversation. Despite the increase in literary texts replicating informal language and speech patterns – prominent recent Irish examples include *The Glorious Heresies*, by Lisa McInerney (2015), and *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*, by Eimear McBride (2014) – the physical difficulty in processing these abridged words means the sense of “incongruity” (van Peer et al., 2007: 198) experienced in encountering this language persists (particularly as Paulin’s poems do not uniformly use colloquial language – contractions are still largely the exception, not the rule). The effect is heightened throughout by Paulin’s frequent rejection of standard punctuation. Lack of punctuation is clearly not particular to Hiberno-English, but can be seen as underlining the colloquial nature of the poetry, and the disorienting effect for the reader, who must re-read words and phrases to pin down the shifting sense.

Beyond the unusual grammatical instances, *The Road to Inver* is also littered with dialect terms. ‘From the Death Cell’ includes “seven hundred *eejits*” (2004: 19, my italics; “eejit” means a “silly person” – Dolan, 2012: 89), and the tramp in ‘Love Thy Neighbour’ is a “lucky *chancer*” (2004: 48, my italics; meaning “a crafty person” – Dolan, 2012: 52). Idiomatic phrases appear throughout: the narrator of ‘Prologue’ says “I was *founded*” (2004: 22, my italics; ‘to founder’ is “to collapse with the cold” – Dolan, 2012: 103). And certain dialect words reappear across the collection: for example, “jeuk” (which Dolan defines as “to dodge, duck out of sight” (2012: 140), but spells “jouk”) appears both in ‘Prologue’ (“jokers jeuked / through the crowd” – 2004: 23) and in ‘Darkness at Noon’ (“a little smut / that jeuks about” – 2004: 18). Similarly, Paulin uses “stocious” (meaning very drunk) in both ‘The Skeleton’ (2004: 10) and ‘Prologue’ (2004: 23).<sup>91</sup> In ‘The Lagan Blackbird’, Paulin describes how “the *wee* blackbird settles / in a *whin* bush” (2004: 15, my italics) – “whin” is a Hiberno-English word for gorse (Dolan, 2012: 266). In later poems, we also meet “a jerky *wee* spot” (2004: 18), a “*wee* pimp” (2004:19), and the “*wee* victims” (2004: 30). ‘Wee’ is not particular to Hiberno-English – it also appears in the dialects of Northern England and Scotland, used

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<sup>91</sup> As with “jeuk”, the spelling of “stocious” varies (it can be spelt “stotious”, as in Carson’s ‘Drunk Boat’ in *First Language* (1993: 37).

as a diminutive (it came to Hiberno-English from Scots – Macafee, 1996: 380). Although in several of the examples above, ‘wee’ *does* function as a diminutive (the “wee victims”, referring to a spider and a nettle; “the wee blackbird”), there is a subtle difference in Hiberno-English, where colloquially it is used primarily for emphasis (as in the question ‘would you like a wee cup of tea?’).<sup>92</sup> It is a literary tic for Paulin, as it is verbally for the Northern Irish population at large.<sup>93</sup> These repeated words, each a fairly small shift from Standard English, echo through Paulin’s collection, reinforcing each other and the colloquial voice, as they occur.

#### **2.2.2.8 *The Road to Inver* – locating the poems**

Whilst Carson’s backdrop is a series of bogs, many of Paulin’s translated poems relocate to very specific towns and places in (Northern) Ireland. *The Road to Inver* often depicts parochial environments, unlikely to be well-known outside Ireland: “dingy rainstung coasts / – dreary towns west of the Bann” (2004: 21, in ‘The Poem as Monument’), or unremarkable towns: “a hot new lunchtime / in the town of Newry” (2004: 51, in ‘The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath’). In ‘The Road to Inver’, the narrator journeys from Belfast to Inver (in Donegal, Republic of Ireland, 2004: 68), via Tempo (a village in Fermanagh, Northern Ireland). This central poem, dealing with belonging and settling, moves within the island but does not move far – it is preoccupied with the complexities of the local. In Paulin’s collection, the wide-ranging European origins of the poems (whether Irish, French, Spanish, Portuguese or German) encounter a (Northern) Irish influence, highlighted in its very unexpected juxtaposition.

The following example illustrates the relocation to an Irish locale and Northern Irish concerns. ‘The Coastguard Station’ (translating Montale) references “Teelin

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<sup>92</sup> It is often used as an endearment (Macafee, 1996: 380).

<sup>93</sup> ‘Wee’ is also talismanic for Heaney – he claimed its appearance in Burns’ ‘To a Mouse’ “opened a channel to all that old stuff back down there in my ear” (in Brown, 2002: 77).

or Carrick” before finally arriving at “Portnoo” (2004: 11; all coastal towns in Donegal). The narrator imagines the developing landscape:

[...] then we'll watch  
as a new little colony of thatched  
breezeblock cottages – *Irish Holiday Homes*  
with green plastic oilgas tanks at the back –  
as a new colony starts up all owned  
by people like us from Belfast (ibid.; italics in original).

“Colony” is clearly used figuratively in both instances, but in the Irish context it is hardly a benign term, especially as, here, the inhabitants of Belfast are moving in on another area in Ireland. The phrase “people like us” generates a sense of tribes and tribal movements, and, to those in the know, will also convey a sense of class (the well-off, white-collar workers from an urban area, readers of the imagined “*Irish Holiday Homes*”, encroaching on rural Donegal), and potentially religion (largely Protestant Belfast moving in on predominantly Catholic Donegal). This passage demonstrates the different layers of meaning that can be inferred from the language used in the translation. Paulin’s language is enough to give the reader with a cursory understanding of Irish matters a sense of power relations (“colony”, “people like us”). But, as Nigel McLoughlin has said, a reader possessing contextual knowledge creates a richer text than a naïve reader (2015: n.p.) – here the reader with more specific knowledge is rewarded by further unfolding layers of meaning: class and religious relations, and, perhaps, a sense of entitlement, as wealthy workers from Belfast acquire second homes in rural Donegal.

If Carson evokes the Northern Irish conflict in his work, Paulin is significantly more direct. The innocent-sounding coastguard station from the previous poem is, in fact, “a ruin from the Black and Tan war” (another name for the Anglo-Irish war, 1919 – 1921),<sup>94</sup> and looks like a “barracks” (2004: 11; there are, by comparison, no such political overtones in Montale’s original – 1966: 72-74). Similarly, by the end of ‘The Skeleton’ the “pachles” from the first line become “squaddies” (2004: 10) – although we suspect they are soldiers (they appear on a

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<sup>94</sup> The ‘Black and Tans’ were British “police reinforcements” recruited for this conflict (Foster, 1989: 498).

“battlefield” – *ibid.*), “squaddies” catapults them into a more modern context (Paulin’s vernacular “pachles” also responds to Paul Verlaine’s “reîtres” – French slang for a soldier).

In ‘Table’ (translating Guillaume Apollinaire) the narrator describes “that crumpled handkerchief near my *right hand, loyal*” (2004: 74, my italics). Here a benign domestic scene leads to one of Northern Ireland’s more potent symbols – the red (bloody) hand is a symbol of Ulster, and also often of loyalism and the Loyal Orders (such as the Orange Order). In this instance, to those in the know, “loyal” qualifies and prompts a re-evaluation of the banal phrase “my right hand”: a new symbol comes into focus. However, the reference also jars as the image is usually the *left* hand, prompting further re-evaluation; the symbol does not quite crystallise. Such processes of re-evaluation are characteristic of reading Paulin’s work in these poems. ‘Table’ contains no other references to Northern Ireland, and only one dialect term (“wick”, meaning “useless” – Share, 2003: 353).<sup>95</sup> The reader lacking intimate knowledge of the symbols of Northern Ireland will simply pass over this fleeting allusion, with no material detriment to their understanding of the poem. The reader who identifies it may interpret it as another example of the re-evaluation of everyday objects (consistent with the central concerns of ‘Table’), but also in line with similar references across the collection, where images of Northern Ireland arise in unlikely contexts.

Paulin’s collection consistently returns to issues of confused identity, and questions of belonging and origins (if, as John Goodby notes, there is a critical obsession with tracing questions of identity in the work of Northern Irish poets (2000: 2), then we must acknowledge that the works themselves often prompt such considerations). In ‘The Road to Inver’, the narrator observes that the pine plantation “belongs here really / no more than I do” (2004: 68), and says “(I feel like – well / a double agent who might be triple)” (2004: 70; parentheses in original). This central translation brings together many of the concerns

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<sup>95</sup> Again, Paulin plays with the slipperiness of language: “a wick one” describes a clay pipe – so could also mean ‘a pipe using a wick’.



suggested in other poems in the collection – issues of origins and provenance, language, lack of belonging and a feeling of being unsettled:

[...] I can't stay in Belfast  
but when I get to Inver I'll be sorry  
I didn't stay behind in Belfast  
– always this disquiet – I'm anxious (2004: 69).

These issues reverberate around the collection. The “homeland” in ‘Don't’ (translating Heinrich Heine) is Germany, but this poem also negotiates questions of belonging:

so don't tell me I want to go back  
– all the cards are there on the table  
but the table's a long way away (2004: 8).

The *preoccupations* of these poems, alongside the socio-cultural allusions, conjure both the specifics of the political situation in Northern Ireland, and the attendant concerns of a society which could be said to have experienced “ethnic conflict” (Darby, 1997: xii); a society in which questions of belonging and allegiance are central (see 1.2.3). The provenance of the poems may shift, but so many of the translations are suffused with similar preoccupations that these concerns become characteristic of the collection (it might also be observed that Paulin often, although by no means exclusively, selects poems with a ‘political’ twist for translation – for example, translating Anna Akhmatova's ‘March, 1941’; the title places this poem just before the siege of Leningrad).

In this vein, the conclusion to ‘The Coastguard Station’ is telling. The narrator is tempted to paint the imaginary holiday homes as progress, a successful renovation obliterating the tensions of the past. But it is not to be; these imaginary homes will be created by people

who've at last laid that claggy building's ghost  
– well I wouldn't go as far as that (2004: 11).

Just as semantically the penultimate line does not conclude as anticipated (the ghost is not laid to rest), the poem ultimately suggests that the issues of the past have not been neatly resolved, and will continue to colour the present (as they colour the language of this collection).

I should emphasise that not all of Paulin's poems contain a consistent smattering of dialect, geographical locations or cultural references. The collection spans twenty-eight years, and so the coverage is uneven; some poems are densely packed with references relating to Northern Ireland, others contain relatively few (or none – for example 'The Cigarette', 2004: 3). Whilst some poems comment very directly on the local situation – 'A Nation, Yet Again' (2004: 65), or 'Chuckling it Away' (2004: 66-7) – and certainly more directly than either *The Inferno* or *Beowulf*, as Wes Davis has said, Paulin's work "has always been more multivalent than that of the stereotypical political poet" (2010: 574). Across this thesis, then, I seek to demonstrate that Paulin's translations showcase lexical ingenuity, intertextual explorations and cultural investigations, amidst the political gestures.

#### 2.2.2.9 Signalling Paulin's lexical variety

*The Road to Inver* is notable for its linguistic variety and lexical oddities. This includes Paulin's penchant for unearthing unusual words – "skrimshander" (2004: 4; a verb relating to the crafts sailors practised on long voyages – OED Online), or "snottery" (2004: 96, an obsolete word related to snot and filth – OED Online) – and coining odd portmanteau words ("grief-splintered / call-sign" – 2004: 13; "bigboned smoothmembered" – 2004: 96). The collection also reflects Paulin's interest in sound patterning and onomatopoeic language: seen in the toad's song "*yuk yuk yuk*" (2004: 43; italics in original), or "the bed bouncy and springy *crik! crik!*" (2004: 82, italics in original). Paulin's forays into other languages – "*Gärtchen*" (2004: 51; a small garden, italics in original), or "la route qui mène à Inver" (2004: 100; 'the road [leading] to Inver') – mingle with his expletives: "our fucks and cries" (2004: 13) or "I felt shit scared" (2004: 66).

Paulin also name-drops classical references, or fellow writers: "Dear douce Rousseau" (2004: 84), and "they applaud in Paul Verlaine / our rigorous Racine" (2004: 83). Perhaps most importantly, just as Paulin plays with punctuation and

orthography, he also textually represents and brings forward different voices within his poems:

- I try to love the spider and the nettle
- the nettle has a hairy stem
- no *hairy stalk* would be better (2004: 30, italics in original).<sup>96</sup>

As with Carson's translation it is difficult to accurately represent Paulin's varied approach across his collection. Such diverse effects greatly add to the complexity of these poems, and to the strangeness of the reading experience, clashing with the dialect elements, and supplementing the dislocation generated by the relocation to a Northern Irish locale.

#### **2.2.2.10 "If I have rightly grasped your idiom"**

Virgil's phrase – "If I have rightly grasped your idiom" (Carson, 2002: 10) – expresses his need to decipher Dante's garbled, fearful expressions. Virgil's uncertain surmising position could be said to reflect the experience of the English-speaking reader who engages with these texts. The reader of *The Road to Inver*, *The Inferno* or *Beowulf* is confronted with an unusual "idiom", a voice which draws attention to itself as different, local and non-standard – albeit a distinctly different voice in each translated text. These texts, especially *The Inferno* and *The Road to Inver*, are (to a greater or lesser extent) relocated to a particular Northern Irish locale, and the language used in translation often raises cultural issues which might be seen as key concerns in Northern Ireland: colonialism, identity, borders and division, aggression and conflict.

The idiom is not pure, however. In each of these texts, Northern Irish vernacular is complicated by a multitude of different linguistic devices and language varieties; the act of comprehension is made more demanding (again to a greater or lesser extent) by the addition of these elements. Just as Virgil is conscious of having to interpret Dante's language, the reader is thrown into the task of decoding and assuming, in order to "rightly grasp" the unusual contortions of the

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<sup>96</sup> I will analyse these interrupting 'staged' voices in Chapters 3 and 4.

language. It is the *conscious* grappling with the making of sense, and the associated ethical implications, that I will consider in the second half of this chapter.

## 2.3 Considering dialect

Having examined the stylistic patterning of each of these texts, I will now explore the ways in which these patterns are justified by the translators in their metatextual writing (a metatext being “any text which comments on another text” – Wales, 2001: 249). These accounts can help us understand the effects these poets were trying to achieve.

I will move on to consider how the visibility of lexical choices and geographical particularities in these translations can be considered theoretically, and ethically. I will argue that the visibility of these selections prompts the reader to consider the manipulation inherent in the act of translation. In this, I will consider Venuti’s concepts of domestication and foreignization (2008: 15-16), how his ideas have changed since their first incarnation, and whether these concepts can helpfully be applied to these texts.

Finally, I will examine the extent to which we can conceive of the process of translation as *reading*, exploring how these texts foreground interpretive processes, and deliberately lead the reader to think about translator choice and selection.

### 2.3.1 Translation strategies – metatexts

A metatext written by the translator can provide an insight into that individual translator’s approach to their work. Whilst we should remain wary of concluding that all that an author *intends* to convey via particular choices *is* ultimately conveyed, nonetheless, metatextual writing can provide illuminating explanations for notable (or contentious) translation choices.

In contrast to Carson’s and Heaney’s translations, Paulin’s collection is remarkably free of metatextual (and paratextual) elements – there is no

introduction and only one footnote, for ‘The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath’ (2004: 102). This long note cites the origins of, and influences on, the translated poem, in a sense highlighting the extent of the information that *could* have been provided for each of Paulin’s translations. Apart from the original author’s surname below each title no further information is given about Paulin’s translation strategies or the relationship of each work to its original.<sup>97</sup>

Carson’s and Heaney’s texts both offer introductions, where the author sets out their approach to translating the work in question. In both cases, explanations are offered for the translation of key aspects of the original texts, and areas of (perceived) equivalence and commensurability with the originals are highlighted.

The notion of ‘equivalence’ in translation came to prominence with Roman Jakobson’s paper ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’ (2004; first published in 1959), and was developed by Eugene Nida in *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), which proposed two types of equivalence: formal and dynamic. The concept of dynamic equivalence, “drawing on terms that are immediately intelligible to the receptor” (Venuti, 2004: 147), took as its premise the assumption that the relationship between the translation and its reader should be similar to that which existed between the source text and *its* reader (Nida, 1964: 159). The introductions provided by Heaney and Carson demonstrate a preoccupation with what we might call dynamic equivalence.<sup>98</sup>

Heaney claims in his introduction that a translator needs “an enabling note”: “the note and pitch for the overall music of the work” (1999a: xxvi). He identifies salient qualities he perceives in the voice of the original, describing it as “attractively direct” (1999a: xxvii), with “a kind of foursquareness about the utterance” (1999a: xxvii; “foursquare” meaning “solid and strong” or “forthright;

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<sup>97</sup> 2.3.3.1 explores the relationship between the translated texts and the originals.

<sup>98</sup> Munday provides an overview of equivalence (2016: 58-79).

honest” – Collins Dictionary, 2018: n.p.).<sup>99</sup> For Heaney, these qualities found their equivalent in the enabling note he eventually located for the work: “a familiar local voice, one that had belonged to relatives of my father” (1999a: xxvi). This voice facilitated Heaney’s translation of the difficult opening phrase “Hwæt” as “So” (see 2.2.2.1). Heaney’s introduction demonstrates awareness of previous options for translating this word, however he notes that these tended to be archaic, literary choices (1999a: xxvii). Heaney selects “So” as “in that idiom [Hiberno-English] ‘so’ operates as an expression that obliterates all previous discourse and narrative, and [...] functions as an exclamation calling for immediate attention” (1999a: xxvii). Thus, “So” seems a closer equivalent for the directness of the original.

Heaney also justifies the oral quality of his translation, claiming that when he inserts colloquial phrases he is “attending as much to the grain of [his] original vernacular as to the content of the Anglo-Saxon lines” (1999a: xxviii). He claims that evidence suggests “this middle ground between oral tradition and the demands of written practice was also the ground occupied by the *Beowulf* poet” (1999a: xxviii). Here Heaney acknowledges not only the actual language used by the original poet, and the overall voice of the work, but the original context of creation: the constraints and tendencies of bards at the time. The vernacular voice of Heaney’s people is presented not just as a stylistic equivalent, but as a means of replicating the very conditions of creation, the tension between oral and written traditions; not an insignificant claim.

Heaney offers some explanation, too, for his use of dialect terms; “In those instances where a local Ulster word seemed either poetically or historically right, I felt free to use it” (1999a: xxix). He offers the examples of “graith” for ‘harness’ (1999a: 12; 94) and “hoked” for ‘rooted about’ (1999a: 95 – see 2.2.2.1). These are not, he claims, random selections which force a dialect word into the poem, but carefully weighted options: “the local term seemed in each case to have

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<sup>99</sup> Heaney also uses “foursquare” in his translation (1999a: 13; 98). Cf. the then Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness: “I will continue to stand foursquare for the peace process” (*Donegal Daily*, 2014: n.p.).

special body and force” (1999a: xxx). In ‘The Drag of the Golden Chain’<sup>100</sup> Heaney acknowledges that certain lexical choices had simultaneous functions – “kesh”, for example, fulfilled multiple translatorly obligations: it “presented itself uncontradictably, combining [...] the local and the alliterative, the drag of the golden chain and the fret-free exhilaration of having slipped the leash” (1999b: 16).

Finally, Heaney acknowledges areas where equivalence is knowingly relinquished: he admits he has not always followed the metrical rules of the original and its strict alliteration. But this departure from the original’s internal structure is presented as *facilitating* the overall sound of the poem: “I prefer to let the natural ‘sound of sense’ prevail over the demands of the convention” (1999a: xxviii). Here, the vernacular, the enabling note – Heaney’s route into *Beowulf* – trumps the formal demands of the original; equivalence in the former area takes precedence over the latter.

In contrast, Carson’s introduction does not explain individual lexical decisions, but sets out his overall transposition of Dante’s epic from fourteenth-century Florence to modern-day Belfast, and from Italian regional vernacular to (Northern) Irish dialect and slang. Carson opens his introduction by describing a walk through his local area, which “happens to lie on one of Belfast’s sectarian fault lines” (2002: xi), with all of its partisan elements: loyalist terrain, flags, murals on gable ends depicting paramilitary groups, loyalist symbols (the Red Hand) and, frequently, British army helicopters hovering in the sky. This is the context for Carson’s writing process, but he establishes a relationship between this environment and the original text: this enclave is a housing estate which “by a squint of the imagination, you can see as an Italian hill-town” (2002: xi), and Carson imagines being in the helicopter “like Dante riding on the flying monster Geyron” (ibid.), looking down on Hell:

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<sup>100</sup> Heaney’s ‘golden chain’ analogy derives from Austin Clarke’s description of his writing process: “I load myself with golden chains and try to escape” (in Heaney, 1999b: 14).



I see a map of North Belfast, its no-go zones and tattered flags, the blackened side streets, cul-de-sacs and bits of wasteland<sup>101</sup> stitched together by dividing walls and fences (2002: xi-xii).

Where Heaney *hears* an enabling note, Carson *visualises* the new context for the work (“I see”; “by a squint of the imagination”). Carson creates equivalence between sectarian, Troubles-era Belfast, and the setting of Dante’s original, fourteenth-century Florence, which in Carson’s eyes comes complete with “vendetta-stricken courtyards and surveillance towers” (2002: xii). In this description the transposition becomes less unlikely that it might otherwise appear. Of course, if a reader encounters Carson’s descriptions it is likely these parallels will then frame their encounter with the text.

Equivalence is also established between the inhabitants of hell who (according to Carson) reveal themselves by their body language, actions, nods and twitches, and the citizens of Belfast who “claim that they can tell each other’s identities – Protestant or Catholic – by a combination of accent, vocabulary, clothes, bearing, gesture” (2002: xii; cf. Heaney’s “land of password, handgrip, wink and nod” – 1975: 59). On a number of levels, then, a claim is made that aspects of Carson’s translated text (its situation in a conflicted Northern Irish locale, with a distrustful population) are apt, modern, local equivalents of Dante’s world and its distinctive characteristics.

Finally, Carson also describes equivalence at the level of rhythm. He observes that other translators claim that Dante’s *terza rima* cannot be “accommodated with any comfort” (2002: xix) in English, given its lack of rhymes.<sup>102</sup> Carson’s discovery (another “enabling note” – Heaney, 1999a: xxvi) was the Hiberno-English ballad form. Technically, he asserts that this form facilitates the translation of Dante’s complicated rhyme scheme and sound patterning:

It would allow for sometimes extravagant alliteration, for periphrasis  
and inversion to accommodate the rhyme, and for occasional

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<sup>101</sup> Given this description, “cul-de-sac” feels all the more prominent on the first page of Carson’s translation, and “wasteland” on the second (2002: 1-2; cf. 2.2.2.6).

<sup>102</sup> Heaney cites Dante’s *terza rima* as an example of the ‘golden chains’ binding the translator (1999b: 14).

assonance instead of rhyme; it could accommodate rapid shifts of register (2002: xxi).<sup>103</sup>

The flexibility of the Hiberno-English ballad form gives Carson the ability to manage the sound demands of the original, and create equivalent patterns in translation. Carson, however, also justifies this choice stylistically. As he interprets it, *The Inferno* “has a relentless, peripatetic, *ballad-like* energy, going to a *music* which is by turns mellifluous and rough” (2002: xxi, my italics). The Hiberno-English ballad form is depicted as an ideal match for these stylistic characteristics. Carson imagines Dante walking from place to place, and this takes him back to the local: “As I walked the streets of Belfast, I wanted to get something of that music” (ibid.). Carson’s wanderings – literal, and then linguistic in his translation – are equated with Dante’s parallel linguistic wandering, and so validate the use of the ballad form, flexible enough to facilitate these switches in register. Equivalence, it is claimed, extends to the accommodating rhythm that permits the lexical shifts.

### **2.3.2 Foregrounding dialect – foreignization and domestication**

Both Heaney and Carson, then, seek to offer explanations of equivalence for significant aspects of the target texts – whether rhythm, vernacular or setting (Carson), or overall voice, dialect terms or oral quality (Heaney). Paulin, as discussed, remains silent.

However, these assertions should be balanced by recalling the strangeness of the reading experience, highlighted by the close textual analysis in 2.2.2.1 – 2.2.2.9. Although equivalence is mooted, the reading experience remains unusual.

The fact that a translation draws attention to itself through its language places it in an interesting relationship with what have been described by some critics as traditional translation practices, and with the expectations of the reader – Venuti is perhaps the most often cited theorist on this topic. The premise of Venuti’s

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<sup>103</sup> “Rapid shifts of register” will be explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

seminal text *The Translator's Invisibility* (first published in 1995) is that, in English-language translation, acceptability for the reading public relates to the fluency of the translation: a translation is acceptable “when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic particularities make it seem transparent” (2008: 1). Venuti explains that a fluent translation would therefore be written in modern English, and in standard, widely used language, without archaic terms, jargon, colloquialisms or foreign words and would be in idiomatic syntax (2008: 4). A fluent translation is “immediately recognizable and intelligible” (2008: 5).

However, Venuti swiftly moves from fluency to figure the process of translation as a dislocating act. The terms are violent: translation is a process involving the “forcible replacement” (2008: 14) of the cultural and linguistic difference of the original with a text that is intelligible to the reader (Venuti writes principally about translation into English, for British and American audiences). Venuti states that the contemporary accepted aim of translation “is to bring back a cultural other as the recognizable, the familiar, even the same” (2008: 14), but he forcibly rejects this practice. *The Translator's Invisibility* is a call-to-arms for translators. In highlighting the violence of the act of translation Venuti emphasises that, in his view, the translator should not be invisible, and cites Friedrich Schleiermacher's foreignizing and domesticating practices, where, respectively, the translator moves the reader to the text, or moves the text to the reader (2008: 15). For Venuti, foreignizing translation is to be lauded: insofar as it “seeks to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation, it is highly desirable today” (2008: 16).

The violence depicted in Venuti's polemic is explicitly related to ethnicity and power relations; noting that translation is extremely influential in the “construction of identities for foreign cultures”, Venuti posits that it potentially has a hand in “ethnic discrimination, geopolitical confrontations, colonialism, terrorism, war” (2008: 14). Here Venuti moves translation beyond a linguistic or literary act, to one with significant societal consequences for the cultural other.

These claims are very ambitious, and it is worth acknowledging the twists and turns in Venuti's thinking. Having received considerable challenge over his ideas, in the second edition Venuti defended his language, claiming that if violence can be taken to mean "damage" or "abuse", then his use is "precisely descriptive" (2008: 14). Tom Boll has charted shifts in Venuti's thinking (including the myriad ways in which he uses the term 'foreignizing'), and how this instability makes it even harder to fully grasp or apply his principal concepts (2013: 85-87). Boll notes that it is hardly surprising Venuti ultimately phases out his use of the term foreignizing, "given the contortions into which it forced him (and his readers)" – 2013: 86.

Nevertheless, the terms 'foreignizing' and 'domesticating' have had a huge impact on translation studies (Boll highlights Venuti's influential position – 2013: 84), and they still form one of the most prominent conceptual frameworks used to describe how translations, and their degree of "foreignness" (Boll, 2013: 84), relate to an intended audience – it is thus worth investigating their potential application in this case.

So, following Venuti's thinking, and in light of the extensive linguistic analysis given in 2.2.2.1 – 2.2.2.9, is it possible to assert that these translations are at the extreme end of domesticating practices? After all, Belfast is grafted onto Florence, and sectarians infiltrate the zones of hell. Some of Europe's most lauded poets (Goethe, Montale and many others) are transposed to parochial places like Portnoo and Teelin, and into colloquial speech patterns. Even in *Beowulf*, bawns and keshes creep into the classical epic, whose hero often speaks as if he were from Derry. These are surely clear-cut cases of "ethnocentric reduction", processes of "bringing the author back home" (Venuti, 2008: 15)?

There are two salient challenges to this straightforward reading. Firstly, there are significant issues in the practical application of Venuti's framework to descriptions of works such as these – that is, in situations with multiple reading audiences, whose varying reading expectations and cultural backgrounds are particularly relevant to how they receive these texts (2.3.2.1). Secondly, there

are aspects of these texts which will remain strange *to all readers*, despite the domesticating elements (2.3.2.2). I will briefly deal with each of these challenges in turn.

### **2.3.2.1 Domestication and foreignization – multiple audiences**

Firstly, I will consider the practical application of the concepts of domestication and foreignization to these works, bearing in mind how different readers may be able to access elements of the translations.

Venuti's work would *seem* to lend itself well to describing works which have been (even partially) resituated in another location, time, and culture. As Paulin writes:

A writer who employs a word like 'geg' or 'gulder' or Kavanagh's lovely 'gobshite', will create a form of closed, secret communication with readers who come from the same region. This will express something very near to a familial relationship because every family has its hoard of relished words which express its members' sense of kinship. These words act as a kind of secret sign and serve to exclude the outside world (1983a: 17-18).

Paulin's description is relevant for these translations. The "secret signs" he describes are reminiscent of aspects of the language used in these translations – for example, Carson's use of "the big man" (2002: 94), and its potential connotation (Ian Paisley) to a reader from Northern Ireland. Language which functions in this way, conjuring the feeling of privileged communication (even a "familial relationship"), would seem to be strongly domesticating – the text is brought to the reader, it speaks to them in their own comforting language.

However, as I highlighted earlier, Carson's reference will not be uniformly intelligible. These three texts often employ dialect words or cultural references familiar only in one area of the country, yet they are published across Britain and Ireland – home to many dialects – and are of course available globally. The 'reading public' cannot be considered a homogenous group and Venuti's theories

are not easily applied to these texts as their potential audiences have such disparate cultural frameworks and backgrounds – this is potentially true of the readership of all texts, but particularly relevant when a text demands engagement with very localised cultural features.

If we take *The Inferno*, we could suggest that the text would have – in places – a strong domesticating effect for a reader from Northern Ireland, a slightly weaker domesticating effect for a reader from the Republic of Ireland (who may miss certain connotations but understand much of the same dialect) and a significantly weaker domesticating effect for a reader from England, Scotland or Wales (or beyond) for whom specific words, phrases and references are likely to appear more alien. The world the translation portrays is likely to be unfamiliar to the reader from Sheffield, Norwich or Newcastle, who picks up *The Inferno*, and, as well as fourteenth-century Italy, hears twentieth-century Belfast. Even within Great Britain, however, ‘foreign’ or ‘domestic’ appellations are complicated: due to linguistic similarities, a reader from Scotland or Northern England might discover that the text resonates more with them, than with a reader from Kent, say, where the linguistic links are not as close (see 1.2.2). The terms ‘domestication’ or ‘foreignization’ are impossible to apply absolutely to a text, when it is really its *relationship to its readership* which is being described, and when the cultural range of the potential readers of these translations is so broad.

However, we *also* cannot claim that *The Inferno* will have a wholly domesticating effect even for readers from Northern Ireland. Although many of the terms in these poems are familiar in casual conversation, it is often a jolt to see vernacular words in print – “only the standard language has an established orthography” (Greenbaum, 1996: 14). Terms such as “boke” (Carson, 2002: 218), “tholed” (Heaney, 1999a: 3) and “stocious” (Paulin, 2004: 10) are not common literary currency – as Paulin states “most [Irish] writers have instinctively moulded their language to the expectations of the larger audience outside Ireland” (1983a: 17). Thus, the appearance of such terms in these translations remains unexpected, and potentially jarring, even to a reader from Northern Ireland.

The physical way in which some dialect terms are represented highlights that their presence is unusual. When Carson writes “girned” (2002: 44; ‘girn’ meaning ‘whine or cry’) he could have written ‘gerned’ or ‘gurned’ (Macafee, 1996: 145) – the spelling is not fixed as the dialect word has survived primarily in spoken rather than written contexts, and even then, only in specific areas. Placing this unstable word in a translation will remind some readers that it is not normally written down, that it is out of place. For a reader from Northern Ireland, this effect can be domesticating (in that ‘girn’ is a familiar, local word) *and* simultaneously potentially foreignizing (if that reader knows the word as ‘gern’ or ‘gurn’ *and/or* as the word is simply unexpected in print). Thus, these works have the potential to be foreignizing to a reader from Northern Ireland even as they resonate with apparently domesticating, local voices.

This brief example is used to demonstrate that literary effects can simultaneously pull a reader in different directions – and this is repeated across these translations: is it homely or jarring to find a reference to “sectarians” (2002: 40) in *The Inferno*? Or to encounter Portnoo (2004: 11) in a translation of Montale? Does it bring *Beowulf* closer to me, or push it farther away, when I notice “tholed” on the first page? That a reader could experience multiple pulls via a single word or allusion, that this could be repeated across a translation, *and* that these pulls would be experienced differently by any given reader renders Venuti’s concepts a fairly blunt descriptive tool.

Even a brief glance at a few key reviews of these texts provides us with another perspective on the difficulty of articulating their effects. In his review of *The Inferno*, Matthew Reynolds explains that: “Because words like ‘sectarian’ are so firmly hooked into a particular modern context, they drag the poem towards us and away from medieval Italy” (2003: n.p.). This might seem to indicate the translation’s significant effect has been domestication; the poem is brought to the reader, not vice versa. However, Reynolds asserts that it is these very words which signal the visibility of the translator and the translation: “they make it obvious that Dante’s text is not being neutrally rendered into English but that

something is being done with it or made out of it" (ibid.). In this sense, it is the obvious, foregrounded *domestic* elements which intrinsically draw attention to the text *as translated* (in fact, as Venuti explains, foreignization necessarily goes hand in hand with domestication: "the foreignness of the foreign text can only be what currently appears 'foreign' in the receiving culture, in relation to *dominant values*" – 2008: 176; my italics).<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, Stephen Romer's review of *The Road to Inver* also showcases both sides of the domestication and foreignization debate. Paulin is depicted as violently engaging with the original works, and forcing them into his local, contemporary speech patterns; this would seem to be domesticating: Paulin "wades in, seizes a foreign poem by the scruff, and shakes it into his own vernacular" (2005: 5; note the violence). On the other hand, Romer lauds the "sheer exhilaration and energy thrown out by these encounters with the other, with what Antoine Berman calls *l'épreuve de l'étranger*" (ibid., italics in original), and they remain "startling" (ibid.) – even the violence of the translation process does not render the final poems "immediately recognizable and intelligible" (Venuti, 2008: 5).

Eagleton's review of *Beowulf* presents Heaney's language itself as simultaneously familiar and alien. Even as Eagleton explains the translation's particular resonance – "like the millennium, [it] closes on a note of sombre foreboding" (1999: n.p.) – he also acknowledges that the poem remains strange to the modern reader, and yet somehow linguistically apt: "Just as this most 'authentic' of artworks is also profoundly alien – we have no idea who wrote it, or exactly when or where – so Heaney's own idiom can be seen as both askew to metropolitan English and somehow closer to the bone of the language" (ibid.).<sup>105</sup> So, even whilst Heaney's language is strange (for most, although not all readers, of course – the metropole is not *everyone's* centre), this strangeness is fact close

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<sup>104</sup> Elsewhere Reynolds analyses problems in applying Venuti's framework to Carson's translation (2008: 79-83).

<sup>105</sup> Eagleton's use of "metropolitan" nods to the relevance of colonial issues here – see 3.2.3 (the 'metropole' is the parent state or city of a colony – OED Online).



to the original. Eagleton paints the translation's language as a curious meld of estrangement and authenticity.

Such reviews demonstrate the complex and contradictory foreignizing *and* domesticating effects these texts generate – particularly in highlighting the role of the translator (although reviews by academics are arguably more likely to identify the translator's role).

I should acknowledge that Venuti *does* complicate his analysis of foreignizing and domesticating practices in his in-depth explorations of specific writers, for example, Iginio Ugo Tarchetti or Francis Newman (2008: 125-153; 99-121). In these longer examinations writers can be perceived as foreignizing *and* domesticating by turns, and even occasionally at the same time. If this is possible, then these terms *could* be useful in relation to these texts, but only if the domesticating or foreignizing effects are carefully explained in relation to the given audience, and the specific textual elements; catch-all descriptions will not work here. Writing against the use of binary schemes or polarities in translation studies, Maria Tymoczko observes that “translations have self-contradictory elements in their specific configurations” (1999a: 56). This is certainly true of the stylistic and cultural variation in evidence in these translations; tools used to describe these works would need to respond to their linguistic nuances, and their wide-ranging potential effects, given the infinite variety of readers who may encounter the works. As Boll has demonstrated, Venuti's emphasis on the macro-level *ethical* implications of translation “leaves no room for the experience and the interpretative actions of the reader” (2013: 91).

#### **2.3.2.2 An alien reading experience: linguistic reappraisal**

In explaining foreignization, Venuti proposes that in an “effort to do right abroad” (that is, to capture the ‘foreignness’ of the original), the translation must transgress at home, “deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien

reading experience” (2008: 16).<sup>106</sup> Across these three translations, many elements would appear to create an alienating reading experience for *any* English-speaking reader. It is worth exploring how these unsettling reading experiences bring our attention back to the manipulation manifest in the act of translation.

Venuti quotes Schleiermacher, noting that one way a translation can foreignize is via “experimentation with language that is intelligible but less widely used” (2008: 97-8). We could apply this to many of the dialect phrases in these works, which would be unfamiliar, but still intelligible, to a reader from England, Scotland or Wales: for example, “give my head some peace” (Carson, 2002: 226), “you think there’s no manners on me” (Paulin, 2004: 9), and “had to be away / to his night’s rest” (Heaney, 1999a: 22). However, the language of these texts is strange beyond the use of dialect. For a start, the heterogeneous nature of the language used in these texts (see 2.2.2.3, 2.2.2.6 and 2.2.2.9), and the shifts between varieties of language, or between specific vocabularies (technical, archaic, scatological), neologisms, portmanteau words or kennings, renders these texts strange – the effect is often to create a foreignizing reading experience for *any* English-speaking reader. Throughout *The Translator’s Invisibility* Venuti emphasises that heterogeneity (a “heterogeneous mix of discourses” – 2008: 28) is yet another way in which an unfamiliar reading experience can be generated. This unfamiliar experience is ethically important as it pushes the role of the translator and of manipulation to the fore, signalling the cultural difference of the original text and thus refusing naïve or apparently neutral equivalence.

Carson is not unaware of this effect. In his introduction, he notes that other translators, struggling with Dante’s rhyme scheme, were concerned it would “result in lines that sound like a translation” (2002: xix). Carson says, however: “some of us expect translations to sound like translations, and to produce an English which is sometimes strangely interesting” (ibid.). Whilst the purposeful strangeness of Carson’s and Paulin’s translations is clear from the outset, I hope

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<sup>106</sup> Chapter 3 explores the deliberate transgression of norms.

to show that whilst Heaney's translation is not so outrageously perverse it, too, produces a "strangely interesting" English, which draws attention to its 'translatedness'.

In these translations, then, lexical choices are revealed *as choices*. The reading experience is made strange, in the sense that we are often invited to attend to elements which may initially seem routine, or familiar – the Russian Formalists called this process "ostraneniye" or "defamiliarization" (Boase-Beier, 2006a: 89). Tymoczko explains this process as a thickening of language within a text "so as to heighten the audience's *perception of the text as text*" (1999a: 249; my italics).<sup>107</sup> Although the concept of defamiliarisation originated outside translation studies, there are distinct affinities between this concept and Venuti's thinking on foreignization (as Boase-Beier traces – 2006a: 68-9).

When in these texts the familiar is returned as new, the reader experiences this process of defamiliarisation. In Carson's translation, for example, Dante observes: "the devil's crest became so fallen" (2002: 144). The unusual construction asks the reader to reappraise the word 'crestfallen', a word we now use figuratively, but which, originally, literally related to the drooping crest of a mammal or bird ("with drooping crest" – OED Online). The same process occurs in Canto XXII when Dante imagines dolphins warning mariners to "batten down the hatches" (Carson, 2002: 148). This phrase is nautical in origin (meaning "to fasten down [tarpaulins] with battens" – OED Online), but again we have come to use it figuratively, meaning 'to prepare for a difficult time ahead'. Carson's use in its 'proper', nautical setting sends it back to its original context, and, via this recontextualisation, the reader is encouraged to consider how the meaning of the phrase has shifted. Kirkpatrick's choices are less suggestive: "His arrogance [...] took such a fall" (2010: 181 – for Carson's "the devil's crest became so fallen") and "to say the ship should soon be steered back home" (2010: 187 – for "batten down the hatches"). In such instances in Carson's translation the reader is

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<sup>107</sup> Tymoczko says that the use of Anglo-Irish idiom (in nineteenth-century translations from Irish to English) "avoids the problem of fluency and domestication, always foregrounding the fact that it is a translation per se" (1999a: 138).

invited to move from what is being communicated to consider both the evolution of language (the history of a given word or phrase over time), and that language can be made to communicate in different ways – here we can appreciate both the literal meaning, and the current, figurative use. Such instances also reveal Carson’s hand, playing with language and meaning in his translation.

This type of language use, demanding reappraisal, occurs throughout these three translations. In *Beowulf*, this frequently happens via the kennings – as Edward Hirsch says, there is “a riddling element to the kenning, which is a way of renaming and thus *re-envisioning* an object” (2014: 331; my italics). Heaney’s kennings often focus attention back on modern usage. When we encounter the term “heart-breaking” (1999a: 8), it may look like any other of his kennings, until we recognise it as an everyday figurative term, still in use in modern English – the same could be said for “soul-mate” or even “right-hand man” (1999a: 44). These instances underline the ‘constructedness’ of the modern language we use unthinkingly (Alexander’s options in these instances, “crushing to his spirit” (2001: 9), “my closest counsellor” and “he stood at my shoulder” (2001: 49), do not prompt the same process of reappraisal).

Heaney’s use of kennings shifts constantly throughout his translation. Although Wales defines a kenning as a *metaphorical* compound, she also observes another simpler kind of kenning, which “identifies the referent with something it actually is: e.g. boat as ‘wavefloater’” (2001: 228). In *Beowulf* not all kennings are metaphorical – some are ‘simpler’ or descriptive compounds (for example “gold-giver” (1999a: 62) for ‘king’), and some are purely literal (for example “mead-bench”, 1999a: 61). In all but the most literal instances there is often some sense of defamiliarisation (“wavefloater” makes the very familiar – a boat – seem strange). What is interesting in Heaney’s *Beowulf* is that these different uses intermingle, as in the following passage:

Right away the mast was rigged with its *sea-shawl*;  
*sail-ropes* were tightened, timbers drummed  
and stiff winds kept the *wave-crosser*  
skimming ahead (1999a: 61; my italics).

Amongst all of the literary devices here – alliteration, assonance and consonance – the kennings are also at play. The metaphorical kenning (“sea-shawl”) meets a literal compound (“sail-ropes”, the juxtaposition made all the more obvious by its placement over a line break), and then Heaney uses a ‘simpler’ kenning: “wave-crosser”. Although these compounds initially appear very similar, the reader must engage with them differently; they create meaning differently so the mind must in total work more cautiously to decode them – as van Peer says, readers “slow down their reading speed under the influence of a nexus of foregrounding devices” (2007: 100).

In contrast, Alexander’s kennings morph rather less here. He translates:

A special *sea-dress*, *a sail*, was hoisted  
and belayed to the mast. The beams spoke.  
The wind did not hinder the *wave-skimming* ship  
as it ran through the seas (2001: 68-69; my italics).

Alexander’s “sea-dress” is perhaps as unusual as Heaney’s “sea-shawl”, but he undoes much of this excess by explaining what is meant (via the sub-clause, “a sail”). Alexander’s other kenning in this passage (“wave-skimming”) is descriptive (and, as a compound adjective, is easier to decode than Heaney’s noun “wave-crosser”). The rest of the passage is also more routinely descriptive (compare Alexander’s lengthy “The wind did not hinder the wave-skimming ship / as it ran through the seas”, with the propulsion of Heaney’s “stiff winds kept the wave-crosser / skimming ahead”). This is not a value judgement; Heaney’s translation is not necessarily ‘better’, but his choices – particularly the compression of lexical effects – frequently make the reader work harder to establish the immediate sense of the text, and thereby throw focus on this very process of decoding.

In Paulin’s collection, too, the language often activates a process of linguistic reappraisal. When, in ‘Voronezh’ (translating Akhmatova) we are told: “Crows are crowding the poplars” (2004: 44), it is impossible not to see the ‘crow’ appear in ‘crowding’ (the physical squeezing of one word into another mirrors the semantics of the phrase). The similarity encourages the reader to re-

examine ‘crowding’ for the relation to ‘crow’ – the two terms are *not* related, but the wordplay prompts linguistic consideration nonetheless. Similarly, in ‘The Storm’ (translating Montale) the narrator describes “the rude crash quiver / of timbrels (tumbrils I nearly said) / over the black ditch” (2004: 5). “Timbrels” – a percussive instrument – corresponds to “tamburelli” in Montale’s original (1966: 96; Geoffrey Hill’s image is also plural, but he selects the more usual “castanets / and tambourines” in his translation – 2006: 80). However, “tumbrils” is also allowed to creep into Paulin’s translation. A ‘tumbriel’ can mean many things, but one of them is “an instrument of punishment” (OED Online). If Paulin’s additional word introduces an odd or discordant tone (as so often in this collection), the presence of two near-homonyms demonstrates the odd capriciousness of language – and the plural routes a translation *could* take, with one flick of the translator’s hand.

As in all these examples, the focus is on the process of interpretation, rather than solely on the simple ‘meaning’ or ‘message’ conveyed. We might conclude, then, that although Venuti’s foreignization and domestication labels are unwieldy in application, the emphasis on interpretation and thus translator visibility *is* of use in considering these particular translations.

### **2.3.3 Translation and interpretation**

Thus, the foregrounding of certain elements in these translations often creates a strange reading experience, and draws attention to the ‘createdness’ of the translated texts. This focus on manipulation and ‘constructedness’ prompts a consideration of each text’s status *as a translation* – and leads us to question the extent to which we think of any translation as an interpretive act.

### 2.3.3.1 Do these translations consider themselves translations?

These translations have differing relations to their source texts. Carson's work is perhaps the simplest; its status as a translation is declared on the front cover: "*The Inferno of Dante Alighieri*" has the subtitle "a new translation by Ciaran Carson". Including Dante's name signals ownership – it is of course Dante's text, as well as Dante's journey through the Inferno. However, "a new translation" recognises the extent to which the work has previously been translated (indeed Carson acknowledges upfront that he has "adapted, adopted or stolen" elements from existing translations (2002: ix), hoping these will be viewed not as plagiarism but "as homages" – 2002: x). "A new translation" also suggests the modern, emphasising that this is a fresh, updated work. *The Inferno* is published without the original text – as Reynolds comments, Carson's translation is a "kind of searching departure from its source" (2003: n.p.). Reynolds' review stresses this distance: "we can observe the modern Irish poet not pretending to stand in for the medieval Italian but measuring himself against him, at once absorbing and resisting the influence of his work" (ibid.). However much the title asserts a relationship to the original, the effect of the translation is to bring to mind the *translator*.

In contrast, Heaney's work declares itself "a translation" only on the inside title page (1999a: iii); translation is not mentioned on the front cover, which gives only "Seamus Heaney" and "*Beowulf*". On the face of it, the act of translation is thus elided, and Heaney appears as the original *Beowulf* author, if only until the book is opened.<sup>108</sup> However, for the first page of the actual translation, the Old English appears on the left-hand side, alongside the translation on the right. This only occurs on the initial page, but it does signal at the outset that this work is a translation, and has a relationship with an original text.

Paulin's collection is a different case. His title can perhaps be read as signalling the position of the collection with regard to the source texts: *The Road to Inver*

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<sup>108</sup> This could occur through a requirement to provide an author name for cataloguing purposes.

has the subtitle *Translations, Versions, Imitations* (2004: iii), which calls into question these terms, and acknowledges at the outset that these poems might not all be considered traditional ‘translations’. As I have noted, each poem is printed without the original, and individual poems are not labelled as a ‘translation’, ‘version’ or ‘imitation’ respectively. It is left to the reader to sense which category each poem might fit into, or rather, not to know; the overall effect is of a nebulous collection which is not tied to a particular relationship with the originals. There is something about this process that could be viewed as elitist (we could argue that Paulin expects us to be so familiar with these canonical texts, with Goethe, Apollinaire and others, that we should not need the originals), or it could be read as an act which frees the translator. I read the subtitle as foregrounding the act of interpretation and the role of the translator, as well as a disclaimer against consistent proximity to the source texts. Paulin does give us one small direction (on the inside page with the publishing information). He notes: “All these attempts are after, sometimes a long way after, the original poems, a number of which I encountered in English translations” (2004: iv – he also acknowledges his use of Robin Bray’s prose versions of Khazendar’s poems, but no others).<sup>109</sup> So, without apology, the emphasis is on *distance* from the original texts.

The final poem in Paulin’s collection, ‘Une Rue Solitaire’, is not a translation (the only non-translation in the collection), but ‘An Epilogue’. This poem directly engages and plays with the idea of what it is to be derivative – we might even interpret it as commenting on the overall mode of the collection:

You find the poem’s title  
but not the poem  
– maybe it does exist so you can try till  
the what’s-it? of dawn – till dayclean –  
– try write it out in your own form  
of this language? (2004: 100).

Here, very little is fixed. Even the opening personal pronoun (“you”) is unclear: is Paulin saying ‘you, the reader, can find the poem’s title, but you can’t find the

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<sup>109</sup> Paulin’s footnote to ‘The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath’ (2004: 102) lists other works consulted for that translation.



original'? Or is he giving a version of his own creative process, where the poet finds a title but not the poem, and this prompts creation? To the reader it may indeed feel as if the translations of this collection have started from a title but little else; Paulin's final poem seems to applaud the idea of extemporisation in translation.

The reviews of Paulin's work are emphatic about the question of translation, focussing on Paulin's departures. Sansom comments "You might call this kind of method improvising upon a theme: you might say that it's just making it up as you go along" (2004: n.p.). He asserts that these are "not translations in any literal or textbook sense", instead "they're Paulin's versions of, and responses to, and free-style riffs upon" other poems – the originals are really "only seen as glimpses, as though apprehended vaguely in a dream" (ibid.). Similarly, Romer's review says that the transpositions are "among the *belles infidèles* in the sense that they invent freely, add and subtract" (2005: 5, italics in original). Romer's view is a particular one; he judges that Paulin's translations could "in no sense replace more conventionally 'faithful' versions, especially for first-time readers of, say, Rilke or Montale" (ibid.). This statement demonstrates a specific interpretation of the term 'translation' and its purpose; here, translation is in part pedagogical, helping to bring new readers (presumably unable to read the original) to the foreign author. Neither Romer nor Sansom are critical of Paulin's translations (the articles are largely positive), but their terms do betray the extent to which even some literary critics may prefer to think of translation 'proper' as an activity which does not engage in this level of manipulation.

The fly-leaf of Paulin's collection declares: "*The Road to Inver* is the richest collection of its kind since Robert Lowell's *Imitations*". In making this statement, Paulin's text might be seen to flaunt or even market its free relationship to the originals, and the creative hand of its author. If Lowell felt the need to acknowledge his interventions – "My licenses have been many": "I have dropped lines, moved lines, moved stanzas, changed images and altered meter and intent" (1990: xii) – Paulin's free-spirited collection betrays none of this anxiety.

Perhaps it should not be unexpected that these translations are strange or unfamiliar, or that their authors exhibit – in places – a less constrained relationship with the original texts. We might expect that these translators (as famous, established poets) could be ‘freer’ with their works, with more authority to establish a different relationship with the original texts.

Although Heaney is undoubtedly the most famous of these poets, he was the most constrained by the intended function of his translation. Heaney was invited to translate *Beowulf* by the editors of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1999a: xii). In this, tradition was not on his side – the Norton editors were keen to ensure that his translation did not depart wildly from the “line-by-line meaning established by generations of editors and commentators”, appointing a reader who was in fact a “kind of minder” (Heaney, 1999b: 15). Heaney details his exchanges with this reader, a process of compromise where certain terms are accepted, and more controversial options are rejected or only accepted after much justification (including the use of “heather-stepper”, which Heaney ultimately retained – 1999b: 15-16). Expressing the well-worn tension between the creative impulse of the original writer, and the duties as translator, Heaney notes that he was “more than usually subject to that tension” as it was a Norton commission (1999b: 16). Heaney’s status as a poet secures the initial commission, and gives him the authority to negotiate with the official ‘reader’ on individual lexical choices. However, the project is consistently reined in by the power of the editors, their commitment to global comprehensibility – “the worldwide audience of English-speakers to whom the anthology is directed” (Heaney, 1999b: 16) – and the pedagogical intentions of the publication.

Carson was initially invited to translate a section of *The Inferno* as part of a programme of contemporary responses to Dante (2002: ix). In contrast to Heaney’s Norton project, this programme seems to have been actively seeking more innovative, updated versions (“contemporary” responses). This ‘looser’ commission may have freed Carson from traditional restraints, and given him the authority to produce the kind of ‘strange’ translation that resulted. Carson explains that the public reaction to the initial translation – at London’s South

Bank Centre – encouraged him to tackle the whole work, despite his lack of familiarity with Italian (2002: ix). It is of course possible that readers who engaged with Carson’s translation were seeking to engage at least in part with *Carson*, as much as with Dante; the equivalent is also likely to be true of readers of Heaney’s or Paulin’s work.

The lack of metatexts for *The Road to Inver* means we have no real insight into the process by which these poems were chosen (it is possible that some were commissions; many were originally published elsewhere – see Appendix 1). However, given Paulin’s reputation (as an uncompromising writer and critic – Goodby, 2000: 221), it is unlikely that Faber would have been surprised by the radical nature of the translations brought together here, indeed the fly-leaf information championing it as the “richest collection of its kind” positively signals its iconoclastic difference. Sansom calls *The Road to Inver* “the work of an original and innovative writer” (2004: n.p.), and his review opens with “Lest we forget: Tom Paulin is a poet” (ibid.). These comments draw attention to Paulin-the-writer, as much as Paulin-the-translator (Sansom also refers to the more ‘celebrity’ aspects of Paulin’s existence: his appearances on *Newsnight Review*, the scandals on the subject of Israel). The fact that Paulin’s public persona is so visible is likely to affect the expectations of the reader (or reviewer) who encounters this collection anticipating a glimpse of Paulin-the-poet in the translations.

### **2.3.3.2 Translation as reading – plurality of interpretation**

If the unfamiliarity of the language of these texts leads us, firstly, to think about the extent to which they can be considered translations, it also leads us to think about the extent to which *all* translations are to some extent manipulations<sup>110</sup> or interpretations.

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<sup>110</sup> André Lefevere (building on the work of the Manipulation School in descriptive translation studies) explored translation as a process of rewriting, including “issues such as power, ideology, institution, and manipulation” (1992a: 2). Questions of power and ideology will be explored in Chapter 3.

Carson describes his translation process in terms of personal interpretation: “Translation became a form of reading, a way of making the poetry of Dante intelligible to myself (2002: xx). His perspective allows for the possibility that Dante is not rigidly fixed in perpetuity, but is open to interpretation and re-interpretation in different hands – there would be a different Dante in a reading by Heaney, or Paulin, or any other poet who engaged with the task. There is something similarly interpretive about the description of Paulin’s collection as his “*personal anthology* of European poetry” (2004: fly-leaf; my italics) – or, indeed, in Heaney’s process of finding the right “music” for *Beowulf*, establishing his “right of way into and through [the] text” (1999a: xxvi).

Carson encourages us to think of translation as a performance of different readings of a source text; this view is common among translation theorists. Clive Scott views all reading as dynamic: “the process of activating the text” (2000: 184) – the ‘dynamism’ here is that reading does not produce a fixed or definitive interpretation. Following on from this, “the TT is a way of re-activating the ST, albeit in its own activity, and probably in another key, or another voice” (ibid.). Boase-Beier also depicts translators as interpreters and readers: “the translator as reader of the source text plays an active role in *constructing a reading*” (2006a: 112; my italics). Boase-Beier’s view is based primarily on Reader-Response Theory and Relevance Theory (Wolfgang Iser and Ernst-August Gutt, respectively). Boase-Beier asserts that translation is no different to other communicative instances where we have to interpret what someone meant through their language – for example a work colleague saying they are hot (ambiguous communication), and someone opening the window (interpretation) (2006a: 108). Similarly, in translation “we have to arrive at an interpretation for which there appears to be a reasonable amount of evidence” (ibid.). What Boase-Beier retains is a sense of the *range* of possible responses: “different readers will read the same text differently, will engage with its implicatures differently and will produce different translations reflecting different aspects of the mind behind the text” (2006a: 114). In the preface to the third edition of *The Translator’s Invisibility* (2018), Venuti specifically emphasises translation as an “interpretive

act” which *always* varies according to what is “intelligible and interesting” in the receiving culture (2018: xii).

Michael Cronin, too, emphasises interpretation, but also experimentation: “Translation as a form of close reading results in diverse interpretations that find expression in the target texts. [...] it is important to remember that translation has an experimental, liberatory function that carries with it attendant risks” (1996: 183). Despite these “risks”, Cronin argues that experimental, “Lowellian” translations should not be condemned, but simply “seen as one manifestation of a range of rhetorical responses to the potential for *inventio* in translation” (ibid; italics in original).

If we return to the texts I would suggest that the act of interpretation itself is foregrounded.

In *The Inferno*, there are instances where the stylistic elements seem specifically to highlight the translator’s interference, and their role in interpretation and lexical choice. In Canto VIII Dante must cross a channel, and a boat appears. Over the next six tercets the narrator variously refers to this as “the little skiff” (2002: 50), “your boat” (2002: 51), “the little barque” (ibid.) and “the ancient cot” (ibid.) – Kirkpatrick’s corresponding choices are a “mean little vessel” (2010: 65), “the boat” (ibid.) and “the ancient prow” (2010: 67) – responding to Dante’s “una nave piccioletta” (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 64), “la barca” (ibid.) and “l’antica prora” (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 66). Similarly, the wolf appearing in Canto I is, in Carson’s translation, “A wolf” (2002: 3), “that lupine brute” (ibid.), “the beast” (2002: 5) and “this rough beast” (ibid.). At this point Kirkpatrick has “a wolf” (2010: 5), “That brute” (ibid.), “That beast!” (2010: 7) and “That beast” (ibid.). Kirkpatrick’s work shifts, but not to the extent of Carson’s, whose adjectives modify even repeated terms (Dante’s text too is plainer here, with “una lupa” (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 4), “la bestia” (ibid.), “la bestia” (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 6) and “questa bestia” (ibid.)). In the instance of the boat, although both translations vary, Kirkpatrick offers more usual variations or metonyms (“vessel” and “prow”), and follows Dante closely, whereas Carson’s “skiff”, “barque” and “cot” are all relatively

unusual. Carson's shifts add layers of linguistic depth and complexity being from different eras and of different linguistic origins. Lexical variety is emphasised: each time the narrator mentions the ship, Carson gives him a different unusual word. This process is writ large across *The Inferno* – lexical variety emphasises authorial (translator) selection.

Paulin's work frequently forces several synonymous (or near-synonymous) words together where most poets might choose one – a repeated characteristic is lists of three words or phrases (often with no punctuation to compound the lexical confusion). For example, in 'Darkness at Noon' (translating Nerval), the dot moving in front of the narrator's eyes is "a skift a skelf a smear" (2004: 18; "skelf" means a "splinter" in northern Hiberno-English, identical to the Scottish word – Share, 2003: 294). In 'Prologue' we are told the common folk invented the different trades with "their gear their tackle their trim" (2004: 25). When later in the same poem, a jester responds to an angel, they are described as "a joker / a word muncher a boker" (2004: 26; 'boke' means to vomit – Dolan, 2012: 30).<sup>111</sup> Paulin's choices proliferate: in William Langland's original these are respectively merely "craftes" and "a goliardeis, a gloton of wordes" (Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse, 2006: n.p.; a 'goliard' is "one of the class of educated jesters" – OED Online). As if to underline this pattern, in the final poem, 'Une Rue Solitaire', the narrator-poet speaks directly of writing processes and concludes "it's not – nay never – no not at all / what you want to say" (2004: 101). Here the sense of always searching but never finding the apt word is replicated by the list of lexical choices ("not – nay never – no not at all"), in an instance of iconicity – the phrase performs both linguistic choice and lack of lexical precision. Where these near-synonyms occur, it is as if we are able to read almost simultaneously all of the phrases which have crowded into Paulin's mind when reading and translating (or all of the options presented to him in the dictionary) – as with the earlier "timbrels"/"tumbrils" example (2.3.2.2). Emily Apter refers to this as the "decisionism" of translation: the "hypothetical alternatives that haunt the words that a translator finally selects" (2013: 169) –

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<sup>111</sup> Paulin presumably selected "boker" in part for the rhyme with "joker".

in including them in his translations Paulin displays the decision-making process, but promotes the words from hypotheticals to actual selections.

Despite the demands of the Norton editors, Heaney's translation uses a very varied lexicon (cf. Magennis, 2011: 171). Heaney explains that he uses as many different words and combinations in his kennings as possible, for example in translating 'king': "I use all the common coinages for the lord of the nation, variously referred to as 'ring-giver', 'treasure-giver', 'his people's shield' or 'shepherd' or 'helmet'" (1999a: xxix). Similarly, if we take something like 'the sea', which plays a significant role in *Beowulf*, Heaney is endlessly inventive: "sea-lanes" (1999a: 10), "the swan's road" (1999a: 9), "the wide sea" (1999a: 13), "the ocean's sway" (1999a: 4), "the whale-road" (1999a: 3), "the night-sea" (1999a: 15), "the sail-road" (1999a: 47) and "sea-roads" (1999a: 75). Heaney says that in such plurality he is trying to "match the poet's analogy-seeking habit at its most original" (1999a: xxix; note again the sense of equivalence). Alexander's corresponding range of terms is quite different: "sea-ways" (2001: 11), "over swan's riding" (2001: 10), "the back of the sea" (2001: 15), "the flood's sway" (2001: 4), "the whale-road" (2001: 3), "on the wave / [...] by night" (2001: 17), "the seas where ships sail" (2001: 52), "from oversea" (2001: 85). Alexander's choices vary, and his language is sometimes similar (with a matching "whale-road", and "sea-ways" for Heaney's "sea-lanes"), but it is often more routinely descriptive, or even prosaic ("from oversea"; "the seas where ships sail"), and he uses fewer kennings (this is true of other *Beowulf* translations – cf. Liuzza, 2013, or Swanton, 1997). In matching the variation of the *Beowulf* poet and showcasing lexical variety, Heaney signals the *creativity* inherent in his translation, and, thereby, in the act of translation more broadly.<sup>112</sup> This creativity is key: that Heaney's choices are unusual in themselves draws attention to them, and to the variety. The variety in Alexander's translation is less noticeable as the individual choices are often less remarkable. Heaney also chooses to *augment* the variation in the original: when the dragon's treasure is described Heaney still varies his terms – "hoard", "hoards", "treasury", "vault", "ring-hoard" (1999a: 72)

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<sup>112</sup> Pound's translation of 'The Seafarer' also reaches for creative kennings, including: "Mere-weary", "hail-scur" (1963: 207), "mood-lofty" and "salt-wavy" (1963: 208).

– whereas Alexander mutes his variations (“hoard”, “hoards”, “hoard-hall”, “treasure”, “treasure-house” – 2001: 81-2) in response to the very restrained original: “Hordwynne”, “hord”, “hordærna”, “hord”, “beaga hord” (Swanton, 1997: 142). Although, in terms of equivalence, we might question Heaney’s decision to exceed the variation of the original here, it is consistent with a translation which prioritises translator creativity: the repeated invention of kennings allows a poet to indulge a desire to be creative, distinctive or flamboyant.

The multiple lexical options in the work of all three poets foreground not only the strangeness of the language, but also the interpretive role of the translator – without comparing translations the non-scholar will not know *absolutely* that the plurality has come from the translator, but nonetheless the question will be raised.<sup>113</sup> As Venuti has indicated, all readers (both ‘elite’ and ‘popular’ readers) must learn “how to read a translation, not as a simple communication of a foreign text, but as an interpretation that imitates yet varies foreign textual features in accordance with the translator’s cultural situation and historical moment” (2008: 124). Boase-Beier is more explicit: readers of a translation will “make their own decisions as to whose voices and attitudes are in the text” (2006a: 147). Via these instances of lexical plurality, readers of these translations – *Beowulf*, *The Road to Inver* and *The Inferno* – are reminded that these are not neutral renderings of the source texts (if even this were possible), but that the translators’ own preoccupations, opinions and idiosyncrasies will mingle with those of the original authors.

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<sup>113</sup> This emphasises the value of bilingual editions.



## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has moved from dialect and geographical dislocation, to alienation (and defamiliarisation), and finally to plurality and interpretation. The use of dialect has been shown to create texts that call attention to themselves by using language that will often be strange to many English-speaking readers, and even to a reader from Northern Ireland, who may not expect to find a literary translation speaking back in the non-standard, colloquial voice of the North. Although there are challenges in applying Venuti's foreignization and domestication framework to the description of these texts, as has been shown, the foregrounding of localised elements – and plurality – can be read as an ethical act that denies the possibility of the translated text fully providing a neat or neutral substitute for the source text. These translations frequently flaunt their linguistic unfamiliarity and prompt the reader to contemplate difference, and distance (from the source texts), rather than assuming automatic translatability. This in turn leads to questions of interpretation and emphasises translator choice.

Venuti's description of translation (quoted above) – as a process that varies “in accordance with the translator's cultural situation and historical moment” (2008: 124) – signals the direction for the next chapter. Chapter 3 will concentrate on the heterogeneity alluded to in this chapter. It will consider how and why these translators might use heterogeneous language in translation, remembering that style is always determined by the author's cognitive state, which, over time, has been influenced by historical, sociological and cultural factors (Boase-Beier, 2006a: 147).

## Chapter 3 – Subversion: style performs linguistic hybridity

### 3.1 Introduction

A poet is necessarily a product of his or her time, someone trying to make sense of him or herself in their time, through whom the time may best be told, yet, largely because of that, insists on the freedom not to espouse directly any political position

(Muldoon in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 172)

Words are a shifty business

(Carson in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 235)

The above statement by Paul Muldoon contemplates the *métier* of the poet and their complex relation to their context. The poet may be seen as ‘speaking for’ the time, embedded ineluctably in it, and yet remaining outside it, refusing to publicly adopt a political standpoint. In this contradiction, Muldoon highlights the friction between the public and personal aspects of the role (particularly relevant for a Northern Irish poet, given the political backdrop – see 1.2.5). On the other hand, Ciaran Carson’s statement addresses not the role of the poet, but the medium. In ‘The Other’ (the essay from which this quotation is drawn) Carson contemplates the idea of writing poetry as, variously, a “word-search”, “an exploration”, and a “journey” with an unknown destination (in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 235). Poetry is figured as the porting of a burden of meaning from one place to another; “poetry is itself translation” (ibid.) – and yet words are depicted as a “shifty business”. “Shifty”, close to ‘shifting’, furthers Carson’s figure of movement, a search for something that cannot be pinned down. But “shifty” also suggests something deliberately evasive, perhaps something dissembling (meaning both “addicted to evasion or artifice” and “changing or shifting in position” – OED Online) – words may not be all they seem. This chapter pursues the idea that certain varieties of language might deliberately

undermine wherever they appear. I will look specifically at how this subversive activity might be read as relating to the time: the particularly fraught socio-political context in which these translations were created. This is, in a sense, the key question for this chapter: whether the language used in translation, in all its ‘shiftiness’, might be a sign of a poet “trying to make sense of him or herself in their time”. In this chapter, ultimately, I will consider whether translation may also be termed a “shifty business” – and whether, as such, it provides the ideal means for an examination of linguistic origins.

This chapter responds to the third and fourth research questions set out in Chapter 1, namely:

3. Are these translations deliberately subversive in their use of language?
4. Why might these translators choose to engage in the act of translation?

This chapter thus moves away from the focus on the *reader* in the last chapter and, instead, concentrates on the central position of the *translator*, and the particular relationship between translator and translation context (including cognitive context). I also focus increasingly on the use of heterogeneous language in these texts, in addition to the use of dialect.

This chapter initially concentrates on the use of non-standard language as a subversive force. I will consider subversion first as a challenge to Standard English, and thereby to literary conventions, before considering postcolonial interpretations. For each translation, analysis will concentrate initially on dialect and colloquial language, before turning to consider the heterogeneous mix of language varieties used to translate. In questioning a postcolonial approach, I will draw on key theorists (particularly Colin Graham) who offer more nuanced critiques of the Irish postcolonial context. I will examine how the lexical variety of these translations may be said to relate to modern-day Northern Ireland, influenced by the presence of Irish, English and Scots, by language struggle and by changing patterns of immigration (see 1.2.2). In focussing on issues of

plurality of language I will draw on the work on Mikhail Bakhtin – particularly his theory of heteroglossia, which emphasises linguistic diversity (1981: 291-2). In invoking Bakhtin I both question ideas of linguistic purity, and suggest that heteroglossic writing may textually open up more complex ways of understanding identity.

The second section of this chapter questions whether these translated works facilitate a process of *personal* linguistic exploration for the translator (rather than constituting interventions in more wide-ranging ethical debates around colonialism). I will examine whether dialect and heteroglossic language in these translations is a reflection of each translator's personal interaction with their plural linguistic background and their formative linguistic experiences. Finally, I will suggest that it is the process of translation itself which allows these translators to examine their own linguistic hybridity – in forcing a position between languages translation may be viewed as emphasising linguistic selection, and bringing to light linguistic instability and polysemy.

The arguments presented throughout this chapter insist upon the importance of the translator-in-context, and of reading these translated poems with this context in mind (social, political, literary, linguistic and so on). In the second section, I particularly emphasise the translator's *personal* experience, making a case for how this can be read in the language of a literary work. The arguments here are rooted in linguistics and stylistics, particularly cognitive stylistics – drawing on ideas expressed by, amongst others, Paul Simpson (2012), Jean Boase-Beier (2006a) and Roger Fowler (1996). This involves an exploration of the translator's 'mind-style' – the extent to which the language of a text embodies the personal experience of the author or translator.<sup>114</sup> As Seamus Heaney learnt from his university lecturer, John Braidwood, "our speech is a signature, a kind of verbal finger-print, a watermark of ourselves in sound" (in Jones, 2006: 188) – this chapter examines how the style of a translation is one area where this personal watermark may (unexpectedly) be clearly seen.

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<sup>114</sup> Mind-style is explored in 3.3.2.

## 3.2 Subversive language

### 3.2.1 Approaches to subversion

In Chapter 2 I suggested that unusual linguistic selections in these translations make the act of translation apparent: they demonstrate manipulation, that something is “being done with” these texts (as Matthew Reynolds observes of Carson’s translation, 2003: n.p.). In this chapter I am approaching these choices from another angle – not as opaque features for the reader, or strategies designed to show the hand of the translator, but as subversive techniques.<sup>115</sup>

Making a linguistic choice in a text can be subversive. We can think of a “subversive” act as one which “challenges and undermines a conventional idea, form, genre” (OED Online). In the following sections (3.2.2 – 3.2.3) I will consider firstly how the language of these texts might be considered subversive by undermining Standard English. I will explore not only the dialect and colloquial elements within the texts – which challenge, in different ways, the ideas we may have of the language ‘appropriate’ for canonical texts (texts which “are generally accepted as upholding the (main) literary or poetic tradition” – Wales, 2001: 47) – but also the heterogeneous nature of the language, the fact that the English of these translations is inherently plural.

Having considered this destabilisation of English, I will then consider whether this linguistic subversion should be read as a direct response to the colonial history of Ireland (undermining the dominant discourse), or whether a more nuanced interpretation may be required.

Before I start the linguistic analysis I will briefly set out the different types of subversion I am considering here – some key ways in which subversion may be perceived in the language of a literary text.

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<sup>115</sup> Of course, many (particularly Venuti, 2008) would claim that revealing the translator’s hand *is* an inherently subversive act.

### 3.2.1.1 Resistance via dialect – minor and informal

In Chapter 2, I explored the unexpectedness of encountering dialect terms, phrases and syntax, or culturally-bound language in translation. The appearance of dialect is unexpected primarily due to its *geographic* particularity, and its opacity: the use of dialect elements twists the translation from the context of the original text, drawing attention to this very dislocation and linguistic difference. Lack of easy comprehension also signals linguistic difference.

In this chapter I focus on the overlap between dialect and issues of status and register – “a variety of language defined according to the situation” (Wales, 2001: 337). Dialect is unexpected as it is particular to one locale, but also because it is generally the voice of a minority, with a lower profile than Standard English (see 1.3.2). Dialects are primarily informal and oral forms of language – in this chapter this informality matters. Just as social conventions dictate that dialect words, phrases or syntax used in everyday speech, with family and friends, or in informal situations, are not used in formal spoken contexts (for example, in interviews), they also do not routinely appear in formal *written* contexts (in broadsheet journalism, legal texts, or literary works). If, as Tom Paulin says, “print-culture overrides local differences of speech and vocabulary” (ed. 1990: xxi) this is particularly true in translations of classic or canonical texts: we are protective of our cultural treasures.

Simpson emphasises that these boundaries are normative, claiming that there is “no feature or pattern of language which is inherently or exclusively ‘literary’ in all contexts” (2004: 98). He analyses a Dorothy Parker poem in which the words “floweret” and “limousine” appear: in the abstract it may seem as if “floweret” is the more literary term, but in reality both words may be pressed into service in a poem (2004: 101; analysis 99-101). Elena Semino observes that the twentieth century was a turning point for stylistic variation: it “saw a considerable rise in the poetic use of a range of language varieties not traditionally associated with poetry, including colloquial, conversational language” (2002: 28). Demarcations

are still useful, however. For Semino, distinctions between typically poetic and non-poetic linguistic features are still necessary to account for the effects even of contemporary texts (2002: 29-30). So, whilst it may be near-impossible to reliably identify words or features which are inherently 'non-literary', a reader does approach a literary text with expectations of the type(s) of language that might appear, and notes and responds to deviations from these expectations.<sup>116</sup> Even Simpson's analysis of the Parker poem ultimately relies on exactly this sense of expectation and juxtaposition: the "more contemporary idiom" (including "limousine") is "brought into collision" with the traditional love-poem style of Parker's earlier stanzas (2004: 101).

Thus, even given the loosening of literary conventions, where vernacular language appears we usually take note. We tend to interpret the use of vernacular language in literary texts as a deliberate intervention, often with subversive aims – Lesley Jeffries suggests this may include the desire to escape the oppression of standard language, to shock, or to demystify poetic language (1993: 31). Where vernacular language appears in *translations*, the forced interrelation of source and target texts (and, thereby, of different locations, time periods and differing literary conventions) brings the use of dialect into sharper focus (as explored in Chapter 2).

If we look to pertinent historical examples, Michael Cronin briefly highlights the use of Hiberno-English dialect in translation during the Literary Revival in Ireland (in the nineteenth century), including Lady Gregory's translation of Molière. Cronin paints her work as an "act of cultural self-confidence" – the very act of translation implies that Hiberno-English is a "fit vehicle" for such a prestigious playwright (1996: 140). Cronin suggests that such translations (by Gregory, but also J.M. Synge and Douglas Hyde) were analogous to the Tudor conquest of the classics through translation – and associated linguistic self-confidence – in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England (1996: 140). In

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<sup>116</sup> Of course, foregrounding in its original form was based on *stylistic* subversion: the overturning of expectations and "automatized perception" – see Willie van Peer (1986: 2) on Viktor Shklovsky's theories.

Gregory's work, Hiberno-English – the language of the rural population (ibid.) – can be viewed as the equal of the French, its direct partner, via translation.

Despite the shift in context, the instances of northern Hiberno-English dialect in these translations by Carson, Heaney and Paulin may suggest similar linguistic self-confidence. Such self-confidence opposes the perception of Hiberno-English as an inferior form of language, and subverts literary conventions which dictate that informal, oral types of language are not appropriate for the task of translation. It may also cause us to alter our perception of the source text – *in translation* the demystification of poetic language may also be a comment on the norms surrounding the treatment of the source text.

### **3.2.1.2 Resistance via plurality**

If it is subversive to undermine Standard English (and literary convention) by admitting a local, minor, informal dialect form, then it can also be subversive to use many different varieties of language within one text.

In order to describe the heterogeneous language of these texts I am using Bakhtin's concept "heteroglossia", which describes the internal stratification of languages into many further language varieties (1981: 262-3; see, too, 1.3.3). Although Bakhtin describes heteroglossia as a linguistic fact, observable in the real world (ibid.), he positions its literary use in opposition to homogenising forces in "socio-linguistic and ideological life" (1981: 271). The public, 'official' world Bakhtin observes excludes the linguistic diversity naturally present in social discourse. For Bakhtin, it is therefore an ethical position, or even a form of activism, to highlight this linguistic diversity by introducing heteroglossic forms into literature (1981: 366-8): linguistic struggles in textual style are "inseparable from social and ideological struggle" (1981: 67-8). Heteroglossia can also be used to emphasise diversity of point of view or position, as embodied in language (Bakhtin, 1981: 291-2). In this chapter I will suggest that such plurality (that is, plurality of position as performed through language) is particularly relevant in



Northern Ireland, a place where single narratives are determinedly espoused by particular communities (see 1.2.1).

Lawrence Venuti's theories are also relevant in this context. Venuti's work aims not only to highlight the translator's presence (explored in Chapter 2) but also to counteract homogenising tendencies in English-language literary contexts (2008: 5) by disrupting the target culture norms (2008: 15). One way in which this can be achieved is through the use of marginal discourses: by "drawing on materials that are not currently dominant, namely the marginal and the nonstandard, the residual and the emergent" (2008: 20), or what Jean-Jacques Lecercle termed "the remainder" (1990: 6).<sup>117</sup>

Many of Venuti's concerns overlap not only with the activities of those early Hiberno-English translators (bolstering a minor language form, defying Standard English), but also with Bakhtin's ideas (which Venuti appears to have adopted): for both Bakhtin and Venuti, variety in textual language use<sup>118</sup> can be set against homogenising norms (against the notion of dominant discourses *per se*, as much as against one dominant discourse in particular). For both theorists this has implications not only for literature but, ambitiously, for society more broadly.

### **3.2.1.3 Postcolonial resistance via linguistic choice**

Many of Bakhtin's and Venuti's concerns also coincide with significant planks of postcolonial thought; the focus on the power dynamics of language, in particular, is an area common to postcolonial theory and the thinking of these two theorists.

Postcolonial translation theorists concentrate on the specific role that translation has played in colonial contexts, in the hands of either the oppressors or the oppressed (see 1.4.2). Within this context, Maria Tymoczko's work

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<sup>117</sup> Venuti acknowledges the conceptual debt to Lecercle (1998: 10).

<sup>118</sup> Venuti explores variety in the target language of a literary translation; Bakhtin explores variety in the language of novels.

(1999a) emphasises the ways in which certain translation practices in Ireland represented forms of resistance to colonial rule (1999a: 20-21, and throughout). Like Cronin, Tymoczko analyses the use of Hiberno-English idiom in translation as one incarnation of linguistic resistance (1999a: 138). She presents this language variety as a means of developing Irish discourses *within* the English literary tradition. This literary activity differs from the translation practices which dominate the rest of Tymoczko's work: the translation of medieval Irish texts into English. The use of Hiberno-English idiom enacts disruption of the dominant discourse (English) by enclosing another language variety within it (that is, within a purportedly *English-language* text), or as Tymoczko has it, "countering the dominance of power relations coded into the very language of the colonizers" (1999a: 138). Thus, where Cronin focusses on the linguistic self-confidence of these writers, Tymoczko highlights the postcolonial subversion inherent in these translation strategies.<sup>119</sup>

Tymoczko presents these translations as ethical acts<sup>120</sup> ("intense ideological and even political activity" – 1999a: 21): resistance via translation uses language to disrupt and unsettle the dominant discourse in Ireland (English). Tymoczko and Venuti both counter the same dominant language (this is not happenstance; the dominance of English is, of course, largely due to its colonial history, in Ireland and beyond). However, their focus is slightly different. Venuti focusses on the English-speaking world, but is opposed to dominance and ethnocentrism *in general*. He is explicitly anti-imperialist (2008: 16), and describes the alternative strategies he suggests as "exemplary modes of cultural resistance" (2008: 267), but this is not a quest which relates to a specific *national* culture. Tymoczko, by contrast, makes no secret of her attitude towards this particular historical context – subversion is not an abstract concept; it is a specific response to the colonial oppressor in the Irish context.

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<sup>119</sup> Cronin agrees, however, that such translation strategies can be subversive (1996: 136).

<sup>120</sup> Venuti's and Bakhtin's positions are also ethical. Graham notes that an "essential component of postcolonial criticism has been its evolution as an ethical criticism" (2001: 82; also 82-87).

All of these angles are relevant as I explore the subversive elements of these translations: can the language of these texts be read as subverting what might be considered 'colonial discourse'? Is any subversion therefore to be read as participating in the long Irish history of activism by the colonised via linguistic choice in translation? Or, are the linguistic choices in these translations subversive in ways that do *not* neatly coincide with traditional postcolonial narratives of translation in Ireland? As indicated in Chapter 1, I will also draw on theorists working in postcolonial studies (as opposed to postcolonial *translation* studies) as they offer further ways of considering linguistic subversion that do not neatly fit traditional 'postcolonial' discourses. This opens up the possibility of reading subversion not in the context of a binary 'coloniser/colonised' opposition. Whilst it would be a serious omission to ignore the extent to which the language of these translations relates to Ireland's colonial past, I want to resist a facile representation of linguistic opposition in these texts as automatically anti-colonial.

Finally, it is worth acknowledging that texts which are subversive on one plane may be resolutely conservative on others: Heaney's *Beowulf* has been criticised for its dismissive position in relation to women (Magennis, 2011: 167; cf. Conor McCarthy's contrasting interpretation – 2008: 117-20), *The Road to Inver* upholds a Western or Eurocentric view of the poetic canon (three translations of the Palestinian poet Walid Khazendar notwithstanding), and Carson's *The Inferno* resolutely maintains the strictures of Dante's rhyme scheme even whilst it is flamboyantly creative elsewhere. Furthermore, in all three translations there is a tension between the subversive elements I examine here, and the status of these translators, particularly Nobel Laureate Heaney; the extent to which these high-profile writers (often published by major publishing houses, including Faber) can be viewed as radically subversive voices is qualified by their proximity to the establishment.

### 3.2.2 Subverting English – subverting literary norms

#### 3.2.2.1 Subversive Heaney

As highlighted in Chapter 2, Heaney's use of northern Hiberno-English gives his translation a particular overall style. Heaney's lengthy engagement with *Beowulf* was a process of understanding the value of his own language variety, and the role it could play in translating this seminal English-language text. Heaney reports a need to legitimise his own language and affirm its suitability for the work: to feel that his "own little verse-craft can dock safe and sound at the big quay of the language" (1999a: xxvi). Thus, uncovering the origins of the word 'thole' in the Anglo-Saxon word 'þolian'<sup>121</sup> was illuminating for him: a local, niche, dialect word (present in his family's language) was "in the official textual world, mediated through the apparatus of a scholarly edition" (1999a: xxv – note the language of literary authority: "official", "textual", "apparatus", "scholarly edition").

Heaney's account betrays the insecurities – not poetic, but *linguistic* – which lie behind the translation. Uncovering the link between 'thole' and this bastion of English literature seems to authorise the enterprise, giving Heaney his entitlement to translate.<sup>122</sup> Hugh Magennis asserts that in choosing to use Hiberno-English in his translation Heaney was not suggesting that his own variety of English was superior, but rather "that it was *not inferior*" (2011: 165; my italics). This seems accurate to me, and is an important distinction: contrary to expectations (perhaps including Heaney's own), Hiberno-English is 'up to the job' of taking on *Beowulf*. In this, Heaney's translation project shares something with key historic instances where the vernacular has been elevated via

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<sup>121</sup> In fact, 'þolian' does not appear at this point in *Beowulf*; Heaney found it in a glossary for the word "drugon" (1999a: 2), from 'dreogan', meaning 'to suffer' (1999a: xxv). Interestingly, 'thole' is *not* used where 'þolian' *does* occur (Magennis, 2011: 166), and only inserted on this first page where it does *not*, suggesting it was most valuable as a signal of intent (cf. 2.2.2.1).

<sup>122</sup> As Magennis indicates, this may be Heaney's own "mythology" of the process, or a post hoc justification of his approach (2011: 163). Nonetheless, Heaney's account is important as it acknowledges the role language *status* may play in translation.

translation – for example, Luther’s translation of the Bible into Hochdeutsch, or the movement to use vernacular French (rather than Latin) for civil acts in France during the sixteenth century (Brisset, 2004: 338-339). There are also faint echoes of those nineteenth-century efforts of Gregory and her peers to legitimise Hiberno-English: through translation the local, parochial and oral is permitted entry to the official textual world.

Although talismanic words like “tholed” (1999a: 3), key to Heaney’s account, are noticeable and dislocating, the colloquial or conversational tone of Heaney’s language is yet more pervasive. In the following passage Beowulf challenges Unferth’s version of a swimming contest:

Well, friend Unferth, you have had your say  
about Breca and me. But it was mostly beer  
that was doing the talking. The truth is this:  
when the going was heavy in those high waves,  
I was the strongest swimmer of all.  
We’d been children together and we grew up  
daring ourselves to outdo each other (1999a: 18).

If this passage were presented in isolation, it would just about be possible to read it as a modern text. Colloquialisms such as “it was mostly beer / that was doing the talking”,<sup>123</sup> “the going was heavy” (a metaphor now mainly used in horse-racing – OED Online), “We’d been children together”, and even the concept of being a ‘strong swimmer’, feel as if they belong to common parlance, and the contemporary world, rather than an Anglo-Saxon epic. As a point of comparison, Michael Alexander’s translation offers more atemporal, less vernacular versions of these elements: “the beer lends / eloquence to his tongue”, “endured underwater a much worse struggle”, “It was in early manhood” and “I had more sea-strength” (2001: 21). (Of course, occasionally isolated passages of Alexander’s translation match or even exceed Heaney’s colloquialisms: for example, when the Danish look-out accosts the Geats, in Alexander’s translation he says “I’ll have your names now” (2001: 11); Heaney selects the more formal:

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<sup>123</sup> Belfast-born poet, Philip Terry, uses the phrase “the beer doing the talking” in his recent vernacular-heavy translation, *Dante’s Inferno* (2014: 3). In Terry’s text, however, the phrase is used *in context* (in a modern bar setting).

"I have to be informed / about who you are" (1999a: 10) – however, in general Heaney's is the more colloquial translation).

For Magennis it is the everyday colloquialisms drawn from Heaney's local speech patterns which, together with the dialect terms, are "one of the most remarkable features" of his translation (2011: 168). Indeed, Magennis views Heaney's work as "revolutionary" (ibid.) in the very *ordinariness* of the language he marshals for his translation. Heaney's use of everyday vernacular is all-pervasive: "gave as good as I got" (1999a: 19), "It was the best part of a day" (1999a: 49), "It bothers me to have to" (1999a: 17), "Be on your mettle now" (1999a: 22), "no mere / hanger-on" (1999a: 10), "So it is goodbye now" (1999a: 90), "He was still himself" (1999a: 97), and "leave the killer be" (1999a: 64). These phrases occur across the characters' speech, but are used just as extensively by the poem's narrator: "rigged out in his gear" (1999a: 48), "He was not man enough" (ibid.), "ready for bed" (1999a: 58), "sitting worn out" (1999a: 90), "he worked himself up" (1999a: 73), "was mad to attack" (1999a: 84), "in tight corners" (1999a: 74), and "all roused up" (1999a: 66) – there is no ostensible distinction between the *depiction* of oral language and that used to frame the tale (Heaney is ever-conscious of *Beowulf* as an oral poem – 1999a: xxviii).

As critics have noted (Magennis, 2011: 168; Reynolds, 2011: 232) in this everyday language there is often recourse to (repeated) cliché: "helping hand" (1999a: 55), "from the heart" (1999a: 59), "to his heart's content" (1999a: 20), "warmed his heart" (1999a: 60), "shoulder to shoulder" (1999a: 19; 90), "alive and well" (1999a: 63), "safe and sound" (1999a: 18; 53; 64), "worth a fortune" (1999a: 94), and "time and again" (1999a: 6; 17; 19). These well-worn formulations are a deliberate aesthetic strategy – Heaney feels the poem invites the "formulaic phrases that are the stock-in-trade of oral bards" (1999a: xxviii). But the formulaic may at times descend into banality, as in *Beowulf*'s description of Hygelac: "he will come to my aid / and want to support me by *word and action* / in your *hour of need*" (1999a: 59, my italics). However interesting Heaney's translation may be in places, elsewhere it can feel mundane, even tired.

In the abstract, these well-worn phrases may tend towards producing the kind of homogenising, smooth translation Venuti is wary of. When Beowulf retorts with “The fact is, Unferth” (1999a: 20), or where Hygelac asks “Did you help Hrothgar / much in the end?” (1999a: 64), we receive the text in a particularly modern, recognisable form. This is not just the vernacular of Heaney’s locale; many of these phrases would form part of the everyday language of the average English-speaking person in Britain or Ireland.

So, how can Heaney’s very “domesticating” cultivation of ordinary language be “revolutionary”, as Magennis has claimed (2011: 168)? It is not unusual to ‘update’ translations, and Heaney’s is not the first to modernise *Beowulf* – although an injection of more modern language *can* provide renewed energy to a text.<sup>124</sup> Reynolds has been extremely critical of the ease of assimilation: highlighting a run of “newspaper” clichés he notes they “give no hint that there might be some cultural specificity here which a translator or reader might need to work to grasp” (2011: 232-3; cf. Tom Boll on the trend for “loose colloquialism” in contemporary poetry in English, including in translations – 2013: 84-5). Magennis, however, proposes that Heaney’s everyday language “suggests communal experience” (2011: 169). Whilst at points the clichéd language may seem uninspiring (as in the routine description of Hygelac), the use of familiar, casual, easily understood or well-worn language *is* inclusive and accessible. A text which is unexpectedly legitimising for a Hiberno-English reader remains approachable and relatable even for the *non*-Hiberno-English speaker via the shared everyday language. The language of this translation is alien enough to be noticeable (for example, where “tholed” appears), but Heaney’s use of familiar colloquial language offsets this alienation and reduces the distance of the translation – it allows Heaney to perform a balancing act. In this quest for balance and comprehensibility we might again see the repercussions of the translation being a Norton (pedagogical) commission.

The reduction in distance is not complete, however. The lexicon employed by Heaney disrupts what we might expect in the language used to convey *Beowulf*.

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<sup>124</sup> Chapter 4 explores this reinvigoration.

When Beowulf declares “The fact is, Unferth” (1999a: 20), he could be in a soap opera, issuing a casual challenge across the dinner table. But this is an epic tale of heroism, and Beowulf is challenging Unferth about his failure to stop Grendel: ‘the fact is’ that Unferth has not prevented “havoc in Heorot and horrors everywhere” (ibid.). If Heaney’s translation is revolutionary, it is in the sense that the language of the everyday, a vernacular, low-brow form of language can be used to transmit this “heroic narrative” (1999a: ix), “the greatest surviving work of literature in Old English” (from the backcover of Alexander’s *Beowulf* translation, 2001). There are perhaps even echoes here of Luther’s vernacular German translation of the Bible which did not appear to preserve as much distance from the Divine (using the language of the ordinary man in the marketplace – Munday, 2016: 40).

While Gregory, Synge and Hyde used translation to enact cultural self-confidence via the elevation of a minor dialect form, Heaney’s is a different project. Heaney asserts not merely the validity of Hiberno-English, but the voice of the common man, including both its recognisable mundanity and its vernacular verve. The colloquial tone is important as much for its informality, its chatty oral quality (ostensibly suited for an oral epic) as for its geographical or historical particularity: this translation asserts an ‘ordinary’ voice, as much as a minor, Irish voice. This fits Heaney’s interpretation of *Beowulf* as a direct, plain-speaking epic (1999a: xxvii-viii). And whilst Chris Jones dismisses Heaney’s reading (2006: 234), this difference in views underlines how contingent the entire shape of a translation is upon translator interpretation of the original text.

We could view Heaney’s language in *Beowulf*, then, as a statement on the types of language that can be used in literature – that literature, even our ‘best’ literature, does not need ‘special’ language (“‘Literary’ does not mean ‘lofty’” – Heaney, 1999b: 16). Except, of course, *Beowulf* is not only a collection of everyday phrases interspersed with cliché and banality: if this were the case it would be unreadably dull. It would also not be poetry – as Heaney said, words must be “raised to the power of verse” (1999a: xxii); craft must be involved to morph clichés into literature worth engaging with, into a translation worth reading. As I



will explore in the next section, Heaney's other linguistic choices (particularly his use of kennings) sit alongside his everyday language, and this variety is part of how the language of the translation achieves the "power of verse".

Finally, it is also worth teasing apart the use of colloquialisms – "Be on your mettle now" (1999a: 22) or "was mad to attack" (1999a: 84) – from the use of clichéd phrases such as "safe and sound" (1999a: 18). The colloquialisms render the text approachable and relatable, they facilitate our encounter with the text, but they also bring the energy and unpredictability of vernacular language. Heaney's translation admits the "careless richness of speech" (Paulin, 1983a: 13) to a canonical text – that gesture could be viewed as preserving the power of the language variety (as Paulin desires, *ibid.*), or as opening up the borders of the text itself (as I will explore in Chapter 4). It can also be seen as disrupting our view of the status of the text and of language parameters. It is not that literature does not need 'special' language, it is rather that it does not *only* need 'special' language (cf. Kit de Waal on modern literature needing minor colloquial voices *as well as* 'standard' or canonical voices – 2018: n.p.). In Heaney's translation colloquialisms and dialect elements are combined with other language varieties – it is the extent of this linguistic mix that I turn to next.

### 3.2.2.2 Heaney's heteroglossia

So, in Heaney's *Beowulf*, there is a disconnect between the marginal or non-standard, colloquial language and the status of the text (and also between language and subject matter – we do not expect ancient warriors to speak as if in EastEnders). However, in Heaney's translation colloquialisms are only one type of discourse – they run into other language varieties at every turn.

Magennis observes the everyday vernacular mixing with dialect terms: "But he knows he need never be in dread / of your blade making a mizzle of his blood" (1999a: 20) – the dialect "mizzle" ("drizzle" – Share, 2003: 212) juxtaposes the colloquial "he knows he need never be". However, other varieties of language are

also brought together in *Beowulf*. In this passage Beowulf explains his arrival at Heorot:

[...] The news of Grendel,  
hard to ignore, reached me at home:  
sailors brought stories of the plight you suffer  
in this legendary hall, how it lies deserted,  
empty and useless once the evening light  
hides itself under heaven's dome (1999a: 15).

In the space of one sentence the passage moves from the prosaic and factual (indeed the trivial: “reached me at home”, a phrase we might use of a phone call to the house), to the grand and expansive – the sun “hides itself under heaven’s dome”. This last phrase does many things: it rhymes with the earlier “home”, it is not factual but metaphorical, it also animates the “evening light” (which seems to have intentionality), and the reference to “heaven’s dome” places the action within the dominant belief system of the time. Between these shifting phrases (from the modern and prosaic “news”, to the sun metaphorically hiding under the dome of heaven) the reader experiences language that means in different ways.<sup>125</sup> This is no longer the everyday voice of the start of the sentence; in fact, this is perhaps more like the voice we might expect to find in *Beowulf*. In contrast, Alexander’s translation has a rather more even, stately tone: Heaney’s “reached me at home” is “has been made known to me on my native turf” (2001: 17), and Alexander’s version does not quite reach the animation of Heaney’s final metaphoric flourish (offering the more straightforward: “as soon as the evening light / has hidden below the heaven’s bright edge” – *ibid.*). The oddity of Heaney’s translation is that both voices (modern colloquial and historic or metaphoric) occur together.

Some of the most marked juxtapositions in language variety involve Heaney’s use of kennings. In this passage, the Danes prepare Shield Sheafson’s sea-burial:

A ring-whorled prow rode in the harbour,  
ice-clad, outbound, a craft for a prince.  
They stretched their beloved lord in his boat,  
laid out by the mast, amidships,  
the great ring-giver. Far-fetched treasures

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<sup>125</sup> See also 2.3.2.2 on how individual kennings construct meaning differently.

were piled upon him, and precious gear (1999a: 4).

The language varieties shift constantly. There are many kennings, but they are not all the same sort:<sup>126</sup> “ring-whorled” and “ice-clad” describe the boat (although both are unusual); “ring-giver” is the first appearance of one of Heaney’s oft-used descriptive kennings for ‘king’. “Far-fetched” looks familiar, but is in fact more complex: we now use it to mean, metaphorically, ‘unlikely’, ‘implausible’ or even ‘fantastical’, but here it is literal: these treasures have been fetched from afar (this literal use of the adjective is now obsolete – OED Online). This is another example of Heaney’s defamiliarisation of language (see 2.3.2.2). Then there are words which feel like compounds, but are more prosaic and are not formally shaped as kennings: “outbound” (literally, the boat will be leaving, although perhaps with modern ‘outdoorsy’ overtones, as in ‘outward bound’)<sup>127</sup> and also “amidships” (a descriptive nautical term). Alexander’s language feels less tightly wrought at this point – he offers only one kenning (“out-eager”), and otherwise the descriptions are less compressed: a “boat with a ringed neck” (note that Alexander does not choose a metonym as Heaney does in “prow”), “icy”, “dealer of wound gold” (2001: 4).

Heaney’s passage moves between the more flowery descriptions and prosaic interludes in everyday language, including the interruption of the start of the middle sentence: “They stretched their beloved lord in his boat, / laid out by the mast”. The long, plain sentence in the middle of this descriptive passage, and the stillness it creates (in contrast to the movement and line breaks in surrounding lines) mirrors the sense of the unmoving corpse in the middle of the flurry of valedictory activity. Alexander also uses phrasing to mirror the sense – “and there they laid out their lord and master” (2001: 4) – but the shift is less marked as the surrounding language is so similarly paced (Alexander’s sentence concludes: “dealer of wound gold, in the waist of the ship, / in majesty by the mast” – *ibid.*). In Heaney’s passage, contrast with the stillness is also provided by the abrupt description of the treasures which “were piled upon him” – less

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<sup>126</sup> As set out in 2.3.2.2, some kennings are metaphorical, some are ‘simple’, or ‘descriptive’ (‘gold-giver’ for king), and some are straightforward compounds: ‘mead-bench’.

<sup>127</sup> R.M. Liuzza also uses “outbound” (2013: 57), but overall the combinations in his passage are not so highly wrought as in Heaney’s translation.

brutally Alexander describes the treasures as being “fetched aboard *her*” (2001: 4; my italics), that is, the boat. Finally, Heaney’s phrase “precious gear” is in itself a juxtaposition: the everyday, practical and prosaic (“gear”; in use since the 1300s, but now used colloquially – OED Online) an abrupt counterpoint to the special (“precious”).

Comparison with Alexander’s translation illustrates the variety in Heaney’s language over even a short passage. This is not uniformly the case – at points Alexander exceeds Heaney’s variety – however, overall, Heaney’s language is significantly more heteroglossic. Again, Heaney’s translation is not necessarily ‘better’ – in the passage above, Heaney’s “outbound”, rather than “out-eager” (Alexander), may feel anachronistic, and it may not be clear what the anachronism adds to the text at this point (although we could argue it brings additional texture to the language). Some may prefer the way in which Alexander’s “out-eager” animates the boat. The point is simply that although Alexander’s language *is* heterogeneous, the mix is of varieties is broader, and the extremes much greater in Heaney’s translation.

In short, Heaney’s translation interweaves a variety of discourses. Clichéd phrases (3.2.2.1) are one of these discourses. But they sit alongside the kennings, which feel, in contrast, particularly literary, and even between themselves construct meaning in different ways: from the routine “floor-boards” (1999a: 44), to the figurative, fantastical “sky-plague” (1999a: 74, meaning dragon). Both exist alongside *recherché* words: a “thresh” (1999a: 9; a “beat or beating” – OED Online),<sup>128</sup> or “boltered in [...] blood” (1999a: 15, meaning “clotted or clogged with blood” – OED Online).<sup>129</sup> And these alongside words which defamiliarise (see 2.3.2.2): “javelin”, used in *Beowulf* to mean a spear (1999a: 13; 57), or “a cutting edge” (1999a: 23) – in *Beowulf* a descriptive noun meaning a sword, but more familiar to us as a metaphoric adjective meaning ‘innovative’.

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<sup>128</sup> “Thresh” (also meaning to “separate [...] grains [...] from the husks and straw” – OED Online) fits Heaney’s agricultural language: including “stook”, describing a group of spears (1999a: 12), but meaning “a group of sheaves of grain”, “a shock” (OED Online), or “bothies” (1999a: 7), meaning a hut, shelter, or small cottage; accommodation for farmworkers (OED Online).

<sup>129</sup> “Blood-boltered” is now “archaic” or “literary” (OED Online).

Terms which feel context-specific, such as “gorget” (1999a: 69; a “piece of armour for the throat” – OED Online), “scion” (ibid.; a “descendent”, often from a noble family – OED Online) or “thane” (1999a: 14,<sup>130</sup> used throughout), are interwoven with modern terms, frequently tending towards the legalistic: “recompense” (1999a: 14), “respite” (1999a: 11, with modern-day overtones of ‘respite care’), “freehold” (1999a: 82), or “suppurating” (1999a: 85). Interestingly, however, although all of these terms may *feel* ‘current’ – we use all of them in 2018 – they originate around the 1400s (OED Online). And, as we saw in Chapter 2, all of these varieties of discourse mix with Hiberno-English dialect terms: “keen” (1999a: 77), or “graith” (1999a: 12; 94), and even flashes of modern-day Northern Ireland (“Hostilities broke out” – 1999a: 78).

The varieties of language shift too, as I have just explored, between ways of making meaning: plain-spoken and metaphorical. In total, this mix of language varieties is not as obviously provocative as the mix in either Carson’s or Paulin’s translations, but where Heaney’s text subverts, it does so by pluralising English – as Jones has observed, “otherness is [...] sited within” (2006: 7). Indeed, the very project of translating *Beowulf* may be said to ‘other’ English: we shine a spotlight on the intrinsic temporal differences and developments within a language when we translate from an older to a newer version of it.

In Heaney’s *Beowulf* then, the effect overall is an uneven texture, a mix of different varieties of language and ways of meaning which vary throughout. If Heaney’s translation can be said to resist Standard English (or indeed fluency), it does not do so through dialect, or colloquial language, or through the use of elaborate compound words alone, although each of these strategies might be seen as individually ‘resistant’: resistance through the use of ‘marginal language’, through the use of informal vernacular which undermines the perceived ‘formality’ of the work (“the impression that it was written [...] ‘on official

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<sup>130</sup> “Thane” was a term from Anglo-Saxon England (OED Online). Although “gorget”, “scion” and “thane” may all *feel* tonally appropriate, only “thane” derives from Old English (the others are from Middle English).

paper” – Heaney, 1999a: ix), or through language which creates meaning in a complex manner. The way in which this translation subtly subverts English is in the *combination* of its linguistic elements. Subversion, here, comes in the form of revealing English to be inherently plural, *and* in allowing all of these varieties to participate in a literary translation of a seminal text.

### 3.2.2.3 Subversive Carson

Reviewers of Carson’s work drew particular attention to the Belfast or Irish voice they felt Carson used (Smith, 2002: n.p.; Greenwell, 2002: n.p.; Mac Lochlainn, 2002: n.p.). Whilst Carson uses specific lexical items and syntax drawn from Hiberno-English dialect, the colloquial voice itself is an equally notable feature of his translation. In the following passage from Canto XI, Dante questions his guide about specific punishments:

[...] those who haunt the slippery bog,  
    belaboured by the rain and howling gale,  
    who clamour at each other’s throats like dogs,  
  
why aren’t they punished in the red-hot gaol,  
    if they are subject to the wrath of God?  
    If not, why are they so beyond the pale?’  
  
‘And why’, said he, ‘do you talk like a clod?  
    I mean, more than your usual verbal antics –  
    or has that brain of yours gone on the nod? (2002: 74).

In this passage we see the geographical particulars reminiscent of Ireland – in “bog”, and also, perhaps, “clod” (“clod” can mean a sod of earth, but occurring in such proximity to “bog”, it suggests a sod of *peat*, another of its meanings – OED Online).<sup>131</sup> We also see linguistic traces relating to Irish colonial history: “beyond the pale” (see 2.1.2.5) and also perhaps “gaol”, in this form originally from the Norman-French – Norman-French could also be seen as ‘colonial’: Tony Crowley

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<sup>131</sup> “Clod” also means a “blockhead” (OED Online).

describes the arrival of Norman-French in Ireland following the Norman invasion of 1169 (2005: 9-10).<sup>132</sup>

There is also Carson's typically relaxed, loquacious, vernacular delivery: "talk like a clod", "that brain of yours", "your usual verbal antics" and "gone on the nod", plus the sentence-filler "I mean". These elements dislocate the poem not only, as I argued in the last chapter, from its original Italian context, but also from the appropriately reverential language that literary norms have taught us to expect in a translation of Dante. As Reynolds has indicated, Carson's delivery, his tone "seems to react against the veneration with which Dante has so often been viewed" (2011: 50). A comparison with Robin Kirkpatrick's translation, highlights the unusual nature of the diction in Carson's translation:

'Yet tell me, too: those souls in that gross marsh,  
those swept by winds, those creatures lashed by rain,  
and those that clash with such abrasive tongues,  
if they all, likewise, face the wrath of God,  
then why not racked within these flame-red walls?  
Or if they don't, why are they as they are?'  
'Why,' he replied, 'do your frenetic wits  
wander so wildly from their usual track?  
Or where, if not fixed here, are your thoughts set?' (2010: 95).

Even this brief passage highlights Carson's direct, colloquial mode of address: "why [...] do you talk like a clod?" or "has that brain of yours gone on the nod?", in contrast with Kirkpatrick's "Why [...] do your frenetic wits / wander so wildly" and the slightly torturous "where, if not fixed here, are your thoughts set?". Kirkpatrick's selections also highlight the geographically particular language: Carson's "bog" in place of Kirkpatrick's "marsh", for example.<sup>133</sup> Against Kirkpatrick's more earnest, 'traditional' response to Dante, Carson's breezy colloquial ease is all the more apparent.

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<sup>132</sup> "Jail" came into English in two forms: "jaiole" from Central (or Parisian) French and "gayole" from the Norman-French ("gaiole"), surviving in the spelling "gaol" (OED Online). Carson uses "jail" elsewhere (in 'Gallipoli', from *Breaking News* – Carson, 2003: 57) – it seems he deliberately chose the non-standard version here, signalling plurality and historical traces.

<sup>133</sup> Here Steve Ellis' translation also has "marsh" (2007: 67), whilst Clive James has the more elaborate "stygian slime" (2013: 57).

The language in evidence in this passage and throughout the translation is subversive in that it resists the deference shown to Dante's work by deliberately encoding it in a voice that is expansively vernacular (much more so than in Heaney's translation). Carson's use of non-standard forms (colloquial voice, excessively direct tone, culture-specific language, geographical particularities) may appear close to the methods of resistance Venuti suggests, which are effective by openly disrupting existing target language hierarchies. The provocative use of this northern Hiberno-English voice could be considered a "recovery of the residual" or an "affiliation with the emergent or the dominated" (Venuti, 2008: 177).

We should be wary, however, of drawing too neat a conclusion here. Carson's project is different to Heaney's, and different again to those nineteenth-century activities of Gregory and Synge. Carson does not so much elevate a minor form of the language (Gregory), or excavate and repurpose key dialect terms (Heaney) – rather, he concentrates on the inventive power and verve of vernacular language, and how this can be re-employed in literature.

Thus, one key element that separates Carson from Heaney is that his choices are often exuberantly playful. In the last example, "why [...] do you talk like a clod?" (2002: 74) ostentatiously rhymes with "God" (ibid.), moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, or at least the earthly, in the space of three lines. In contrast, Kirkpatrick's "God" merely half-rhymes with "walls" (2010: 95). Of course, Kirkpatrick is not attempting to adhere to Dante's *terza rima* – many of Carson's more outré lexical selections are designed to fit the parameters of this scheme. The choice of "has that brain of yours gone on the nod?" (2002: 74) was partly dictated by the need to rhyme with "God" and "clod". However Carson's turn of phrase is deliberately colloquial – Clive James also rhymes "nod" with "God" at this point, but in a less stridently colloquial formulation: "How your wits nod / And wander aimless!" (2013: 57).

Sometimes Carson's translation is simply conversational – "Here's the rub" (2002: 129); "I stood and goggled at him" (2002: 194); "Say no more" (2002:



227); “d’ye think” (2002: 143); “I tell you, he looked horrible close up” (2002: 141). But more often the language is playfully provocative, and seems to relish the juxtaposition of our perception of the source text (the reverence Reynolds mentions, 2011: 50) with the language used to recast it. These choices are of a different order even to Heaney’s most colloquial selections: “Be on your mettle now” (1999a: 22), or “gave as good as I got” (1999a: 19). So, Carson conspicuously includes “How dare you cramp / my style?” (2002: 143), “Why eyeball me, you little squirt” (2002: 124), “I’ll fill your ear!” (2002: 213; in Northern Irish slang, ‘to give someone a telling off’), and “we’ll give you gyp!” (2002: 142, meaning to “punish” or “hurt” – OED Online) – as I have suggested, frequently Carson’s more inventive lines appear in passages of aggression and invective (see 2.2.2.4).

Often, the language of the translation reaches the scatological, puerile or playground: “with her shitty nails she picks her sores” (2002: 125), “the trumpet of his arse” (2002: 146), “blew [...] a raspberry salute” (2002: 146), and “Let him have it up the bum?” (2002: 144). Kirkpatrick notes Dante’s “perverse genius in the treatment of vulgar, scatological or obscene locutions” (2010: lxxxix); that Dante wrote unusually and innovatively in the vernacular may give Carson a sense of licence (cf. Carson’s description of Dante’s language as encompassing both “formal discourse and the language of the street” (2002: xxi) and his complaint that other translations forget Dante “wrote vernacular” – 2002: xix). Without recourse to the Italian we might doubt that Carson’s strategy in these examples is simply to provide equivalence – in using language such as “the trumpet of his arse” Carson seems to deal “a raspberry salute” to the concept of literary veneration. Satisfying as this argument is, however, it is not quite accurate. For Dante’s Italian also has “del cul fatto trombetta” (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 184, which Kirkpatrick, too, translates as “made a trumpet of his arse” – 2010: 185); we must remember that in the first instance Dante was also an iconoclast. There are places where Carson’s vulgarity exceeds Dante’s but the fingerprints of both are in the translation; if a “raspberry salute” is blown, it most often comes from both poets. This underlines one of the challenges of translational stylistics (cf. Munday, 2016: 98): the complications in picking apart the style of the

translator from the stylistic elements of the source, given that both intermingle in the newly-forged text.

Carson's translation demonstrates abundant glee in the use of vernacular as a significant constituent of the inventive energy of the translation. In Lisa McInerney's forthright defence of vernacular language she comments on the "verbal jousting" of the adults in her working-class family circle, in particular her grandfather with his "rapid-fire badinage with his friends in the pub", a man who "delighted in coining hilariously sniffy putdowns" (2017: 12). McInerney argues that the use of vernacular should not be (but often is) lazily equated with a *lack* of creativity, or articulacy, or ingenuity; quite the opposite. Carson's translation bears this out. Passages thick with repartee and vicious retorts are often laden with vernacular and bristle with the vitality many reviewers identified in his translation (Smith, 2002: n.p.; Greenwell, 2002: n.p.). The passage analysed in Chapter 2 (2.1.2.4) – including "Who are you that gives out such abuse?", "bugger off, and give my head some peace", and "I'll scalp your noggin piece by piece" (2002: 226) – is a good example of the verbal sparring that sparks throughout this translation. Carson's recourse to vernacular constructions, his stream of colloquial "sniffy putdowns" is part of his strategy for dealing with the rhyme scheme (adopting this vernacular tone permits him inventive workarounds for the constrictions of *terza rima*, as much as the Hiberno-English ballad gives him the model to *formally* accommodate it),<sup>134</sup> and it is a significant ingredient in the spring and ebullience of the translation as a whole. Whilst a slangy, colloquial, energetic Dante will never be to every critic's taste – see Vendler (2005) or Kirkpatrick (2010) – and vernacular language often dates quickly,<sup>135</sup> Carson's translation is more complicated than his "rapid-fire badinage"; vernacular language plays a central but not overwhelming part in this energetic, heteroglossic translation.

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<sup>134</sup> I will re-examine Carson's use of this ballad form in Chapter 4.

<sup>135</sup> Carson's breadth of vernacular – he uses Hiberno-English, British and American slang, and from varied eras – means that his translation cannot be pinned to one particular historical moment. It may thus avoid seeming 'dated'.

In short, Carson's selections are not half-hearted or subtle; his translation is a sustained, stimulating, varying linguistic performance. His choices often coincide with or respond to Dante's own subversion, happily interfering with the reader's ideas of the standard or the 'appropriate' in literature. Many of his choices, however, are as much a poet relishing his own ingenuity or daring as a nod to his subversive predecessor.

### 3.2.2.4 Carson's heteroglossia

Carson's text may appear subversive or resistant merely on the basis of the dialect and the colloquial voice (with its tendency towards vulgarity). However, even more than with Heaney's text, it is the linguistic mix which does as much as the dialect terms or colloquialisms to disrupt the "uptight efficient voice of Official Standard" (Paulin, ed. 1990: xx).

In the following passage, from Canto XXII, the devils are chasing a foe in the pit of tar:

Ratbreath, when he heard this, rolled his eyes,  
and hissed: 'Don't listen, it's a dirty trick,  
so he can jump. He must think we're not wise.'

And he, whose AKA was Señor Slick,  
replied: 'It's dirt indeed, to get my comrades  
in the shit; in fact, it's rather sick.'

Now Harley Quinn, unlike the other blades,  
was eager for some sport. 'If you dive in,  
I shall not gallop after you,' he said;

'but on our wings, above the bitumen  
we'll tally-ho, and hark behind the dyke,  
while you try to evade us gentlemen' (2002: 152).

The linguistic diversity is unrelenting. There are elements of Northern Irish vernacular in "He must think we're not wise" (meaning, idiomatically, 'have no

common sense’ – In Your Pocket, 2018: n.p.),<sup>136</sup> but also in in “blades” – which usually applies to a man, meaning a “gallant, a free-and-easy fellow” (OED Online), but in Northern Ireland typically refers to *girls* (BBC Northern Ireland, 2014b: n.p.). Here, it refers to the (male) devils, but the use of the word may, for (Northern) Irish readers, bring both senses to mind.

Then there are colloquialisms: “a dirty trick”, “it’s rather sick” (meaning ‘it’s cruel’) and “in the shit” (meaning ‘in trouble’). Once again “shit” lowers the register but here it is also linguistically playful: these characters are literally in something resembling “shit” (“boiling pitch” – 2002: 147), as well as metaphorically ‘in the shit’. There is playfulness, too, in the naming: “Ratbreath”, “Harley Quinn” (making a name out of ‘harlequin’, itself a pantomime term)<sup>137</sup> and “Señor Slick” (the text draws attention to this nicknaming with the acronym “AKA”).

Then there are terms which seem to come from a more elevated register of English belonging to the landed gentry: “gentlemen” or “blades” (a term reminiscent of the eighteenth century – OED Online), “eager for some sport” (meaning ‘wanting some fun’, but with connotations of bloodsports),<sup>138</sup> “tally-ho” (referring to a hunt cry – OED Online),<sup>139</sup> and even “gallop” (with its links to horse-riding and hunting). “Shall” too fits this register: Hiberno-English resolutely does not use ‘shall’; it uses ‘will’ (Dolan, 2012: xxiv-xxv) – in Ireland “shall” is seen as very ‘English’ (and ‘posh’). “Hark” (as a verb) specifically relates to hunting, particularly when used with an adverb (the OED Online gives the examples “hark away” or “hark forward”) – Carson presses this uncommon usage into service as it fits his imitation (or parody) of the discourse. This huntsman’s language, complete with its grammar, sits in opposition to the world of the

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<sup>136</sup> The OED Online suggests it means “in one’s right mind, sane” (a Scottish dialect expression).

<sup>137</sup> ‘Harlequin’ derives from ‘Arlecchino’ from the Italian commedia dell’arte (*Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 2012: 628) – with clever circularity ‘harlequin’ is thus the English form of a name which originated in the genre of which *The Inferno* is the exemplar. See also Carson’s note: 2002: 275.

<sup>138</sup> “Sport” recurs in the line following the quoted passage, and “sportsmen” six lines later (2002: 152).

<sup>139</sup> “Tally-ho” occurs in an earlier Canto alongside similar language, including “chaps” (2002: 143).

idiomatic use of “it’s a dirty trick” or “He must think we’re not wise” – upper-class English plays off against the colloquialisms. The interrelation of the two types of discourse suits a passage which illustrates warring factions (including the devils warring between themselves). We might even think of Carson as over-working this language in order to present a stereotyped variety of English, which more clearly underlines the linguistic shift.

Finally, there are other terms in this passage which fall outside these patterns: “comrades” (with overtones of Marxism, perhaps also in opposition to the established world of “tally-ho”), “Señor” (from the Spanish), “bitumen” (a technical term for ‘tar’, in opposition to the colloquial version used earlier: “shit”) and finally the use of “dyke” (here in the non-standard form; later in the work Carson will also use the standard version, “dike” – 2002: 189). These additions to the passage demonstrate the extent of Carson’s variety. Occasionally there is a rationale for specific selections: “Señor Slick” alliterates but it also denotes the nationality of the sinner – a Navarrese (the use of “signor”, the Italian version, in the previous Canto (2002: 143) reminds us of the interlinkages of Spanish and Italian). However, often choices are arbitrary: the use of both “dyke” and “dike”, for example, underlines plurality, rather than either selection being particularly meaningful in context.

The rest of *The Inferno* offers reading experiences which are at least as rich or confusing. Other passages are equally thick with layers, but different layers: words imported from other languages – from Italian, but also French (“pavé” – 2002: 77, meaning paving stone(s) – OED Online), Latin (“puerile” – 2002: 205) and even American English (“dude” – 2002: 144) – abbreviations, such as “phizog” (2002: 121; for “physiognomy” – OED Online), and borrowings from other areas such as football parlance (“offside” – 2002: 142; used colloquially in Hiberno-English to mean “out of the way” – OED Online). There are many different types of technical language: including “aliquot” (2002: 29; a mathematical term meaning “a portion or fraction” – OED Online),<sup>140</sup> “pluvial”

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<sup>140</sup> Used in the odd phrase “a road of aliquot / from stillness into storm” (2002: 29).

(2002: 39; a geological term, colloquially meaning “rainy” – OED Online)<sup>141</sup> and “paraclete” (2002: 81; a Christian term meaning “an advocate, intercessor” – OED Online). And numerous *Inferno*-specific puns: “infernal” (2002: 138 and throughout), “devilishly” (2002: 237) and “hell-bent” (2002: 240). Reynolds suggests Carson’s language is “as multiple and fragmented as Dante’s Italian – perhaps even more so” (2003: n.p.). Including the hyper-modern (“body-double” – 2002: 196), and puns on the source text (“infernal”) are two ways in which additional layers are conspicuously present in Carson’s translation, as compared to Dante’s original.<sup>142</sup>

As explored in Chapter 1 (1.3.3), Semino’s analysis of Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘Poet for Our Times’ describes the heteroglossic interrelation of the journalist’s voice with tabloid headlines; the effect she describes is generated via this specific, sustained juxtaposition of voices. Carson’s text is not heteroglossic in this concrete way. His translation does not settle into neat patterns of specific oppositions, but into a general mode of heterogeneity, where language contradicts itself, repeatedly and differently. In theory, of course, not everything can be foregrounded (Mukařovský in van Peer, 1986: 7), but Carson’s shifts are so frequent that we might say that heterogeneity itself is foregrounded.

As with Heaney, Carson’s text can be read as subverting English via its colloquial or localised voice. The resistance or subversion is more comprehensive and radical, however, when the linguistic mix is brought to light. Carson’s choices (“Harley Quinn”, or the use of “eager for some sport”) ask the reader to contemplate the histories written into language. His plurality and polysemy is an acknowledgement of the freightedness of language – of the different groups of individuals who use, and have used and left their mark on, the language.<sup>143</sup> This takes us back to Bakhtin and his observation that “images of language are inseparable from images of various world views and from the living beings who are their agents” (1981: 49). Allowing different varieties of language to

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<sup>141</sup> From the interesting juxtaposition “this pluvial hell” (2002: 39).

<sup>142</sup> This expansion of Dante’s text will be explored in Chapter 4.

<sup>143</sup> As Wales observes, discourse “transmits social and institutionalized values or ideologies, *and also creates them*” (2001: 114; my italics).

intermingle, is to allow different perspectives to exist simultaneously, to acknowledge that different perspectives exist in the first place, a tolerant position which might be seen as particularly useful in Northern Ireland, given the propensity for entrenched inherited accounts of a complex situation (see 1.2.2). This literary plurality is therefore subversive; it denies a “sacrosanct and unitary linguistic medium” (Bakhtin, 1981: 367), and in so doing, denies the possibility of single vantage points on the world, per se.

Neal Alexander notes that, for Carson, translation is not just a practice, but a significant trope across his work as a whole: “a concern with the ways in which other words, languages, and cultures imply and project other worlds, alternative ways of saying and seeing that defamiliarise received habits of perception” (2010: 175-6). In employing both “dyke” (2002: 152) and “dike” (2002: 189), “signor” (2002: 143) and “Señor” (2002: 152), “bitumen” and “shit”, “blades”, “comrades” and “gentlemen” (ibid.)<sup>144</sup> Carson uses alternative ways of saying to make room for, and perform, alternative ways of seeing.

### 3.2.2.5 Subversive Paulin

As explored in Chapter 2, Paulin’s translations are startling not only given the (partial) relocation to Northern Ireland, but also the dialect voice. It is the directness of this vernacular voice which I will consider first in exploring Paulin’s defiant challenge to ‘appropriateness’.

The opening lines of the poem ‘Unavoidable’ (translating Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) exemplify one of the ways in which this collection throws down a challenge:

Who can say to the birds  
*shut the fuck up* (2004: 9; italics in original).

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<sup>144</sup> The use of both “gub” and “gob” (see 2.2.2.4) also fits this pattern.

The contrast is stark between the benign, even romantic (“who can say to the birds”), and the twist to the abrupt vernacular “*shut the fuck up*”. Even without knowing the original, we suspect that an equivalently harsh line is unlikely to have been in Goethe’s text;<sup>145</sup> this type of language is anathema to many texts (it is far in excess of phrases such as “in the shit” in Carson’s translation – 2002: 152). Indeed, the shift to language more often used in speech is signalled typographically by italics. The implicit question of these lines is: ‘who can put “*shut the fuck up*” into the first two lines of a Goethe translation?’ The direct language invites questions of authority related not only to register but to decency in poetic creation, and to aesthetics – even the most tolerant consumer of ‘free’ translations may not appreciate Paulin’s determination to crowbar *his* lines and concerns into these poems, whatever the context.

Later in ‘Unavoidable’ the challenge more obviously relates to the creative process:

who can stop me chucking words  
onto this heavenly white page? (2004: 9).

Again, the oppositions are plentiful: the casual, careless nature of the vernacular “chucking”, set against the bland image of the page, “heavenly white” – poetically virginal, perfect, unsoiled (even this image may seem inappropriate as Paulin is producing translations – he does not exactly start with a blank page). The question can be seen as rhetorical, or as bravado – it again deals with the poet’s or translator’s authority: who can prevent a translator’s choices? Who is the arbiter of appropriateness in literature? Who will stop a poet from publishing a potentially sacrilegious translation of one of the pillars of European literature? The narrator’s rhetoric in this poem, in line with Paulin’s linguistic choices across this collection, robustly challenges not just what it is to translate (as explored in Chapter 2), but the deference with which we tend to approach classic literature.

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<sup>145</sup> Goethe’s poem, ‘Unvermeidlich’, does ask this question, albeit in quite a different register: “Wer kann gebieten den Vögeln / Still zu sein auf der Flur?” (Goethe, 1998: 102) – Martin Bidney translates: “Who will require on the meadow / Quiet, for birds, be the rule?” (2010: 36).



Often, however, there is a twist with Paulin – despite appearances “*shut the fuck up*” in one sense closely responds to Goethe’s original: for the dative plural noun “Vögeln” (Goethe, 1998: 102, meaning ‘birds’) also means ‘fuck’ (as the verb ‘vögeln’). As we have seen, Paulin enjoys punning, delighting in the capriciousness of language, when two words seem to stand in the same place. He also enjoys using expletives. But here there is a *textual* base to his profanity – in seeming to defy convention, Paulin is in fact jokingly exploiting the potentialities of Goethe’s original poem.

In a parallel vein, ‘Unavoidable’ concludes: “– Hafiz it’s such a struggle / being in love at my age” (2004: 9). Goethe’s original is from his *West-östlicher Divan* (1819), a collection of lyric poems inspired by the Persian poet, Hafiz. Paulin’s careful re-inscription of the poet’s name is a link back not to Goethe’s original – the name “Hafiz” does not appear in Goethe’s text – but to the original work which prompted Goethe’s poetry. As such, it is a clue (not often provided) to Paulin’s source. Its presence may prompt reader research, and encourages us to think about poetic derivation, artistic inspiration and how these issues relate to translation – a theme which weaves through these translated poems.<sup>146</sup> Thus with one hand Paulin’s poem challenges what it is to translate by seemingly disrupting the deferential relation with the source text; with the other it adds a link back to the very ‘source’ of artistic inspiration, in fact exceeding Goethe’s overt links to Hafiz. These contradictions problematise our reading of the poem *and* any sense of Paulin carelessly trampling over the classics without research or intent.

Paulin’s collection is not uniformly as profane as this Goethe translation, but the directness of vernacular language is often placed to shock or arrest. Many of the opening lines are as defiantly unexpected as ‘Unavoidable’. ‘Date of Renewal’ (translating Stéphane Mallarmé), opens with the jauntily direct “Snotty spring it’s seen off winter” (2004: 64) – a colloquial, puerile turn on Mallarmé’s elegant

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<sup>146</sup> See also 2.3.3.1, and poems such as ‘Une Rue Solitaire’ (2004: 100-101). ‘Creation and Animation’ (another Goethe translation) also nods to Hafiz (2004: 96), but that reference *is* in the original (Goethe, 1998: 24).

and muted: “Sur les bois oubliés quand passe l’hiver sombre”, from ‘Sonnet’ (‘In forgotten woods when sombre winter passes’ – my translation). ‘From the Death Cell’ (translating André Chénier) begins “We live – dishonoured, in the shit” (2004: 19): in this reimagining the colloquially metaphoric “in the shit” may be literal – there are shades of the republican hunger strikes of the 1980s, the opening line perhaps alluding to the dirty protests where walls were smeared with excrement.<sup>147</sup> The language here is immediately arresting, but the allusion, too, is controversial – political, unsettling, and highly emotive.

Beyond the openings, many of the poems perform the same trick of an unexpected shift in register as we saw with “*shut the fuck up*”. ‘Don’t’ (translating Heinrich Heine), has the following opening stanza:

Don’t mention it ever  
 – not when we’re lying in bed  
 or eating dinner  
 – not when I’m making a meal  
 of your wet cunt  
 don’t mention Deutschland to me (2004: 8).

The expletive “cunt” shocks because it follows “making a meal” in the previous line – this leads the reader in one direction, before abruptly changing tack (via the play on words: the literal becomes the metaphoric). “Cunt” is unexpected because of this wordplay, and provocative given its perceived strength in the English language, and its sense of the male gaze (Heine’s original, ‘Nachtgedanken’, does open with the narrator thinking of “Deutschland” in bed, but not during a sexual encounter – Heine, 1986: 140). The linguistic shift gives the poem a bodily or sexual twist – a frequent stylistic tic in Paulin’s work. Similarly, for example, ‘Date of Renewal’ is disrupted by “the smell of those trees like sweaty armpits” (2004: 64) and in ‘From the Death Cell’ someone “lifts her skirts” (2004: 19). In ‘L’Anguilla’ (translating Eugenio Montale) there is a stream of sexual imagery, including “that dry or wet – / either way hairy – slit” (2004: 40) – again Paulin plays with the line break and dashes to mislead and shock the reader (“dry or wet” follows “in a ditch” so it is not clear that it will become a sexual image: this is a poem about eels, after all).

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<sup>147</sup> See Mulholland (2002: 107-9; 112-14) on these hunger strikes.

'L'Anguilla' exemplifies Paulin's out-of-context sexualisation of language. The opening describes the eel:

it flexes through our warm sea  
our rivers and estuaries  
then licks their bottoms  
with its tongue its slime  
tongue threading each muddy bum (ibid.).

The wordplay in "licks their bottoms" (playing on 'river bottom') twists the line from the descriptive to the physical or sexual; Paulin spells this provocation out with "threading each muddy bum". Such imagery means that by the time "dry or wet" occurs (thirteen lines later) we perhaps anticipate Paulin's direction – his recourse to sexualised language causes us to second guess the words before us. Throughout this collection our expectations of how language will behave are unsettled – we come to expect it to be suggestive and subversive, double-voiced. These shifts in register occur repeatedly in Paulin's collection – at each occurrence they raise many of the same challenges spelt out by the lines in 'Unavoidable', problematising poet or translator authority.

In Paulin's collection the combined effect of the dialect forms (see 2.2.2.7) and the directness of the vernacular language with the associated shifts in register suggests an open defiance of authority, an assertion of the right to translate in a voice which is distinct from that of the 'establishment'. Paulin subverts the language we expect to see in translations of classic literature (whether due to its geographic particularity, use of expletives and sexual imagery, or deliberately provocative wordplay). This often leaves us with additional questions, however – Paulin appears to do what he wants with classic literature, but what does this add to the poem? What does it add to our understanding of the originals? Beyond defiance, what does Paulin's approach bring? This challenge to the aesthetic value of the language used to translate ghosts these poems. Significantly more than with Heaney or Carson we question the hand that translates – this is an unsettling position to be in as a reader.

It is tempting to view the use of colloquial or expletive language or the invidious sexualised imagery as facile, capricious or gimmicky, more for effect than for aesthetic purpose (and potentially tiresome when consumed in an anthology). Paulin, however, believes there is value in the shock and the challenge itself – opposing that “uptight efficient voice of Official Standard” (ed. 1990: xx) is consistent with his view of his poetic role. In this, his subversive tendencies are perhaps closer to James Joyce than the dialect-elevating work of Synge and Gregory.

Additionally, we must remember that example of Hafiz (from ‘Unavoidable’). That Paulin’s work may prompt a search for the source (often revealing fascinating interlinkages) makes many of these translations more thought-provoking than his vulgar interjections may imply. Research into the source of ‘Voronezh’ (translating Anna Akhmatova), for example, reveals that the poem’s name derived from ‘voron’ (‘raven’), but Akhmatova treats it as though from ‘vorona’ (‘crow’) – as translated by A.D. Hope (Australian Poetry Library, no date). Understanding the centrality of the word ‘crow’ to the very name of the original poem helps explain Paulin’s wordplay in the line explored in Chapter 2: “Crows are crowding the poplars” (2004: 44). Here Paulin uses a strategy of compensation to partially replicate Akhmatova’s treatment of the name ‘Voronezh’. The links within Paulin’s wordplay (even in the case of “*shut the fuck up*” – 2004: 9) betray a more sensitive approach to the original and the task of translation than we might infer from such seemingly offence-seeking insertions as “cunt” (2009: 8) elsewhere in the collection.

Provoking such quests does something different with translation. In challenging the role of the source, and the deference we usually accord it, Paulin may actually ask more of the reader in terms of interpretation – in one sense, passing over this baton is significantly more subversive than the work of either Carson or Heaney.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> See 3.3.3.3 for other elements of Paulin’s work which contribute to the burden of interpretation on the reader, including lack of linearity, punctuation and the presence of multiple ‘voices’ in the text.

### 3.2.2.6 Paulin's heteroglossia

Extending the opening passage from 'Unavoidable' offers a slightly different perspective on Paulin's linguistic selections, highlighting the variety. The first stanza of 'Unavoidable' reads as follows:

Who can say to the birds  
*shut the fuck up*  
or tell the sheep in the yow trummle  
not to struggle and leap? (2004: 9; italics in original).

"*Shut the fuck up*" is aggressive and incongruous, but it is also at odds with "the yow trummle", a phrase probably incomprehensible to many readers meaning "a cold spell in early summer about the time of sheep-shearing, supposed to chill the sheep" (Dictionary of the Scots Language). This phrase famously appears in the opening line of 'The Watergaw' by Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid.<sup>149</sup> Although an image of sheep-shearing occurs in Goethe's original (1998: 102), the function of "yow trummle" in Paulin's poem is plural. Firstly, MacDiarmid has a predilection for working with Scots. Scots, like northern Hiberno-English, is itself a marginal language, and one which is connected to the Northern Irish linguistic world in complex and controversial ways (via the arrival of the planters to Northern Ireland from England and Scotland – see Harris 1993: 140; also 1.3.2). Inserting Scots into 'Unavoidable' is a nod to these complex linguistic affiliations – to plantation and the Irish experience of it, in all its variety (of which more in 3.2.3). Secondly, MacDiarmid cited "yow-trummle" as one of a number of words which express "natural occurrences and phenomena of all kinds which have apparently never been noted by the English mind" (in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 78-9). MacDiarmid also includes "watergaw" in this list (meaning an "indistinct rainbow" – *ibid.*) – Paulin explicitly cites MacDiarmid's "watergaw" when he explains his own epiphanic realisation of the richness of the Hiberno-English compound "wind-dog", also meaning "rainbow" (ed. 1990: xxi). Paulin thus expresses an affinity with MacDiarmid's positioning; inserting the phrase "yow

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<sup>149</sup> "Ae weet forenicht i' the yow-trummle" – meaning "One wet, early evening in the sheep shearing season" (The Poetry Archive, no date).

trummle” explicitly links Paulin’s work with a writer known for his use of dialect, and with similar subversive tendencies. The difference and incomprehensibility of “yow trummle” continues the disruption of the poem. It extends and complicates the inappropriateness of the vernacular in the second line – Scots is also unexpected, but in a different way to “*shut the fuck up*” (Scots words do crop up in Paulin’s translations, but rarely as prominently as this). Just these four lines of translation, then, subvert our literary expectations in myriad ways.

Links to other writers can be felt across the collection. Paulin’s intertextual references reflect the breadth of his reading experience beyond the wide-ranging selection of works he chooses to translate (Wales defines intertextuality as “a continual ‘dialogue’ between the text given and other texts/utterances that exist outside it” – 2001: 220). At times, as with “yow trummle”, Paulin’s poems directly weave in other textual matter (I will explore this in 4.2.2.2). At other points – as with Hafiz in ‘Unavoidable’ – it is the *names* of writers which are invoked, creating a complicated web of original poets, intertextual references, and name-dropping. This happens with the opening line “André Chénier climbed up the ladder” (2004: 33) which appears in ‘André Chénier’, a translation of a Marina Tsvetayeva poem – the collection also includes a translation of Chénier himself, some six poems earlier, in which no mention is made of the author. Although Tsvetayeva’s original includes the reference to Chénier (Stephanie Schwerter’s translation is “André Chénier went to the scaffold”, 2013: 78), the interrelation with other poems in the collection amplifies the sense of literary interlinkages. Finally, there are even glancing self-referential moments: ‘L’Anguilla’ mentions “the wind dog’s arc” (2004: 41) – *The Wind Dog* (1999) is one of Paulin’s collections of original poetry – and ‘Winds and Rivers’, which first appeared in Paulin’s translated play, *Seize the Fire* (1990b), actually includes the phrase “seize the fire” (2004: 77), which thus comes to function as an intertextual link.

At times these references threaten to overwhelm the translations – the following passage from ‘The Emigration of the Poets’ plays with intertextuality, including invoking Brecht, the author of the original poem:

[...] at least Lucretius  
was nicknamed *Le bien aimé*  
and slipped away from *Heim*  
just like Heine  
– now watch me here Bertolt Brecht (2004: 46; italics in original).

Paulin's poem (the whole is as dense as this passage) makes similar leaps from poet to poet, reference to reference. The narrator also directly engages with the imagined persona of Brecht – similar to the direct addressing of Hafiz in 'Unavoidable' (2004: 9).

Paulin's collection, like Heaney's or Carson's translations, involves a range of different language varieties, including dialect words, colloquialisms and expletives, but also borrowings from other languages, neologisms (often in portmanteau form), obsolete words and onomatopoeic language (see 2.2.2.7 for examples of all of these). However, as demonstrated, intertextuality plays a very significant role in the linguistic variety of Paulin's collection. Bakhtin notes that intertextuality is one form heteroglossia can take – the reflection of other literary languages in the text (1981: 49). In so many of Paulin's translated poems (most notably 'The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath' – 2004: 51-62), the concerns, words and worlds of other authors are woven into the mix of language varieties within the texts, as Carson might weave in the language of bloodsports (2002: 152). In some ways, Paulin's is actually a *more* ostentatious heteroglossic device: recognisable words, names and phrases draw attention to these literary borrowings, offering new paths for reader exploration. We might note that an anthology of translations of a wide variety of different authors is itself an intrinsically heteroglossic act. As Nick Laird has said (of a recent poetry anthology he edited, *The Zoo of the New*, 2017), to experience multiple poems of different provenances side by side is to "see something of the plurality of the human" (2017: n.p.). When the anthology is made up of translations, the plurality is perhaps still more pronounced.

So, as with Heaney and Carson, although with different emphasis, it is not simply the use of marginal varieties of language (whether Scots or Hiberno-English) which disrupts Standard English. Nor solely the direct nature of the colloquial

voice (“*shut the fuck up*”). Rather it is the jarring collection of these, and more diverse linguistic elements – in particular the tapestry of intertextual references – across each of Paulin’s translations which not only calls into the question the idea of Standard English, but also refuses to provide a unified narrative voice.

Paulin’s linguistic mix subverts at the level of the text (undermining the deference usually shown to authors such as Goethe) but also at the level of language itself: in resisting fluency, Paulin’s texts resist a view of language which “manifests itself as a stress on immediate intelligibility and an avoidance of polysemy” (Venuti, 2008: 49). Paulin’s heteroglossic tendencies, and in particular his recourse to intertextual and metatextual play, suggest multiplicity. The author or translator position in his translations is made plural by ventriloquising a vast range of other authors – as an anthology, but intertextually in individual poems as well (he also textually articulates differences in the narrator/translator position, examined in 3.3.3.3 below). Paulin’s heteroglossic language layers different textures into these translations, knowingly compromising the ostensibly direct line from source to target, and the easy, untroubled encounter of reader and text.

### **3.2.2.7 Differing heteroglossia**

These texts are not heterogeneous in the same way. Ian Sansom summarises the work of the Northern Irish poets as follows: “Paulin is the only northern Irish poet who can make English sound like German. (Carson makes it Italian; Muldoon makes it Yiddish; Longley makes it Greek; and Heaney speaks in a language from far beyond the grave)” (2004: n.p.). Even this description compartmentalises these poets into single languages, diminishing their internal complexity. By way of illustration: the pop culture references of Carson’s *The Inferno* do not appear in either Heaney’s or Paulin’s translations; wordplay is not such an obvious presence in Heaney’s text as in Carson’s or Paulin’s; compound words do not colour Carson’s work as they do *Beowulf*, or, in a different way, Paulin’s collection. Neither Carson’s nor Heaney’s translation involves the



sentence-filling words which litter Paulin's work (for example "ack" – 2004: 13), and neither Carson nor Heaney has such recourse to intertextuality as Paulin.

These texts also differ in the extent to which the overall effect is uneven: Paulin's work (partly as it includes a wide range of translations covering twenty-eight years) is not uniform: some translations are more heteroglossic (for example, 'The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath' – 2004: 51-62) and a few less so ('The Lagan Blackbird' – 2004: 15).<sup>150</sup> Where linguistic heterogeneity does occur, it often feels wilder, or less controlled than the heterogeneity of either Heaney's or Carson's translations – see, for example, 'The Skeleton' (Paulin, 2004: 10), where the language and voice shift with practically every line. It is in part the sound schemes – whether rhyme (Carson) or rhythm and alliteration (Heaney) – which create a more controlled overall impression, even where individual passages are as inherently complicated as the Carson passages explored above.

As the analysis in 3.2.2.1 – 3.2.2.6 demonstrates, these texts are also not *subversive* in the same way (they are not even subversive in the same way within themselves). Thus, the re-inscription of "beyond the pale" in Heaney's or Carson's translations (1999a: 45 and 2002: 74 respectively), does not work in the same way as the intertextual re-inscription of "yow trummle" in Paulin's translation (2004: 9). The use of the colloquial "it was mostly beer / that was doing the talking" (1999a: 18) in *Beowulf*, is different to the function of some elements of colloquial speech in *The Road to Inver* ("shut the fuck up" – 2004: 9), which is different again to the way the speech-fillers operate ("ackhello" – 2004: 51). "Hostilities broke out" (1999a: 78) has a different role in *Beowulf* to "tholed" (1999a: 3); but it does have synergies with Carson's "sectarians" (2002: 40) – and yet both are tonally different to Paulin's more extreme "We live – dishonoured, in the shit" (2004: 19). All of these can, in different ways, be interpreted as subversive elements, and they share common features, overlap in some ways, and differ significantly in others. And this is before we consider the role of intertextuality in Paulin, or the playfulness of Carson.

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<sup>150</sup> Even this poem has been translated by so many Northern Irish poets that the sense of intertextuality may, to some readers, feel prominent (cf. Sansom, 2008: n.p.).

Close reading allows us to hold up the layered complexity and tensions in these translations, but it remains difficult to accurately describe the language of these texts, and its functions, as it changes so constantly, and pulls in different directions simultaneously. Jeffries has lamented that many stylistic studies are too descriptive, becoming as complicated as the texts they attempt to describe (2015: n.p.). However, Peter Stockwell asserts that there is value in in-depth literary analysis precisely because it illuminates effects which are difficult to articulate, but which nonetheless affect the experience of reading the text (2013: 267). These translations use language in complex, nuanced, varied, innovative and historically sensitive ways – in highlighting their distinctive complexities we draw out rather than obscure, their particularities.

In Chapter 4 I will investigate how multiple language varieties are not simply present together in these texts, but are brought into contact, forced to ‘interact’ via rhyme schemes, alliteration and other techniques. I will focus on the *creative* possibilities of these interactions, drawing on Bakhtin’s theories of dialogism (1981).

For now, I will turn to think about how the disruption of English evident in these translations may be linked to the Irish context, and to questions of postcolonialism in translation – and how these translations may push against or beyond this.

### **3.2.3 Subverting the language of the coloniser?**

As shown above, at different points and in different ways, these texts demonstrate: the promotion of a minor dialect form (a form influenced both by Irish, and the English and Scots spoken by the planters), the use of language which is historically or politically freighted, a challenge to linguistic authority and the destabilisation of English, or, rather, the demonstration of the plurality inherent in the English language.

In the abstract many of these concerns overlap with the ostensible concerns of postcolonial theory, and it may be tempting to read these subversive elements as aligned with a tradition of postcolonial protest – with historical literary efforts in Ireland to undermine English and destabilise the language of the coloniser.

Rui Carvalho Homem highlights the “unusual degree of mutual awareness” (2009: 20) between Irish poets – their sense of writing as part of and *after* a tradition. Carvalho Homem traces the indebtedness of the Northern Irish poets to Patrick Kavanagh, Thomas Kinsella and Brian Friel in particular (2009: 7-9), and the different ways in which these precursors focus on translation. Most prominently, Cronin (1996) and Tymoczko (1999a) have traced the role translation played in Ireland in the multi-faceted destabilisation of English over the centuries (see 1.4.2 – 1.4.3). Parallels may be drawn with key instances of historical translation activity: as I have mentioned, a line (albeit broken) might be drawn from the efforts of Gregory to promote Hiberno-English via translation in the nineteenth century to the work of these three poets. There are affinities, too, with the late twentieth-century work of the Field Day group – most specifically with Friel’s watershed play *Translations* (1981), which depicted the renaming (and colonial rewriting) of the physical environment in Ireland by the English.<sup>151</sup>

The overlaps between such ‘postcolonial’ literary activities and the linguistic tics of these poets in these translations are complex and difficult to tease apart. Magennis observes, for example, that issues of register and questions of colonialism can be linked. Noting Heaney’s sensitivity to language hierarchies in Ireland – as non-standard forms had a “socially stigmatized status” – he explains that these issues were “complicated in the Irish context of Heaney’s own experience by considerations of language ownership and perceptions of colonialism” (2011: 165). Questions of one type of inferiority may bleed over

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<sup>151</sup> The Field Day Theatre Company initially aimed to promote *Translations*, but ultimately sought to establish a new (conceptual) cultural space for artists confronting societal divisions in Northern Ireland (Field Day, no date).

into another: Hiberno-English dialect, marked as it is by Irish, may be easily read as not-English, or even *anti*-English, as well as not-*Standard* English.

Heaney's meta-narrative around his translation of *Beowulf* has contributed to the tendency (see the accounts of Magennis, 2011: 163, or Jones, 2006: 229-230) to view elements of his translation as a postcolonial project.<sup>152</sup> Heaney's oft-repeated narration of his use of the word "bawn" directly relates his choices in translation to the need to right linguistic wrongs, and confront Ireland's colonial past:

In Elizabethan English, bawn (from the Irish *bó-dhún*, a fort for cattle) referred specifically to the fortified dwellings that the English planters built in Ireland to keep the dispossessed natives at bay [...] Putting a bawn into *Beowulf* seems one way for an Irish poet to come to terms with that complex history of conquest and colony, absorption and resistance, integrity and antagonism (1999a: xxx).

So expressed, the journey of this word epitomises the role played by language in the colonial encounter: "bawn" not only comes from the Irish, but has been twisted to be used against the colonised; their own word repossessed, and used to signify the structures which will physically exclude and disempower them. Heaney's re-employment of this word is cast as redemptive; a means of acknowledging and redressing colonial history by re-using the appropriated word in a translation of this prestigious Anglo-Saxon epic. In line with this interpretation, Heaney's very translation project could be interpreted as postcolonial in nature – the rewriting, and 'Hibernicising', of a cornerstone of English literature by a poet from rural Northern Ireland might seem a not insignificant political act, an example, perhaps, of the Empire 'writing back'.

"Bawn" seems a perfectly formed example, and Heaney's narrative compelling in its coherence. But the coherence breaks down if we try to extend it beyond this word. Even the other instances of Hiberno-English dialect in this translation do not have this underlying strength of postcolonial story – for example, "keshes" (1999a: 45) is Hiberno-English and, as I have suggested, is imbued with a sense

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<sup>152</sup> Some reviewers objected to the anachronistic insertion of postcolonial language into a text which so obviously predates these theoretical ideas (Magennis, 2011: 161).

of the Troubles, with a sense of the political and controversial (via the allusion to the prison, known as Long Kesh, which housed political prisoners – see 2.2.2.2). But although this word brings *political* resonances, to me it does not convincingly constitute a postcolonial intervention.

The same is true for other instances of Hiberno-English – “graith” (1999a: 12), or “keen” (1999a: 77) – or for the allusions to the political situation in Northern Ireland. Often the primary function of the dialect language may be aesthetic. When Heaney describes Beowulf’s troops – “So they duly arrived / in their grim war-graith and gear at the hall” (1999a: 12) – “graith” gives Heaney increased capacity for alliteration (with both “grim” and “gear”) *and* provides an interesting interaction with “gear”, bringing a different flavour. Here the re-inscription of a minor dialect word, with all of the attendant political concerns, is only one facet of Heaney’s language use.

The language of Heaney’s translation *is* layered and etymologically aware. It often reflects current political friction (“troubles” – 1999a: 3) or issues of linguistic and colonial history – as in words such as “hall-session” (1999a: 25), which betray traces of Irish (in Hiberno-English “the word ‘session’ (*seisiún* in Irish) can mean a gathering where musicians and singers perform” – Heaney, 1999b: 16). But to my mind, this “historical suggestiveness” (Heaney, 1999a: xxx) does not combine to form a full postcolonial project, however Heaney’s presentation may tempt us to frame certain linguistic choices.

Neither *The Inferno* nor *The Road to Inver* has attracted the explicit postcolonial critical commentary that has been attached to Heaney’s translation, although other elements of these poets’ work are considered to be postcolonial.<sup>153</sup> As with Heaney’s translation, the various subversive linguistic strategies employed by Carson and Paulin imbue these texts with the political – sectarian marchers in *The Inferno* (2002: 40); hunger strikes in a translation of Chénier (2004: 19) – and the historical and colonial: “beyond the pale” in *The Inferno* (2002: 74); “a

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<sup>153</sup> See, for example, Julia Obert’s study (2015), which considers the *sound* of several Northern Irish poets in relation to postcolonial concerns.

ruin from the Black and Tan war” in *The Road to Inver* (2004: 11). There is also the decentring via the relocation to the world of, for example, “some Irish bog” (Carson, 2002: 216), or a nondescript Irish seaside town (“Portnoo” – in Paulin’s translation of Montale – 2004: 11). And both use language in which the influence of Irish can be seen (“strip *you* it off again” – Carson, 2002: 232), or “the islanders *they* keep indoors” (Paulin, 2004: 2; my italics highlight the additional personal pronoun).

The use of this sort of double-voiced language means that subversive flashes of the insidious influence of colonialism invade these translations, and it can be tempting to over-read: Schwerter interprets the appearance of the “White Canal” in ‘Last Statement’ (Paulin, 2004: 13, translating Vladimir Mayakovsky) to be a symbol of Stalinist control, and *therefore* also a symbol of British “supervision” of Northern Ireland (2013: 103) – her readings often over-inflate, or over-simplify, the complex political interlinkages in Paulin’s work. As with Heaney, these instances of subversion in Carson’s and Paulin’s work do not seem to constitute a neat postcolonial intervention – we should be wary of inferring a straightforward affinity with the Irish postcolonial critical tradition which is not warranted.

### **3.2.3.1 Reading beyond postcolonialism – the importance of plurality**

Justin Quinn observes that Irish writers seem to need to “define their difference” (2012: 343) – perhaps through fear of becoming subsumed into a “homogeneous anglophone tradition” unless their texts are marked by “traces whose provenance reflects the historical experience of his or her country” (ibid.). The language used in these three translations sets out the “difference” of these translators’ linguistic experiences – this is often prominently performed, or indeed highlighted by the translators themselves. It is Heaney who highlights the significance of “bawn” (1999a: xxx), Carson who insists on the ‘music’ of Belfast as his influence (2002: xx-xxi). The prominent staging of linguistic difference in Paulin’s work stresses the ‘otherness’ of his voice in the absence of an

introduction – for example the slew of dialect words in the second poem, ‘The Island in the North Sea’ (2004: 2): “bawn”, “dander” (“a leisurely stroll” – Dolan, 2012: 78), “girning” (crying or whining – Dolan, 2012: 113), and “hirpling” (walking lame – Share, 2003: 154).

That there is an undoubted challenge to English in these texts does not acknowledge all that these translations do. The analysis in 3.2.2.1 – 3.2.2.7 demonstrates that these poets also subvert via linguistic plurality. This plurality is important – it links to the ideas of interpretation raised in Chapter 2, but it also complicates our ability to read these translations as straightforwardly postcolonial. The interplay of dialect terms and Northern Irish vernacular with other language varieties in these texts is crucial, and is one significant way in which the projects undertaken by these translators differ from and advance the work of the translators of nineteenth-century Ireland.

Even elements which relate to the Irish experience suggest plurality. When Heaney describes his family’s use of “thole”, he also traces the word’s etymological journey (from England to Scotland, then to Northern Ireland via the planters, and over to the locals’ language – 1999a: xxv). If “bawn” seems to reclaim a word that was originally *Irish*, in showcasing “thole” Heaney acknowledges another side of the language picture in Northern Ireland: the influence of the (Protestant) planters’ language. John Wilson Foster has claimed that Heaney has “worked consciously, both formally and thematically, at conciliation, at balance” (2009: 220), and there seems to be evidence of this here, linguistically. Many of Heaney’s dialect words betray the planters’ influence – “hirpling” (1999a: 31), “wean” (1999a: 77), “hoked” (1999a: 95) – as do many of Carson’s and Paulin’s choices: “girned” (Carson, 2002: 44) or “skelf” (Paulin, 2004: 18). This feels to me to be an acknowledgement of the multiple influences on the poets’ ‘home’ dialect, rather than a comment on ‘original’ language purity (pointing to Irish as the indigenous language which pre-dated the colonial invasion), or a loaded statement highlighting linguistic oppression.

The allusions to Irish linguistic matters related to colonialism are strong in these works, but are not automatically postcolonial in nature – I would suggest that postcolonial subversion is not even the primary mode of ‘resistance’ here; there is a greater prize than merely undermining the coloniser.

These translations highlight the ways in which the past marks the use of the English language in (Northern) Ireland today. Demonstrating such traces is ethical, historically aware language use. However, when combined with the other language varieties used in these translations, the overall effect is to undermine the myth of linguistic ‘purity’ itself. Investigating the trope of translation across Carson’s work, Alexander finds that the linguistic pluralism implied by the shifts between languages “would appear to call into question the very idea of a ‘first language’ along with the concept of pure origins that it implies” (2010: 178).<sup>154</sup> Across all of these translations, the English language is internally subverted by being made plural, and this plurality points to the ways in which English is in fact many Englishes – made up of different dialects, registers and discourses, cultural connotations, literary references and so on.

The language used in these translated works is porous; it admits other worlds – via, for example, language from other countries, from other textual styles and other writers, or other media, such as film. Even the use of northern Hiberno-English dialect highlights the multiple linguistic traces still present in the language variety, and the inherent plurality of Englishes which came to Ireland in the first place (see 1.2.2) – both Maguire (2012: 69) and Macafee (1996: xxxiv) indicate the futility of trying to establish where certain words first originated, in favour of suggesting mutual networks of influence. Thus, this linguistic patterning does not seem to me to be primarily concerned with a binary interaction between English and Irish, coloniser and colonised, oppressor and oppressed. Rather, the porous nature of the language of these translations feels like a step away from such reductive representations of experience (in Northern Ireland, Ireland, or indeed further afield).

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<sup>154</sup> Alexander puns here on the title of an early Carson collection, *First Language* (1993).



### 3.2.3.2 Plurality articulates cultural multiplicity

As highlighted in Chapter 1, Reynolds has suggested that, increasingly, there seems to be more translation into “varied styles and dialects” rather than between “standardized” versions of languages (2016: 87), but that so far there has been little discussion of *why* such varied styles are being employed in translation (ibid.). However, it is pertinent to explore why such shifts may be important – and helpful – in the Irish context.

If we accept that translator strategies are “conditioned by the historical moment and the ideological framework within which the translation is produced” (Tymoczko, 1999a: 178), it is to be expected that translations produced in Northern Ireland around the turn of the last century will show stylistically how they have been formed by the shifting socio-political, cultural and linguistic context of the last decades of the Troubles. A move away from binary oppositions (such as that between Irish and English), and the emphasis on linguistic plurality and polysemy can perhaps be viewed as a poetic response commensurate with a society experiencing the turbulence of the period of the Troubles, its tense aftermath, and key changes in identitarian politics over this stormy period.

As set out in Chapter 1, the Good Friday Agreement (1998) acknowledged the “linguistic diversity” of Northern Ireland, including the Irish language, Ulster Scots and the languages of ethnic minorities (Gov.uk, 1998: n.p.). In part, the Agreement sought to respond to the changing face of Northern Ireland – and in acknowledging linguistic plurality, it also hinted at the possibility of hybrid identities. In granting that its citizens could identify as British, Irish *or both* (ibid.) it acknowledged that identity in Northern Ireland is not a given, but a matter for individual choice, and that individuals may feel affiliations to more than one identity. The Agreement’s recognition of the languages of ethnic minorities acknowledges the increase in immigration (see 1.2.2), again stressing a plural language picture. Across Europe, Reynolds suggests that national cultures, affected by such waves of immigration, “are becoming more fluidly

multilingual, more aware of the thickness and variety of language use” (2016: 87). As I suggested in 3.2.2.4, stylistic plurality may accord with a desire to suggest plurality of world-view – the Agreement demonstrates an analogous attempt to move away from the siloed narratives which plague Northern Ireland. As Fintan O’Toole says, the Agreement tried “to replace either/or with both/and” – “both/and pushes away the illusory satisfactions of purity and seeks out the common decency of everyday life, in which we all live with complex ideas of belonging” (2018: n.p.).

The world in which Carson, Heaney and Paulin translate is coloured by all of these socio-political and linguistic changes. Such a world is far beyond the days of plantation (1600s) or the Act of Union (1801), and beyond the time of Home Rule (1870s onwards), or of the cultural nationalism which saw those nineteenth-century Irish writers espouse Hiberno-English in translation (Tymoczko, 1999a: 138). It is also at a remove from the world of Partition (1920), or the early days of the civil rights protests and conflict in Northern Ireland (late 1960s).<sup>155</sup> Stressing the particularity of the situation in the final decades of the twentieth century does not negate the gravity and import of the historical experiences (which are in any case embedded in the language), but it does acknowledge circumstances which might prompt a different form of language statement.

The heteroglossia of these translations seems to be attuned to the strained socio-political and linguistic reality of Northern Ireland towards the end of the last century, a stylistic expression of linguistic plurality, rather than linguistic opposition and power-play. Alexander, for his part, has explicitly linked the use of translation by Irish writers and changing questions of identity at the end of the twentieth century: “Translation offers Carson and other Irish writers opportunities to explore the inherent duality or multiplicity of Irish cultural experience as it continues to evolve, and can also serve as a means of interrogating or redefining the conceptions of ‘Irishness’ they inherit” (2010: 184-5; note the importance of Irish literary tradition). Alexander highlights

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<sup>155</sup> Chapter 1 (1.2.1) discusses these historical events.

Terence Brown's assessment of the increasing production of translations from the 1980s – Brown describes the upturn in the translation of Irish and European texts as part of a critical search for “new modes of vision” and “alternative perspectives” (2004: 350) in a post-nationalist context. Thus, the translation activity of these poets, particularly their stylistic plurality, may be viewed as standing apart from translation efforts of previous eras.

If such times and a quest for “alternative perspectives” may be said to bring about a new poetic response, it is possible that they would also benefit from a different critical one. Traditional postcolonial narratives do not seem to lend themselves to describing the linguistic picture offered by these translations. As I mentioned above, Alexander labels the context “post-nationalist” (2010: 185), but Graham rejects this idea as an alternative to postcolonialism, as it remains intrinsically attached to the idea of ‘the nation’ (2001: 98). Instead, Graham promotes a version of postcolonialism (for application in Ireland) informed by Subaltern Studies. Subaltern Studies originated with a group of Indian historians (including Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak) who attempted “to write history outside the frameworks of both colonialism and Indian elite politics” (Bertens, 2008: 171). This group was concerned with “the lower layers of colonial and postcolonial [...] society”, for example, the female, the homeless and the unemployed (Bertens, 2008: 170). For Graham, Subaltern Studies offers a “critique of the ideology of nationalism, as a restrictive and totalising political force” (2001: 84). In Graham's view, Subaltern Studies' critique of postcolonial nationalism “allows postcolonialism to sidestep a persistent positioning with the colonised against the coloniser” (2001: 92).

Graham's work advocates a move into liminal spaces – that is, a move away from understanding the subject matter as the meeting of “uncomprehending cultural affiliations” (2001: 93), in favour of identifying transcultural movements. Graham suggests that such approaches can “allow for the fractured range of complex cross-colonial affiliations which have existed within the British/Irish cultural axis” (ibid.). It is vital to stress these “complex cross-colonial affiliations”. John Goodby observes that “postcolonial theory is generally

confused by the complexity of Irish writing” (2000: 325). Jahan Ramazani demonstrates these complexities by walking his readers through the myriad challenges in classifying W.B. Yeats (and, by extension, other Irish writers) as ‘postcolonial’ or ‘anti-colonial’, given the many nuances – and shifting nature – of their affiliations (2001: 22-23, and, more generally, 21-48). More simply, Quinn warns that it is a “distortion to read Irish poetry as continually opposed to the British Empire, because the attitude of both the colonising society and the colonised is more nuanced” (2008: 5). He notes that many Northern poets (including Carson and Heaney) are “poets of the English language”, and “have more in common with the poets of England than they do with the Gaelic bards” (2008: 2).

Graham’s emphasis on liminality is helpful. His work acknowledges the influence of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha in moving the debate in postcolonial studies into these “‘liminal spaces’ of colonial discourse, marginal areas, where the ultimate opposition of coloniser and colonised breaks down through irony, imitation and subversion” (2001: 86; it is worth recalling, too, Samia Mehrez’s emphasis on “culturo-linguistic layering” (1992: 121) in hybrid postcolonial texts, a position which stresses the importance of plurilingualism). This ‘liminal space’ is where we might helpfully position these translations (particularly recognising their subversive elements). I should emphasise that this liminal space does not offer some magical resolution of historic linguistic woes. Rather, ideas identified by Graham such as the importance of liminality and “complex cross-colonial affiliations” seem to be a more accurate representation of the personal linguistic experience of these translators than can be provided by ‘traditional’ postcolonial theory.

The heteroglossic nature of these texts (including their espousal of northern Hiberno-English dialect) problematises their relationship with Ireland’s troubled linguistic history and the poets’ relationship with their own language (3.3 explores this personal angle). Emphasising the heteroglossia of these translations releases them from the binary oppositions which so characterise postcolonial criticism of literature in Ireland. Highlighting heteroglossia allows

for individualised experiences, and for multiple interpretations of the world, recognising the ‘otherness’ of alternative perspectives. Bakhtin attests that “all languages of heteroglossia [...] are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words” (1981: 291-2). Understood in this way, the use of heteroglossia in translation permits an understanding of alterity, polysemy and multiplicity which opens up rather than narrows ways of understanding identity. This potential for new ways of conceptualising (linguistic) identity is one significant benefit of translations into the “varied styles and dialects” Reynolds observes (2016: 87).

Graham felt able to write as long ago as 1994 that paths offered by Subaltern Studies, and by discussions linking postcolonialism to ‘liminal spaces’, meant that postcolonialism itself was “moving into a new phase in which the ethically-loaded dichotomy of coloniser/colonised is becoming less fixating” (1994: 33). This is a different world to the literary sphere in which Synge used Hiberno-English dialect. Cronin writes that Synge’s nineteenth-century manoeuvrings between two languages, via this dialect form, and via translation, “externalises and in a way resolves his divided linguistic allegiances” (1996: 140). This neat resolution is not the realm of Paulin, Heaney and Carson.<sup>156</sup> In these works, the source language (whether Italian, French, Portuguese or Old English) does not unproblematically equate to another ‘pure’, unified language in the translated text – rather, target text plurality of language suggests plurality of experience, plurality of interaction with language, plurality of identity. It suggests not the overthrow of a dominant, colonial discourse, but the unhelpful – even foolish – nature of ideas of linguistic purity, or purity of identity, especially in the Northern Irish context.

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<sup>156</sup> Although writers including Jones (2006: 11) and Jonathan Bate (2010: 47) have made this claim of Heaney’s *Beowulf* translation.

### 3.2.4 Summarising subversiveness

I have suggested that if these translations are subversive, they are so in a way that undermines English not merely by involving dialect forms, but by making the language inherently plural. English is destabilised – it is revealed as inherently ‘impure’. In bringing to light linguistic impurity, or linguistic porousness, these translations can be read as moving beyond the traditional ways in which ‘the postcolonial’ has been conceived and applied in Ireland (that is, as a discourse of binarism). Rather, the emphasis on linguistic plurality expands the ways in which identity can be conceived – the stylistic choices in these translations can perhaps be seen as reflective of the changing identitarian landscape in Northern Ireland at the end of the twentieth century (even, in Carvalho Homem’s hopeful formulation, suggestive of “a more ecumenical understanding of the traditions” of Ireland, England and Scotland – 2009: 59).<sup>157</sup>

One way in which traditional postcolonial discourse is helpfully complicated is by focussing on the individual: the experience of the individual is more nuanced than the narratives overlaid upon experiences can describe; personal experiences do not fit neat theoretical moulds. The next section of this chapter will engage with the use of dialect and plurality in translation not as a means of reflecting heteroglossic cultural influences, or as an ethical act, but as a means of understanding *personal* linguistic experience.

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<sup>157</sup> Carvalho Homem is commenting on Heaney’s etymological linkages in *Beowulf* (2009: 59).

### 3.3 Personal hybridity

The second section of this chapter moves from ethical considerations in the public or global sphere to consider the linguistic choices in these translations as *personally* resonant for these translators – that is, reflecting a personal experience of language acquisition and exploration.

#### 3.3.1 Questioning the personal

Consciously moving a literary discussion from the textual to the personal – choosing to discuss the author’s situation and circumstances, in short, their life, in relation to the text – is to cross a line. As W.N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis bemoan: “the historic death of the author has seen the poet become little more than the ghost at the academic feast” (2000: 14). The ‘death of the author’ refers to Roland Barthes and his seminal essay of the same name (first published in France in 1968), but also to the associated reverberation the concepts expressed in Barthes’ essay have had in the field of literary criticism (Burke, 1998: 17). In brief, what Barthes’ essay indicated was that the task of the critic had become reduced to a process of “discovering the Author” – Barthes ironically observes “when the Author has been found, the text is ‘explained’ – victory to the critic” (1977: 147). Barthes’ essay advocates focussing instead on the reader, overthrowing the myth centralising the writer (and thereby causing the titular ‘death’ – see 1977: 148).

In the wake of Barthes’ essay, the literary world became wary of invoking the author in critical debate – as Seán Burke said, it is “properly improper to speak of the author in our day and age” (1998: 186). However, the shift in trends in literary criticism following post-structuralism has not, of course, “erased the connection between *bios* and *graphē*” (Burke, 1998: 188; meaning ‘life’ (*bios*) and ‘writing’ (*graphē*), both from the Greek), and, in practice, much literary criticism has continued to propose significant links between the author and their

work (for example in the hands of critics such as John Carey). Similarly, stylistics has continued to pursue an interest in the author: Stockwell notes the “New Critical prohibitions” (2013: 265) on discussing the intentional fallacy rather than the text alone, but also describes the slow efforts of the discipline over the last half-century to reverse this trend (ibid.).

There has been a ‘turn’ in translation studies along these lines; the emphasis on the individual translator is increasing (and of course individual analysis can be combined with other types of analyses, for example systems-type analysis, as I suggested earlier). In proposing ‘Translator Studies’ Andrew Chesterman identifies a research area focussing primarily on the “agents involved in translation”, on “their activities or attitudes, their interaction with their social and technical environments, or their history and influence” (2009: 20). A conference – ‘The Translator Made Corporeal’ – held at the British Library (London, May 2017) advanced this area of translation studies in the UK, while an international conference – ‘Staging the Literary Translator: Roles, Identities, Personalities’ – took place in Vienna (May 2018). Jeremy Munday identifies the increasing focus on “the social nature of translation” (2016: 236), highlighting, for example: the prominence of Venuti’s theories of domestication and foreignization (discussed throughout this thesis) and the interest in questions of the reception and sociology of translation(s) (2016: 222-248). He suggests that the key consideration in this area is “why does one translator act differently from another?” (2016: 238). Munday approaches this question by investigating the translator’s ideological background (2008), but notes that it has principally been approached from a *stylistic* angle (2016: 98-9) – it is precisely this approach that I will set out in the next section.

### **3.3.2 Reading the personal in (translation) style**

Simpson asserts that, at its most basic level, stylistics as a discipline is “interested in language as a function of texts in context” (2012: 361). Fowler, too, finds the contextual inscribed in the language of the text: he states that “the



significance of linguistic structures in literature” (1996: 16) directly relates to the relationship between the text and “the social, institutional, and ideological conditions of its production and reception” (ibid.). Many schools of thought are based on precisely this ‘embeddedness’ of literature (including translations) in context – postcolonial theory in particular exemplifies the links between a text and the contextual power relations which have contributed to its (linguistic) characteristics, and often to its very formation.

The personal, in all of this, is provided by the author: Simpson advocates thinking of the process of composition as “strategic selection from the linguistic code that frames it” (2012: 370). “Strategic selection” indicates personality – it is the force of the author’s individuality, their views, attitudes, creative purpose (not all necessarily conscious) which inform their selections. Of course, an individual’s language is distinctive: as Simpson has said, “no two speakers use language in exactly the same way” (2004: 102). That this unique style – this “idiolect” (ibid.) – can be identified in a work highlights the impossibility of editing the author out of the process of encountering a text.<sup>158</sup>

Fowler and Simpson both examine original writing, not translation per se. However, translation can also be viewed as literary creation, and the ideas outlined above can equally be applied to translational choices. Stylistic choices in translation, as in original writing, are strategically selected. As Boase-Beier expresses it, “the style of the target text is an expression of the translator’s choices” (2006a: 5) – indeed “style is [...] a reflection of choice in a way other aspects of language are not” (2006a: 72). Thus, the translator’s own style will become part of the target text in the process of transposing the source text (2006a: 1). Translator idiolect is ineluctably inscribed in the language of the translation.

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<sup>158</sup> Of course, Barthes did not argue that the author was *irrelevant*, rather that the focus on the author stifled interpretation: “To give a text an Author is to impose limits on that text, to furnish it with a final signified” (1977: 147).

So, context, translator and style are linked. As outlined in Chapter 1, Boase-Beier stresses the importance of developments such as cognitive stylistics which, “through its concept of context as cognitive entity, involves a concern with social and cultural factors” (2006a: 10). In short, in cognitive stylistics, linguistic choices arise from the translator’s *cognitive* context: that is, their experience of their context, including their formative experiences, political viewpoints, social interactions, cultural framework and anything else that would inform or influence their mind.

Fowler, too, is concerned with cognition and the link to stylistic choices, suggesting what he calls “mind-style”: “the world-view of an author, or a narrator, or a character, constituted by the ideational structure of the text” (1996: 214). Fowler’s use of “ideational” adopts Michael Halliday’s definition: “the speaker or writer *embodies in language* his experience of the phenomena of the real world” (in Fowler, 1996: 31; my italics). Whilst Halliday’s emphasis on the *embodiment* of real-world experiences in language is extremely helpful, Boase-Beier slightly adjusts Fowler’s explanation: she defines ‘mind-style’ as the *linguistic expression* of the world-view of the speaker, narrator or inferred author, rather than the view itself (2006a: 54) – I will use the term in this way. For Halliday, Fowler and Boase-Beier the observable stylistic features of the text (for example adjectival use, preponderance of pronouns, or use of particular types of metaphor) are evidence of the interlinking of the singular position of the writer or translator and their cognitive context.

Theo Hermans is unequivocal about the role of the personal in translation: “All translating is translating with an attitude. It could not be anything else, since all translations contain the translator’s subject-position” (2007: 85). The emphasis in this section on the individuality of the translator, on their agency in linguistic choice, on the mind-style of the translations as relating to the cognitive context of the translator (that is, on style as reflective of personal experience) throws the spotlight back on Hermans’ “subject-position”.

### 3.3.3 Re-reading dialect and heteroglossia in translation

It is possible, then, to use the concepts I have set out to approach the language of these translations not as an abstract ethical intervention (subverting canonical literature), nor as a political, postcolonial or post-national intervention (undermining the language of the coloniser or problematising linguistic tensions in Northern Ireland). These may be valid interpretations – however we can also consider the linguistic patterning of these texts as a mode of *personal* exploration, and as a means of articulating a personal experience of language difference, the experience of “someone trying to make sense of him or herself in their time” (Muldoon in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 172).

If, as Sarah Brown indicates, “we are all products of the texts, paintings, and other symbolic systems of the past that make up our cultural heritage and thus the lens through which we see the world” (2006: 189-190), then the “symbolic systems of the past” influencing a late twentieth-century poet in Northern Ireland are more than usually bound up with linguistic tribulations. These may include: the polarisation of questions of language into English or Irish; the politicisation of language choice in Northern Ireland, particularly during the Troubles; the relation between language and cultural identity in (Northern) Ireland; the complex history of colonial oppression via language in Ireland; the fact that colonialism and migration can be traced in modern forms of the language varieties; the hybridity inherent in the English spoken in Northern Ireland; the history of translation between the available languages in Ireland.<sup>159</sup>

An orientation towards northern Hiberno-English dialect may be interpreted as a *personal* reaction to these myriad linguistic pressures. That there are telling differences in emphases in the types of northern Hiberno-English used in these three translations highlights differences between the creative forces behind the works. Additionally, as described earlier, the heteroglossic mixes of these translations are not identical. These differences relate to the ways in which each

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<sup>159</sup> See Chapter 1 for discussion of these issues.

translation responds to its source (kennings are a feature of the *Beowulf* poet, but not of Dante), *and* to the ways in which each translation relates to the individual translator in question, and to their own poetic self-reflexivity. As Clive Scott has indicated, although stylistic decisions may be ideologically motivated, they may also extend from “our own personal maps of language” (2008: 26). Scott’s comparative analysis of translators of Charles Baudelaire identifies their stylistic idiosyncrasies – as he says, “Finding their way into French means for these writers finding their way *into their own language*, into the particular ways in which they possess and manipulate it” (2008: 26; my italics). In this way, the project of translation may be seen as a mode of personal excavation, as much as linguistic or socio-cultural analysis or intervention.

### 3.3.3.1 Carson’s mind-style

Carson’s introduction to *The Inferno* suggests that a curiosity about overlapping languages informs the work: “I found myself pondering the curious and delightful grammar of English, and was reminded that I spoke Irish (with its different, curious and delightful grammar) before I spoke English” (2002: xx). Carson’s personal relationship with both of his primary languages (Irish and English) has been widely documented in various forms, not least by the poet himself.<sup>160</sup> The Hiberno-English forms (such as “strip you it off again” (2002: 232), with the additional personal pronoun) may be read as stylistically bringing together the linguistic elements which have shaped the poet.<sup>161</sup>

In Carson’s Hibernicisms in *The Inferno* English is affected by the Irish with which it historically interacted. Cronin describes this effect in Ireland as “the leakage, the internal translation between the island’s two languages, the one ghosting the other” (1996: 4). This ghosting is a particular day-to-day reality for

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<sup>160</sup> These include Carson’s fictionalised account of his formative experiences, *The Star Factory* (1997), his essay ‘The Other’ (in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 234-5), and his introductions to *In the Light Of* (2012) and *The Alexandrine Plan* (1998a).

<sup>161</sup> Carson describes these dual inheritances in personal terms, depicting his very name as an embodiment of forked influences: Ciaran (Irish) and Carson (English) – in Edemariam, 2009: n.p.

Carson as a bilingual poet, more so than for Heaney or Paulin: “I write in English, but the ghost of Irish hovers behind it; and English itself is full of ghostly presences, of others who write before you, and of words as yet unknown to you” (in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 235).

It is significant that Carson values *both* languages – in his account “curious and delightful” is carefully applied to both English and Irish. To the extent that Carson’s linguistic choices may be interpreted as a statement, his selections seem more interested in the idea of ‘leakage’ or ‘ghosting’ than in the exposition of one language as a pure original, and one as a colonial interloper (albeit that the image of Irish as a ghost behind English may seem to affirm this view of the power relations between the two).<sup>162</sup> The way in which Hiberno-English dialect and the texture of the Belfast vernacular colours *The Inferno* plays with the layering of language: it uncovers traces, links, synergies and historical twists, but not in a way which feels overridingly political or postcolonial. The sense that there are others writing before you and “words as yet unknown to you” suggests literary inheritance, as much as a colonial tale of linguistic (re-)possession, and the focus on the as-yet-unknown paints Carson’s linguistic sensitivities as future-oriented, as much as backwards-looking.<sup>163</sup>

There are other aspects to the mind-style we encounter in *The Inferno* which reveal the process of translation as a personal act. Carson is a particularly urban poet, and has lived in Belfast all of his life (Edemariam, 2009: n.p.). His oeuvre charts his changing relationship to the city in all of its physicality – *Belfast Confetti* (1989), for example, is preoccupied with maps of Belfast, the shifting physical layout of the city, and Carson’s changing understanding of this layout as he grows up – see, for instance, ‘Farset’ (1989: 47-49) or ‘Question Time’ (1989: 57-63).<sup>164</sup> The mind-style of *The Inferno*, complete with its barriers, zones and

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<sup>162</sup> Carvalho Homem highlights the trope of ghosting in critical analyses of Northern Irish poetry (2009: 18).

<sup>163</sup> The layering of language, and synergies between different places and temporalities will be explored in Chapter 4.

<sup>164</sup> *The Star Factory* (1997) recounts some of these experiences in different ways. The physicality and space of Carson’s poetry is a key area of critical analysis – see for example Smith (2005), Kennedy-Andrews (2008), or Alexander (2010).

sectarians (2.2.2.5), relates very particularly to the language and images which colour Carson's lexicon, as a result of his everyday urban experiences. Carson's narrative of the process of translating Dante makes explicit the link between the *physical* experience of the city and his process of word-weaving: "The deeper I got into the *Inferno*, the more I walked" (2002: xi).

Carson's work is thus distinctively patterned in a way which relates to his self-reflexivity, and to his experiences, and indeed his own oeuvre, *as context*. Whilst *The Inferno* demonstrates linguistic diversity, Carson often recycles and reworks. An idea picked up in one place frequently reappears elsewhere in his work; as Denis Donoghue says, "He loves words, but not equally; he has his pets" (1997: n.p.) – this is equally true of Carson's key images. Thus, for example, it is hard to read the account in *The Star Factory* (1997) of the narrator's<sup>165</sup> dreams interrupted by a "*surveillant helicopter*, vacillating high above the roof of the house like a rogue star", and to read that the "riot-torn dark street flickered like an annex of an iron-foundry or *inferno*" (1997: 134; my italics), and not to see this reworked in the synergies and language of *The Inferno*. The words of *The Star Factory* relate to the language and imagery of *The Inferno* itself, but also to the language of its introduction, where the surveillance helicopter is invoked as a means of gaining a bird's-eye view of Belfast (2002: xi-xii), and likened to Dante riding on the monster Geryon.<sup>166</sup> If these words and images are key for this translation, it may in part be because they are key for Carson; key to his understanding of his own city and experiences, or simply images which are personally resonant.<sup>167</sup>

The plurality and heteroglossia so distinctive in Carson's translation of *The Inferno* are characteristics which can be found, too, in Carson's non-translated, ostensibly monolingual prose work. A brief illustration is afforded by a version of

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<sup>165</sup> As *The Star Factory* is, at least partly, autobiographical, the reader is likely to conflate the figure of the narrator with that of Carson.

<sup>166</sup> Elements of Carson's description of Geryon also suggest the path of a helicopter: Geryon takes a "slowly gliding spiroid / pattern down" (2002: 117), a "downward spiral" (2002: 118). Gibson (2017) discusses the ambiguities of this passage.

<sup>167</sup> The helicopter can be traced through Carson's other works (1989: 34; 2008: 23; 29), and the image of Belfast as an "inferno" also appears elsewhere (1989: 81).

one of his father's stories from *The Star Factory* (1997: 143-147). In recounting this story Carson uses twelve terms for 'Satan', including "Mephistopheles" (1997: 144), "the Cloven Hoofed One" (ibid.), and "His Black Nibs" (1997: 146). Such passages may seem to foreshadow the sections of *The Inferno* where Carson refuses to settle for one consistent term (see 2.3.3.2). This characteristic of the mind-style suggests a concern with linguistic shade and nuance, and with multiple interpretive possibilities in language.

In particular, the disregard for language borders suggested by heteroglossia is a characteristic of Carson's writing more generally, as much as of this translation. An occasional penchant for French terms is in evidence in *The Inferno* (for example, "arrondissement" (2002: 157), "seigneurs" (ibid.) and "*nouveaux riches*" (2002: 108; italics in original), but very much in evidence, too, in *In the Light Of* (2012) and *The Alexandrine Plan* (1998a). These collections are translations from the French<sup>168</sup> where, often, French lexical items also appear in Carson's English translations. The French words in the translated texts are different to those in the originals – for example Carson uses "flambeaux" in 'The Riddle of the Pyx' (1998a: 59), and "communiqués" in 'Coexistences' (1998a: 71): "flambeaux" and "communiqués" do not appear in the original French poems, yet occur in the English translations. Similarly, Carvalho Homem (2009: 194-5) and Reynolds (2003: n.p.; 2008: 74) have highlighted how Carson weaves Italian words *not* in Dante's text into *The Inferno*. Reynolds selects "presto" (2003: n.p.); Carvalho Homem musical terms and words like "mafioso" which suggest stereotyped 'Italianness' (2009: 195) – none of these words occur in the original Italian. Reynolds suggests that such apparent synergies highlight more forcefully the *gaps* between the cultures (ibid.), but I would suggest that they simultaneously contribute to the sense of ongoing porosity and lendings between languages (as I have suggested elsewhere – Gibson, 2018).

In the appearance of the French terms above ("arrondissement" and so on) in *The Inferno*, it is as if the language from Carson's other translation projects has

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<sup>168</sup> Translations, respectively, of Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, and a range of poetry by Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé.

bled across into a process which, nominally, has nothing to do with translation from the French. Such porousness suggests, firstly, the extent to which English is indebted to and enriches itself via other languages (including via Italian, in areas such as musical terms). It also defies ideas of language borders – Carson’s use of “arrondissement” in a translation of an Italian text, by a poet based in Belfast refuses to confine itself to the languages immediately ‘on offer’ in his locale, or suggested by the particular language combination. The mind-style of *The Inferno*, its linguistic roaming, suggests that the poet views all of language as open to him – any linguistic options are equally able to be appropriated and pressed into service.

### 3.3.3.2 Heaney’s mind-style

Heaney’s translation also demonstrates a particularly personal interaction with the language employed. As discussed, Heaney’s introduction details the extent to which his translated work relates to his understanding of his own use of English. He acknowledges the potential for linguistic polarisation, describing his fascination with the term “*lachtar*”, a word used in English by his aunt, but which bears traces of Irish (1999a: xxiv). For Heaney, this linguistic discovery was both talismanic and potentially divisive: “a rapier point of consciousness pricking me with an awareness of language-loss and cultural dispossession, and tempting me into binary thinking about language” (ibid.).<sup>169</sup> In Heaney’s account, this potential binarism is collapsed by a linguistic loophole which encourages him to look beyond opposition and view multiple influences and interlinkages within one word – this word is *uisce* (in English, ‘whiskey’), an Irish word Heaney knows to derive from ‘water’, and thus can see is linked to the name of the British River Usk.

Heaney describes this epiphanic moment in typically metaphor-heavy terms:

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<sup>169</sup> Heaney acknowledges the borrowed image from Joyce (“rapier point”); yet another example of the interlinkages of Irish writers.



in my mind the stream was suddenly turned into a kind of linguistic river of rivers issuing from a pristine Celto-British Land of Cockaigne, a riverrun of Finnegans Wakespeak pouring out of the cleft rock of some prepolitical, prelapsarian, urphilological Big Rock Candy Mountain (1999a: xxiv).

Viewed in light of this description of linguistic awakening, the Hiberno-English dialect used in Heaney's translation becomes merely one part of a larger picture of language recovery and expansion (a "linguistic river of rivers"). If there is a sense of wishful thinking in Heaney's description it is in his vision of a "prepolitical, prelapsarian" linguistic state – "some unpartitioned linguistic country" (1999a: xxv; in particular "unpartitioned" implies that Heaney is imagining away the Partition of Ireland of 1920). A similar tension can be felt in Muldoon's statement, referenced at the outset of this chapter, portraying the poet as someone "through whom the time may best be told" yet who refuses to adopt a political position (in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 172). The complexity of being embedded in a socio-political moment, and yet somehow above or beyond such embeddedness, of working with language and yet somehow desirous of finding a way beyond or around its political ramifications, exerts pressure on Heaney and his writing (and on our efforts to interpret his writing).

Heaney's description of this "linguistic river of rivers" gives us a *personal* perspective on the use of dialect words which permeate the translation. "Graith" (1999a: 12), "bawn" (1999a: 24), "keen" (1999a: 77) and "hoked" (1999a: 95), with their disparate etymological baggage, may not hail from some idealistic "Celto-British Land of Cockaigne" (Ireland's history is too complicated for that), but they are all, in their complexities and contradictions, *Heaney's* words. Heaney's translator's introduction offers an overwhelmingly personal narrative, which happens to finish on a historical, even postcolonial, comment (his description of his re-use of "bawn" – 1999a: xxx). It is this comment which has been taken up by critics, thus making a deceptively emphatic (and forthright) statement of a process which is much more about personal navigation through linguistic tension.

As with Carson's work, the mind-style in *Beowulf* can be seen as interacting with and having absorbed significant stylistic aspects from the rest of the poet's oeuvre. Kennings are a characteristic of *Beowulf*, but also of Heaney's writing in general. This is seen across his work – for example, 'Hercules and Antaeus' (from *North*, 1975) opens "Sky-born and royal, / snake-choker, dung-heaver" (1975: 52), and 'Strange Fruit' (also in *North*) describes a girl's head as "Oval-faced, prune-skinned, prune-stones for teeth" (1975: 39). A parallel use of kennings appears in Heaney's critical work. This is Heaney commenting on Sylvia Plath's 'The Mussel Hunter at Rock Harbour': "A change occurs in the poem's dominant undersong, which until then has been a *wind-strummed, wave-thumped* background throb. We move from *pulse-beat* to *mind-flight*" (1988: 157; my italics). In tracing this use of language and the synergies in mind-style across the various works of Heaney's oeuvre we can view his exploitation of the kennings found in *Beowulf* as a continuation of the personal fascination with a lexical form which permeates his poetry and his critical writing. Heaney makes this link, too, in his introduction, noting the Anglo-Saxon feel of some of his earliest work, the stresses, alliteration and caesura of these lines from 'Digging': "The spade sinks into gravelly ground: / My father digging. I look down" (1999a: xxiii). Heaney's recognition of these personal stylistic links is a different way of conceiving of his poetic entitlement to translate *Beowulf*. The synergies we recognise between the *Beowulf* translation and his broader work highlight again the extent to which the translation was a personally resonant undertaking, as much as a public performance.

"Bawn", too, is a word that has followed Heaney. 'Belderg' (from *North*) problematises the dual allegiances of 'Mossbawn' (the name of Heaney's childhood home):

[...] I could derive  
A forked root from that ground  
And make *bawn* an English fort,  
A planter's walled-in mound,

Or else find sanctuary  
And think of it as Irish (1975: 14; italics in original).

Heaney carefully positions the word “bawn” in *Beowulf*, with all of its long history (an Irish word, appropriated and anglicised by the colonisers, used to describe an Elizabethan fort built to exclude the colonised, a word reinscribed in the translation of an Anglo-Saxon epic by an Irish translator). But the word has already been picked over and mined for its multiple connotations in ‘Belderg’, in a collection published nearly twenty-five years previously.

If the use of “bawn” is talismanic for Heaney in the *Beowulf* translation, it is contiguous with his own personal narrative of his linguistic origins. We can interpret “bawn” as being personally resonant (within the poet’s life *and* oeuvre) beyond the critical interpretation of its role in *Beowulf* as a cypher for the overthrow of linguistic, colonial oppression. As noted in Chapter 1, Jones views *Beowulf* as fitting a broader pattern in Heaney’s work of the poet “coming to terms with a sense of linguistic binarism, and reconciling the twin poles of a literary inheritance” (2006: 11). Although I am sceptical about the neat sense of reconciliation here (Heaney’s position feels more uncomfortable than this), Heaney leans in this direction more than Paulin or Carson, both of whom produce more heterogeneous work and devote less attention to the reclamation and re-inscription of history-heavy words such as “bawn” in their texts. In tracing the movement of words like “bawn” across Heaney’s oeuvre, we can view his translation of *Beowulf* as a continuation of processes exploring and mythologising his relationship with his complex linguistic history. Heaney has written dismissively of the “autobiographical neediness” of his first translation of *Buile Suibhne* (2002: 63) – in fact, we might still find shades of this “neediness” present in his *Beowulf* translation.

### **3.3.3.3 Paulin’s mind-style**

As with both Heaney and Carson, Paulin also acknowledges the interaction between English and Irish in espousing forms which demonstrate the influence of both (including his use of additional personal pronouns: “the parish priest and

the pardoner they split the takings” – 2004: 24).<sup>170</sup> One element which sets *The Road to Inver* apart from *Beowulf* or *The Inferno*, however, is the extent to which Paulin’s translations capture orthographical representations of *oral* forms of language – in the insertion of colloquial interjections such as “Ack” (2004: 13) or “ackhello” (2004: 51). Patterning translations with such interjections develops a particular mind-style which seems to be preoccupied by the oral, and by the way in which the oral can be captured in the written, with all of the associated challenges and limitations. As previously noted, this emphasis on orality is a preoccupation of Paulin’s (his introduction to *The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse* (ed. 1990) sets out his views of the restrictions of the written standard), and can be seen across his other collections: for example, “ack” appears in ‘An Ulster Unionist Walks the Streets of London’, from *Fivemiletown* (1987: 42).

In Chapter 2 I noted that Paulin’s frequent lack of punctuation complicated the ability of the reader to engage with the text. As Scott explains, a lack of punctuation not only complicates, but multiplies:

Unpunctuated writing begins to let grammar and syntax loose, to ambiguate them, to get them to work against themselves; unpunctuated writing multiplies ways of reading and correspondingly multiplies meanings; it creates fluidity, ease of passage, the possibility of the simultaneity of perception, the withdrawal of the presiding voice (2008: 22).

“The withdrawal of the presiding voice” (and even “simultaneity of perception”), of course, takes us back to Bakhtin (always bearing in mind that he thought it was impossible to achieve such effects in poetry). Paulin’s lack of punctuation is distinctive<sup>171</sup> – it colours his collections of original poetry as much as these translations (for example ‘The Maiden That Is Makeless’ from *Fivemiletown* describes “the style a platinum blonde / who’d skimmed in a jet / from Connecticut / flipped *aluminum* to me / through a hi! smile / one hour before” – 1987: 12; italics in original). In identifying such synergies, the preoccupation with absent or ambiguous punctuation may be seen as part of a broader project to undermine the notion of a coherent narrative presence – including Paulin’s

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<sup>170</sup> See 2.2.2.7 – 2.2.2.8 for sustained analysis.

<sup>171</sup> We might, however, perceive an echo of Joyce’s lack of punctuation, particularly in the ‘Penelope’ episode of *Ulysses*.

own, it must be stressed – rather than a particular translation strategy relating to specific source texts.

Throughout Paulin's collection self-reflexivity is more obviously signposted than in Carson's or Heaney's work. In 'To a Political Poet' (2004: 12), the narrator parodies feeble 'political' poems (imagining them entitled "Me Rotten Grammar School" or "Ode to the Toffee-Nosed Gits / Who Mocked My Accent" – *ibid.*). The poem concludes:

Now your whinges  
get taught in class  
and the kids feel righteous –  
righteous but cosy (*ibid.*).

"Cosy", that final little word, laden with smug domesticity, undermines the grand, ode-like title ('To a Political Poet'). In puncturing imaginary 'political' uses of language, the double-voicedness of the mind-style displayed here demonstrates an acknowledgement of the challenges of being political or radical in language. If the mind-style of the translation betrays a preoccupation with positioning via language, this may not seem out of place for a writer who has engaged so ostentatiously in the public sphere,<sup>172</sup> and who writes elsewhere in favour of radical authorship – for example in *A New Look at the Language Question* (1983a), or *The Day-Star of Liberty* (1998).

Self-reflexivity extends throughout *The Road to Inver*, and is particularly seen in the frequent 'interruptions' within the translations – these are shown typographically: an alternative viewpoint is set out with dashes. Thus, in 'The Skeleton', the narrator describes two soldiers returning over a battlefield:

but then they see this gnawed daft  
– nit of a translator says *deboned* – skeleton  
lying there among the puddles and shellholes  
the mud the debris the bust or abandoned weapons  
– like a trapdoor its mouth gapes open (2004: 10; italics in original).

Here the narrator's description is interrupted by another perspective: we are told that the 'translator' figure, set in opposition to the narrator, suggests

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<sup>172</sup> See 1.2.5 on Paulin's public positioning.

“deboned” (differentiated by italics as well as dashes). The next interruption (beginning “– like a trapdoor...”) may be another of the translator’s choices, or simply a view offered by the narrator. In the disjointed style, various subject-positions are teased apart. Space (physical and conceptual) is opened up between narrator and translator, as if the multiple roles involved in creation (even Paulin’s multiple roles) are being critiqued. Essentially, the stylistic patterning embodies in language (to borrow from Halliday, in Fowler, 1996: 31) the experience of being both author and translator, with the attendant responsibilities and pressures of each. The narrator speaks in Paulin’s distinctive idiolect – using “daft” (which appears throughout *The Road to Inver*, and in *Fivemiletown* – 1987: 26), and a characteristic group of three terms: “the mud the debris the bust or abandoned weapons”.<sup>173</sup> The ‘translator’ (whom we may be conflating with Paulin) suggests a different option to that of the narrator. Such complicated interruptions convey a mind-style preoccupied by the hovering hand and choices of the translator, and by the idea of plurality of interpretation: the internal debate over “gnawed”, “daft” or “deboned”. This mind-style is characterised by fractured positions, and plurality of linguistic options. Self-reflexivity is ‘performed’ in the prominence of choice, interruption, and multi-voicedness even *within* the translator/narrator position in Paulin’s work.

#### 3.3.3.4 Personal multiplicity

Making links across the various works of these writers is the luxury of the reader (or scholar or critic) who has time to investigate the synergies and handovers, the mutual reinforcement of linguistic patterns. To extend these analyses would be to launch a full-scale comparison of linguistic characteristics across each poet’s oeuvre – this is not the purpose of this thesis.

The brief examples above give some indication of the extent to which the linguistic preoccupations of these translations are *personal* concerns – as evidenced in the way in which the language reverberates in these poets’

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<sup>173</sup> See 2.3.3.2 and 4.2.2.2 for analysis of these groupings.

metatexts, and recurs throughout their broader writing. My point is not simply that each poet's style can be viewed across the totality of their works. Rather, I wish to emphasise that the cognitive context of the translators – the idiosyncratic and internal, their personal narratives, experiences, previous creative output and ongoing intertextual processes of discovery – are as relevant to their translation projects as their observable environmental or socio-cultural 'context'. As Scott says, the translator's reading process is "a re-fabulation of the ST by a mind interfered with by memories, fantasies, associations" (2008: 18).

Of course, the language of every writer is, to some extent, heterogeneous. But the mind-style of these translations is particularly heteroglossic (as demonstrated when they are compared to alternative translations; see 3.2.2.1 – 3.2.2.6). Whether it is the switching between figurative and plain language in *Beowulf*, the shifts between archaic language and pop culture in *The Inferno*, or Paulin's differentiation between the positions of narrator and translator in *The Road to Inver*, or any of the other heteroglossic patterns on display, each of these translations uses language to acknowledge the existence of multiple other viewpoints, other ways of "saying and seeing" (Alexander, 2010: 176). However, by viewing the style of these translations as mind-style, by acknowledging the subject-position, the heteroglossia in these texts can be viewed not only as an objective comment on the presence of multiple varieties of language in (contemporary) society, but also as a personal acknowledgement or investigation of the 'freightedness' of language and linguistic choice – and the ways in which the individual is inescapably implicated in this choice. If we can view the presence of multiple varieties of language in these texts as a performance of a state of mind – a recognition of the plurality of language options, and the extent to which an individual's language is multiply influenced – this seems particularly relevant for a poet from Northern Ireland. We might also observe that the opportunity for such linguistic self-reflexivity is another important affordance of the growing trend (identified by Reynolds, 2016: 87) for translation into more varied styles and dialects.

### 3.3.4 Translation facilitates linguistic exploration

If the heteroglossia of these translations may articulate the way in which an individual can be severally influenced by language, then the act of translation may be seen as an enabler in such processes of linguistic exploration. This is not a new concept; many writers and critics have considered how translation functions as a release from the polarity of language choice and may facilitate (linguistic) self-reflexivity (see Scott, 2008: 26; Cronin, 1996: 4).<sup>174</sup>

In choosing translation, opting for a relationship with alterity, these translators seek out a form of linguistic introspection. As Carson says of his encounter with Arthur Rimbaud's work for *In the Light Of*: "Examining his French, I had also to examine my English, learning other aspects of it, sometimes relearning it" (2012: 13; cf. Scott, 2008: 26). Heaney's biography-heavy introduction to *Beowulf* also suggests linguistic introspection – as I have explored, his approach to translating *Beowulf* only partially concerned his engagement with the Anglo-Saxon text, focussing significantly on his understanding of the language he inherited (1999a: xxii-xxx; in contrast, Alexander's introduction to his translation (2001) focusses on the content of the original text, and the constraints of translating from Old English, rather than a personal narrative). The lack of metatexts for *The Road to Inver* leaves us without Paulin's interpretation of his translation processes. In some ways, however, his processes of linguistic introspection are the clearest of these three poets. Paulin's collection of translations spans almost thirty years (1975 – 2003), accompanying significant decades of his creative life as a poet. The concerns of the collection as embodied in the linguistic manoeuvrings betray an interest with issues of belonging, and specifically *lack* of belonging, sentiments of being unsettled, situations of being 'between' (geographically or emotionally), and a concern with provenance (see 2.2.2.8). I am not claiming that these are Paulin's personal concerns simply because they appear in his poetry, but rather that it is possible to view a synergy between the ostensible concerns

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<sup>174</sup> Michael Longley has also described translation as an "enabling" process – translating the classics ("the Homeric slant") allowed him to address painful and emotive topics: "to explore the private in public", or even "to comment obliquely on the Northern Irish Troubles" (2017: n.p.).



of these translated poems, the fractured, polyphonic, questioning language used within them and the fact of their being translated.

Translation, then, may function as a process in which personal linguistic discovery and articulation can take place; a particularly fruitful perspective from which to consider questions of an individual's relationship to their language. Carson describes his translation of *The Inferno* as follows:

An exercise in comprehension: 'Now tell the story in your own words.' What are my own words? I found myself wondering how one says what one means in any language, or how one knows what one means (2002: xx).

If words are "shifty" (Carson in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 235), then this statement suggests that meaning and identity are also shifty. The basic task of translation – the retelling of a narrative in different words – requires linguistic choice, and this leads to introspection. As Scott says, "each reading is a new journey into the self" (2008: 26). Rather than a focus on the language of the original, for these poets the task of translation throws the spotlight back on their own linguistic idiosyncrasies, their personal "watermark" (Braidwood, as recounted in Jones, 2006: 188).

Translation thus offers a very public means of stylistically and linguistically differentiating oneself from another writer or translator. It may even offer *more* opportunity to be distinctive than original poetry, as translations have specific points of comparison – with the original text, *and* with other published translations. A stylistic shift in a new translation may be read as an identitarian statement because reading against both, for example, what we expect from Dante, and what we expect *given other Dante translations*, draws attention to difference and idiosyncrasy. Reading individualistic concerns into a text – working in "bawn" or weaving in the image of a surveillance helicopter – is both a form of introspection and of linguistic mark-making where it is perhaps least expected.

Linguistic introspection is less of an imperative when questions of language origins, ownership and history are less fraught. For these three poets, I would argue that the defining search in these translations is for an answer to Carson's intrigued question: "What are my own words?" (2002: xx). For these poets, the internalisation of a complicated linguistic context plays out in the style of the translated text; in a sense, the translation process provides the therapist's couch.

### 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has moved from the wide lens to the narrow – shifting from the globally-focussed dynamics of, for example, postcolonialism, to the idiosyncratic perspectives offered by these translators via the style of their work. The work of these translators is not merely focussed on the local, the inward or the personal – it gestures to wide-ranging, contentious linguistic history, and to large-scale critically crucial questions of language and linguistic purity. The local features heavily, but one of its roles *is* to point to these broader resonances. There are many valid ways of reading the linguistic play in these texts: one reading would emphasise the ethical nature of the language used as part of a wider defiance of the hegemony of Standard English. Another reading would cast it as a postcolonial or post-national response to the changing linguistic and identity picture in (Northern) Ireland, and, in so doing, would link it to the history of such responses via translation in Ireland. In my view, a reading based on a postcolonial critique would, however, need to interpret these works as moving beyond a discourse of binarism, and revelling in the possibility of a multiplicity of subject-positions, as suggested by the heteroglossic language used.

For me, the most compelling reading of the linguistic play of these translations is as a form of personal exploration and articulation – it seems clear that the local and personal remains central to the creative projects of these translator-poets. As Cronin notes:

Architects of literatures and languages, channels of influence, ambassadors for the Other, [translators] *embody* at the same time many of the painful dilemmas of Ireland's troubled history" (1996: 1; my italics).

This statement acknowledges Ireland's contentious past. In "embody", however, we have the crux of this chapter – the translator is the locale where these concerns are brought together. I believe that it is in the light of the individual translator (the confluence of personality and context), and in light of the translator's personal relationship to their own language, that these translations can most helpfully be viewed.

The next chapter moves beyond these personal concerns, taking up other salient points from Cronin's statement. It will examine the extent to which these translators, as "ambassadors for the Other", may use this alterity to operate as "architects" of literature and language; whether they may be said to offer literary and linguistic reinvigoration through their adherence to dialect and heteroglossic discourses.

## Chapter 4 – Linguistic collision and renewal

### 4.1 Introduction

Contradancing, claustrophobic chaos

(Carson, 2002: 44)

– how many borrowed things do  
I go about in or use all day?  
but the things that are lent I take  
them over and make them mine  
– one day way back they even loaned me me

(Paulin, 2004: 70)

My first epigraph from Ciaran Carson's *The Inferno* (2002) suggests cacophony and movement. It occurs as Dante and Virgil gaze upon the frenzied, reeling madness of forms in the Fourth Circle of Hell. The "contradancing claustrophobic chaos" describes the incomprehensible spectacle: the movement of jostling sinners, linked in an endless pattern of progress and clash. It might, however, equally be applied to Carson's language in this translation: dense, compact, compressed and oppositional, "contradancing" is the mode throughout. Carson uses a wide range of linguistic varieties (including his local idiom, the language of film, song, and intertextual references), and *The Inferno's* resultant "dancing" is in its movement and travel between these different varieties. The second statement, taken from the titular poem of Tom Paulin's collection, *The Road to Inver* (2004), also concerns movement and travel. The narrator, driving across the north of Ireland, fractiously ponders the various ways in which he relates to the places he is driving between (Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Inver, Republic of Ireland). The poem is laden with angst: about belonging and ownership, lack of direction, journeying and (deferred) arrival. In the passage cited above, the narrator's self-questioning seems to be prompted by the borrowed Toyota he is driving, but his introspection is triggered as much by a stock symbol he has just

called to mind (“a bog road” – 2004: 70), as by the car. The questioning thus becomes personal and linguistic, rather than merely prosaic, and is concerned with appropriation – Paulin’s narrator suggests that the things he borrows (cars; symbols) are assimilated by him, and are transformed. However, these lines suggest, too, that the *narrator* has been altered by this process (“they even loaned me me”) – language can be personally formative, and *transformative*.

This chapter is interested in travel, but also in both “borrowed things” and “contradancing”. It is less interested in the relation to place (explored in Chapters 2 and 3), but rather in the movement *between* places. In this chapter, I will explore how the movement between language varieties in these translations emphasises the interrelation of disparate elements: disparate languages, frames of reference, different temporalities, and literary borrowings. I will explore the effect of such heterogeneity and dialogism<sup>175</sup> – Mikhail Bakhtin’s term for the *interanimation* of languages in a text (1981: 47) – in terms of its literary impact: what it might offer these texts, and the language of these poets. I will consider how this interanimation may suggest opposition and difference, but also unlikely, productive synergies between dissonant materials.

This chapter responds to my fifth research question, namely:

5. Does dialogism in these texts have the potential to bring about renewal?

My focus is on the *creative* potential of dialogic language, looking specifically at the power and energy of the clash between language varieties. In Chapter 3 I proposed that linguistic heterogeneity suggests the multiple language varieties available in society, and multiple viewpoints. This chapter will now focus on the *interaction* between the different types of language present in these translations, and the effect of these interactions.

In the first section, I focus on the ways in which these translated poems (Seamus Heaney’s *Beowulf* (1999), as well as *The Inferno* and *The Road to Inver*) bring into

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<sup>175</sup> Explained further in 4.2.2.

opposition multiple different language varieties and thereby poetically and stylistically bring about a compressed form of travel. I will adopt Jahan Ramazani's definition of "transnational": "poems and other cultural works that cross national borders, whether stylistically, topographically, intellectually, or otherwise" (2009: 181). Ramazani suggests that poetic compression (particularly via rhyme and alliteration) encourages imaginative travel (2009: 52-54). Using close textual analysis I will highlight the imaginative travel in these translations, demonstrating how poetic compression can engineer the interrelation of language varieties.

In the second section I focus on the new. I will suggest that the dialogic interaction of languages in these translations is used to imply the overlapping and interconnectedness of disparate worlds – it highlights simultaneous similarity *and* difference. I will suggest that one useful way of conceiving of these translations is as palimpsests – texts where a new layer of writing is inscribed over traces of previous writings. In a similar way, additional layers of meaning are laid down in these translations; texts – and language – are expanded and enriched. Finally, the chapter returns briefly to the personal. The layering of language and the appropriation of alien material is also potentially transformative for the individual lexicons of these writers as much as for the texts themselves.

As I have explored, one might argue that in subverting Standard English, particularly by involving Hiberno-English dialect, these translations are – in some ways – postcolonial, and are striving to comment on the political situation in (Northern) Ireland (see 3.2.3.1 – 3.2.3.2). However, the overarching argument in this chapter is that these heteroglossic and dialogic translations are simultaneously creative, language-enhancing texts, which are sensitive to the border-breaching potential of translation, and exuberant in their challenge to linguistic purity.

As Matthew Reynolds has written of Carson's translation: "It is possible for a phrase to make you draw up and think out the meaning of an expression, and for

this activity to carry an aesthetic as well as an intellectual charge” (2008: 76) – this chapter focusses primarily on this aesthetic “charge”.



## 4.2 Linguistic clash

### 4.2.1 Transnational poetry and compression

Ramazani's work on transnational poetics (2009) offers a way of approaching the mix of language varieties described in the previous chapter. He suggests the idea of "traveling poetry" (2009: 53): poetry which crosses national or cultural boundaries (2009: 51). Ramazani's thesis is that poetry can travel not only at the level of the text, but principally at the micro-level: "swift territorial shifts by line, trope, sound, or stanza that result in flickering movements and juxtapositions" (2009: 53; in "territorial shifts" Ramazani seems to borrow from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "territoriality" and "deterritorialization" – 1984: 145 and 231-2 respectively). In Ramazani's terms, "territorial" refers primarily to literal shifts in nation, but also shifts between frames of reference (2009: 55).

Ramazani suggests that what poetry may lack in terms of depth of social detail (compared to the novel), it gains "through structural efficiency and compression" (2009: 53), and "sonic patterning" (2009: 55). So, the rhyme schemes, rhythm and (typically) brief overall length of poetry, together with an element of self-reflexivity, are all elements which "enable imaginative travel" (ibid.). So, too, the typical structuring of poetry into short lines – truncated, separated by space – contributes to dislocation and travel: "the disjunctive logic of poetic lineation instructs us *not to expect continuity*" (2009: 61; my italics).

Ramazani suggests that these common poetic features can force disparate elements together, creating potentially unlikely connections and juxtapositions (which would not be possible in the same way in the novel form); poetic compression helps to engineer imaginative movements. Whilst Ramazani's observations are of course not wholly new (many other critics have observed the impact of poetry's compression and brevity – see, for example, Eagleton, 2007:

42), the linking of the structural compression of poetry with the potential for imaginative movement or travel is useful for this thesis.<sup>176</sup>

As explored in Chapter 3, linguistically Carson, Paulin and Heaney move beyond the local, beyond Hiberno-English dialect, in their translations. In this way they can, as Ramazani suggests, be viewed as “transnational” (Ramazani discusses the transnationalism of Northern Irish poets, including Heaney – 2009: 39-41). Linking structure and patterning of sound to travel allows us to view the juxtaposition of unlikely combinations of words in these translations as a means of bringing together and contrasting disparate worlds.

#### **4.2.2 Enforced dialogue and friction**

Ramazani likens interactions via the compression of poetry to what the theorist Mary Louise Pratt terms a “contact zone” (as cited in Ramazani, 2009: 54). Ramazani describes this zone as “a site of migrating and mingling tropes, geographies, and cultural signifiers” (ibid.). However, Pratt’s original concept is less about benign interaction and more about spaces “where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths” (1991: 34). In the previous chapter I argued that although issues of colonialism and asymmetric power relations *were* relevant, this did not seem to be the principal focus of these texts. This does not, however, mean that the different language varieties in these translations do not “grapple with each other” (Pratt, 1991: 34). Indeed, I would argue that such interactions, brought about by the compression of the poetic line, through alliteration, rhyme scheme or the use of kennings (and other compounds), results in extremely active ‘grappling’, in friction. A trace of this very friction (a kinetic effect) is often seen in the reviews of these

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<sup>176</sup> Oddly, Ramazani resists the translation of poetry: poetry is “stitched and hitched to the particularities of the language in which it is written” (2009: 53). For a theorist so convinced of poetry’s ability to move beyond national boundaries this seems a curious (and misguided) position. Nonetheless Ramazani’s observations on transnational poetics can helpfully be applied to translated poetry.

translations where energy and vitality have been identified as significant characteristics. Thus, for example, in Ali Smith's review (used to promote the paperback edition of *The Inferno*) she notes: "Ciaran Carson's version of Dante's *Inferno*, is the first I've read in which the English (because Irish really) seemed so kickingly alive" (2002: n.p.). I seek to draw out the frictions, energy and kinetic zing of these "kickingly alive" translations.

In focussing on the interaction of different language varieties I am using Bakhtin's concept of 'heteroglossia' (which emphasises linguistic diversity – 1981: 291-2), but also drawing on his idea of 'dialogism'. Bakhtin viewed the hybrid novel (that is, the novel which mixes linguistic forms – 1981: 360) as "a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another" (1981: 361). For this illumination to occur, it is not merely the presence of multiple language varieties in a text that is crucial, but the relation between these languages, languages that "mutually and ideologically interanimate each other" (1981: 47). In other words, dialogism is not merely a benign mixture, but *productive interaction*. For Bakhtin, the word "ideologically" is important, too. It is not only the words which intermingle, rather, via these linguistic forms there is a "collision between differing points of view on the world" (1981: 360; see 3.2.3.2). Whilst Bakhtin's view is that heteroglossia and dialogism are essential ideologically (in part as they reflect the variety of social language, rather than being a homogenising force – 1981: 367), in this chapter I am interested, too, in the creative energy they might add to a text.

Finally, I should highlight that the frictions in Heaney's translation are primarily between different Englishes (between Hiberno-English phraseology and the kennings, between figurative language and plainer diction) – as I noted in the last chapter, in Heaney's *Beowulf* "otherness is [...] sited within" (Jones, 2006: 7). On the other hand, while the language of Carson's and Paulin's translations also plays substantially within English, it often travels well beyond it, pulling in other language varieties as it shifts.

#### 4.2.2.1 Carson's dialogism

In Carson's translation, poetic travel and dialogism are highlighted and augmented by the rhyme scheme which brings unusual oppositions together, and by the density of the language; the shifts between different language varieties are remarkably frequent.

Carson adheres to Dante's *terza rima*, even though many translators of the *Inferno* abandon regular rhyming (Kirkpatrick, 2010: xciii). Kirkpatrick suggests that dedication to producing rhyming lines can distract from Dante's precise meaning: often "rhyme becomes the dominant point of interest in a line, drawing undue attention to itself" (ibid.). Clive James concurs: "nobody has ever written a *terza rima* poem in English that makes you forget the form in which it is composed" (2013: xix). James claims this is principally because "in a rhyme-starved language like English, the same rhyme sound keeps cropping up too early", and therefore "calls the wrong kind of attention to itself" (2013: xx).<sup>177</sup> Reynolds, too, says that because of intrinsic differences between languages' capacity for rhyme, adherence to it often creates a different tone in the translated text to that of the original: he suggests, for example, that rhyme feels "more intrusive" in Dorothy Sayers' translation than in Dante's original (2016: 51).

Carson's use of rhyme is both ingenious, and deliberately demanding of the attention James eschews: highlighting his adherence to the rhyme scheme, Carson suggests that some people *expect* to find that translations produce "strangely interesting" English (2002: xix); in other words, Carson welcomes the linguistic contortions produced by his adherence to *terza rima*. In Carson's translation, rhyme frequently shifts the frame of reference or brings unlikely counterparts together, and this is rarely unobtrusive. At times the rhymes seem

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<sup>177</sup> R.M. Liuzza notes similar problems in replicating structural features of Old English verse in Modern English (2013: 42).

to exist to highlight the process of intermeshing disparate worlds. In Canto XXII, for example, Virgil interrogates a sinner who describes his fellow Italians:

[...] their endless rap  
about Sardinia would put your head astray.

But me, oh my! Observe that grinning chap –  
I'd only be too glad to further talk,  
but fear he's going to scalp my scabby bap.'

The eyes of Flit the Moth were out on stalks,  
as he prepared to strike, but in a blink  
their marshal turned and bellowed: 'Scram, you shitehawk!' (2002: 151).

The rhyme scheme brings together unlikely combinations. Thus "rap", here meaning "banter" or "dialogue" (OED Online), an American colloquialism but with obvious overtones of rap music, is obliged to chime with both "chap" (with its upper-class, English overtones) and "bap" (Hiberno-English slang for 'head' – see 2.2.2.4). As I noted previously, the combination of alliteration (in "scalp my scabby bap"), and the line and stanza closing on a plosive (the 'p' of "bap") highlights the dialect term. It also emphasises the unusual combination of words – part of the "point of interest" (Kirkpatrick, 2010: xciii) becomes these very rhymes, the movement from "rap" to "chap" to "bap" and the shifts between these words and worlds, and their accumulating connotations.

At the same time, movement occurs between the other three end-rhymes: "talk" (unremarkable and prosaic) moves to "stalks" (from "out on stalks") – a modern image, drawing on cinematic animation which depicts fear or aggression by making a character's eyes stick out. The text then moves to the differently bizarre "shitehawk" (a "contemptible individual" – Share, 2003: 290) – an extravagant, dismissive term of abuse, at once explosive and expletive.<sup>178</sup> Again, the placement of "shitehawk" as the third of three rhymes creates emphasis, and draws attention to the movement over a few lines from the benign to the explosive. "Scram, you shitehawk!" is also emphasised by the longer final line (eleven syllables rather than ten),<sup>179</sup> and the outburst itself juxtaposes language

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<sup>178</sup> "Shite" (not "shit") is particularly Irish (Share, 2003: 290; Dolan, 2012: 222).

<sup>179</sup> Carson's lines routinely shift in length, but the preceding five lines each have ten syllables (and are in iambic pentameter) meaning that the extra syllable and different stress pattern of this

varieties, bringing together the slightly passé “scram” (perhaps parodying benign cartoon language) with the derogatory “shitehawk”. The exuberant range of words made to fit the rhyme scheme is arresting; Carson seems to revel in jerky shifts between choices, and the interaction between unlikely partners.

As many critics have indicated, the interlinking pattern of *terza rima* is progressive: our anticipation of the next rhyme endlessly propels the text forward (Sampson, 2013: n.p.; James, 2013: xvi-xviii; Hirsch, 2014: 637). However, by its nature rhyme is simultaneously backward-looking (Campbell, 2017: 29): so “shitehawk” is startling, but in it we also hear the echo of “out on stalks”, lingering beyond its poetic place. That these two terms intermingle *aurally* complicates the reading experience – Carson’s inventive rhyming asks us to hold multiple dissonant images in our heads at any one time. An equally heteroglossic text, but one without the rhyme, would not have quite this complex, layered aural effect (for example, Philip Terry’s translation – *Dante’s Inferno* (2014) – is a highly polyphonic text, but as it is in largely unrhymed verse the multiple voices do not aurally overlay themselves in quite this way).

For Carson, the strait-jacket of rhyme often leads him to ever more ingenious linguistic responses – as Jean Boase-Beier has observed, “it is in the interplay between given extra- and intratextual constraint and individual freedom that creativity develops” (2006b: 47) – or, as Jonathan Safran Foer describes it, “The handcuffs are also the keys to the handcuffs” (in Campbell, 2017: 27).<sup>180</sup> Carson similarly explained that in translating *The Alexandrine Plan* (1998a), and retaining the French twelve-syllable alexandrine, he wanted to see “what interpretations might emerge from those constraints” (2012: 12).

If Carson’s playfulness is never far from the surface (cf. Chapter 3), rhyme is one of the most obvious ways in which he demonstrates his creative flair. Rhyme

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final line stand out – as Alexander Pope wrote “A needless Alexandrine ends the Song, / That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along” (in Hirsch, 2014: 17).

<sup>180</sup> Perhaps the most famous example of the use of literary constraints to prompt creativity is the group of (largely French) ‘Oulipo’ writers, one of whose number – George Perec – published a text (*La Disparition*, 1969) without using the letter ‘e’.

repeatedly forces unlikely companions together, twisting *The Inferno* in unusual directions: so a “stirabout” (2002: 148 – a Hiberno-English word for porridge – Share, 2003: 314) meets “frightened trout” (2002: 148),<sup>181</sup> and the medically specific “cauterize” meets the circuitous “circlewise” (2002: 215). “United” and “divided” (2002: 199) are obliged to half-rhyme (particularly in a Northern Irish accent) in a match which emphasises their contrasting sense, and the schisms of this Canto (Bertran de Born speaks these words, waving his own severed head – punishment for encouraging discord between Henry the Young of England and his father, Henry II – Carson, 2002: 287). At times Carson even reaches for words embedded within other words: “chine” provides the third in the sequence of “chin” and “machine” (2002: 239) – this combination draws attention to the three different sounds contained in subsections of the same word, and so again uses rhyme to emphasise linguistic difference and dissonance, even from the same source.

Of course, rare usages (such as “circlewise”)<sup>182</sup> are one way round the rhyme scheme, and very occasionally Carson does create neologisms, such as the plural noun “liers-low”, to partner “slow” and “snow” (2002: 93), although in general he explores the depths of the language rather than wholly re-creating it (I will develop this in 4.3.3). However, sometimes Carson must move away from English to make the sound scheme work. He makes “*frisson*” the central rhyme for “contrition” and “logician” (2002: 191, italics in original), using a loanword from the French (the borrowing highlighted by the italics). The combination (and the ambiguity about which accent we are to ‘hear’ for these words) may also remind us that “logician” itself is also originally from the French (‘logicien’). Later “impresarios” (from the Italian) provides the rhyme for “foes” and “show” (2002: 217), although the borrowed term is *not* italicised. This is another of Carson’s *apparent* gestures towards the source text, although neither

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<sup>181</sup> Although no mention of fish is made in the Italian, it is possible that (especially to a non-Italian speaker, like Carson) the Italian word for sinners, “peccatori” (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 188) may have suggested fishy words: ‘pesce’ (fish), or ‘pescatore’ (fisherman).

<sup>182</sup> See also “crescent-wise”, partnering “lives” and “advised” (2002: 79).

“impresarios”, nor the Italian word from which it derives (‘impresa’), appears in Dante’s text at this point.<sup>183</sup>

As Reynolds has suggested, we might find that these ostentatious, jarring echoes give a materially different feel to Carson’s translation compared to the Italian text (2016: 51): they often deliberately draw attention to language difference or oddity. Additionally, they often move beyond the anticipated language pair (as with “*frisson*”), or complicate our understanding of the dividing line between the source and target language (is “impresarios” from Dante’s Italian, or from English? – I explore these dynamics further in Gibson, 2018). The linguistic jolts also frequently introduce an element of bathos, and puncture the mood – for example, whilst edgier, “shitehawk” is also a much sillier term of abuse than Kirkpatrick’s “You vulture!” (2010: 191), or James’ “dirty bird” (2013: 106).<sup>184</sup>

Carson, however, has an alternative take on the significance of rhyme. He quotes from Hugh Shields’ study of Irish narrative singing to the effect that: “a translator from Irish might consider rhyme, as a traditional metrical principle, more important to preserve than the literal wording of the message” (in Carson, 2002: xxi). Carson’s borrowed explanation reminds us that even within the Western literary world there are significantly different emphases between cultures on the relative importance of aspects of a literary text. As Kwame Anthony Appiah indicates, we make value judgements when we translate: we might, for example, deprioritise literal interpretations because “we are trying to preserve formal features that *seem more crucial*” (1993: 816; my italics) – Appiah’s description asserts the determining factor of the translator’s situation and personality. So, Kirkpatrick is dismissive of rhyme given its more limited role in English-language poetry (and because, therefore, to his ear, it sounds silly – Kirkpatrick stresses Dante’s sobriety, his “deliberate plainness and ethical gravity”, 2010:

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<sup>183</sup> See 3.3.3.1 on Carson’s use of Italian terms.

<sup>184</sup> This links back to the lack of deference discussed in 3.2.2.4.



xcvii). By contrast, Carson *values* rhyme as it underpins Irish-language poetry, one of the traditions he writes out of (2002: xx).<sup>185</sup>

Accordingly, in Carson's translation rhyme dominates, and internal rhyme, too, features heavily – another element Carson appreciates from Irish-language poetry (2002: xx-xxi). Consider the enhanced sense provided by the internal rhyme in this stanza from Canto II:

As little flowers, bended down and *curled*  
by chilly night, *unfurl* themselves, and stand  
erect when touched by sunlight, as the *world*

awakes (2002: 14; my italics and underlining).

Clearly the textual effects cannot be reduced to the rhyme: the arrangement of words around line breaks is clever (“erect” and “awakes” occur at the start of new lines, echoing their sense), and “bended” has to be re-read (it is an archaic verbal form, with the night, not the flowers, the active party; it also suggests ‘bedded down’). But the internal rhymes (“curled”/“unfurl”/“world” and “night”/“sunlight”) reinforce the sense – the sound echoes across the stanza conjure up the idea of something gradually unfolding, particularly as the internal rhyme of “curled” and “unfurl” brings two opposing senses together in an almost Metaphysical conceit (again achieved through the trick of requiring us to hold something in our heads while something else happens acoustically).

David Wallace has suggested that a stream of Irish poets translating Dante (Yeats, Joyce, Beckett, Heaney) “achieve[...] things that are beyond the grasp of the English or Americans” (2007: 281). Wallace suggests that the *Catholicism* of Irish poets brings them closer to Dante (2007: 298), however, although Carson was brought up with Catholicism, the emphasis on rhyme seems a more tangible way in which his background relates to his translation. Whilst I am not evaluating Carson's translation along nationalist lines, it is worth remembering

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<sup>185</sup> Maurice Riordan's anthology of early Irish lyrics highlights the importance of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and assonance (2014: xvi-xvii). Interestingly, in Carson's introduction to *The Táin* (2007) he explains that the original's *aabb* scheme would be “difficult and tedious” to replicate in English (2007: xxvi). Dante's *aba bcb cdc* scheme seemingly gives Carson enough room for invention, without the tedium.

that in different hands translations can perform different tricks, and reveal different qualities of the source text and author (Reynolds, 2016: 52-3). They may also present interpretations that would otherwise be unavailable to us – in translation studies we often think of this in terms of an illuminating *recontextualisation* of a text (reading *Beowulf* against the context of Troubles-era Northern Ireland, say), but the recasting may equally be stylistic or formal.

Carson delivers a different position on Dante's *Inferno*, re-emphasising shades of acoustic meaning in this well-worn text. When Kirkpatrick or James deprioritise the rhyme scheme they brand it a tricky, formal consideration, but lose the sense that it also complicates the text as we move through it – the hand-holding movement of the rhyme is more than a translator challenge, and the acoustic reverberations and complications are greatly reduced if the rhyme scheme is not adhered to (even if many 'unrhymed' versions rely on internal rhyme, including Kirkpatrick's translation – 2010: xciii). By contrast, where *The Inferno* chimes "sheds its leaves" and "unsleeved" to create a fresh image of an autumnal tree (uncovering the echo of "leaves" within "unsleeved" – 2002: 20), and pairs "strange assize" with "triple-tries", extending the legal metaphor, and drawing attention to the specificity of the term "assize" with the neologism "triple-tries" (triple given Cerberus' three mouths – 2002: 37), Carson layers semantic and acoustic effects in cacophonous multiplicity. Rhyme, assonance and homophonic play are significant means by which he reinforces the complex dialogic properties of his translation.<sup>186</sup>

One of the aspects which I feel needs to be addressed in translation studies is the lack of discussion of the complex nature of translated texts in their own right (that is, *in addition to* their performance of a reading of a source text). Carson's translation relates in interesting ways to Dante's original, but it is also a varied, challenging, extemporising force, with its own in-jokes, metatextual play, and a vast array of attention-demanding poetic effects (in this it sits alongside his original poetry, its equal in dense linguistic interplay). Highlighting the complexities of how rhyme operates in *The Inferno* is one way of underlining the

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<sup>186</sup> I explore homophony in 4.3.3.

significant artistic effort required to perform this feat of translation, and the considerable successes of its performance (rather than dismissing it as mere child's-play, only generating the "wrong kind of attention" – James, 2013: xx).

In any case, the dissonant complications of Carson's translation are not only to be found in the rhyme scheme. *The Inferno* dialogically relates different varieties of language in ways which go beyond the acoustic effects. In the following section, from Canto XXXI, Dante and Virgil approach another pit:

Here, you couldn't call it night, nor day;  
but as I peered into that twilight zone  
I heard the mad *ta-ra-ra-boom-di-ay*

of some gargantuan bugle-megaphone  
whose noise would make a thunderclap seem dim,  
and so my eyes zoomed back to seek its home –

I tell you, when the noble paladins  
of Charlemagne were slaughtered, Roland's trumpet  
never raised so terrible a *din* (2002: 215; italics in original).

Across this passage the end-rhymes shift from "dim" to "paladins" to "din". As we have seen, throughout *The Inferno* Carson plays with homonyms or, more often, near-homonyms, like "dim" and "din";<sup>187</sup> here, although similar phonetically, they provide opposite senses. In this sequence "paladins" does not so much rhyme with "din" as contain it (as with "machine" and "chine" above). In using "paladins", Carson also echoes the content of this passage. He inserts a lexical item specific to the precise period in question (Charlemagne's reign) back into the poem: a "paladin" refers to one of the twelve peers of Charlemagne's court (OED Online). In an odd way, Carson's linguistic choice may seem even *more* suitable than the original (Dante's phrase is "la santa gesta" – Kirkpatrick, 2010: 274).<sup>188</sup> In contrast, Kirkpatrick's version is "the sacred band" (2010: 275) and Steve Ellis' is "the holy company" (2007: 185), both more anodyne choices. After

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<sup>187</sup> For further examples see 4.3.3. "Dim"/"din" demonstrates reverse rhyme (the front of the words rather than the end of the words rhyme).

<sup>188</sup> Translations *can* offer 'improved' versions of the original – see Reynolds on Paul Muldoon's 'improvement' on a Eugenio Montale poem via a particular linguistic selection (which Reynolds suggests Montale would have adopted had it been available to him – 2005: n.p.).

such a specific, antiquated term, “din” seems quite a contrast; a modest, even farcical word for the cacophony.

The dialogue between the language varieties in this passage goes beyond that forced by rhyme or echo. “Gargantuan bugle-megaphone” brings together words of disparate origins: “bugle” and “megaphone” are physically melded together in a bizarre portmanteau word. “Bugle” (with older, military connotations) and “megaphone” (modern, perhaps with overtones of a protest-march) are forced bedfellows, the composite simultaneously suggests the (opposite) characteristics of both, and a superabundance of meaning (later in the passage “trumpet” provides yet another variant). “Gargantuan” complicates this linguistic marriage further – we use it colloquially to mean ‘huge’ but it is, of course, derived from literature (from François Rabelais’ *Gargantua*, 1534; Gargantua is the name of one of the giants). “Gargantuan” is a historical word, but from a different era than either the translation or the original. To add to the layering of connotations it is also, in one sense, an intertextual reference (and intertextuality is a type of heteroglossia – Bakhtin, 1981: 49). “Gargantuan” is appropriately suggestive for this context – this Canto will describe the pit-dwelling giants; “gargantuan” points us back to an earlier text on exactly this subject. In contrast to Carson’s extravagant description, Ellis’ selection is the plain “I heard a trumpet sounding” (1997: 185), James chooses a “horn’s blast” (2013: 150), and Kirkpatrick has “a horn ring out so loud” (2010: 275). None offer the internal complexity of Carson’s selection, which, as Muldoon observes of a particularly multi-functional word in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, “goes in four or five directions at once” (2008: 83).

In a similarly oppositional way, in sequential lines the phrase “twilight zone” is brought together with “*ta-ra-ra-boom-di-ay*”. Here, a phrase originally used to describe an urban area with decrepit housing (OED Online), but since used as the title of a well-known American sci-fi television series of the 1950 – 60s (Internet Movie Database: no date), and now employed colloquially to mean a boundary area (OED Online), meets a vaudeville chorus from the 1890s.<sup>189</sup> “Twilight zone”

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<sup>189</sup> The song was originally African-American, but became synonymous with the British music-hall scene (Bellanta, 2010: n.p.).

is sometimes used to describe a mysterious, undefined area (perhaps due to the television series), and the very juxtaposition of this television reference with a refrain from a song from the previous century embodies the strangeness of the sights and sounds Dante is encountering. If, as Carson proposes, Dante's language is strange even for Italians (2002: xix), in Carson's melding of different frames of reference there is an attempt to render an equivalently strange tapestry of linguistic influences and traces. Kirkpatrick suggests that translators must walk an impossible tightrope in terms of replicating Dante's linguistic variety:

The spectrum of Dante's linguistic choices is a reflection of his power to dramatize an extreme multiplicity of voices and an indication of his irrepressible virtuosity. The translator must reconcile the full range of Dante's choice of words with an orientation towards simplicity and even silence (2010: xcvi).

Whilst Carson certainly addresses the "full range" of linguistic choice, he flies in the face of simplicity or silence.

Across this passage, then, Carson's choices are extravagant, and force disparate worlds together: "paladins", Charlemagne and Roland coexist with the bizarre "bugle-megaphone". This odd composite instrument blasts out an old music-hall song in a place suggesting a different frame of reference entirely ("that twilight zone"). Shifts in linguistic worlds are brought about by single words (for example "zoomed", which introduces cinematographic language), by the interaction of sounds across lines ("paladins" with "din"), through contrasts in adjacent lines ("twilight zone" with "*ta-ra-ra-boom-di-ay*"), or through compression of variety into a single image: the "gargantuan bugle-megaphone" playing "*ta-ra-ra-boom-di-ay*"; indeed the "bugle-megaphone" alone. It is characteristic of Carson to perform this frequency of shift in such a compressed space. Carson's linguistic patterning is dense; phrases or even single words undo one frame of reference and set up another contrasting context. In so doing, they draw attention to their interrelation, to the "twilight zone" of language in this poem. As another Northern Irish poet, Alan Gillis, has written, to read Carson's work is to be dazzled by the "complexity of braided associations and temporal layers, experienced in a perpetual ignition of metamorphosis" (2003: 183). Given such

dialogic passages, this seems to be as true of *The Inferno* as of Carson's original poetry.

#### 4.2.2.2 Paulin's dialogism

The dialogism in Paulin's translations occurs both at a micro-level (in individual phrases) and across extended passages in his poems. Interaction between language varieties occurs in a wide variety of ways, and shifts between language varieties – and indeed between different voices – occur between lines, and even sometimes within them.

Single phrases which compress different kinds of language together dialogically litter Paulin's translations. 'The Island in the North Sea' (translating Rainer Maria Rilke), for example, concludes with: "– then a sheep scumbles up a dyke a / gross hirpling dopey ominouslooking sheep" (2004: 2). The effect of the unusual "scumbles" (perhaps a portmanteau of "stumbles" and "scampers")<sup>190</sup> is compounded by the final, outrageous line, combining many different language varieties. "Gross" (with its multiple senses: "corpulent", "bloated", "massive", "disgusting" – OED Online), meets the dialect "hirpling", then the colloquial "dopey", and finally "ominouslooking" (contrasting with the previous silly word, "dopey"). The combination of these four terms, their interplay and contradictions is a bizarre note on which to end an otherwise relatively sober poem. The overabundance of these descriptions emphasises the interactions between language types.

This effect is repeated throughout Paulin's translations in bizarre compounds where words are physically melded together, for example Jack Adam's "bigboned smoothmembered handsome head" (in 'Creation and Animation', translating Johann Wolfgang von Goethe – 2004: 96), or a cascade of blows like a

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<sup>190</sup> The Irish writer Colin Barrett uses "scumbled" in *Young Skins* (2015: 57), meaning "scrambled", so it may be Hiberno-English. Paulin re-uses "scumble" in 'The Pipe' for the sound of the coals on the grate, seemingly prompted by the "coal *scuttle*" (2004: 34; my italics).

“hammerbrash” (in ‘Bournemouth’, translating Paul Verlaine – 2004: 38) – these compounds seem more bizarre as words are merged, rather than hyphenated.<sup>191</sup> Oddly compressed combinations of language varieties are common. In ‘Prologue’ (translating William Langland), the courtier speaks in “a priestly a most smarmy orotund bowelly fashion” (2004: 26). The colloquial “smarmy” contradicts (or, depending on your view, confirms) “priestly”, then meets the formal, little-used “orotund” (meaning ‘imposing’, but with a tinge of pomposity, and a hint of extra flesh, as it includes “rotund”), and finally “bowelly” (an obsolete word meaning “compassionate” (OED Online), but with silly, scatological overtones). Thus, even within a line, shifts in register and tone can be used to undermine or complicate the sense – the courtier is speaking with forked tongue to influence the king; so the text, too, represents him with (double-voiced) forked tongue. Of course, Paulin is by no means the first translator to enrich the target language with neologisms or obsolete usages, as we saw with Carson’s version of the *Inferno*. Across history translators have responded in this way: think, for example, of Cicero’s tendency to “coin new expressions” in translations from the speeches of Greek orators (in Lefevere, 1992b: 47).

Perhaps the most obvious way in which Paulin’s translations bring about the intermingling of language varieties is through the combination of three descriptive terms, used throughout *The Road to Inver*, but also in his collections of original poetry.<sup>192</sup> So, for example, in *Fivemiletown* (1987), combinations such as “a scrake / a scratch / *a screighulaidh*” occur (1987: 32; italics in original), here describing a baby’s cry: “scrake”, from the Irish ‘scréach’, meaning “a screech” (Dolan, 2012: 214), and “screighulaidh” combining ‘screigh’ (another spelling of ‘scréach’) and ‘ulaidh’, a version of ‘Ulster’ in Irish (BBC Northern

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<sup>191</sup> Heaney’s compounds are generally hyphenated, producing a more ‘literary’ feel (3.2.3.2). Paulin’s compounds tend towards the Joycean portmanteau, or have a Germanic tone (cf. Sansom, 2004: n.p.). Sansom’s observation that these compounds make Paulin sound like “sixth-form Joyce” (ibid.) is often apt – Paulin’s compounds are frequently less inventive or revealing than Joyce’s (for example, in *Ulysses*, Molly drinks tea “from her cup held by nothandle” – 1993: 62).

<sup>192</sup> Paulin’s most complicated, dense translation, ‘The Caravans of Lüneburg Heath’ contains longer prosaic lists – “sugars furs saltfish copper sandstone corn” (2004: 53) – but lists of three remain Paulin’s most used form.

Ireland, 2014a: n.p.).<sup>193</sup> While in original poetry these lists highlight authorial choice, as I noted in Chapter 2 in a collection of *translations* such lists seem to emphasise the plurality of possible interpretations of the source material, physically representing the various lexical choices open to the translator, or the “decisionism” of translation (Apter, 2013: 169).

If Carson’s rhymes force us to hold multiple resonating images in our head at any one time (“shitehawk”/“out on stalks” – 2002: 151) then Paulin’s lists of three terms achieve a similar effect: these multiple descriptions create multi-faceted images, not acoustically but semantically: for example the toad who is “bald as a coot / a mud nightingale a singing turd” (2004: 43), or the swan who creates “those ripples algebra pure sequences” (2004: 87). The compression within a line (or occasionally over a few lines), combined, most often, with a lack of punctuation means that we have to re-read to establish where one image stops and another begins. In certain poems – for example ‘Prologue’ (2004: 22-29), ‘Sentence Sound’ (2004: 81) or ‘The Caravans of Lüneburg Heath’ (2004: 51-62) – these contradictory, layered descriptions proliferate, building to a complex overlapping whole, where the sense seems to slide around with each new sub-clause. Here is the opening to ‘Prologue’:

One summer’s morning in the white the soft the widening  
sunshine I struggled like a daft sheep into a  
shepherd’s smock a ragged thing – stained and greasy –  
that made me look like a rude a houseless hermit who’s  
up to no good as he wanders out all hunched up  
toward the wide the crowded world there to witness  
– bear witness –  
to all its wonders and atrocities (2004: 22).

The whole of Paulin’s translation of Langland ebbs and flows in this way. It is not that the text is incomprehensible, rather that the combined effect of the ever-broadening descriptions (“the white the soft the widening”), the qualifiers (“– stained and greasy –”) and the reassessments (“to witness / – bear witness –”) means that “the processes of perception and of comprehension are slowed down” (van Peer, 1986: 2). Langland’s original is comparatively direct:

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<sup>193</sup> Paulin uses “scrake of dawn” (meaning daybreak) in ‘Date of Renewal’ (2004: 64).



In a somer seson, whan softe was the sonne,  
I shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were,  
In habite as an heremite unholy of werkes,  
Wente wide in this world wondres to here (Corpus of Middle English  
Prose and Verse, 2006: n.p.).

In Paulin's version we must process not only multiplicity, but ambiguous interrelation (how the world can be both "wide" and "crowded", for example). This passage also demonstrates how Paulin's compressed descriptions often appear hand in hand with other types of dialogism (here, with a self-correcting authorial or translator voice), such that it is often impossible to work out whether interjections are (designed to look like) the translator's reworkings, or are instead deliberate, ambiguous and cumulative authorial selections.

The interplay between these different voices which interrupt, comment on or contradict the principal narrative voice of the poems contrasts with both Carson's and Heaney's translations. In Chapter 3 (3.3.3.3) I suggested that Paulin's poem 'The Skeleton', translating Verlaine, presents multiple positions, or even the split positions of the poem's creator. Dialogism in Paulin's translations often involves this performance of multiple positions within the role of author/translator: for example the self-correction in 'Sentence Sound' (translating Giacomo Leopardi) to a more apt selection: "– I licked – no lisped – that smooth file" (2004: 81; the poem is about the mechanics of poem-creation, the choice of "fricatives labials and peachy vowels" – *ibid.*). Or in the description of the atmosphere in Francis Ponge's 'The Cigarette': "smoky, dry, tousled – no unkempt –" (2004: 3). Such interruptions seem to display Emily Apter's "decisionism" *in action*, and exceed the ambiguity and plurality of the originals: Ponge's ambiance, for example, is merely "à la fois brumeuse et sèche, / échevelée" (1994: 20).<sup>194</sup>

At other times, the dialogic qualities of these poems are less involved with *authorial* decision-making, but present instead a complicated, self-questioning

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<sup>194</sup> Meaning 'all at once smoky, dry, dishevelled' (my translation). In not translating "à la fois" Paulin renders a more directly plural image.

internal dialogue, following non-linear thought patterns – for example, in ‘Belongings’ (2004: 7, translating Walid Khazendar), ‘Love Thy Neighbour’ (2004: 48, translating Max Jacob) or ‘Chuckling it Away’ (2004: 66-67, translating Heinrich Heine). In these poems the unsettling dialogism produces instances of iconicity, where the poem’s form imitates what it presents. This can be seen in the following passage from ‘The Road to Inver’ (translating Fernando Pessoa’s ‘Ao Volante do Chevrolet Pela Estrada de Sintra’), where the narrator, on a journey from Belfast to Donegal, feels suspended between point of departure and destination:

without ever having left Belfast  
or having to go to Inver  
– in Irish it means *river*  
*mouth* – which is a bit like not having read  
– I don’t know the language –  
like not having read  
that book – is it a novel or memoir? –  
called *The House at Inver*  
which stood somewhere on the shelves  
in our house in Belfast  
which reminds me my grandmother’s house  
in Belfast was called *Invergowrie*  
after the village in the Lowlands she was born in  
or maybe that her family came from  
(they brought the bronze nameplate with them  
when they moved from Glasgow  
and settled – more or less – in Ireland) (2004: 69; italics in original).

In this passage the ‘interruptions’ represent the narrator’s own uncertain thoughts tripping over themselves, overlapping, digressing from and deferring the ‘main’ flow of expression. Differentiating these qualifying thoughts via punctuation (the proliferation of dashes) typographically portrays the wavering, insecure position of the speaker. The poem’s protagonist spends the journey pondering questions of belonging and homecoming, and his ‘out-of-place-ness’ in both Belfast and Inver; the dialogic manner of the interruptions marries with their uncertain, wavering content, representing an anxious, divided state of mind. Naming the town as “Inver”, the speaker clarifies that “in Irish it means *river / mouth*” – this intervention suggests that the narrator straddles both sides of the language divide (English and Irish), and also highlights the contentious colonial process of anglicising Irish place names (portrayed in Brian Friel’s

*Translations*, 1981).<sup>195</sup> The split of “river mouth” over the line break requires reassessment: we think Inver means ‘river’, but this is qualified as we read on, complicating the initially neat sense of equivalence between languages.

The process of reading ‘The Road to Inver’ is riven with these qualifications and reassessments. The next interruption – “– I don’t know the language” (of the book, *The House at Inver*) – seems to undo the earlier confidence translating Irish. It could mean ‘I don’t know what language it’s written in’, or ‘I don’t speak that language’. Either breeds more uncertainty; as the poem progresses, the dialogic interjections raise fresh complications by interacting with earlier statements. This title seems to be a misquoted or misremembered intertextual reference to *The Big House of Inver*, a novel by the Irish writers Edith Anna C  none Somerville and Martin Ross about the Anglo-Irish ascendancy.<sup>196</sup> It remains unclear whether the misstep in the book’s title is intentional or inadvertent.

As the poem is in part about the life of the public poet (2004: 68; 70-71), the interjection “– is it a novel or memoir? –” seems to comment on the muddled distinction between personal experience and artistic creation, themes developed elsewhere in this collection (most clearly in ‘Une Rue Solitaire’ – 2004: 100-1). The final interruption in this passage (“– more or less –”) undermines any idea of a neat shift in territory or home (in the transplantation from Glasgow to Northern Ireland). The narrator’s grandmother transports her house nameplate between nations, but the personal transfer will only be approximate – similarly, the transfer of the narrator from Belfast to Inver is partial, incomplete; at the poem’s close the narrator remains on the road to Inver, and “as far / from [peace] and myself as ever” (2004: 72).<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Tempo (a village mentioned in the poem’s opening line) is also anglicised (historically known as Tempodeshel, from the Irish: an tIomp   Deiseal).

<sup>196</sup> Martin Ross was the pen name of Somerville’s cousin, Violet Martin. The big house is “a recurring motif in Anglo-Irish literature, often symbolising the arrogance of the ascendancy” (Dolan, 2012: 23; cf. Carr on the “Big House novel” – 2017: 89). The ‘ascendancy’ refers to the dominance of wealthy Protestant landowners in Ireland until the twentieth century (see Foster, 1989: 162-3; 167-94).

<sup>197</sup> Furthering the ambiguity, “peace” (the referent two lines previously) implies both the narrator’s personal peace, and peace in the Northern Irish civil context.

Across this passage, the dialogic interaction between the principal flow of thought and the anxious interjections captures the narrator's uncertainty and self-questioning stance on matters of identity, belonging, cultural transplantation and provenance (linguistic and personal). Gesturing beyond himself, the narrator's interjections loosely allude to contentious aspects of Irish history: ascendancy politics, anglicisations of Irish place names, immigration between Scotland and Northern Ireland, the interplay of Irish and English in Ireland, tension between rural (Inver; the Lowlands) and urban locations (Glasgow; Belfast).

As in all the passages examined in this section, this last from 'The Road to Inver' displays the extent to which Paulin's poems weave together complex layers of meaning, and where reader research (for example into "*The House at Inver*") yields further nuances. Shane Murphy links Paulin with Carson (and Paul Muldoon and Medbh McGuckian), claiming that "interpreting their poetry involves difficulty for the reader (finding the sources, comparing the quoting text with that from which it cites, translating the 'foreign' language)" (2003: 206).<sup>198</sup> This prompt to further research is one example of the additional expectations required of Paulin's readers. Such research is not required in reading Pessoa's original – although Paulin's poem closely echoes Pessoa's *concerns* (particularly in terms of lack of belonging), the reference to the Big House, for example, originates with Paulin. Similarly, Pessoa's poem, although anxious and self-questioning, does not stage dialogic interjections in Paulin's distinctive manner (cf. Chris Daniels' translation, 2009: 35-6).

Finally, it is worth emphasising that across these translated poems different voices 'speak' in myriad different ways. Paulin uses dashes ("– I don't know the language –" – 2004: 69), but also italics: "they'd say *there goes a happy fella / he doesn't give a damn what his car looks like*" (2004: 71; italics in original). Italics are occasionally used where Paulin signals a move into vernacular (although this is not consistent), or for noises – for example when the bed moves in 'Roman

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<sup>198</sup> In contrast, Heaney's poetry seldom demands this level of additional research.

Elegy': "the bed bouncy and springy *crik! crik!*" (2004: 82; italics in original). At other times quotation marks are used ("Go chew acorns / Mr Heidegger / you went with the Nazis" – 2004: 58-9), and occasionally other voices are allowed in via reported speech, without italics ("but he as St Paul says he who talks filth / serves the devil" – 2004: 23). Finally, other voices speak without being signalled first: in 'A Nation, Yet Again' (translating Alexander Pushkin) the narrator describes a new style that "purifies its tribal rites" (2004: 65), echoing T.S. Eliot's "purify the dialect of the tribe" from 'Little Gidding' in *Four Quartets*, 1943 (itself borrowed from Stéphane Mallarmé).<sup>199</sup> Here Paulin's poem about language complexities recycles an approximation of Eliot's line, from a translation of Mallarmé's French, to translate Pushkin's Russian. The reference to Eliot is unannounced, but the echo is felt (indeed, the multi-voiced texture may remind us of Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), which itself borrowed different voices). In this way, many other voices enter Paulin's translations, woven into the fabric of the poems (similarly "paradise lost", bringing to mind John Milton's epic of the same name, appears in 'The Rooks' – 2004: 31).<sup>200</sup>

The dialogic contortions of Paulin's translations are thus many and varied. At times dialogism draws attention to processes of analogy, a plurality of linguistic options and increasing polysemy (I will examine Paulin's use of analogy in 4.3.2.2). Often linked to this is a muddying of the position of the narrator or translator – a deliberate attempt to draw attention to their choices, the different shades of meaning which might be conjured by a single word in the original poem and the simultaneous (even contentious) pulls they experience. In other poems, the *narrator's* voice is split or fragmented, and here the emphasis is less on linguistic clash, but rather on existential, identitarian angst. Literary fragmentation embodies uncertainty over complex issues such as belonging, language and identity. At other points the narrative voice appears consistent, but intertextual elements creep in – this includes, ultimately, the echoes between poems in this collection (the repeated dialect terms, stylistic tropes and

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<sup>199</sup> Eliot's line borrows from Mallarmé's: "Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu", from 'Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe' (1876).

<sup>200</sup> 3.2.2.6 analyses Paulin's intertextuality.

preoccupations). A few of these translated poems are not dialogic, but the vast majority are plural in these ways. The fact that multiple authors appear several times across the collection (Verlaine, Goethe, or Baudelaire, for example) means that other voices (and their idiosyncratic concerns) reverberate too, adding to the dialogical whole.

The overall effect of this range of methods for introducing other voices is uncertainty – are these the voices of other individuals (real or imagined?), or quotations from texts which have influenced the author? Are they the multiple different opinions of the author himself, or conflicting pulls felt by him: the differing demands of his role as writer *and* translator? Paulin's collection does not offer neat solutions to these queries, but instead creates a nebulous tapestry of voices echoing and interacting through the work.

Taking these poems together, with their varied representations of the interactions between different subject-positions, or world-views, Paulin's translations deny the all-uniting narrative voice – the “unity of the language system and the unity [...] of the poet's individuality as reflected in his language and his speech” – that Bakhtin saw as rendering poetry un-dialogic (1981: 264). One limitation, however, of Bakhtin's terms ‘dialogism’ and ‘heteroglossia’ is that, whilst they helpfully *describe* an effect, they often do not help extend a discussion of *why* an author might choose to use these techniques, beyond exemplifying a variety of positions, and thereby replicating the breadth of society (Bakhtin, 1981: 367). Analysis using Bakhtin's terms often does not push much further than this somewhat vague ideological concern, and frequently does not highlight that dialogism may be used in different ways, and to different ends.

Paulin's collection is not easy to categorise. It uses language dialogically to problematise the relationship between original and translation, and it plays with ideas of literary derivation (of which more later in this chapter). It complicates the idea of a single, unwavering narrative voice (consistent with the postmodern fragmentation of much of Paulin's original poetry – see, for example, *Liberty Tree* (1983b), or *Fivemiletown*, 1987). It worries, self-questioningly, about key

concerns which resonate throughout Paulin's oeuvre: history, land and language, identity and ownership, travel and belonging. Finally, *The Road to Inver* promotes linguistic ambiguity and multiplicity, and even, at points, semantic chaos (via the punctuation). Sometimes Paulin's translated poems do all of these things together, sometimes only a few (and very occasionally none). These complex dialogic poems, augmented by the random linguistic and intertextual connections across the anthology, produce the "flickering movements and juxtapositions" Ramazani suggested (2009: 53), very often without any overarching sense of cohesion. "Contradancing, claustrophobic chaos" reigns supreme (Carson, 2002: 44).

#### 4.2.2.3 Heaney's dialogism

It could not be claimed that Heaney's translation replicates the dialogic oddity of either Carson's swings from the "twilight zone" to "the mad *ta-ra-ra-boom-di-ay*" (2002: 215; italics in original), or Paulin's multi-voiced poems such as 'Prologue' (2004: 22-29). But, as Eagleton says, a "poem may be verbally inventive without flamboyantly drawing attention to the fact" (2007: 47). Heaney's *Beowulf* is significantly dialogic, but it demonstrates its dialogism in subtle shifts within a few lines, or in movements across small passages of text. I want to suggest that the ways in which the different language varieties in this translation interact via the compression of the poetic form (particularly specific contrasts in alliterative and metaphoric language, and plain-speaking) is a significant factor in how *Beowulf* as a text is reinvigorated, and how it reaches its points of emphasis.

We are not required to react to Heaney's translation in the same way as either Carson's or Paulin's – Carson's in the dazzling breadth of language variety, Paulin's in the intertextual references or political allusions, and the repeated disruptions of the narrative voice. But reading Heaney's language still often requires significant effort – and it becomes odder the closer we peer at it. Often without fanfare Heaney's lexical selections are peculiar, in particular the specific

combinations he generates. So, for example, when Beowulf returns Unferth's sword, he says:

[...] he had found it a friend in battle  
and a powerful help; he put no blame  
on the blade's cutting edge (1999a: 58).

In Beowulf's mouth the metaphoric "friend in battle", meets the everyday, Hiberno-English use of "powerful" (meaning 'great', rather than 'strong'; Share defines "a power of" as meaning a "large quantity of; great deal of" (2003: 252), from whence the adjective).<sup>201</sup> The "blade's cutting edge" is a metaphorical term returned to the literal. "Powerful" is exactly the kind of Hibernicism which is a knowing signal of belonging for the Irish reader, but may pass the average non-Irish reader by. It is interesting, too, that Beowulf uses it to cover a fib (he is obscuring the ineffectiveness of the sword): in more ways than one "powerful" does not mean what it says.

When Beowulf fails to vanquish the dragon and approaches death the language is, ostensibly, surprisingly simple and everyday:

[...] it was no easy thing  
to have to give ground like that and go  
unwillingly to inhabit another home  
in a place beyond; so every man must yield  
the leasehold of his days (1999a: 81).

There is a strange contrast here between the significance of the hero dying, the prosaic, casual feel of the lines, and yet their metaphoric or euphemistic sense: "go / unwillingly to inhabit another home"; "a place beyond" (meaning, presumably, the afterlife). Heaney weaves in vocabulary of housing or property to extended this metaphor – "inhabit", "home", "leasehold" (cf. Shakespeare's "summer's lease" in Sonnet 18). Alexander's selection here is the gentler "as every man must give up / the days that are lent him" (2001: 92) – this line does not extend the earlier metaphor. When Beowulf's death is described at the end of the epic a shade of this vocabulary returns: Beowulf is "convoyed from his bodily

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<sup>201</sup> This subtle use of Hibernicisms may be one reason critics such as Chris Jones downplay the 'Irish' nature of Heaney's translation (2006: 232). "Powerful" occurs in the usual sense of 'mighty' elsewhere in *Beowulf* (1999a: 81).



home" (1999a: 99) – "convoyed", a term which appeared in English literature as early as Chaucer (OED Online), also has oddly modern, transactional connotations (suggesting a police escort, or group of army vehicles, as well as a funeral convoy), given that it describes this final metaphorical and spiritual departure. Here again the language is *at once* metaphoric and modern. Alexander's version – "when the leading-forth / from the house of flesh befalls him at last" (2001: 113) – is metaphorically striking, but does not achieve the dissonance generated by the contraction of the modern and prosaic, and metaphorical and spiritual into one image. In these examples compression plays a significant role: Heaney's mix is peculiar and demands interest, reassessment and processing power. That the shifts are compressed in a small space means that multiple significations often co-exist, as in the simultaneously metaphoric, euphemistic and yet legalistic connotations of "leasehold".

Examining Heaney's translation we might wonder whether all language is to some extent heteroglossic and dialogic if we probe deeply enough, but analysis of other translations suggests this is not the case. In contrast to Heaney's, Alexander's versions are often wordier, and so the effect is less sharp, and less internally dissonant. When Beowulf returns Unferth's sword Alexander translates as follows:

[...] he accounted it  
formidable in the fight, a good friend in war,  
thanked him for the loan of it, without the least finding fault  
with the edge of that blade (2001: 65).

Alexander's lines often expand in comparison to Heaney's brevity,<sup>202</sup> they generate fewer linguistic twists and turns, and require less reader effort. "The edge of that blade", for example, is entirely prosaic, where Heaney's "cutting edge" manages to be both prosaic *and* defamiliarising: we can trace the trajectory to our modern adjectival idiom where 'cutting-edge' means 'innovative'.<sup>203</sup> In other translations of *Beowulf* – Swanton (1997) or Liuzza (2013), as well as Alexander (2001) – the interaction between linguistic varieties

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<sup>202</sup> Alexander's text is not, in total, longer than Heaney's (Heaney has 3,182 lines, Alexander 3,179), but individual lines of Alexander's translation are wordier.

<sup>203</sup> See Chapter 2 (2.3.2.2) on defamiliarisation.

does not occur in this compressed manner, nor so often. In this sense Heaney is simply doing more within the same poetic space.

I have explored previously how different kennings make meaning in different ways. Heaney creates hyphenated compounds more often than portmanteau words (Paulin's penchant), but this form still physically forces multiple words together. An extreme example of this can be seen when Beowulf's borrowed sword, Hrunting, is described: a "sharp-honed, wave-sheened wonderblade" (1999a: 49). As often occurs with Heaney's compounds, the text shifts swiftly between different ways of meaning within one short line: from a regular compound description ("sharp-honed"), to "wave-sheened", alluding to its decoration, and the final flourish: "wonderblade" – one of Heaney's neologisms, newly-forged to illustrate the fantastical brilliance of the whole (with a slight tinge of superhero language).<sup>204</sup> Alexander's version – "this wave-patterned sword / of rare hardness" (2001: 54) – is restrained in comparison.

The "wonderblade" proves ineffective, however, in the fight with Grendel's mother. So Beowulf:

[...] flung his sword away.  
The keen, inlaid, worm-loop-patterned steel  
was hurled to the ground: he would have to rely  
on the might of his arm (1999a: 50).

Initially, this description of the sword seems similar to Heaney's earlier description ("keen" for "sharp-honed", "inlaid" for "wave-sheened"), but these lexical choices are more direct. Even "worm-loop-patterned", which looks excessive, is significantly less elegant or dazzling than the brilliant "wave-sheened" predecessor. The whole of this line is undermined by the direct statements surrounding it, describing how Beowulf "flung his sword away", and dismissively "hurled [it] to the ground". "Steel", too, stands in place of "blade": the inefficacy of the weapon is expressed via the metonymic use of "steel", which describes it in terms of its *material*; it is not awarded a term like "blade", which would more explicitly express its *purpose*. Plain-speaking concludes the

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<sup>204</sup> See 2.2.2.3, 2.3.2.2, 2.3.3.2 and 3.2.2.2 on Heaney's kennings.

sentence: “he would have to rely / on the might of his arm”. In contrast, the difference between the two descriptions in Alexander’s text is less abrupt: “the wave-patterned sword / of rare hardness” is later described as “spiral-patterned, precious in its clasps, / stiff and steel-edged” (2001: 54; 56) – not much separates the two. Neither Alexander nor Liuzza (2013: 143) compresses the full description of the sword into a single line as does Heaney – that Heaney repeats this form is in part what invites the comparison between the shifting language.

In Heaney’s passage different types of language interact and do battle. Just as Beowulf resorts to brute strength, so elaborate, effusive and highly-wrought language is undermined, and direct terms win out (a literary strategy designed to deliver a particularly important point – cf. Shakespeare’s use of explicitation in *Macbeth* II.2: “[...] this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red”). The dialogism here mirrors Beowulf’s conflict between his chosen weapons. It also perhaps stylistically points to the underlying predisposition of Heaney’s translation towards plain-speaking, or what he termed the “foursquareness” of utterance (1999a: xxvii).<sup>205</sup> The subsequent lines at this point express solid sentiments: “So must a man do / who intends to gain enduring glory / in a combat. Life doesn’t cost him a thought” (1999a: 50). This short passage is a good example of how shifts in types of language in Heaney’s translation deliver significant aspects of the text.

Beyond these intense moments where language varieties are compressed together, elsewhere linguistic shifts occur across longer passages, generating drama or capturing emotional effect. In the following passage Wiglaf witnesses Beowulf’s death:

[...] His soul fled from his breast  
to its destined place among the steadfast ones.

It was hard then on the young hero,  
having to watch the one he held so dear  
there on the ground, going through  
his death agony (1999a: 88-89).

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<sup>205</sup> See 2.3.1 and 3.2.2.1 on plain-speaking.

This passage starts with the metaphorical language of predestination: “his soul fled from his breast / to its destined place among the steadfast ones”. Beowulf’s “soul” is animated, the placement of the line break (after the soul flees) suggesting its movement. The language (“destined” and “steadfast ones”) is formal, perhaps even Biblical in tone, and the rhythm is slow and stately, echoing the sense of “steadfast”. The mirroring stress pattern of “destined place” then “steadfast ones” – in each instance a double syllable (stressed then unstressed), followed by a single syllable (stressed) – creates emphasis and rings of finality.

However, as attention turns to Wiglaf, the language shifts too – becoming more colloquial (“it was hard then on the young hero”) and much more blunt. This directness is conveyed via the snappy, monosyllabic words (“hard”, “then”, “young”, “one”, “dear”, “there”, “ground”, “through”, “death”), which propel the lines forward (in contrast to the disyllabic “destined” and “steadfast”). These lexical choices also feel fresher – more suited to the young, still breathing Wiglaf – than the earlier portentous language. In this instance, the emotional impact is delivered by the shift to more everyday, direct language, which emphasises the significance of Beowulf’s death as much for the *present*, and its impact on Wiglaf, as for Beowulf’s soul (by contrast, there is no change in pace or tone in Liuzza’s or Alexander’s translations: 2013: 223-5 and 2001: 100-1 respectively).

Emotional impact is not only delivered via a shift to plain-speaking – in this description Beowulf takes leave of Hrothgar:

[...] And such was his affection  
that he could not help being overcome:  
his fondness for the man was so deep-founded,  
it warmed his heart and wound the heartstrings  
tight in his breast (1999a: 60).

The first two lines here are almost prose, but the colon brings a change in tone and emotion: the alliterative, assonantal and metaphoric elements ramp up in the second half of the sentence. “Fondness” finds multiple echoes in “founded”: an alliterative echo, a metrical echo in this pair of disyllabic words, and a sound echo (“fond” and “found”, particularly close in a Northern Irish accent). Somehow this last echo seems to reinforce the sense of “deep-founded” – the

half-rhyme uncovers a link between the words, giving us a reassuring sense that the fondness is indeed deeply felt, as if it resonates in Beowulf, as through the line.<sup>206</sup> “Warmed his heart” and “wound the heartstrings” also echo: in the alliteration of “warmed” and “wound”, the matching use of two past participles, and in the reappearance of “heart” in “heartstrings”. “Wound” echoes back to “founded”, of course. But it also means in multiple ways – its primary meaning here is as the past tense of ‘to wind’, but in its *written form* it also means ‘to hurt’ or ‘to injure’. This sense does not scan in the sentence, but the homonym suggests itself nonetheless, invading our comprehension of the image. In the context, the polysemy is apposite: Beowulf’s heart is simultaneously warmed and *wounded* by his affection for Hrothgar and his imminent departure. Heaney’s language moves from the everyday expression of regret, to the metaphoric “wound his heartstrings / tight in his breast” (as often occurs in his translation, the metaphor is extended, and intensified, across the line break). This metaphor is not in itself remarkable,<sup>207</sup> but it contrasts with the plainness of the opening clauses and allows Heaney to introduce the polysemous “wound”.

Ultimately, the poetic effects in the last two and a half lines express in a different, more visceral way, the emotion in the first line and a half. The rhymes and other echoes throughout this passage (including the jolt provided by the double-voicedness of “wound”) mean in a manner that goes beyond the semantic, or rather that effectively pairs with the semantic, allowing us to “sens[e] some internal bond between the two” (Eagleton, 2007: 47). Rhyme and alliteration, in that they are experienced or *felt* by the reader (rather than merely understood by them), are techniques for affecting the reader, beyond calling upon their intellectual capabilities. At just this point, the ability to deliver a physical effect – if I can be allowed to call it that – brings us closer to the deeply felt sentiments Beowulf is experiencing. It is possible, too, that the physical effect is not merely confined to the reader – of translating *Buile Suibhne* (as *Sweeney Astray*, 1983b), Heaney wrote: “unless the translator experiences the almost muscular sensation that rewards successful original composition, it is unlikely that the results of the

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<sup>206</sup> In this sense it is iconic, too.

<sup>207</sup> Metaphors and idioms about the body, especially the heart, abound in *Beowulf* (see 3.2.2.1).

text-labour will have a life of its own" (2002: 65). In the complicated effects of this reworking of the Old English we may glimpse Heaney attempting to achieve this jolt for himself, as much as for the reader.<sup>208</sup>

In contrast, Alexander's version at this point is less varied in its poetic effects:

[...] he could not stop the surging in his breast;  
but hidden in the heart, held fast in its strings,  
a deep longing for this dearly loved man  
burned against the blood (2001: 68).

Alexander's translation uses alliteration widely ("stop"/"surging"; "hidden"/"heart"/"held"; "burned"/"blood") – most notably, in the combination "deep longing"/"dearly loved". But there is undoubtedly less of interest in these lines. There is no great contrast between the prosaic opening ("The man was so dear to him / that he could not stop the surging", 2001: 67-8), and the conclusion. As the whole of the poem is alliterative, a few heavily alliterated lines do not stand out – and alliteration alone is less arresting than the combination of effects in Heaney's passage. Again, this is not to say that Heaney's translation is uniformly more effective than Alexander's, but in this instance, the nuances and resonances of Heaney's lines are more affecting, and this is highly pertinent at a point of emotional stress.

In total, Heaney's shifting language is not as showily dialogic as that of either Carson or Paulin, not as obviously intertextual or as performatively full of the voices of others. Nonetheless, as these passages demonstrate, his language is continually on the move, travelling from metaphoric rise, to solidly plain, deliberate and measured tones. These shifts and interactions are a means, at a micro-level, of emphasising dramatic and emotional twists in the work. But they also bring energy, creating a sense of movement and dynamism via shifts in pace, and even viscerally affecting the reading experience (as in the "heartstring" passage). At the macro-level, these interactions are cumulatively a means of complicating and enriching the poem via ongoing travel and interplay between

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<sup>208</sup> Michael Longley, too, notes this creative, physical jolt: he describes translating Homer as an "electrifying experience", and that he was "shaking with emotion" when he read his work to his wife (the critic, Edna Longley) – 2017: n.p.

different types of English, different ways of making meaning, and different frameworks for understanding the world.

Heaney's translation is an interesting example of how dialogism does not have to be excessive or showy to significantly affect a text. It is easy to dismiss the language of Heaney's translation as unadventurous – it does not have the performance-value or flamboyant, iconoclastic flavour of some modern translations (of other texts). In particular, against Carson's and Paulin's efforts, Heaney's translation may seem staid and conventional, inward-looking rather than alluding beyond itself. But in comparison with other translations of *Beowulf* we can see the extent to which Heaney bends the language to work with its internal varieties. And by analysing individual passages we can see how the interrelation of different types of language is a significant part of what makes this translation effective, delivering different textures, and a greater sense of light and shade, or emotional depth, than may be delivered by other versions. Of course, other translations of *Beowulf* rely, too, on shifts in linguistic variety and register as part of their poetic arsenal; to some extent this is what all poetry does. But Heaney's shifts are more intricate, and create densely patterned passages, thick with linguistic interest (particularly at the most dramatic moments, for example at the unleashing of the dragon, 1999a: 73-74).

Heaney's *Beowulf* is not marked by a single, sustained interaction between two identifiable language varieties. Instead, his language compresses many varieties together so that multiple connotations often intermingle. There is also, more pervasively, a general tendency to bring together and contrast metaphoric, heavily marked language (densely alliterative, rhyming or assonantal/consonantal), and plain-speaking. Often, even the plain-speaking is, in fact, metaphoric – for example when Beowulf's approaching death is described as him going “unwillingly to inhabit another home / in a place beyond” (1999a: 81). If a wide range of language varieties exists in this translation (see 3.2.2.2), then the *interrelation* of these varieties is part of the translation's significant revitalising technique. The imaginative travel effected in Heaney's *Beowulf* does not invoke the globe-trotting excesses of Paulin's or Carson's translations, but it

is nonetheless a significant departure from the Old English world, a deliberate muddying of linguistic waters and part of what gives the poem “a fresh chance to sweep [...] forward into the global village of the third millennium” (Heaney, 1999a: xiii).

#### 4.2.3 Summarising dialogism

Linguistically, these texts are not static. Poetic compression, whether through sound patterns (rhyme; alliteration) or other stylistic features, brings language varieties together in these poems, and forces them to interact. I have argued that this is used to draw attention to linguistic breadth itself (Carson’s bizarre “gargantuan bugle-megaphone” – 2002: 215), but also to heighten emotion (for example at Beowulf’s death – Heaney, 1999a: 88-89), or even to enact a poem’s dominant preoccupations (for example representing the personal uncertainty of ‘The Road to Inver’ via multiple interjections – Paulin, 2004: 68-72). This offers only a brief summary of the multitudinous manifestations and effects of dialogism seen across these translations.

In forcing different language varieties to become bedfellows these translators choose to do something different with the language of their translations. Of course, we can offer justifications: the *Beowulf* poet used variation (“a kind of multiplication of reference” – Liuzza, 2013: 39); perhaps Heaney is in part replicating this characteristic when he brings together different versions of one description (using both “old campaigner” and “grey-haired prince” to refer to Hrothgar – 1999a: 58). Similarly, perhaps Carson’s variety is merely his response to *source text* linguistic variety: Dante’s cacophony of tongues. In Chapter 3 I suggested, too, that these heteroglossic texts suggest multiple perspectives, thereby dismantling any perceived purity in English, and single perspectives on the world.

Clearly, at the broader level such dialogism generates unusual, highly textured translations; with this complex interrelation of language varieties comes



unstable timescales, and shifting perspectives or frames of reference. One further effect is that in their dialogic movement and changes of pace, these translations also bring energy and dynamism – the “contradancing claustrophobic chaos” noted at the outset (Carson, 2002: 44).<sup>209</sup>

The second half of the chapter will explore this injection of dynamism. I will investigate how the linguistic choices made in translation and the interrelation of languages can be transformative, introducing the fresh and the vigorous, the “kickingly alive” (Smith, 2002: n.p.) into literature and language itself – expanding texts by adding layers of connotations to form richly complex new works, and mining the vast depths and dark recesses of the English language.

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<sup>209</sup> This “chaos” is of course relative: greater in many of Paulin’s poems than in Carson’s Dante, which is more chaotic than Heaney’s *Beowulf*.

### 4.3 'Newness' via linguistic clash?

#### 4.3.1 M lange and 'newness'

Ramazani cites Salman Rushdie on the impact of the interaction of different languages and cultures in literature: "*m lange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*" (in Ramazani, 2009: 47; italics in original). Rushdie's comments are interesting, but vague. If it can be said that the "intricate enmeshments" (Ramazani, 2009: 12) of different language varieties can indeed generate the 'newness' Rushdie suggests, the various implications could be that such interactions can revitalise a specific work, or an author's reputation, legacy or place in the canon. Or that such interactions revitalise a whole genre, or even forms of literature or language themselves.

In translation studies, multiple theorists (significantly Lefevere, 1992b; Venuti, 2008) have explored the ways in which texts can be regenerated or 'made new' via translation, where the specific interaction between unlikely language pairs, forms or contexts appears to give a text a new lease of life, or opens it up for a new readership (this regenerative aspect is often the focus of reviews of literary translations). Translation can also rehabilitate or bolster a lesser-known language by translating out of it, and making its literature more widely available. In a slightly different twist, Theo Hermans (drawing on the work of Maria Tymoczko) suggests that translation studies *as a discipline* will benefit from new theoretical approaches by remaining open to translation practices from outside its usual sphere of reference (from beyond the Western world), or by incorporating concepts from other disciplines (2007: 154-6; cf. Boase-Beier, Fawcett and Wilson, 2014). An encounter with the unfamiliar can thus also expand our staid theoretical frameworks.

Beyond the revitalisation of a specific text, linguistic experimentation in translation can also import innovative practices into the target culture, influencing traditional forms. Susan Bassnett and Andr  Lefevere say that

different rewritings “can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices” – the history of translation “is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another” (in Lefevere, 1992a: vii). Lawrence Venuti particularly lauds the linguistic strategies of Modernist poets such as Ezra Pound, suggesting the experimentation of this period brought innovative forms into English through radical translations which resisted fluency by “cultivating extremely heterogeneous discourses” (2008: 164). If Bassnett and Lefevere assert that translation has “shaping power” across cultures, for Venuti, this power is at its most acute when the translation is linguistically diverse. Of course, at the macro-level, the processes described here by Venuti, Bassnett and Lefevere and others (cf. Reynolds, 2016: 102-119) depict the source language and culture in productive dialogic relation with the target culture, its traditions and norms.

It is this transformative potential which interests me. I am less concerned with interpreting the use of dialect in these translations as a project to revivify Hiberno-English – these translations do not seem to have the primary aim of bolstering a minor language. Rather, I am investigating the extent to which the interanimation of language varieties (Bakhtin, 1981: 47) in these translations could also be said to revivify the texts in question – by creating richer, more complex, or more suggestive works – *and* may even reinvigorate the language itself: these texts offer energetic, creative forms of English, but can also revitalise, deepen and enrich the individual lexicons of these translators. My particular interest is in how this process of enrichment occurs via the layering of connotations – I want to suggest that these texts are not simply overwritten with new contexts, but rather energised by the dialogic layers built up within them.

#### **4.3.2 Concomitance in disparate worlds**

Paul Muldoon’s collection of lectures, *To Ireland, I* (2008; first published in 2000), is an alphabetical passage through major Irish writers, connected with “rigorous randomness” (2008: 5). In these essays, Muldoon makes leaps between

supposedly disparate literary works. Fundamentally, Muldoon claims, there is an “extraordinary appetite and aptitude for ‘intertextuality’” between Irish writers that “goes beyond a mere interest in the allusive” (2008: 24). Muldoon suggests that the disregard of these writers “for their ‘selves’ allows them to mutate and transmogrify themselves, to position themselves [...] at some notional cutting edge” (2008: 25). The very premise of Muldoon’s theorising is that Irish writers and their works can fruitfully be analysed as seeking and presenting overlapping, interconnecting worlds. Muldoon does not examine contemporary Irish writers or translation per se, but the traits he highlights are relevant to a consideration of my three poets. Muldoon’s work is a paean to the capacity of Irish writers for connectivity and concomitance – that is, “subsistence together; co-existence” (OED Online).

All of these ideas are interesting for translation studies. Muldoon’s critique puts a positive spin on intertextuality, and literary borrowing. As I noted earlier, intertextuality can be considered a form of heteroglossia (see 4.2.2.1), and translation can also be thought of as a form of intertextuality (through the dialogue with the source text), or even concomitance (in the simultaneous existence of both a source and target form of the ‘same’ text). Tymoczko has even suggested that translation can be viewed as a “metonymic process of connection” (1999a: 282). Muldoon says that, for these Irish writers, “there’s no distinction between one world and the next. Or one text and the next” (2008: 24). His language suggests that texts are not pinned to points on a linear historical plane, but are, rather, circulating and running into one another, influencing and shaping as they go (that is, they are shaping both texts and authors – for Muldoon, it is the *authors* themselves who “mutate and transmogrify” via the interaction with others – 2008: 25).

Muldoon’s suggestion, when applied to translation, seems to refute stock hierarchies of original and translation, either where the original retains supremacy, or where the translated text is seen as automatically superseding (or standing in place of) the original. Viewing both original and translation as in some ways concomitant suggests multiple forms of a text are on a more equal

footing, even engaged in a mutually beneficial dialogue (facilitating the “shaping power” Bassnett and Lefevere proposed – in Lefevere, 1992a: vii). Elsewhere Muldoon has in fact radically suggested that “both ‘original poem’ and ‘poetic translation’ are manifestations of some ur-poem” (Muldoon, 2006: 195)<sup>210</sup> – again, this formulation disrupts stock hierarchies, playing with received ideas of chronology.

If, as Muldoon suggests, we might perceive in the work of some Irish writers a lack of clear distinction between one world, or text, and the next (2008: 24), it might be said that although dialogism shows up disjuncture, it can also expose similarity. Jones (2006) suggests a similar premise, albeit in a different context. His study of the diachronic literary influence of Old English proposes that “the incorporation of Old English allusions and techniques into a twentieth-century poetic” (2006: 6) is a form of experimentation through rediscovery, a discovery of “strange likeness” (Jones’ work takes this idea as its title: *Strange Likeness: The Use of Old English in Twentieth-Century Poetry*).<sup>211</sup> In the following sections I will argue that ‘not-quite-sameness’, or ‘strange likeness’ of worlds – the ways in which disparate worlds can be simultaneously not alike, and yet alike – is one of the most important characteristics achieved by linguistic dialogism in these translations.

In this sense, these translations can be helpfully likened to palimpsests: writing surfaces where the text has been effaced or partially erased, and which can therefore be reinscribed (OED Online); thus, metaphorically, a palimpsest can mean “a multilayered record” (ibid.). The advantage of this analogy, I think, is that it allows for the possibility that previous writing is present as a trace in a new piece of writing: multiple traces (similar and yet different) can exist or overlap in the same text at once. The idea of a palimpsest is helpful, too, in that it provides a means of conceptualising the positive, yet complicated, expansion of a text via translation: not an increase in wordiness, explanation or footnotes

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<sup>210</sup> This calls to mind Walter Benjamin’s “pure language” glimpsed between an original and its translation (2004: 81).

<sup>211</sup> For Jones, these processes of rediscovery resemble the “familiar modernist trope of seeking renewal by returning to supposed origins” (2006: 6).

(prosaic ways in which texts may expand via translation), but an increase in connotations or implicatures which adds to the suggestive whole. As Clive Scott has said, the “life of a text is a process of accretion, accumulating to itself, and discarding, meanings, intertexts, varying functions and roles within the (cultural) landscape” (2006: 22).<sup>212</sup> In the sections which follow I will revisit the work of Carson, Paulin and Heaney, exploring the ways in which disparate worlds are layered together in these texts,<sup>213</sup> suggesting simultaneous difference *and* concomitance, and, thereby, enacting Scott’s process of “accretion” – augmenting the translated texts in complex and demanding ways.

#### 4.3.2.1 Carson’s converging worlds

Stan Smith coined a specific term – “ambilocation” (2005: 203) – to describe the ambiguous use of place in Carson’s work. Smith uses the term to mean:

a matter of being always in neither place, or of being between places, or of being always in one place which may be Belfast, but also at the same time in many other places, dis-located, relocated, mis-placed, displaced, everywhere and nowhere (2005: 203).<sup>214</sup>

Whilst Smith writes mainly of Carson’s original poetry, Carson’s translation of *The Inferno* demonstrates this curious, unsettled ambilocation from the outset. The passage in Carson’s introduction where he ‘sees’ (and hears) Dante’s Florence in Belfast is itself an ambilocated passage of text:

I see a map of North Belfast, its no-go zones and tattered flags, the blackened side streets, cul-de-sacs and bits of wasteland stitched together by dividing walls and fences. For all the blank abandoned spaces it feels claustrophobic, cramped and medieval. [...] And we

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<sup>212</sup> Scott cites Jacques Derrida’s claim that the “translation will truly be a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself *in* enlarging itself” (in Scott, 2006: 22; italics in original).

<sup>213</sup> Another method of fruitfully approaching the layers of different times and places in these translations would be via Text World Theory. I find this approach too systematic (far removed from ‘ordinary’ processes of reading) but, as it deals with cognitive models for mapping mental representations, it might be applied to these texts with interesting results (see Semino (1997), or Gavins (2007) for more on these models).

<sup>214</sup> Heaney has suggested that Northern Irish writers “take the strain of being in two places at once”, in belonging to a place “that is patently riven by notions of belonging to other places” (2002: 115).

*see again* the vendetta-stricken courtyards and surveillance towers of Dante's birthplace, where everyone is watching everyone, and there is little room for manoeuvre (2002: xi-xii; my italics).

Carson's introduction sets out his ambilocated route into the work; an imaginary palimpsest (aural and visual) which allows him to reimagine and rework his own familiar surroundings, in order to reappraise and recast Dante's situation (and, thence, text).

Accordingly, *The Inferno* seems to exist simultaneously in the Tuscan world of the original (Dante declares "I am a Florentine, / born and nurtured near the lovely Arno" – 2002: 159), *and* that of modern-day, inner-city Belfast (with its "military barriers" and "defensive spaces" – 2002: 119). As I have observed elsewhere (Gibson, 2018), the action of Dante's text itself is of course ambilocated in the first instance, a curious amalgam of both Hell and Florence. To Dante's unusual blend, Carson adds a Belfast layer. Thus (as we saw in 2.2.2.4) "sectarians" "hold their banners to the skies" (2002: 40) as they parade through Florence, and the Italian sinners of Dante's "divided city" (ibid.) speak in Hibernicisms, as even Dante does at times ("Who are you, that gives out such abuse?" – 2002: 226). Some individual images, too, fold together multiple contexts: in Canto XXXI the giant, Antaeus, is figured as both the Garsienda tower (a leaning tower in Bologna – 2002: 291), and as a "titanic" mast on a ship (2002: 221). This last metaphorical adjective conjures the ghost of the doomed ocean liner, Titanic, built in Belfast and (to its citizens) synonymous with the city.

It is worth emphasising, however, that Carson retains Florentine elements in his translation. Terry's version – *Dante's Inferno* (2014) – is also significantly heteroglossic and dialogic (perhaps even more so than Carson's translation). Terry uses aspects of Dante's text to introduce digressions on contentious issues: Margaret Thatcher's involvement in the hunger strikes (2014: 144-6), rogue IRA units assassinating policemen after the Good Friday Agreement (2014: 116), or the involvement of a priest in the 1972 Claudy bombing (2014: 117-9). However, Terry erodes the Florentine references in the process of translating – the result is a layered text, rich in associations and connotations (particularly political), but

not one in which the Florentine elements can still be perceived under the Irish or contemporary British material overwriting them. It is very much a multi-layered text, but not one with the same underlying flavour of Dante's home environment. By contrast, the split world of Carson's translation, encapsulated in the language used, insists upon the presence of the original in the same place as the translation: the language of inner-city Belfast does not obliterate, but is coterminous with the Florentine world of the original text, jostling dialogically with it in the new work.

However, *ambilocation* is but one way of conceptualising the layered effect of Carson's translation.<sup>215</sup> As Reynolds observes, the mix of *temporalities* is also of note: "Because translations of works from the past belong to two periods at once, their language can have a specially incisive relationship to time" (2003: n.p.). In addition to ambiguous location, I will extend Smith's term to explicitly cover time spheres. A longer example from Carson's translation illustrates his more sustained, palimpsest-like layering of (somewhat) similar worlds, and temporalities. In Canto XXIV, a serpent bites a sinner on the shoulder, and the sinner initially turns to ash:

[...] after he'd been thus dissolved, the selfsame  
molecules, by integral repair,  
immediately resumed their former frame:

just so, as natural scientists declare,  
the phoenix dies and then is born again  
when it approaches its five hundredth year;

its lifelong diet neither grass nor grain,  
but drops of cardamom and frankincense;  
and myrrh and spikenard swaddle its remains.

And like a man who falls, not knowing whence  
the seizure, whether stricken to the ground  
by demons, or some other inner cadence;

who, when coming to, stares all around,  
bewildered by the epileptic throes  
he's undergone, and makes a groaning sound:

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<sup>215</sup> Some of the dialogic interrelations via rhyme can be viewed as *aural* palimpsests (for example the intermingling sounds of "out on stalks"/"shitehawk" – 2002: 151).



so was it with that sinner when he rose.  
O power of God! how terrible his switch,  
that takes its vengeance with such whiplash blows! (2002: 168).

The oppositions are plain to see. On the one hand, the terms “dissolved”, “molecules”, “natural scientists”, “seizure”, “epileptic” and “whiplash” line up on the side of modern scientific and medical language. The idea that molecules can regenerate (“integral repair”) is a strikingly contemporary scientific concept, and “diet” brings modern, faddish connotations (as well as scientific ones). On the other hand, the analogy being offered (for the resurrection of the sinner) is that of the “phoenix”, which lives until “its five hundredth year”, consumes “frankincense”, and is not wrapped but “swaddled” in “myrrh and spikenard” (this last “an aromatic substance” obtained from an Eastern plant – OED Online). Similarly, the epileptic fit is potentially provoked by “demons”, and the all-powerful deity, God, inflicts his vengeance with an old-fashioned “switch”. In these elements, the imagery is mythical, and reminiscent of Biblical language: God’s vengeance is literal and physical (not abstract, as modern theology often suggests), and the particular combination of frankincense and myrrh evokes the nativity story.<sup>216</sup>

In contrast, in Kirkpatrick’s translation the choices are more temporally uniform – he does opt for “epileptic” (2010: 213), but has “sages” in place of “natural scientists”, “dead dust” rather than “molecules”, “food” for “diet” and “vengeful” replaces “whiplash” (ibid.). Similarly, James’ translation has “sages”, “dust”, “herbs and grain” and “so many blows for vengeance” (2013: 117). Both sets of linguistic selections produce a more consistent feel; the reader does not jolt from one mode of thinking to the next. In Carson’s translation, words such as “molecules” and “whiplash” may seem to be out of context, and therefore “temporally and tonally inappropriate to the material” (Reynolds, 2008: 74), or overly “domesticating”, to use Venuti’s term (2008: 16).<sup>217</sup> And yet I would argue that the intermingling of temporalities is entirely appropriate for this passage:

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<sup>216</sup> As told in Matthew 2:11.

<sup>217</sup> Carson’s text is often simultaneously domesticating and foreignizing (2.3.2.1 – 2.3.2.2).

the linguistic regeneration or updating of the text iconically mirrors the regeneration of a soul.

Carson's poetic compression is such that languages of different times and world-views consort with one another – thus, in individual phrases “natural scientists declare, / the phoenix dies and then is born again”, the modish “diet” comprises “cardamom and frankincense” and God's vengeance is delivered through “whiplash blows”. These phrases do not simply juxtapose lexicons, they interrelate different ways of making sense of the world (through myth, religious belief, or natural science or medicine). This is reminiscent of Bakhtin's view of different varieties of language as a proxy for different “points of view on the world” (1981: 291; see also 3.2.3.2). In this, as Reynolds notes of another of Carson's passages, we are aware that the distance between us and Dante “has been recognized and thought about” (2008: 74).

In bringing these modes together we notice the differences, and also progress (for example, we now understand what can cause seizures) – as Scott says, translation can sometimes be the vehicle “by which the ST makes progress through the time and space it did not yet know at its birth” (2006: 31). However, in Carson's translation these lexicons and world-views, different though they are, can be made to relate – this combination of ways of understanding the world asks the reader to consider relation in disparity and places the emphasis on concomitance: individuals use frameworks to make sense of the world around them, whatever the era. In one of Carson's original collections, *For All We Know* (2008), the narrator asks “What is it in us that makes us / see another in another?” (2008: 45) – the interrelations offered in *The Inferno* demonstrate Carson's desire for connection and synergy.<sup>218</sup>

Through this dialogue of time spheres, Carson's text does not demonstrate an abstract sense of ‘timelessness’, nor blithe universalism. Reynolds describes the different perspectives in Carson's translation as layered “in a way that abolishes

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<sup>218</sup> These interrelations are also a different manifestation of Carson's desire to find a way of “making the poetry of Dante intelligible to myself” (2002: xx).

neither's distinctiveness" (2008: 78). Neal Alexander suggests the same of Carson's *Opera Et Cetera* (1996):

on the one hand, the poems conjure an overload of linguistic metamorphoses and narrative transitions, where one thing spontaneously becomes another; on the other, they foreground an irreducible impression of difference and particularity, an exhilarated sense of the world's multiplicity and the heterogeneity of language in particular (2010: 200).

Carson's translation does not suggest the superiority of the modern. Elsewhere Carson demonstrates an interest in and reliance (in a storytelling sense) on myth, legend, proverb, received wisdom and folklore (see, for example, *The Twelfth of Never* (1998b), which interrelates Irish myth and folksongs alongside tales from the Napoleonic and World Wars, and scenes from Japanese bars). Carson's Dante translation includes rather than overwrites the past. The purposeful interrelation of world-views emphasises that this text is vastly alien to us, but also somehow resembles us, our twenty-first century context notwithstanding – we might, indeed, regard molecular regeneration as an almost equally fantastical idea as the regeneration of a phoenix. Carson's strategy also emphasises that the text has been re-read in many contexts; in this there are synergies with Scott's suggestion that certain translations "trace in [their] writing the geographical and temporal distances the ST has travelled in order to be in the here and now" (2006: 30).

Carson's mode of translation suggests that texts, concepts, myths are not held statically at their time of conception, but are still in currency, present in our shared history and literature, the equals of our modern lexicon and ways of thinking. The more archaic, outmoded elements of *The Inferno* are thus not obliterated, but are incorporated with the new. This is one creative advantage of translating from a modern perspective – meanings, myths and modes of understanding can accumulate productively (accrete, in Scott's terms – 2006: 22). Carson creatively melds various frames of reference into a newly complex passage of text, disrupting traditional concepts of chronology and anachronism as he goes – indeed, he might be seen as counteracting "the historicist

assumption that every event and every object has its proper location within objective and linear time” (Nagel and Wood in Apter, 2013: 63).

In identifying that *The Inferno* “enhances Dante’s multiplicity of registers, tones, and styles” (2010: 204), Alexander points to Peter Denman’s observation that Carson’s translations often seek “to enlarge the poetic and linguistic space that the poems occupy” (Denman, 2009: 28).<sup>219</sup> Carson’s poetic expansion of the text via translation concentrates on “extending the expressive relevance of the ST”, “exploring the ST’s potential to be other, to operate in other creative contexts and to animate other ways of thinking about its subject” (Scott, 2006: 21). However, *The Inferno* does not showcase increasing linguistic *sophistication* over time, but rather increasing linguistic *wealth* over time. Carson’s palimpsest-like layering of locations and eras into his translation demonstrates how literature – and language – can develop, grow and morph in translation without necessarily abandoning, overwriting or ‘improving upon’, previous riches.

#### **4.3.2.2 Paulin’s converging worlds**

Paulin’s translations also suggest concomitancy in their dialogic interrelations – specifically in their recourse to analogy – and his poems could often be described as palimpsests, particularly in the way that they use intertextuality.

The recurring lists of three terms (examined in 4.2.2.2) are a compact form of linguistic layering. Paulin’s sequences perform an evolving series of different options, which appear almost simultaneously, both like and unlike each other. So ‘The Island in the North Sea’ opens: “Each farm squats inside a circular dam / like a fort a bawn a crater on the moon” (2004: 2). Here, a circular dam is likened to both a fort and bawn: close, yet crucially different (the principal difference is of course linguistic; “fort” an English term, and “bawn” an anglicised version of

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<sup>219</sup> One significant advantage of Denman’s argument is that it shifts away from the idea of “loss” in the translation of poetry.

the Irish).<sup>220</sup> Both are distinctly unlike, and yet are likened to, “a crater on the moon”. In this instance, Rilke’s original poem effects the poetic shift in frame of reference – Len Krisak translates the first two lines: “As if they lay inside some crater on / the moon, the farms are dammed against the sea” (2016: n.p.); so, arguably the most unusual comparator originates, in fact, with Rilke (Rilke’s language is in fact more alienating than Krisak’s: Rilke refers to “*einem Mond*” – ‘a moon’ – rather than ‘the moon’).<sup>221</sup> However, Paulin’s tendency to compress his terms into these stark groups delivers impact in brevity: the sequence “a fort a bawn a crater on the moon” is all the more remarkable for its lack of padding, or explication (and for the additional historical/political frisson in “bawn”).

As we have seen, some of Paulin’s sequences display the evolution of linguistic selection. In ‘Prologue’, there is “a prison no a blockhouse a claggy / blockhouse” (2004: 22). These various terms recalibrate one another; the building morphs from the familiar “prison” to the more unusual “blockhouse” (a word with multiple meanings: an observation point, prison or fort – OED Online), and is finally qualified as a “claggy blockhouse” (“claggy”, a dialect term, usually meaning “tenaciously sticky” – OED Online).<sup>222</sup> This apparent insight into the translator’s “decisionism” (Apter, 2013: 169) means that Paulin’s poem ultimately becomes a palimpsest of these choices and revisions. An earlier example – Paulin’s rendering of the atmosphere created by Ponge’s cigarette as “smoky, dry, tousled – no unkempt –” (2004: 3) – also illustrates the palimpsest-like layering of Paulin’s translation process: in the act of translating, “tousled” is in theory erased, and yet survives in ‘The Cigarette’ – a fourth adjective, a different nuance, an increase in the suggestiveness of the published text. Where in ‘The Cigarette’ the inclusion of both “tousled” and “unkempt” seems benign, redundant even, the retention of “prison” in ‘Prologue’ is more charged, emphasising the political in our interpretation of the subsequent term “blockhouse” (Langland’s original has simply “dungeon” – Corpus of Middle

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<sup>220</sup> As discussed in 3.2.3.

<sup>221</sup> The German is “Als läge er in einem Krater-Kreise / auf einem Mond: ist jeder Hof umdämmt” (from ‘Nordsee’ in *Neue Gedichte*, 1907).

<sup>222</sup> Dolan says that “claggy” is now in Hiberno-English, derived from English (2012: 57).

English Prose and Verse, 2006: n.p.). Together “prison” and “blockhouse” make a more potent – if ambiguous – image.

Throughout *The Road to Inver* there is a tendency towards analogy, often of a bizarre nature (indeed the opening to the Rilke poem above is a series of analogies). It is in the inherent nature of analogies, of course, that they work on the basis of a simultaneous marriage of similarity and difference, interrelating two disparate entities (and it is often the case that the more extreme the difference, the more striking the analogy). Unusual analogies are suffused throughout this collection, at times overwhelmingly. ‘Paris Ink Sketch’ (translating Verlaine) is almost entirely made up of different types of analogies. It opens:

Scrubbed like a bartop the roofs look tin  
or moony zinc – upended – all angles  
like baths and sinks in a plumber’s merchants  
while out of pointy pencil chimneys  
smoke – sinless – scribbles its 5s (2004: 76).

The first three lines are a composite of interrelated impressions of the roofs: they are, variously, “scrubbed like a bartop”, “tin”, “moony zinc” (‘le zinc’ a French metonym for ‘the bar’, hence the earlier “bartop”) and “all angles”, making them, in turn, “like baths and sinks in a plumber’s merchants”. The mode of relation also shifts throughout: they are, via simile, “like a bartop”; “like baths and sinks”, but they simply “look tin”. In the next line we have the “pointy pencil chimneys” (no simile required), and the pattern of the smoke is described as “its 5s” (again no mode of relation). The remainder of the poem continues in analogies: the sky is “grey – an echo – an encore / like a weepy bassoon” – another simile, albeit a slightly odd one, and once again several terms (“an echo”, “an encore”) forced abruptly together. The poem ends with “the blinking eye of these blue gas lamps / these burning beaks” – in this apposition, the lamps somehow embody two contrasting physiological images (eyes and beaks).

Verlaine’s original (‘Croquis parisien’, from *Poèmes saturniens*, first published in 1866) also provides analogies, some replicated in Paulin’s version. Verlaine offers us “Des bouts de fumée en forme de cinq” (2008: 99; ‘wisps of smoke

shaped like 5s' – my translation), and “La bise pleurait / Ainsi qu'un basson” (ibid.; ‘the breeze wept / as a bassoon’ – my translation). But Paulin inserts many additional analogies. He springs from Verlaine’s “zinc” (describing the light of the moon, *not* the roofs), to make his roofs “like a bartop”, “tin” and “moony zinc” – descriptions and images proliferate; two metallic substances appear rather than Verlaine’s one, and, as discussed, the “bartop” analogy exploits another sense of Verlaine’s “zinc” (something readers familiar with French are likely to spot). Similarly, Paulin’s smoke issues from “pointy pencil chimneys” (rather than Verlaine’s “des hauts toits pointus” – 2008: 99; ‘tall pointy roofs’ – my translation). In swapping the image (chimneys for roofs) Paulin adds both explication (spelling out that the smoke comes from the chimneys) *and* a new compact analogy by making “pencil” an adjective which directly describes the chimneys. The prosaic “Like baths and sinks in a plumber’s merchants” has no equivalent in the French – as with so many of the analogies in this poem, indeed across *The Road to Inver*, the prompt seems to be Paulin’s own suggestive mind, rather than the source text. We must note, however, that Paulin’s concluding image (combining eyes and beaks) takes advantage of the ambiguity in Verlaine’s original: “Sous l’œil clignotant des bleus becs de gaz” (2008: 99; “becs” meaning both ‘spouts’ *and* ‘beaks’).

Throughout the collection, then, an image often makes Paulin, and the reader, “think / of something else, then something else again” (Muldoon, 1987: 33). Even where the originals offer ambiguity, Paulin’s translations most often expand upon this ambiguity. His overall mode results in an endlessly suggestive web: for example, that unceasingly self-qualifying opening to ‘Prologue’, where the narrator “struggled like a daft sheep into a / shepherd’s smock a ragged thing – stained and greasy – / that made me look like a rude a houseless hermit” (2004: 22). Paulin’s poems offer winding streams of associations, where words or images rarely crystallise. There are significant frustrations with this approach – most importantly, the problem of making Langland sound like Verlaine. Langland is direct, and Verlaine is compact, if ambiguous – we might question whether they should both be made endlessly analogical, and what is achieved by relating them stylistically. Of course, we can argue again that in preserving or

augmenting ambiguities present in the original texts, Paulin, like Carson, is “extending the expressive relevance of the ST” (Scott, 2006: 21), even “acting out [...] implications that the ST cannot have foreseen” (Scott, 2006: 20). In this way, the ceaseless suggestiveness of Paulin’s translated poems (“The drunkenness of things being various” – MacNeice, 2007: 24) indicates more clearly than either Heaney’s or Carson’s translations that the task of translation is never complete (cf. Scott, 2006: 21), there is always one more adjective, one further analogy.

Beyond these analogical sequences, as explored in Chapter 2 (2.2.2.8), Paulin does – at least partially – relocate many of his translated poems; the original contexts are overwritten with small Irish towns – “Newry” (2004: 51); “Teelin or Carrick” (2004: 11) – and with political symbols and concerns: the prisoners in ‘From the Death Cell’ living “in the shit” (2004: 19), perhaps alluding to the hunger strikes. Paulin’s language also means his poems are ambilocated: via the dialect words – “stocious” (2004: 10; 23) or “tight” (2004: 52), both meaning ‘drunk’ – but also in the discourse of sectarianism and politics: “people like us” (2004: 11), “a southern accent” (2004: 85), “talk of sharing power, / prophecies of civil war” (2004: 65).

However, in Paulin’s work intertextuality specifically adds to the sense that his poems are not just situated in Belfast but “many other places, dis-located, relocated, mis-placed, displaced, everywhere and nowhere” (Smith, 2005: 203). When in ‘Sea Wind’ Paulin’s narrator waves his “snotrag” (2004: 47; meaning handkerchief), he has one foot on the deck of Mallarmé’s “steamer”,<sup>223</sup> and one firmly in Ireland: it is impossible to read the phrase “I’ll wave my snotrag” without thinking of that other “snotrag” produced by Mulligan in the first section of *Ulysses* (Joyce, 1993: 16). In such unannounced borrowings Paulin’s poems become highly complicated composites (occasionally with an added Irish dimension, as here).

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<sup>223</sup> “Steamer” appears in English in Mallarmé’s original French poem (1986: 18), reused by Paulin in his translation.



Thus, the dialogic interaction of languages in Paulin's poems often interestingly suggests the *literary* implications of layering disparate elements. In 'Une Rue Solitaire', the narrator suggests that an existing poem could prompt original composition:

[...] this phrase you maybe lifted  
 from some livre de poche  
 – nous prenons  
 la route qui mène à Inver  
 (a narrow a rough road  
 not bog or famine quite  
 it leads this road  
 back to the Elver Inn on Lough Neagh)  
 or else it's some phrase you want  
 to fold up like a pastrycook  
 – fold it in four  
 clean little lines  
 of makeshift verse –  
 il court au jardin  
 et s'échappe par une porte  
 qui donnait  
 sur une rue solitaire (2004: 100).

The different layers of language comment on processes of intertextuality and literary inspiration, on the ways in which one text may be like and unlike another. The narrator suggests a potential source of inspiration ("this phrase you maybe lifted / from some livre de poche"), and it initially appears that the poem enacts this appropriation: the French words which follow (beginning "nous prenons") could well be from a "livre de poche" (paperback book). And yet, as the subsequent section (in parentheses) makes clearer, they are in reality translated *into* French from one of Paulin's own translated poems, 'The Road to Inver' (2004: 68-72). This is not an exact appropriation, however; compare the passage above with this section from 'The Road to Inver':

it's a dream road this  
 the same road that leads  
 to the Elver Inn on Lough Neagh (2004: 69).<sup>224</sup>

The language shifts in the transposition from one poem to another; it has been translated from the earlier poem to the new location, melding with other

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<sup>224</sup> 'The Road to Inver' also concerns literary borrowing: the narrator explores how "dream road" is itself a borrowed phrase (2004: 70).

borrowings from the same poem ('The Road to Inver' also contains the lines "old road / that feels a bit like a bog road" (2004: 70), which echo in the section above).<sup>225</sup> The borrowed section is both like and unlike its predecessor. No line in 'The Road to Inver' would exactly translate as "nous prenons la route qui mène à Inver", but this very lack of exact synchronicity points to the fallacy of one phrase ever completely translating another. 'Une Rue Solitaire' thus echoes and translates Paulin's 'The Road to Inver' in ways that are similar to how his translations of other poets work across this collection.

More broadly, this passage suggests not merely intertextuality, but also *self-referentiality*: the reuse, and reworking of Paulin's own lines (themselves of course a reworking of Pessoa) – Paulin's poem seems to function as a palimpsest of his own oeuvre. Paulin's willingness to re-employ his own language within the same collection is an emphatic means of demonstrating that the recycling of literature is not finite – the fact that these borrowings are from the titular poem (including its title location, Inver) underlines the allusion. Thus, Paulin is not only capable of reappropriation, he is also there to be mined and reappropriated himself.

The last section of this passage actually enacts appropriation from a "livre de poche". The lines "il court au jardin / et s'échappe par une porte / qui donnait / sur une rue solitaire" are taken from Stendhal's novel, *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839). Paulin borrows Stendhal's words, but alters their form; they are indeed, as the narrator says, folded up into "makeshift verse" (and re-employed for the title: 'Une Rue Solitaire' – it is possible Stendhal's phrase inspired the poem). The interaction between the texts demonstrates the questionable nature of textual 'originality'. Paulin has created original verse, but has done so by shifting the shape of a pre-existing literary sentence. His poem is a composite – both like and unlike Stendhal, and like and unlike Paulin's own work.

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<sup>225</sup> "Bog or famine [road]" conjures two specifically Irish images, one with particularly unpleasant connotations (the Great Famine, 1845-52). Once again, emotive Irish concerns are layered onto apparently unconnected content (cf. Eavan Boland's 'The Famine Road', 1975 – in Davis, 2010: 476-7).

The final irony here is that ‘Une Rue Solitaire’ is *not* a translation (the only non-translation in the collection). The poem openly, ostentatiously, lifts directly from other sources, weaving them into the final version (although Stendhal’s lines are not credited, they are in French and so attention is drawn to them; we assume they originated elsewhere). In performing this ‘trick’ – in concluding the collection of translations with an ‘original’ poem largely made up of quotations – Paulin plays with the concept of creativity. This supposedly ‘original’ creation is as derivative as the translations which have gone before – perhaps even more so. The text’s obvious constructedness, its indebtedness, is a comment on the multiple language varieties (including the words of others) which make up the lexicon of a writer, and which are re-employed in the aim of artistic endeavour – a simultaneous link to the literary past *and* newness via reworking. As the poet-narrator says in ‘The Road to Inver’: “the things that are lent I take / them over and make them mine” (2004: 70).

Via the presence of these traces in ‘Une Rue Solitaire’ Paulin seems to comment on the extent to which translation is a neatly identifiable activity – its derivativeness and relation to other texts draws it into a network of literary activity that includes original creation on the one hand, literary indebtedness or emulation, literary borrowing (“some phrase you want / to fold up like a pastrycook”), and, at the other extreme, plagiarism. Indeed, Paulin’s composite forms come close to Scott’s description, drawing on Gérard Genette, of how “translation is itself more a weave of quotation, pastiche, imitation, allusion than a self-defining and separate activity” (Scott, 2006: 22). In Paulin’s collection, the reworking of Stendhal’s lines, or even Joyce’s “snotrag” (2004: 47) form a forthright statement on literary suggestiveness, derivativeness, or even on the validity of literary appropriation (Apter suggests plagiarism can in fact be “one of many effective tactics aimed at radical deownership” – 2013: 315);<sup>226</sup> in either case, it is a controversial note on which to conclude the collection.

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<sup>226</sup> Plagiarism is not beyond Paulin; Duncan Large has indicated that Paulin’s ‘Schwarzwald oder Bauhaus’ in *The Invasion Handbook* (2002) is almost entirely composed of unattributed borrowings (Large, 2013: 46).

These translations draw attention to the ways in which they are, at the same time, both like and unlike their originals. Paulin's subtitle – *Translations, Versions, Imitations* – proposes different degrees of similarity and difference (in another list of three terms). It suggests that the degree of concomitancy will not be wholly evident in each poem, that the extent to which these translations neatly coincide with, and share ground with the originals will have to be divined.<sup>227</sup> The fact that this text is a collection also means that unlikely translations can be made to be 'like' one another, or may come to interrelate by dint of the translator's voice and authority. In this way, the reappearance of the "*big fat pury toad*" in 'The Road to Inver' (2004: 70; italics in original), relates a translation of Pessoa to a translation of Tristan Corbière ('Le Crapaud', containing the line: "– a toad! his pury skin pubbles" – 2004: 43), but also to 'Love Thy Neighbour' ("wee crap-o / a toad trying / to flup across a street" – 2004: 48; translating Jacob). Paulin's reuse of signature words like "daft" (2004: 10; 13; 22; 75), or "claggy" (2004: 11; 22; 100) brings about the same process. In borrowing his own language, Paulin creates a further web of intertextuality, and suggests unlikely synergies between totally unconnected works. These minute additional forms of concomitancy are a bonus, courtesy of this specific form of an edited collection of translations.

#### 4.3.2.3 Heaney's converging worlds

In Heaney's *Beowulf* it is also possible to identify the deliberate relation of disparate worlds (principally between the consciously modern and the identifiably Anglo-Saxon), and a palimpsest-like layering of language difference, perhaps most interestingly in terms of language related to the situation in Northern Ireland.

The ambilocation Smith identifies in Carson's work is present in Heaney's translation of *Beowulf*, albeit in a reduced fashion. Carson's Dante encounters "some Irish bog" (2002: 216) yet remains identifiably in a Florentine

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<sup>227</sup> As discussed in 2.3.3.1.

environment (with its ‘hellish’ characteristics). So Beowulf strides around the “keshes” of Northern Ireland (1999a: 45), but he also dives into the “mere” of his Anglo-Saxon world (ibid.) only a few lines later – “mere” appears in the Old English (Liuzza, 2013: 136), indeed the word is often “used specifically of Grendel’s abode in *Beowulf*” (OED Online). Just as Carson retains Dante’s emphasis on the “divided city” (2002: 40) of his birth (with Belfast overtones), Heaney’s *Beowulf* is by no means a wholesale rewriting of the Old English text and its world. The setting is resolutely alien, with a “mead-hall” (1999a: 30), “clan-chiefs” (1999a: 27), and the necessities of war: “breast-mail”, “helmet” and “sword” (1999a: 22). The context-specific language extends to boats, dwellings, warriors, names, festivities and even the internal modes of storytelling – warriors, including Beowulf, extoll their conquests via monologue (1999a: 18-19) and storytellers accompany battles (1999a: 28-29). It also extends to the fantastical elements (the monsters and their scourges), and the different belief systems and customs depicted: the widespread belief in God (1999a: 23), customs such as burial at sea (1999a: 4), and elaborate ceremonies lavishing treasures upon a victor (1999a: 33). This translation is not a simple ‘updating’ or rewriting of an Anglo-Saxon text for the modern world; in many ways the protagonists and narrator remain firmly situated in their time. Heaney’s translation also retains the use of kennings (and alliteration) as an outward literary sign of the text’s particular historical moment.

However, location in *Beowulf* is only one part of the story. In Chapter 3 (3.2.2.1) I commented on the juxtapositions between, for example, the modern vernacular language and the ostensible concerns of the text. At a micro-level the text compresses these juxtapositions so that individual phrases come to exist in multiple time spheres at once. Thus Hrothgar “doled out rings / and torques” (1999a: 5), and we are told that “round upon round / of mead was passed” (1999a: 32). Alexander offers more muted options – “gave out rings, arm-bands” (2001: 5-6) and “they refreshed themselves kindly / with many a mead-cup” (2001: 38) – where Heaney’s elements seem to conflate two temporalities. “Doled” has peculiarly modern connotations. Given its relation in common parlance to ‘the dole’ (unemployment benefit) it may seem a curious verb to pair

with the antique “rings and torques”, *and yet* it is Old English (OED Online) so, in other respects, tonally accurate. Similarly, “mead” feels appropriate for *Beowulf*’s world, but “round upon round” suggests a modern drinking context. In this instance, the line break contributes to the defamiliarisation: “of mead” and “was passed” qualify and adjust our initial understanding of “round upon round” – we do not consume rounds of mead, and we no longer pass rounds, we buy them.

These types of language have never co-existed: we do not in the same temporal sphere refer to “mead” (1999a: 32), “spears” (1999a: 12), or “torques” (1999a: 99), alongside a “kit” (1999a: 42), “comeback” (1999a: 25) or an “armlock” (ibid.).<sup>228</sup> This effectively means that the standpoint from which the translation is written can only be modern: these languages are only available to a contemporary poet deliberately bringing them together in a way which cannot, therefore, help being striking.

More interestingly, perhaps, than the linguistic fusing of eras, the language Heaney employs is more double-voiced than it initially appears, adding additional layers of connotations. In Chapter 2 (2.2.2.1), I observed the early use of the word “troubles” in Heaney’s translation: the narrator tells us that God

[...] knew what they had tholed,  
the long times and troubles they’d come through (1999a: 3).

I argued that this lexical choice was a reminder of the conflict in Northern Ireland (the Troubles). The word “troubles” recurs throughout *Beowulf*: “trouble”, “troubles” or “troubled” occurs ten times (1999a: 3; 8 (twice); 46; 64; 65; 73 (twice); 86; 98). “Terror”, “terror-monger” or “terrorized” occurs eleven times (1999a: 3; 8; 11; 25; 43; 44; 66; 67; 68; 71; 81), and other terms which we might relate to the situation in Northern Ireland – such as “killer” (1999a: 78), “murderer” (1999a: 36), “feud” (1999a: 66), “campaign” (1999a: 76), “reprisal” (1999a: 20), “peace” (1999a: 66) – recur throughout. Once again, these recall Peter Stockwell’s observation about “featural effects that might be vague, hard to articulate or define, very subtle or faint” but which nonetheless significantly

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<sup>228</sup> Venuti states that translations can only foreignize by using cultural material and agendas that are domestic, and, sometimes, “anachronistic” (2008: 29).

impact the reading experience (2013: 267). In comparison, Alexander's translation uses all of these terms, but not with the intensity of Heaney's text (particularly not those words which are more marked, like "troubles").

So, for example, upon Beowulf's return, Hygelac asks him "Could you ease the prince / of his well-known troubles?" (1999a: 64), and we are told that when the dragon woke up "trouble flared again" (1999a: 73). These references feel deliberate, designed to evoke the sectarian situation in Northern Ireland. The phrase "trouble flared again" is reminiscent of language often used by the media to describe the hostilities – the BBC described skirmishes in Belfast in 2011 as "Sectarian *trouble flares* at East Belfast's Short Strand" (BBC News Northern Ireland, 2011: n.p.; my italics). By comparison, Liuzza's version – "When the dragon stirred, strife was renewed" (2013: 191) – is not at all marked by modern discourse; if anything, "strife was renewed" has a somewhat 'days-of-yore' feel (and Alexander's "The waking of the worm awoke a new feud" prioritises alliteration rather than modern parallels – 2001: 82). Similarly, earlier in the epic when Beowulf foretells the grim events which will befall the Danes, he predicts an older spearman will "stir up trouble" (1999a: 65). Again, the word evokes notions of civil strife – Beowulf's language is ominous and the additional connotations of "trouble" fit this portentous speech (Liuzza's "awaken war" (2013: 177) and Alexander's "awaken his war-taste" (2001: 73) are both more innocuous than Heaney's selection). A few lines earlier a previous defeat has been referred to as a "massacre" (1999a: 65) – another more politically charged word than the ancient "slaying" (Alexander, 2001: 73) or "deadly shield-play" (Liuzza, 2013: 177). The term 'massacre' was often applied to significant atrocities in Northern Ireland's history, such as the 'Kingsmill massacre', which Heaney has described as "one of the most harrowing moments in the whole history of the harrowing of the heart in Northern Ireland" (1995: n.p.). So, via the addition of this discourse, *Beowulf*, an Anglo-Saxon text about battles with mythical creatures (Grendel and the dragon), is layered with overtones of sectarian conflict and media representation – the mythical creatures do not disappear, but the contemporary language overlays a sense of modern-day tensions on this epic struggle.

To complicate this picture, ‘trouble’ is a particularly Irish expression, often related to death – for example, in Heaney’s ‘Mid-Term Break’ (from *Death of a Naturalist*, first published in 1966) about the death of his young brother, the narrator says that old men “tell me they were ‘sorry for my trouble’” (1991a: 15). ‘Trouble’ is a euphemistic expression for covering or dealing delicately with problematic or sensitive matters. Similarly, ‘the Troubles’ is a peculiarly euphemistic phrase (Share, 2003: 336) for a devastatingly brutal phase in Irish history (see 1.2). I would argue that Heaney’s translation also manages to layer this euphemistic sense into his text. When Hygelac asks “Could you ease the prince / of his well-known troubles?” (1999a: 64), he is not asking about minor ailments, but Grendel’s decimation of Hrothgar’s realm. Heaney’s re-inscription of the word “troubles” at this point displays its double-voicedness; it highlights both the modern conflict and the inappropriate euphemism of its name.

‘Trouble’ behaves in different ways in *Beowulf*, sometimes even innocuously: Heaney uses “It was no trouble” at the end of the epic (1999a: 98) to mean, colloquially (and with tongue-in-cheek), that it was no hardship for the thanes to remove the dragon’s treasure from his den. Similarly, shortly after the dragon awakes and “trouble flare[s] again” (1999a: 73), we are told the beast is looking for the “trespasser who had troubled his sleep” (1999a: 73) – a less marked use of the term (albeit that such close repetition reinforces the deliberateness of the lexical selection). In short, not only is the word double-voiced in that it evokes the Northern Irish conflict (and its media representations) with all of its euphemism, but it is *also* sometimes wholly innocuous or off-hand. Thus, in a less flamboyant way than in Carson’s or Paulin’s translations words also slip around in what they connote, and when, in Heaney’s translation.

Whilst Heaney’s use of “troubles” is significant (talismanic, even), it is not the only way in which *Beowulf* weaves in modern political discourse. During Beowulf’s doomed fight with the dragon, his band of followers abandons him:

The hoard-guard took heart, inhaled and swelled up  
and got a new wind; he who had once ruled  
was furling in fire and had to face the worst.



No *help or backing* was to be had then  
from his high-born comrades; that hand-picked troop  
*broke ranks* and ran for their lives  
to the safety of the wood (1999a: 82; my italics).

In this passage, as across the translation, linguistic worlds collide. Here the modern colloquial phrase “had to face the worst” signals a change from the densely alliterative language which has gone before (“hoard”, “heart”, “inhaled”, and “furled”, “fire” and “face”). The phrase “help or backing” dislocates this fight from its poetic context and offers a parallel with modern political situations where partisan support is required (for example, in 1998 the BBC reported: “David Trimble has won convincing backing for the Northern Ireland peace deal from his Ulster Unionist Party” – BBC News, 1998: n.p.). The dragon “inhaled and [...] got a new wind” – so too the text follows suit, and is refreshed by an unlikely context brought into juxtaposition. Heaney’s “broke ranks” also has a modern political feel (even though the origins of the phrase are military, and this is a battle context). In this, Heaney adds a layer of implicatures which simply do not exist in most other translations (Alexander’s action remains resolutely in the Anglo-Saxon world, talking of a “band of picked companions”, “battle-usage” and “athelings” – 2001: 93). Heaney does not overwrite the essentials of the scene: Beowulf still faces a fire-breathing dragon, and is deserted not by a political party but a band of followers. However, through the multi-voiced language the desertion suggests modern connotations which fit the politicised, even sectarian, elements of other aspects of the poem (cf. Eagleton’s review of the translation (1999) on such modern parallels). Neil Corcoran notes a similar “contemporary idiom of power politics” in Heaney’s *The Burial at Thebes* (2004, translating Sophocles’ *Antigone*), citing “traitors and subversives”, “disaffected elements” and “patriotic duty” (2004: n.p.).

Of course, an underlying discourse may not always be conscious – it is just possible that Heaney reaches more naturally for a phrase like “trouble flared again” than Alexander or Liuzza, given his background. It is also true that other translators occasionally use similar – or even more political – terms: Alexander describes Beowulf’s “terror-campaigns” (2001: 86), for example, where Heaney mentions “a comfortless campaign” (1999a: 76), and he uses “ambush” (2001:

39; as does Liuzza – 2013: 119), where Heaney opts for the less marked “fierce attack” (1999a: 34). Such comparisons demonstrate that Heaney does not automatically opt for the political whenever the opportunity presents itself; he often makes more muted choices, employing his more marked terms only at key junctures. This results in a work which is not overwhelmingly political; modern analogies are oblique rather than defiant.<sup>229</sup> However, on balance I would argue that Heaney’s choices are conscious – not least as *he* suggests a modern parallel for the Geat woman grieving at the end of his epic: she “could come straight from a late-twentieth-century news report, from Rwanda or Kosovo” (1999a: xxi). Heaney does not add “Belfast or Derry” to this list, so in a sense the parallel is denied, but perhaps it is not required. It is no great extension to think of Northern Ireland, particularly given its presence in such “news report[s]” only a few years prior to events in Rwanda or Kosovo.<sup>230</sup> Fintan O’Toole says that in Heaney (and Yeats) there is “always in the poetry that voltage, that latent politics” (2013: n.p.). Whilst, as noted, Heaney has been roundly criticised for the *lack* of the political in his poetry (see Johnston, 2003), the language of this translation appears subtly infused with a “latent politics”, a charge or freightedness which influences the work, without overwhelming it.

If, as Kirkpatrick says, contentious civil events can lead us to seek new means of expression or comprehension, asking that we “refresh and reinvigorate the very roots of perception and language” (2010: lxxii), then it is possible Heaney felt that the interaction between *Beowulf* and the Northern Irish situation released fruitful resonances. Heaney was forthright about the resonances he hoped might be apparent in his earlier translation of *Buile Suibhne*: “I wanted to deliver a work that could be read universally as the-thing-in-itself but that would also sustain those extensions of meaning that our disastrously complicated local predicament made both urgent and desirable” (2002: 61). The differences in the Northern Irish context between 1983 and 1999 perhaps mean that these resonances are slightly less “urgent” in *Beowulf* than in *Buile Suibhne*; Jones

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<sup>229</sup> It is worth remembering that Heaney’s translation was a Norton (pedagogical) commission.

<sup>230</sup> Heaney perhaps wished to avoid drawing explicit public parallels between the genocide in Rwanda (1994), the war in Kosovo (1998-9) and events in Northern Ireland, which, however devastating, were not atrocities of a similar magnitude (Fay et al., 1999: 202).

explicitly says that *Beowulf* is “not so much a Troubles as a ceasefire poem” (2006: 235).

Translations are diachronic interactions – as Carson says: “any proper poem divulges different meanings at different times” (in O’Malley, 2012b: n.p.). However, not all readings are equally striking and some recontextualisations are more successful or valuable than others; there is a non-essential nature to the similarities and touchpoints translation establishes between texts and cultures.<sup>231</sup> That the political references to Northern Ireland in Heaney’s *Beowulf* have not received significant critical commentary (as opposed to Heaney’s use of dialect terms – see Jones, 2006, and Magennis, 2011), suggests that they have somewhat slipped below the radar. And yet they seem to be an important way in which aspects of the original are highlighted, emphasising the violence, civil strife and feuding of the society *Beowulf* depicts. Perhaps these Northern Irish layers (beyond the dialect terms) have not been identified as they are suffused gently throughout the text, or perhaps because Heaney did not signpost them. In any case, Heaney’s translation seems to ask – obliquely – what it is to read this epic in the modern day. The melding of different temporal spheres is common in translations or versions of myths – it makes them seem still more universal in application.<sup>232</sup> As Heaney notes, the epic’s narrative elements “may belong to a previous age but as a work of art it lives in its own continuous present, equal to our knowledge of reality in the present time” (1999a: ix; cf. Benjamin’s “continued life” of the original text via translation – 2004: 76). The political parallels offered in Heaney’s translation are part of a mode of relation to the

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<sup>231</sup> A recent television adaptation of Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* was critically welcomed despite the many existing adaptations. The reworking of Atwood’s text against a backdrop of the so-called ‘Global War on Terror’, the rise of neo-Nazism, the Trump presidency and increased awareness of practices including female genital mutilation, seems an especially productive pairing. Some recontextualisations may be so rewarding that they are repeatedly reworked: the Ugolino episode in Dante’s *Inferno* seems to have particular resonance for Irish writers (Carvalho Homem, 2009: 194) given the emphasis on starvation, and thus the potential synergies with events such as The Famine (1845-52), or the hunger strikes (1980s).

<sup>232</sup> So, for example, Colm Tóibín’s version of the Agamemnon and Clytemnestra myth (published as *House of Names*, 2017) was influenced by more contemporary events, including the Kingsmill massacre in Northern Ireland (1976), the trial of one of the perpetrators of the Boston bombings (2013), and the wars in Syria and Iraq (Tóibín, 2017: n.p.).

modern which helps to give the text, including its breast-mail, torques and dragon, this “continuous present”.

Michael Longley has described Homer and Ovid as “poets I’ve been conversing with across the millennia”, acknowledging that translating them was a way of seeking some kind of connection (2017: n.p.). The layers of language in Heaney’s translation suggest a similar sort of conversation across millennia, an attempt to get under the skin of the world of the Old English epic by drawing linguistic parallels with recent atrocities, using the linguistic remnants of the sectarian feuding that is hard-wired into the experience of living in Northern Ireland. As Nick Laird has said (of anthology, rather than translation, although there are synergies): it is “no small thing to be reminded that other people’s wants and fears are mappable on to ours” (2017: n.p.). If, as Muldoon says, Heaney had a “signal ability to make each of us feel connected not only to him but to one another” (2013: n.p.), then perhaps the double-voiced language of *Beowulf* is one – uncomfortable – way of reading our own modern-day fears back into an older precursor, and finding solace in the discovery of concomitance. This process is ultimately self-reflexive, however: Heaney observes, “masquerade[s] of fictions and ironies and fantastic scenarios [...] can draw us out and bring us *close to ourselves*” (2002: 68; my italics).

### 4.3.3 Linguistic regeneration

If, as Rushdie suggested, “newness” may be generated via *mélange* and interconnectedness (in Ramazani, 2009: 47), in this final section I will focus principally on *linguistic* rather than textual regeneration, and ultimately on the transformation of a writer’s lexicon via dialogism and translation.

For Heaney, the literary translator “shoulders the burden of the past and tries to launch it into the swim of the present” (1999b: 16) – via translation these treasured works of literature are ultimately “willable forward”, recirculated for

the next generation (ibid.).<sup>233</sup> In terms of *language*, Heaney is clear, too, that recycling is the route to reward and enrichment:

[...] our language pays tribute to itself when tribute is exacted from it; [this] suggests that our value to ourselves as individuals or as a group or even as a species can be re-estimated and increased by dwelling upon the sum total of the experience stored in our word-hoard. Our fret as investors in ourselves can [...] be allayed when poetry recirculates the language's hidden wealth, a recirculation that is not only etymologically renovating, but psychologically and phenomenologically so as well (ibid.).

That Heaney's *Beowulf* translation regenerates the Old English epic is an act of literary recirculation, another chapter in the epic's long history of translation (albeit that, for many, Heaney's *Beowulf* "is the poem now, for probably two generations" – Shippey, 1999: 9). The production of a translation in the vernacular of Heaney's homeplace is, however, also *linguistic* recirculation and, in a sense, rehabilitation. Heaney's talismanic words "tholed" (1999a: 3), "bawn" (1999a: 24), and, more commonly, the everyday colloquial language – for example, "Be on your mettle now" (1999a: 22) – are implanted in a literary work and launched into that "swim" of the literary present (and, presumably, future). If Heaney notes that such an activity can be "etymologically renovating", then we need only think of his favoured "bawn" (1999a: 24; see 3.2.3) as a salient example. There is a joy in unearthing and holding up dialect terms, in words "ferreting themselves out of their dark hutch" (Heaney, 1979: 29). As Hugh MacDiarmid said of dialect words (quoting an unknown Glaswegian commentator) they "usefully express shades of meaning" (in Herbert and Hollis, 2000: 78). MacDiarmid said that vernacular words thrill him "with a sense of having been produced as a result of mental processes different from my own and much more powerful. They embody observations of a kind which the modern mind makes with increasing difficulty and weakened effect" (ibid.). In Heaney's translation the ferreting out of little-used, parochial terms (or even well-worn colloquial phrases) gestures towards such linguistic breadth, a welcoming of all that language can do, and an acknowledgement that linguistic sophistication does not always equate to modernity (cf. Heaney on tracing the

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<sup>233</sup> In a further instance of literary recycling, intertextuality and self-referentiality, this metaphor is borrowed from Heaney's own poem 'The Settle Bed' (as Heaney acknowledges: 1999b: 16).

linguistic journey of “thole”: “the world *widened*, something was *furthered* – 1999a: xxv; my italics).

There are many other instances of the revivification of language in *Beowulf* beyond dialect. The description of the “outlandish lair” of Grendel’s mother (1999a: 49) requires us to see “outlandish” as closer to its archaic meaning of “belonging to a foreign country; foreign, alien” (OED Online), rather than solely in its current use, “looking or sounding foreign; unfamiliar, strange” (ibid.). Similarly, when the text refers to the “bone-cage” of Beowulf’s body (1999a: 47), the reader may, perhaps, marvel at the archaic conceptualisation of the skeleton – until we remember that the term ‘rib-cage’ is still very much in use, perhaps not so distant a construct. These processes of defamiliarisation do not give us new terms so much as add (historically inflected) nuance to everyday expressions. The uncovering of these roots may be said to renew in the sense that it augments the word (and, as Heaney would say, augments language, and augments the individual and humanity) – multiplicity of meaning complicates the language we use and adds to the communal linguistic spoils.

We can identify similar processes of renewal in the works of both Paulin and Carson. Carson has said: “There’s a whole language out there, and one’s role as a writer is to stumble around in it” (in Edemariam, 2009: n.p.).<sup>234</sup> The effect of this can be seen throughout *The Inferno*. The lexical variety examined in 2.3.3.2 (for example the multiple terms for the boat in Canto VIII) foregrounds the translator’s role, but it is also a way of fully exploiting the breadth of the English language, of creatively displaying “the sum total of the experience stored in our word-hoard” (Heaney, 1999b: 16). Carson thus often mines forgotten words: introducing the word “paladins” (2002: 215) into Canto XXXI (4.1.2.1), unearthing a little-used word which is context-specific (referring to the court of Charlemagne). If, as Reynolds says, Carson frequently uses lexical items in such a way as to “activate their earlier meanings” (2008: 73), in this instance “paladins”, an apt choice at this point in the text, is also an act of recirculation, an active

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<sup>234</sup> Heaney similarly observes that a writer is “poised between his own idiolect and the vast sound-wave and sewage-wash of the language’s total availability” (1999b: 16).

selection of an unusual alternative launched into the “swim of the present” (Heaney, 1999b: 16). Similarly, Carson adds “adamant” (in the phrase “the outer rim of adamant” – 2002: 119) to Canto XVIII. Adamant is a “hard, strong rock or mineral” (OED Online), once seen as almost magically strong, but the term is now used primarily as an adjective (meaning “unwavering” – *ibid.*). The figurative phrase “of adamant” means the “quality of being unmovable” (*ibid.*). Carson’s word fits the rhyme scheme (2002: 119), but its earlier meanings are also activated, drawing out both the depth of the language and (as we have seen before with Carson) the ways in which the language has evolved: legend to prosaic use; noun to (metaphorical) adjective.

Carson’s poetry (original and translated) exploits random connectivity between words, especially the concomitance of *sound*. Carson’s recourse to homonym (or near-homonym) and his gleeful use of puns at times becomes as much the organising force in the poem as the ideas at hand. This can be seen in choices such as “a goat would be most difficult to goad” (2002: 132), or the “ragged rock of rugged woe” (2002: 118; cf. the tongue-twister ‘round the rugged rock the ragged rascal ran’) – whilst we quickly establish “goat” and “goad” as unrelated, “ragged” and “rugged” are surprisingly similar (especially once related to terrain, as here), and we may wonder if they are indeed cognate. When, in Canto XXV, we are told that “The victim stared; he did not girn, nor grin” (2002: 175) similarity is suggested by proximity of orthography and sound, even though “girn” (“to cry or whine” – Dolan, 2012: 113) and “grin” are polar opposites. Language seems to be making its own suggestions, throwing up unlikely patterns and synergies, and demonstrating its own excesses, and Carson welcomes these odd synchronicities.<sup>235</sup>

Of course, homonym principally gets Carson out of a tight spot in terms of the rhyme scheme: in Canto VII Carson describes the movement of bodies “in the horde”, “shouting: ‘Spend it now!’ and ‘No, no, hoard!’” (2002: 44). But at other points, linguistic nuance is specifically underlined. So, when Virgil places Dante on Geryon he says “I’ll ride pillion, / lest his tail upset you, or offend” (2002:

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<sup>235</sup> See Gillis on self-generating “poetic pyrotechnics” elsewhere in Carson’s work (2003: 194).

116). When we reach the end of the sentence we must reassess: if we have initially read “upset” as meaning ‘make unhappy’ (arguably its more common current usage), when we read “offend”, we realise that the earlier use probably meant ‘knock over’ (the less common usage). Carson’s addition of “or offend” after the comma is knowing – it plays on our linguistic expectations, and inverts them, in the process revealing the full dimensions of the earlier word.

Carson’s most consistent punning in *The Inferno* is on the title itself – he frequently uses “infernal” (2002: 97; 108; 111; 140), describing everything from the three Furies (2002: 58) to a group of devils (2002: 144). Occasionally Carson is responding to the Italian: his description of the Furies matches Dante’s “tre furie infernal” (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 74). However, most often Carson’s punning has no equivalent in the Italian, and thus across the translation it morphs into additional metatextual play; Kirkpatrick and James, by contrast, largely do not allow themselves this liberty with Dante’s text. Gesturing towards the metatextual is one more sense in which the language of Carson’s translation expands upon the language of Dante’s original text. In all these ways – the lexical variety, the uncovering of little-used words and archaic shades of meaning, the use of homonym (or near-homonym) and punning<sup>236</sup> – it can be argued that Carson uses translation to push at the borders of the English language, to expand its remit, just as he enlarges the space of the poem he translates (Denman, 2009: 28) via his layering of temporalities, and his use of ambilocation. Of course, a good poet will presumably always want to push at the borders of what language can do, but the process – and specifically the constraints – of translation seem to act as a further spur to creativity in Carson’s case. Linguistic breadth and capriciousness *is* showcased, too, in Carson’s non-translated work. However, it is more remarkable in his translations because there it implicitly emphasises ambiguity and the *broadening* of language rather than the narrowing of linguistic selection as guided by aspects of the source text.

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<sup>236</sup> I suggest elsewhere that Carson’s use of irony also contributes to this textual and linguistic expansion (Gibson, 2018).



As we have seen, for Paulin, linguistic regeneration is often achieved via intertextual references, for example, the reuse of Joyce's "snotrag" (2004: 47) or the repurposing of his own "skrimshander whalebone" (2004: 4), which appears in this collection in 'The Albatross' (translating Baudelaire) but also in "skrimshander out of whalebone" in 'Prometheus on Mythology' (2004: 79), originally published in *Seize the Fire* (1990b; Paulin's translation of *Prometheus Bound*).

Beyond intertextuality, in Paulin's poems we see similar behaviour to Carson's use of near-homonyms (such as "rugged"/"ragged"; "goat"/"goad"). In 'Le Crapaud', Paulin's lexical play is intrinsic to the translation. Paulin takes advantage of the fact that Corbière's French title 'Le Crapaud' (meaning 'toad') contains the word 'crap', suggesting the English 'turd', by happenstance sonically close to 'toad'. This sequence of chance connections leads Paulin to depict the toad as "a singing turd", and to end the poem with the climactic "fat Mr Turd he's me" (2004: 43). Here the chance resonances appear to dictate the direction of the entire translation; the unusual interlinkages of language prove too appealing, too exploitable, and, as a result, language itself feels oddly full of connotations, excessive in its in-jokes and bizarre affiliations. As Paulin himself has said, language "goes on, recreating itself, playing games, breaking down old structures and forming new ones" (in Murphy, 2003: 197).

However, even more than his intertextuality, it is Paulin's use of dialect and his generation of neologisms which most explicitly could be said to expand and revitalise the English language. Of course, he has his Hiberno-English favourites – and, as discussed, his work consistently recuperates the "great, marvellous, clattery tenderness of Belfast speech" (Paulin, 2003: 233). This is part of his ongoing project of language rehabilitation, counteracting the impoverishment of "a rich linguistic resource" (1983a: 18). However, Paulin also reaches into hidden pockets of English to unearth treasures such as "nesh" (2004: 76; a Northern dialect word meaning "lacking courage, spirit, or energy; timid" – OED Online), and hauls such words both from obscurity (for many readers) to publication, and from the world of dialect, to (in this instance) the European world of Verlaine's

Paris. In “the flusker of birds’ wings” (2004: 1), the unusual “flusker” is both like and unlike the later phrase “the quick fluster of seabirds flying” (2004: 78) – both reaffirm the breadth of the word-hoard. Two of the OED’s examples of the use of “flusker” are from John Clare’s work (OED Online), and Paulin is a great admirer of Clare’s writing (1992: 47-55); here, the borrowing of the unusual word may thus be seen as another intertextual reference – a way of relaunching someone else’s linguistic treasures into the “swim of the present” (Heaney, 1999b: 16). More so than in Carson’s work, the word-hoard is also challenged and augmented by coined language. Paulin’s neologisms build on the plethora of linguistic resources already present in English, and increase the wealth. The coined adjective “stittering”, however, used in *The Road to Inver* in ‘Last Statement’ (2004: 13), has been reused from *Seize the Fire* (1990b: 63). Once again Paulin uses his own work to repeatedly collect and showcase certain terms.

Of course, part of the role of a poet is precisely to research, collect, curate and reactivate language in this way: poets are, as Heaney says, “discoverers and custodians of the unlooked for” (2002: x). This vocation, this calling to be “finders and keepers” (Heaney, 2002: ix) is the reason Muldoon’s collection is “an abecedary” (rather than ‘an alphabetical list’). It is the reason Heaney refers in his introduction to “fireworking”, “tumulus”, “effulgence”, “foundedness”, and “lambency” all in the same sentence (1999a: xix), “oneiric” a sentence later (ibid.), and “channel-surfed” (1999a: xiii) and “hoplite” (1999a: xviii) elsewhere in the same introduction. It is the reason you reuse “skrimshander”, if you are Paulin (2004: 4; 79), and that you return the adjective “adamant” to its rock-like noun state if you are Carson (2002: 119). If your currency is words, you deal in the more obscure, most specific types, as this allows you to say something fresh. Carson describes poetry creation as “the pleasure of arriving at a way of saying things which until then I hadn’t [arrived at]” (Culture Northern Ireland, 2011: n.p.) – for these poets the task of translation seems to prompt not a narrowing of their creative resources but instead a tendency towards expansion and enrichment in the examination, and re-employment, of “borrowed things” (Paulin, 2004: 70).

#### 4.4 Conclusion

It is important not to push the arguments in relation to literary or linguistic renewal too far. Carson, Heaney and Paulin could not be said to be inventing radically new literary forms, or a wholly new literary language – but then this is not their aim.

The dialogic interrelation of language varieties in these translations (achieved via poetic compression, sonic patterning (Ramazani, 2009: 55), and the interweaving of intertextual references, amongst other techniques) pulls disparate worlds into relation. However, the palimpsest-like layering of different environments and temporalities in these translations also insists upon the discovery of unlikely synergies: a pattern of worlds that “ceaselessly overlap, intersect, and converge” (Ramazani, 2009: 49). This layering process offers a sense of renewal in that it generates translations which are rich in connotations – they expand the “poetic space” (Denman, 2009: 28) of the original poems by adding (for example) the discourse of the Northern Irish civil situation to the world of dragons and thanes (in *Beowulf*), the fantastical developments in modern science (molecular regeneration – 2002: 168) to the rebirth of a phoenix in *The Inferno*, and the “snotrag” of Joyce’s Mulligan to Mallarmé’s sea passenger in ‘Sea Wind’ (Paulin, 2004: 47). In these new convergences these texts might be said to perform Scott’s idea of textual “accretion” (2006: 22).

These convergences thus produce newly complex texts, but the process of translation also renews *linguistically*. This does not mean that these translations prioritise modern forms of expression, but rather that in their dialogism they draw on, and thereby highlight, the existing depth and breadth of the language: they renew by excavating existing linguistic resources and productively re-employing them. To this extent, the process of translation also revitalises the language of these poets. Translation prompts a search for little-used lexical treasures, dialect or otherwise: “tumbrils” (Paulin, 2004: 5), “paladins” (Carson, 2002: 215) and “tholed” (Heaney, 1999a: 3) are specifically prompted by interactions with the original texts. In the hands of these poets, translation

pushes at the borders of the English language. It is not that these poets are not verbally inventive outside their translation work, but rather that they do not seem inhibited, but inspired, by the process of translating and thereby re-encountering English with fresh eyes and ears.

These poems will not – did not – recast English literature, but the “contradancing, claustrophobic chaos” offered by these translations is reason enough for their existence: they stand as new readings “capable of shaking us awake to some experience” (Laird, 2017: n.p.), pushing the language forward, and gazing outwards and beyond themselves “toward the wide the crowded world” (Paulin, 2004: 22).

## Chapter 5 – Conclusions: remaking texts via a “local row”

### 5.1 A “local row”

I inclined  
To lose my faith in Ballyrush and Gortin  
Till Homer’s ghost came whispering to my mind.  
He said: I made the Iliad from such  
A local row. Gods make their own importance

(Kavanagh in Davis, 2010: 92)

In Seamus Heaney’s account of translating *Beowulf*, great significance is attached to the poet’s discovery that an early form of the Hiberno-English dialect verb ‘to thole’ (meaning to bear something) can be traced in the Old English (Heaney finds the word ‘polian’ in a glossary – 1999a: xxv). For Heaney, the uncovering of this word authenticates his link to the work: literary entitlement is achieved by a happenstance of etymologies. This link is preserved, furthered, even, in translation: “tholed” is carefully embedded in the first page of Heaney’s translation (along with the word “troubles”, with all of its alternative connotations – 1999a: 3).

To a reader from Northern Ireland, the appearance of “tholed” in a Faber translation of one of the formative texts of English literature feels disruptive – as it was disruptive for Heaney, too, finding an earlier form of the word in that Old English glossary. The only living person I know who uses the word ‘thole’ is my father. Encountering “tholed”, then, is my own flash of authentication and connection, a visceral jolt or reminder of literary and linguistic roots – unexpected, and therefore all the more remarkable. The same might be said of reading, say, the word “geg” in Tom Paulin’s translation of Walid Khazendar (2004: 99; meaning a “joke” – Share, 2003: 118), or the exuberant “head-the-ball” in Ciaran Carson’s version of the *Inferno* (2002: 218; meaning a “fool” – Share, 2003: 150). Just as these poets treasure the textures of these parochial

words, revelling in the “scutching vernacular” (Paulin, 2003: 239), so they are a fond part, too, of my own lexicon, often obscured, revealing when uncovered.

With all of these terms there is a signal back to a particular world, a recuperation of peripheral language which stresses the ‘locatedness’ of these translations. Such terms also often bring a playful, performative element to the act of translation. However, whilst these words provoke this almost physical reaction in me, they will inevitably be read differently (or even passed over, *not* read) by other readers. Such language, then, invites us to ask who these translations are really *for* – even what translation itself is for. What does it mean to remake *Beowulf*, *The Inferno* or the great works of European poetry “from such / A local row”?

In this concluding chapter I will ponder these questions, drawing together what these translations have to show us about themselves, and about the act of translating.

## 5.2 Research questions and responses

I set out to address five research questions:

1. Is there a specific style of translation displayed by these Northern Irish poets?
2. How does the use of dialect in these translations affect the reader experience?
3. Are these translations deliberately subversive in their use of language?
4. Why might these translators choose to engage in the act of translation?
5. Does dialogism in these texts have the potential to bring about renewal?

I will briefly provide specific answers to these questions in the sections below.

### **Question 1: Is there a specific style of translation displayed by these Northern Irish poets?**

These translations are highly idiosyncratic texts. Although they are all patterned with (northern) Hiberno-English dialect (in different ways), it is the heteroglossic elements which ultimately prove most notable.

In terms of dialect, specific lexical, syntactic and idiomatic choices, although often individually slight, cumulatively build to a distinctive overall style in each of these translations. The texts are often wholly or partially relocated to (Northern) Ireland, and lexical, syntactic and idiomatic choices contribute significantly to this relocation. There are obvious commonalities, even in the precise words used – Heaney and Paulin use “bawn” (Heaney, 1999a: 24; Paulin, 2004: 2), Carson and Heaney re-purpose “beyond the pale” (Carson, 2002: 74; Heaney, 1999a: 45; xiv), Paulin and Carson use “boke” (Paulin, 2004: 26, in “boker”; Carson, 2002: 218). However, the style of each translation remains distinctive: for example, sentence-fillers such as “ack” do not appear in Carson’s and Heaney’s translations, as they do across Paulin’s work (2004: 13; 64; 73).

Crucially, Hiberno-English dialect is only one element of the linguistic complexity of these texts – in fact, the heteroglossic nature of the language of these translations is often their most striking stylistic aspect. Even so, these translations are also not heteroglossic in the same way – for example Heaney interweaves highly-wrought language with everyday vernacular, whereas Paulin produces intertextual tapestries.

**Question 2: How does the use of dialect in these translations affect the reader experience?**

Across these texts the translators' lexical choices often have a dislocating effect – but, of course, the extent of this dislocation is relative: a reader from Northern Ireland will react very differently to the particularity of “keshes” (Heaney, 1999a: 45), “stocious” (Paulin, 2004: 10), or “sectarians” and “banners” (Carson, 2002: 40) as compared to a reader from, say, the south-east of England.

The heteroglossic language used in these translations dislocates still further: processing dialect is only one of the demands made of the reader. We are confronted, too, by obvious translator choice and interpretation – in the Hibernicisms, but also in the lexical variety. This forces us to acknowledge that something is “being done” (Reynolds, 2003: n.p.) with these works.

**Question 3: Are these translations deliberately subversive in their use of language?**

We can interpret these translations as subversive in a number of ways: undermining the language that we expect to encounter in translations of major works from the European literary canon (via prominently placed vernacular language), and undermining the ‘purity’ of the English used to translate, by deliberately signalling linguistic difference and multiplicity. This emphasis on



linguistic plurality demonstrates the extent to which English (in fact every language) is inherently plural – made up of loanwords, vying discourses, different dialects, and so on. Such plurality of language allows us to perceive a plurality of world-view – indeed this perceived plurality might be beneficial in a place where attachment to single narratives or interpretations of the world impedes empathy or progress.

I would stop short, however, of claiming that these translations are subversive in ways that can be described as being straightforwardly *postcolonial* (as Irish literary subversiveness is often interpreted). This is partly what makes their use of language interesting, and sets these translations apart from other salient instances of translation in Ireland (and especially from previous uses of *Hiberno-English* in translation, which sought to elevate the dialect under the banner of cultural nationalism – Tymoczko, 1999a: 138). To the extent that these translations *do* offer a postcolonial response, they do so by carefully emphasising linguistic plurality and “cross-colonial affiliations” (Graham, 2001: 93), rather than constituting a simple challenge to an identifiable colonial oppressor.

#### **Question 4: Why might these translators choose to engage in the act of translation?**

In rejecting a neat postcolonial reading of the linguistic selections in these translations I would emphasise instead the extent to which these translations are *personal* responses. Adopting a cognitive stylistics approach, and concentrating on “mind-style” (Fowler, 1996: 214), allows us to read the choices in these translations in line with linguistic selections traceable in these poets’ broader work: such synergies suggest a preoccupation with language excavation.

The process of translation can thus offer a very specific way of thinking about one’s own language (how and why we possess the words we possess). Opting for striking (local) linguistic selections is *more* noticeable in a translation than in an original work – the inherent comparability of translations (to an original, to

other translations) allows the poet to perform their distinctive use of language against the language of the crowd. It also offers a public space where the validity of local re-readings of seminal texts can be affirmed.

**Question 5: Does dialogism in these texts have the potential to bring about renewal?**

The compression of the poetic form means that language varieties in these translations collide with one another – via, for example, the rhyme schemes in Carson’s work, or interweaving voices in Paulin’s poems. This imaginative travel can have *creative* potential, often implying not simply plurality, but also similarity *and* difference in the same place.

Thus, in superimposing language varieties, time frames and environments in a palimpsest-like manner, these translations expand: they become more layered, more complex, richer texts than the originals to which they relate. This offers us not a simple narrative of translation as overwriting, but a view of *enrichment* via translation: enrichment of the text over time (cf. Clive Scott’s “accretion” – 2006: 22), and enrichment of language, and the lexicons of these poets.

### 5.3 Further conclusions

There are, of course, conclusions which go beyond the immediate responses to these research questions – I examine a few of these further conclusions here.

#### 5.3.1 Translation's personal function: linguistic excavation

Although Jeremy Munday has suggested that the “social nature” (2016: 236) of translation is currently in the spotlight within translation studies, there is an anthropological angle to translation which has not been fully exploited. There is increasing focus on this – a recent translation studies conference in London (May 2017) sought to explore “current progress in studying the human, flesh-and-blood translator in an historical and cultural context” (British Library, 2017: n.p.). However, analysis often slides into the minutiae of a translator's life rather than considering what the particularity of a translator's circumstances can teach us about how translation can operate (whether in a specific time and place, or more broadly).

Whilst there is increasing focus on the inherent positionality in translation (for example Hermans, 2014), it is important to ask why particular translators might use or engage with translation in the first place<sup>237</sup> – and what motivates one translator to act differently from another (Munday briefly explores developments in this area – 2016: 238).

Based on my close readings of these translations by Heaney, Carson and Paulin I would suggest that translation as a process offers an opportunity for linguistic introspection. Translation's unique requirement to make linguistic selections *in comparison to* another author's selections emphasises the significance of linguistic choice, and its personal nature. Deciding which word or expression to select to convey some particular aspect of the source text can be viewed as a

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<sup>237</sup> Francis Jones briefly explores translator motivation (2011: 87-8; 103-4; 175).

freeing, creative process, but also one which offers a spotlight back on our own language: on our linguistic roots, why we reach instinctively for one word and not another, and on the histories attached to the words we use.

I have tried to demonstrate that this spotlight on linguistic possession and selection might be something that is particularly resonant or powerful for a poet-translator from the north of Ireland – and that translation might therefore become a particularly attractive activity. If a writer’s formative experiences occur in an environment where linguistic choice is fraught, and freighted, then translation’s emphasis on choice provides a space in which to explore these questions. By extension, it might be expected that translators from other areas experiencing significant cultural-political tensions – such as Quebec, Catalonia and Israel/Palestine, or, closer to home, even Scotland and Wales – may also use translation in this way to explore linguistic affiliations (cf. Sherry Simon’s investigation (2012) of linguistic tensions – and translation – in cities in a few of these locations, including Montreal and Barcelona).

Myriad theorists have suggested that translation is a form of close reading (Scott, 2012; Cronin, 1996: 183; Muldoon, 2006: 195). That, conventionally, translations are then published introduces a performative element to this reading process, as Scott has observed (2012).<sup>238</sup>

Carson, Heaney and Paulin know that the comparative potential of translation means that their particular linguistic selections *will* be noted. Even if words such as “hirpling” (Heaney, 1999a: 31), “girnèd” (Carson, 2002: 44) and “jeuks” (Paulin, 2004: 18) occur instinctively (which is possible), I am arguing that their placement in these texts is deliberate: a strategy for emphasising rather than concealing translator visibility and positionality, by *announcing* the infusion of the idiolect of the writer into the linguistic mix that is the final translated text (cf. Jones on ‘performing’ his Yorkshire identity in his poetry translations – 2011: 46).

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<sup>238</sup> The very premise behind *Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading* (2012) is that literary translation is the “performance of reading” (back cover).

Whilst developments in the investigation of style in translation permit us to consider why particular translations are stylistically distinctive (often via a corpus-based approach), or even to think about what a translator is considering as they translate (via think-aloud protocols – see Jones, 2011), translation studies has not traditionally focussed on *why* a translator engages with translation in the first instance.

This thesis invites us to view translation as a process of picking over and performing personal linguistic tendencies – I would even suggest that *most* instances of literary translation will involve linguistic introspection *to some degree* (cf. Scott, 2006: 13). However, for these three “strong poets” (Bloom, 1973: 5; “major figures” able to “wrestle with their strong precursors” – *ibid.*), translation can become an analytical and anthropological process *for* the translator, *about* the translator.

### **5.3.2 Reading dialect and heteroglossia: the complex language of translation**

In translation studies we traditionally think of dialect as a translation challenge: where we do consider dialect we typically explore how different translation strategies can help us to pragmatically – or perhaps creatively – respond to the presence of dialect in the original text (cf. Berezowski, 1997).

We do not, traditionally, consider inserting dialect deliberately into a translation (that is, where it is not a strategy for responding to the source text). Michael Longley has described how he was discouraged at school from using Hibernicisms, so now takes delight in including them in his poetry (2017: n.p.). The presence of dialect in a translated text can function in a number of ways highlighted in this thesis: as a means of recuperating long-lost linguistic treasures, and proving their worth again; subverting norms by making a point

about centre and periphery; speaking to a specific group of language users in a way which underlines how much literature does *not* speak directly to them (to me, reading “tholed” is startling partly as it prompts me to consider how often I do *not* read “tholed”).

Encountering dialect in translation invites consideration of the traditional means of describing the language of a translation, and how infrequently translation studies takes account of the complications in the language of a translated text *in its own right* (cf. Scott, 2006: 32). Munday rightly notes the challenges of what Kirsten Malmkjær calls “translational stylistics” (Malmkjær, 2003: 39): the difficulty in discerning whether the choices in the target text are motivated by the source, or by the translator’s preferences (Munday, 2016: 98-9). As I noted in Chapter 1, whilst there are some studies which examine the “distinctiveness” of the work of individual translators (for example, Kenny, 2001; Munday, 2008; Saldanha, 2011), there are few other studies in this area.

Acknowledging the heteroglossia of my three texts underlines their complexity. I have suggested that these translated works demonstrate the expansion and enrichment possible via translation, illustrating this heteroglossic expansion via close textual analysis. This perspective deliberately adopts a different position to the negative lens offered by numerous theories of loss in translation. Antoine Berman’s “negative analytic” (2004: 278), for example, suggests translation often involves “qualitative impoverishment” (the use of equivalent words which lack the “sonorous richness” of the source text language), or “effacement of the superimposition of languages” (the erasure of different traces of language in the source text) – 2004: 283; 287-8.<sup>239</sup> These translations by Paulin, Carson and Heaney do not *only* enrich the source text – there are certainly ways in which we could choose to describe the ‘loss’ that each of these translations brings about (for example, loss of alliteration in Heaney’s *Beowulf*, to accommodate a contemporary allusion – 4.3.2.3).

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<sup>239</sup> Where Berman does discuss “expansion” via translation he means it in the *negative* sense of augmenting “only the gross mass of text” (2004: 282).

However, I seek to highlight that we do not often enough consider the creativity of a translation for its own merits. Translations can be expanded and enriched by techniques which pluralise the language used, and therefore lay down multiple linguistic traces in the translated text. We can decide, following scholars such as Berman, that this ‘deforms’ the text. Or, acknowledging that any translation deforms (or, more positively, *re-forms* a text), we can decide that this pluralising process complicates the texts which are produced, and complicates our understanding of the act of translation, and what it is capable of.

*The Inferno*, *Beowulf* and *The Road to Inver* are hugely sophisticated texts which, at any one time, do a vast number of things with language in translation. This includes: subverting major canonical works, recuperating tiny, forgotten words from Northern Ireland; introducing different discourses, including language related to the Troubles; playing with intertextuality (primarily Carson and Paulin); weaving in personal experiences, or personal interactions with language; relocating the texts; destabilising English; defamiliarising English words – and undoubtedly many other things beyond the scope of this thesis.

Itemising these traits underlines how much of the complexity of these new texts will be missed if we concentrate on these works only as versions of pre-existing texts, without exploring the inherent nuances of the new language and new forms produced. This is not to say that complexity alone is worthy of praise – additional difficulty or ambiguity is not always positive (for example, Paulin’s persistent use of analogy, resulting in nebulous, suggestive translations, may not always result in aesthetically pleasing or interesting poems – see 4.3.2.2). Nonetheless it is important to highlight that interrogating target text selections in light of the source text is only one (albeit central) way to approach our interpretation of translations. Writing successfully about these poets and their works involves adopting many of their traits and techniques: close reading, attention to etymology and research, a focus on intertextuality, interconnectedness and circularity. That this produces complex readings is – to my mind – an advertisement for the literary prowess of the translators, and the literary strengths of this translated literature.

Analysis of translated literature that remains sensitive to the stylistic complexities of the *translated text* reminds us that we can read translations as rich, creative, exuberant works of literature – *as well as* rich, creative, exuberant responses to other works of literature.

### **5.3.3 Reading the complex language of translation in a Northern Irish context**

As noted in Chapter 1, Matthew Reynolds has suggested that translations into “varied styles and dialects” are increasing, but that there has not yet been much discussion of the *function* of these stylistic shifts (2016: 87). Munday has also suggested that there has been little discussion of the motivations of linguistic selections in translation, and how these choices (conscious and unconscious) relate to the translator’s environment (2016: 100).

I have argued that in these three texts the use of heteroglossia suggests the plurality of English, often demonstrating the histories written into the language. I emphasised the importance of this in an environment (like Northern Ireland) where language history is contentious and often seen as being closely related to colonial processes of language oppression. With this lens, the heteroglossic language of these translations becomes not a partisan or political statement as such, but a means of underlining the ways in which language *is* political – it necessarily carries history with it (as do we all, in using it).

The specific insertion of heteroglossic language into a *translation* of course draws further attention to linguistic selection (as argued earlier, we take more notice of distinctive linguistic choices in translations), and to the idea that there are “alternative ways of saying and seeing” (Alexander, 2010: 176); that there are competing world-views embodied in language: “specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words” (Bakhtin, 1981: 291-2).



As I set out in Chapter 1, over twenty years ago Michael Cronin briefly theorised the use of translation by Northern Irish poets. He described it as follows: firstly as a dialogue with Irish (an internal and personal dialogue, but also an external one), secondly as “a release from the tense bipolarities of conflict” (1996: 181), and finally as a means of *indirectly* addressing the conflict (ibid.).

My findings differ slightly from Cronin’s formulation (Cronin’s model does predate these works). I deliberately did not consider Irish-English translation as I, too, wanted “a release from the tense bipolarities of conflict”. In any case, in response to Cronin’s observation about a dialogue with Irish, I would suggest that the translations I have considered here do not only (or even significantly) grapple with the implications of the Irish-English dynamic – and, importantly, they often also explore the relation with a *Protestant* linguistic heritage (3.2.3.1). Rather, more fundamentally, they seem to grapple with what it is to possess language, and specifically English (in all its variety).

In response to Cronin’s second suggestion I would frame these poets less as escaping the bipartisan or sectarian nature of the conflict, but as using plurality of language to allow for the existence of multiple ways of perceiving. The plurality inherent in the act of translation – that is, the fact that translation makes plural the versions of a given text – plays into this emphasis on multiple perspectives. I suggested that this plurality could be helpful in a context, such as Northern Ireland, where binary narratives have such a foothold. Translation as a pluralising enterprise, and these translations as, I am arguing, particularly plural versions of this pluralising enterprise, fly in the face of the ‘binarism’ of perception which has so plagued Northern Ireland over the last half century. I stop short, however, of agreeing that this constitutes “a release” – the use of discourse related to the Troubles (an allusion to Improvised Explosive Devices in *The Inferno* – Carson, 2002: 40, the integration of conflict ‘media-speak’ in *Beowulf* – Heaney, 1999a: 73, or the “shots” and “*squad car*” at the opening of ‘The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath’ – Paulin, 2004: 51-2; italics in original) means that the “tense bipolarities” are knowingly pulled into these texts. They

constitute a key influence on the idiolects of these poets, albeit that their presence is not permitted to overwhelm these translations.

Finally, Cronin's third suggestion that Northern Irish translators use translation to indirectly address the conflict. There are, as discussed, ways in which these works address the conflict in Northern Ireland (perhaps most particularly in Paulin's work: "we've had x years of blood and shit" – 2004: 51), but I am not convinced that these poets engaged in translation *because* they wanted to address the conflict, even from an oblique angle. All three poets address the conflict much more directly in their own original work – Heaney's *Field Work* (1979) and *Station Island* (1984), written during the Troubles, react violently to the violent context; Paulin's *Liberty Tree* (1983b) ponders questions of nationality, and *Fivemiletown* (1987) articulates the complexities of the unionist position mid-Troubles, and Carson's *Belfast Confetti* (1989) depicts the physical (and social) fragmentation of Troubles-era Belfast. In these translations, the focus, whether refracted through Heaney's media-speak (4.3.2.3), Carson's recurring image of the British army helicopter (3.3.3.1), or Paulin's preoccupation with belonging and exile (for example in 'The Road to Inver': see 4.2.2.2), is on broader questions: the emphasis on language itself and its role in history, and the way in which we construct ourselves through our language, our imagery, our associations and frames for reading the world.<sup>240</sup> The point does not seem to be about Northern Ireland and its conflict per se, but rather a personal angle which affirms that who we are, and where we are from informs how we read (and therefore how we translate). Even where oblique parallels are offered (for example where Heaney suffuses his account of the dragon with the language of civil conflict – 4.3.2.3), this seems to offer a means of connecting to the original text, rather than a deliberate strategy to offer socio-political commentary. In this we might observe a shift from translations in earlier decades, such as Heaney's *Sweeney Astray* (1983b), which more explicitly sought such parallels *in order to* comment on the social situation (see 4.3.2.3).

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<sup>240</sup> Even those of Paulin's poems which appeared in previous collections are recontextualised in *The Road to Inver*, in a less overtly political or polemical setting.

Reading these translations in light of their historical context insists upon their very particular relation to these circumstances. The ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies facilitated the consideration of translations in this way, and led (amongst other things) to a rich seam of investigation considering the myriad uses of translation in Ireland (Cronin, 1996; Tymoczko, 1999a). This thesis sought to demonstrate that the use of translation in *Northern* Ireland warrants similar critique, adding nuance to our understanding of how translation has functioned, and shifted, as a cultural act in Ireland. Such nuance is important: as Maria Tymoczko has said, in an increasingly globalised world “it is paradoxically in the local that difference is maintained and manifest” (1999a: 31).

Employing cognitive stylistics allows us to peer at the intersection of individual and environmental considerations (as cognitive stylistics “through its concept of context as cognitive entity, involves a concern with social and cultural factors” – Boase-Beier, 2006a: 10). Considering three Northern Irish poets translating in a similar time period facilitates an exploration of why an individual translator might translate in a specific way, in a specific context, but also triangulates how that activity relates to other translations from this specific place and time, where some similar stylistic patterns can be identified (whilst acknowledging significant differences). This intersection between the personal and the collective is fruitful, perhaps never more so than when translation occurs in environments which have experienced fraught linguistic circumstances (such as Northern Ireland, but also, as discussed, potentially other places experiencing parallel cultural complexities, such as Quebec or Catalonia). Northern Ireland’s “local row” may not be the *primary* reason these poets turn to translation but it creates the conditions for a very particular relationship with language, which, in turn, can be read in remarkable, idiosyncratic translation style.

## **5.4 Further areas of study**

Of course, we hope that any area of academic study will open up further avenues of exploration. The additional conclusions in 5.3 suggest significant lines of enquiry for future studies, with their own intriguing questions.

### **5.4.1 The use of translation in the north of Ireland (and beyond)**

Even these three translations demonstrate how varied approaches can be within the same small locale – in this thesis, the approaches range from Paulin’s intertextuality to Carson’s jovial performance, via Heaney’s contortions within English. One longer critical work (Carvalho Homem, 2009) specifically engages with translation in Northern Ireland (across the work of five poets), but the expanse of material covered necessarily limits the analysis of the translations. As I noted at the outset, this thesis did not engage with translation from or into Irish (thereby ruling out many excellent poet-translators, including Paul Muldoon and Medbh McGuckian). I also only worked with translations published at the turn of the last century (towards the ‘end’ of the Troubles). More recent publications from Northern Ireland of course have a different context – history marches on, and the use of translation is likely to shift with this onward march.

Language remains a controversial topic in Northern Ireland (the Irish Language Act remains one of the principal stumbling blocks preventing the re-negotiation of power-sharing – McDonald, 2017: n.p.); the relation of language to identity and power in the north of Ireland is likely to remain a central consideration. In such circumstances (remembering that translation style is essentially language choice: “style is [...] a reflection of choice in a way other aspects of language are not” – Boase-Beier, 2006a: 72), literary translations from Northern Ireland are likely to continue to warrant further consideration.

#### **5.4.2 The use of dialect and heteroglossia in the language of the translated text**

I have emphasised how rarely we focus on the style of the translated text, and, within this, on the plurality of language varieties used to translate. Some studies do consider such plurality (Thomson (2004) explores dialect; Klinger (2013; 2015) and Millán-Varela (2004) consider heteroglossia), but, as Reynolds has suggested, so far we do not often think about *why* translation occurs into these plural language varieties (and how this might relate to either the translator-as-individual, or the translator-in-context).

I have tried to suggest how and why dialect and heteroglossia might appear in these translations from one very specific locale, but if, as Reynolds suggests, translation into plural language varieties is increasing (2016: 87), then this significant area will demand increasing attention in translation studies. Such studies are likely to enhance our appreciation of individual texts, and the artistic power and potential of translated literature more broadly.

#### **5.4.3 ‘Anthropological’ uses of translation – the focus on the translator**

This is the area where it is perhaps easiest to see real momentum in translation studies, albeit that, as I have suggested, this runs the risk of producing weaker research projects, reliant on highlighting loose connections between a translator’s personal circumstances and their work. However, successful versions of such projects could in theory provide a rationale for why certain texts (re)appear in certain locations or contexts, and why certain authors engage with translated works, in particular ways.

The emphasis on positionality in translation studies insists upon the presence of the translator’s voice in the translated text (Hermans, 2014), yet the fact that literary translations may be highly personally resonant texts is not usually

captured in translation studies (we often ignore what makes a particular *translator's* works stylistically distinctive, even whilst in literary studies we would routinely consider an *author's* idiosyncratic style – we have developed different ways of prioritising our reading processes dependent on discipline).<sup>241</sup>

Further studies which focus on the stylistic “thumb-print” (Baker, 2000: 245) of the translator will be a step towards meaningfully recognising and describing what Theo Hermans calls the “double-voiced and dialogical” nature of translation (2014: 294). It will also be a further step away from an approach to evaluating translations which presupposes a narrative of ‘loss’, prioritising instead a perspective which acknowledges difference, and idiosyncrasies. I would simply add that pursuing a cognitive stylistics approach not only permits the identification of stylistic traits particular to a single translator, but necessarily presupposes that these relate to translator environment (“language involves the mind and the mind is concerned with culture and context” – Boase-Beier, 2006a: 9). As Malmkjær has suggested, this recourse to both the translator’s personal history *and* the socio-cultural aspects of the society in which they were working will strengthen arguments arising from studies in translational stylistics (2003: 54) – progressing both translational stylistics (or translational *poetics* – Boase-Beier, 2015: 90-91),<sup>242</sup> and translation studies more broadly.

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<sup>241</sup> Of course, exceptions do exist, including Saldanha (2011) and Munday (2008).

<sup>242</sup> 1.4.4 explains this distinction.

## 5.5 A final word: unlocking the word-hoard

As Edward Hirsch has suggested, understanding “poetic secrets” (that is, the devices by which poetry works) tends to lead not to the removal of mystery, but to “deeper levels of enchantment” with poetry itself (2014: vi). I have used the passages of close reading in this thesis not to dismantle the works, ‘decode’ a single meaning, or ‘prove’ how well these translations correspond to their precursors. I sought rather to demonstrate the layers of complexity and ambiguity, to highlight that we can read translations as closely as we might read ‘original’ work, and that according this level of interest to the stylistic particularities of translations can lead us to interesting conclusions about these translations – but can also provide insight into how the translation process itself might function, as both a personal act, and as a culturally-situated act.

“Tholed” is a word which connects Heaney to the original *Beowulf* text, but also to his own language history – it provides him with a narrative of himself in relation to language and literature. In a sense, this is what we all do when we read – we find a way of making what we are reading comprehensible to ourselves. It is also what we do when we translate – Carson paraphrases this as: “Now tell the story in your own words” (2002: xx) – it is simply that when we publish translations we make public and perform these readings. Thus, we infuse a translated text with a narrative about ourselves.

The narrative of this thesis is that we can read the stories these writers tell about themselves in their translated language – we see it in the dialogic intertextuality of Paulin, we notice it in the heteroglossic virtuosity of Carson, we view it in the careful recycling, placement – and narration – of “tholed” in Heaney’s *Beowulf* (1999a: 3; xxv-xxvi).

When, in *Beowulf*, the Geats reach the Danish shore, they are asked to declare their purpose (“the sooner you tell / where you come from and why, the better” – Heaney, 1999a: 10). In response we are told: “The leader of the troop unlocked

his word-hoard" (ibid.). Here, language inherently illustrates (performs) identity and belonging. Looking at the bigger picture, for these poet-translators the 'unlocking of the word-hoard' via translation allows them to investigate stylistically 'where they come from, and why'.



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### Appendix 1 – *The Road to Inver*: original poems

	Translated Title	Original Author	Source Text	Source Language
1	'Oran'	Albert Camus	From <i>La Peste</i>	French
2	'The Island in the North Sea'	Rainer Maria Rilke	'Die Insel II' (Nordsee)	German
3	'The Cigarette'	Francis Ponge	'La cigarette'	French
4	'The Albatross'	Charles Baudelaire	'L'albatros'	French
5	'The Storm'	Eugenio Montale	'La bufera'	Italian
6	'Belongings'	Walid Khazendar	*	Arabic
7	'Don't'	Heinrich Heine	'Nachtgedanken'	German
8	'Unavoidable'	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	'Unvermeidlich'	German
9	'The Skeleton'	Paul Verlaine	'Le squelette'	French
10	'The Coastguard Station'	Eugenio Montale	'La casa dei doganieri'	Italian
11	'To a Political Poet'	Heinrich Heine	'Warnung'	German
12	'Last Statement'	Vladimir Mayakovsky	'Past One O'Clock'	Russian
13	'The Pleasures of the Door'	Francis Ponge	'Les plaisirs de la porte'	French
14	'The Lagan Blackbird'	Anon, Irish	'The Blackbird of Belfast Lough'	Irish
15	'My Name'	Anna Akhmatova	'Name'	Russian
16	'Chorus'	Sophocles	From <i>Antigone</i>	Ancient Greek
17	'Darkness at Noon'	Gérard de Nerval	'El Desdichado'	French
18	'From the Death Cell'	André Chénier	'Iambes VIII'	French
19	'Emulation'	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	'Nachbildung'	German
20	'The Poem as Monument'	Horace	'Ode 3.30' (Exēgī monumentum aere perennius)	Latin
21	'Prologue'	William Langland	The 'Prologue' to <i>Piers Plowman</i>	Middle English
22	'Contemplation 27'	Victor Hugo	XXVII: 'J'aime	French

	Translated Title	Original Author	Source Text	Source Language
			l'araignée et j'aime l'ortie'	
23	'The Rooks'	Arthur Rimbaud	'Les corbeaux'	French
24	'André Chénier'	Marina Tsvetayeva	'André Chénier'	Russian
25	'The Pipe'	Stéphane Mallarmé	'La pipe'	French
26	'Winter Becoming Spring'	Horace	'Ode 1.4'	Latin
27	'Bournemouth'	Paul Verlaine	'Bournemouth'	French
28	'L'Anguilla'	Eugenio Montale	'L'anguilla'	Italian
29	'Symbolum'	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	'Symbolum'	German
30	'Le Crapaud'	Tristan Corbière	'Le crapaud'	French
31	'Voronezh'	Anna Akhmatova	'Voronezh'	Russian
32	'The Velléda'	Paul Verlaine	'Après trois ans'	French
33	'The Emigration of the Poets'	Bertolt Brecht	'Die Auswanderung der Dichter'	German
34	'Sea Wind'	Stéphane Mallarmé	'Brise marine'	French
35	'Love Thy Neighbour'	Max Jacob	'Amour du prochain'	French
36	'from Algerian Diary'	Vittorio Sereni	'Non sa più nulla, è alto sulle ali'	Italian
37	'The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath'	Simon Dach	'Klage über den endlichen Untergang und Ruinirung der Musicalischen Kürbs-Hütte und Gärtchens' [See Paulin's note on his many sources for this poem: 2004: 102].	German
38	'Piano Practice'	Rainer Maria Rilke	'Übung am Klavier'	German
39	'Date of Renewal'	Stéphane Mallarmé	'Sonnet' (Pour votre chère morte, son ami)	French



	Translated Title	Original Author	Source Text	Source Language
40	'A Nation, Yet Again'	Alexander Pushkin	'To Chaadaev'	Russian
41	'Chucking it Away'	Heinrich Heine	'In der Fremde'	German
42	'The Road to Inver'	Fernando Pessoa	'Ao volante do Chevrolet pela estrada de Sintra'	Portuguese
43	'March, 1941'	Anna Akhmatova	'Leningrad, March 1941'	Russian
44	'Table'	Guillaume Apollinaire	'Veille' (and inspired by <i>Calligrammes</i> ).	French
45	'Paris Ink Sketch'	Paul Verlaine	'Croquis parisien'	French
46	'Winds and Rivers'	Aeschylus	From <i>Prometheus Bound</i>	Ancient Greek
47	'Prometheus on Mythology'	Aeschylus	From <i>Prometheus Bound</i>	Ancient Greek
48	'Sentence Sound'	Giacomo Leopardi	'XXXVI: Scherzo'	Italian
49	'Roman Elegy'	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	Sections from 'Elegy II' and 'Elegy I' (withheld).	German
50	'Souvenir of Manchester'	Paul Verlaine	'Souvenir de Manchester'	French
51	'Inscription for the Tomb of the Painter Henri Rousseau the Douanier'	Guillaume Apollinaire	'Inscription pour le tombeau du peintre Henri Rousseau douanier'	French
52	'from Landsflykt'	August Strindberg	'Landsflykt'	Swedish
53	'The Swan'	Rainer Maria Rilke	'Der Schwan'	German
54	'The Owls'	Charles Baudelaire	'Les hiboux'	French
55	'Prometheus' Last Speech'	Aeschylus	From <i>Prometheus Bound</i>	Ancient Greek
56	'The Briar'	Charles Baudelaire	'La pipe'	French
57	'The Crate'	Francis Ponge	'Le cageot'	French
58	'The Orange'	Francis Ponge	'L'orange'	French
59	'Horse Chestnuts'	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	'An vollen Büschelzweigen'	German
60	'Creation and Animation'	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	'Erschaffen und Beleben'	German

	Translated Title	Original Author	Source Text	Source Language
61	'The Wait'	Walid Khazendar	*	Arabic
62	'A Single Weather'	Walid Khazendar	*	Arabic
63	'Une Rue Solitaire' – An Epilogue	Tom Paulin	Original poem	N/A

### Notes

\* Khazendar's work is only available in Arabic; there are no other published English translations of these three poems. Paulin went on to include fifteen translations of Khazendar's work, including these three from *The Road to Inver*, in *Love's Bonfire* (2012).

### Previous publication history

Paulin's translations have often been published previously, including in his own collections.

*The Faber Book of Political Verse* (1986) includes 'To a Political Poet' and 'Iambes VIII' (retitled 'From the Death Cell' in *The Road to Inver*). It also includes 'from Piers Plowman', sections of the translation 'Prologue' which appears in *The Road to Inver*.

'André Chénier', 'Symbolum', 'Voronezh' and 'Last Statement' all also appear in *The Faber Book of Political Verse*, before appearing again in *Fivemiletown* (1987). 'Chuckling it Away', 'from Landsflykt' and 'The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath' are also included in *Fivemiletown*.

'There are many wonders on this earth' appears first in Paulin's version of Sophocles' *Antigone* (*The Riot Act*, 1985) before it is included in *Fivemiletown*, and then (as 'Chorus') in *The Road to Inver*.

'A Nation, Yet Again' and 'From the Death Cell: Iambes VIII' appear in *Liberty Tree* (1983).

Paulin chose to include seven of his early translations in his first *Selected Poems* (1993): 'Symbolum', 'Vononezh', 'There are many wonders on this earth' ('Chorus' in *The Road to Inver*), 'The Caravans on Lüneburg Heath', 'Winds and Rivers', 'The gods of our new mythology' ('Prometheus on Mythology' in *The Road to Inver*) and 'Holy Mother, Themis, Earth' ('Prometheus' Last Speech' in *The Road to Inver*).

'Don't' and 'The Rooks' are included in *Walking a Line* (1994).

'Bournemouth', 'Le Crapaud', 'The Emigration of the Poets', 'Paris Ink Sketch' and 'Sentence Sound' all appear in *The Wind Dog* (1999).

'The Skeleton', 'My Name', 'The Emigration of the Poets' and 'Voronezh' all appear in *The Invasion Handbook* (2002).

'The Coastguard Station' was first published in *West47* (2002).

'Horse Chestnuts' was first published in *Columbia: A Journal of the Arts* (Fall 2002/Spring 2003) as 'An vollen Büschelzweigen'.

'The Road to Inver' was first published in *London Review of Books* (2003).

'The Emigration of the Poets' (1998), 'Bournemouth' (1999), 'The Skeleton' (2001), 'The Pipe' (2003), 'The Island in the North Sea' (2004), 'Sea Wind' (2004) and 'Contemplation 27' (2004) were all published in *The Times Literary Supplement*.