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“Bereft of its great poets”: Translation and its Legacies in Michael Hartnett’s *Farewell to English* (1975) *and O Bruadair* (1985)

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“Gaelic is my national language but not my mother tongue” (KIBERD, 1995, 253): the language question, thus defined by W. B. Yeats, has haunted and inspired generations of Irish poets and writers working in either language and faced with the decline of the Irish language and the rise of English in Ireland.[1] John Montague’s celebrated poetic image of the “grafted tongue” (MONTAGUE, 1995, 37) of the Irish poet writing in English, living and speaking proof of the success of English colonial language policy in Ireland, echoes the laments of seventeenth-century Gaelic or Irish-language poets who first felt the coming dominance of English. Translation has been central to poetic attempts to reclaim the heritage of Irish-language poetry in English for centuries, and underlies the canon of what is known of the Irish Literary Revival (CRONIN, 1996; WELCH, 1988; KIBERD, 1995, 155–165). Either directly or through translations, poets from Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory, to Austin Clarke, Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland, have drawn on the Irish tradition to constitute a specifically Irish poetry in English. This poetry, characterized by its repertoire of images, heroes and legends, its distinctive sonorities, as well as sound-patterns and metres transposed from Irish, resists the hegemony of strictly English literary traditions by defamiliarizing, to some extent, English-medium poetry.

Even against this rich culture of translation in modern Irish poetry in English, translation occupies a singularly important place in the poetry of Michael Hartnett. Hartnett first won notice for his translations of works such as the *The Hag of Beare* and other poems from Old Irish, but also for translations from other languages, including the *Tao* and a translation of Lorca’s *Gipsy Ballads* (HARTNETT, 1987b; SHIELDS, 2000, 127–144). In 1975, Hartnett declaimed his long poem “A Farewell to English” (“FE”) to a crowd at a poetry reading in Dublin and set out his intention “to court the language of my people” (*CW*, 147)[2] and to adopt Irish as his medium of poetic expression. “FE”, published in the collection *A Farewell to English* (*FE*) in the same year, is a lacerating critique of the failure of post-independence Ireland

to affirm its own identity, dramatized by Hartnett in the disappearance, as he writes in an elegy to his grandmother, an Irish-speaker, of "a language seldom spoken" (*CW*, 139): Irish. Hartnett was not a native speaker of Irish; fostered by his grandmother, he was to some degree exposed to the language at an early age as Walsh discusses in his documentary study (WALSH, 2012, 12–14). She becomes a totemic figure for the language and a premodern Gaelic culture in his poetry, as we shall see below. He published several collections in Irish, before again publishing new poetry in English in 1985 and thus becoming one of the few Irish poets of his generation admired for his Irish as well as English poetry. Criticism, with rare exceptions (SHIELDS, 2000), encouraged by the exclusion of the Irish poems and the translations from the 2001 *Collected Poems*, has tended to focus on the return to English in Hartnett's *Inchicore Haiku*, published in 1985 and the speaker's dramatization of the language question as a first-person psycho-drama and familial betrayal:

> My English dam bursts
> and out stroll all my bastards.
> Irish shakes its head (*CW*, 149).

1985, however, is also the year in which Hartnett published what would become the first in a trilogy of translations, each dedicated to a canonical Gaelic poet of early-modern Ireland: his *O Bruadair* (*OB*) presents selected translations of the canonical seventeenth-century poet, Dáibhí Ó Bruadair (c.1625–1698). In this article, I wish to explore Hartnett's response to the predicament of language, as articulated by Yeats, through the representation of translation in *FE* and through Hartnett's own practice of translation as evidenced in *OB*.

The history of poetic translation from Irish to English is far from a simple struggle of noble partisans resisting English linguistic hegemony, just as Irish political history cannot reasonably be reduced to simple binaries. Hartnett (b. 1941) remarks in his preface to *OB*, in a comment which bears on both types of history, that "like many Irish children [he] was reared on a diet of folktale, Republicanism and mediocre ballads" (*OB*, 9). The romantic tendencies of such sources remove the asperities of, for example, Irish participation in various stages of the colonial project. Crucially for the history of translation, by the 1940's, this material expressing national identity and culture was in English. The first "articulation of Irish identity and culture, on a national scale, in the English language" (CROSSON, 2008, 72) has been traced back to Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, an enormously influential work indebted metrically, musically

and thematically to the Gaelic tradition which it ultimately displaced (LUCY, 1978, 160–166, 176). The process by which Hartnett's childhood fare of "folktale, Republicanism and […] ballads" came to be produced in English and not in Irish is one allying, in shifting ways, translation and violence, in the sense given recent prominence (SAMOYAULT, 2020). As Cronin underlines in his study, *Translating Ireland*, translation in the Irish context can be seen at different times as both embodying and eliciting anticolonial and postcolonial cultural resistance.

Though some applications of postcolonial theories to Irish literary figures can be reductively schematic, perhaps especially in relation to Yeats (as discussed in BROWN, 2010, 14–26), such a paradigm seems particularly relevant for considering Hartnett's self-declared "attempt to restore and popularise" (*OB*, 14) in late twentieth-century Ireland the poet Ó Bruadair, whose poetry records and responds to colonization. Cromwellian conquest; the dispossession of the Gaelic lords; the end of the system of traditional poetic patronage of bards; and the increasing prestige of the English language are the historical materials of his work (GRIFFIN-WILSON, 2009). Furthermore, a postcolonial lens reflects Hartnett's own attitudes to Irish poetry and translation in English, and as such, is helpful for understanding the poetic historiography of translation that he sketches in *FE* and enacts in *OB*.[3] The model of the translator, correlated to a particular stage of colonial experience, derived by Tymoczko in her study of translations of early Irish saga literature into English in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, helps clarify Hartnett's attitudes to translation as a form of cultural-nationalist resistance, as well, crucially, as his practice. Tymoczko describes the "assimilationist strategy" corresponding to the "introjection of the colonizers' standards in a colonized mentality: through the assumption of the values of the colonizing power and the submerging of native standards to those of the colonizer". In contrast, drawing on Frantz Fanon, what she terms "ostensive translation" marks the "emergence of a decolonized identity", overcoming the binary and narrow nationalism of opposition to the colonial Other (TYMOCZKO, 1999, 178).[4] The resources of the target language are "harnessed and enlarged" in order to "signal and define […] an Irish identity within an English-language translation". Though Tymoczko concentrates on a "defamiliarized lexis" in her study (180), in considering Hartnett and ostensive translation, metrics will be seen to play a central role.

These terms clarify Hartnett's *parti-pris* particularly in relation to his "bugbear Mr Yeats", as he names him in "FE" (*CW*, 145). The extent to which Yeats' use of Irish-language materials

was salutary or self-serving, an instance of nation-building or further colonial exploitation, is highly contested (TITLEY, 1981, 126; BROWN, 2010, 14–26; O'NEILL, 2012, 42–46). Hartnett, in line with poets like Patrick Kavanagh (KAVANAGH, 2004, 259), favours the second view in *FE*, and refuses the possible hybrid identity of the 'Anglo-Irish' label. This term can refer generally to the literature of the Revival, but also more particularly to the Irish Protestant upper class, as distinct from the Catholic middle and lower classes. In *FE*, Yeats, representing metonymically a particular "Anglo-Irish" (*CW*, 143) mode of poetic translation from Irish, is subjected to a poetic flyting.

I propose to trace the representation of translation as resistance first through observation of different moments of translation in *FE*: a series of visionary moments account for language loss in Irish history and the psychic effects on the speaker. This prepares the ground for the title-poem where abusive translation by Yeats is itself resisted, but gives rise to a stringent self-examination through the exploration of the relation of Hartnett's persona to translation. The particular silence which falls on translation after this collection is broken by the new direction announced with *OB*.

1. Visions of language failure and loss in *A Farewell to English*

The very title of *FE* implicitly designates the Irish language as the unspoken Other of the collection. This holds true for the twenty-one poems which precede the title-poem in the 2001 *Collected Poems* (twenty-two in the original publication). The opening poems in *FE* evoke consistently the "disintegration" of the poet-speaker, shadowed by threatening, even violent failures of language and meaning. This danger gradually emerges as tied to a damaging transmission between English and Irish modes of expression.

In the opening poem, "The Buffeting", a hallucinatory illness gives rise to an illumination, perceived beyond the grasp of the poet's language, but which nevertheless retains a mysterious but clearly ancient "meaning":

> I sat down there,
> huddling my broken innards,
> looking at points I barely focused on
> […]
> But I was here for some reason;

> there was some meaning in this disintegration,
> some old meaning (*CW*, 115–116).

A near-illumination, or Joycean epiphany, concludes “Signal from the World”, as the speaker is thrown after a climb. The failure of illumination is again attributed to a failure of the poet’s language:

> Then there was that crack
> Like a light bulb violently blowing.
> And an undesignable shape —
> Seemingly three-dimensional —
> Appeared between me and the light,
> Comparable to no familiar symbol.
> It almost named itself.
> But I could put on name on it (*CW*, 119).

An image of the poet “climbing upwards into time” and “backwards into tradition” in the poem “Struts” (meaning bars or beams designed to support weight) ends in violence done to the poet. The Irish language is not explicitly mentioned in the contradictory movement towards “time” and “tradition”; when a rope “gives,/implodes”, then “tradition, time and fire/mix” and the poet is flung against the rockface: “the hill unskins the knuckles” (*CW*, 118). The tension, as yet of unknown origin, surrounding language and violence, is repeated in the obscure, quasi-apocalyptic vision of “Horse Breaking Loose”. Caught in the “violent smoke” and “disintegrating sparks”, the speaker registers his experience of a chaos most characterized by alien, foreign language and customs, perhaps situated in an archaic world (“the long outlandish coats” recalling the “ancient overcoats” of “Struts”):

> All this violence and men running passed me by
> with lashing whips of wire
> and long outlandish coats
> with voice and weapons most barbarous and uncouth (*CW*, 120).

The figuring of the exhaustion of the poet’s idiom climaxes in the three poems preceding “FE” which thematize the limits or failures of translation.

“Mrs Halpin and the Lightning” and “Death of an Irishwoman” are elegies to the poet’s grandmother (so identified in an earlier and uncollected poem, “For My Grandmother, Bridget Halpin”, *CW*, 52). The poems attempt to capture the alterity of this woman, her at least partial

belonging to an ancient dispensation. The reader is led by the occurrence of untranslated terms to understand that this Otherness is grounded inseparably in a language and world view, a Gaelic *mentalité*, into which the poet enters with a new-found fluency and confidence. The first refusal to translate relates to a placename. The sonorities of Irish placenames, generally meaningless in their Anglicized versions, are a well-recognized means of reifying an inalienable, ancient, even mystic, Irishness in Irish poetry in both languages (Denvir, 2005). The place, inextricable from the lore concerning it, the name that gives it meaning, resists the domestication or globalization that have been identified as dangers associated with translation (VENUTI, 2008, 15) and, as the subtitle of a work by Emily Apter has it, the "politics of untranslatability" (APTER, 2013, 175–189).

The use of Irish declares that the world of Mrs Halpin is pregnant with pre-scientific significance, which apparently resists translation. An official Anglicization of the placename *Mullach a' Radhairc* (literally 'the hilltop of the prospect'[5]) exists: the Mullaghareirk Mountains. As it stands, untranslated in the English text, *Mullach a' Radhairc* is constituted for the reader as an untranslatable, that is a term "in the throes of mistranslation, non-translation, or ceaseless retranslation"[6] resisting its sonorous but meaningless Anglicization (CASSIN, 2014; APTER, 2022, 7):

> When thunder entered like an Easter priest
> And draped its purple on Mullach a' Radhairc
> […]
> Mrs Halpin with a goose's wing
> flailed holy water drops
> Like the steel tips of holy whips
> To beat the demons from the room (*CW*, 138).

Her "fear" of the lightning was not ignorance of meteorology; it was rather fear borne of an ancient knowledge ("Mrs Halpin knew the reason why") particular to a land and a language:

> these were the ancient Irish gods
> she had deserted for the sake of Christ (*CW*, 138).

The following poem returns to the theme of knowledge and translation in treating the same elegiac subject, a here-unnamed "Irishwoman". The woman is acknowledged to be both "[i]gnorant" and "pagan", albeit concessively: this is far from the whole truth. Her ignorance and paganism are expressed by a word purposely untranslated. The word itself, *Púca*, a

malicious sprite of Irish folklore, had been Anglicised as far back as 1824 (*OED Online*, n.d., s.v. Pooka); Hartnett, however, posits the term as a carefully italicized untranslatable:

> Ignorant, in the sense
> she ate monotonous food
> and thought the world was flat,
> and pagan, in the sense
> she knew the things that moved
> at night were neither dogs nor cats
> but *púca*s and darkfaced men,
> she nevertheless had fierce pride.
> […]
> I loved her from the day she died.
> She was a summer dance at the crossroads.
> She was a card game where a nose was broken.
> She was a song that nobody sings.
> She was a house ransacked by soldiers.
> She was a language seldom spoken.
> She was a child's purse, full of useless things (*CW*, 139).

In the longer, relaxed, song rhythms of the conclusion, with the fluency and confidence of anaphora and the important linking of the rhyme-words ("died/pride", "broken"/"spoken", "sings"/"things") the poet identifies the Irishwoman metonymically with a Gaelic world: its culture and leisure, its historical violence, its language and the near-extinction of the latter. They are contemplated, in the poet's perspective, as identically vulnerable, loved and wronged.

The poem contains a clear formal division: 15 short lines, followed by 6 longer lines. On the page and to the ear, this imitates the shape of a type of poem which emerged in Irish in the seventeenth century, an amalgamation of the strict syllabic metrics of the *dán díreach* (strict poem) and the looser accentual metres of the *amhrán* (song), practised notably by Dáibhí Ó Bruadair and other poets like Seathrún Céitinn (KIBERD, 2001, 25–38). An overriding concern with translation emerges from my reading of this poem, in the tension between the resistance of an untranslatable idiom and the desire to translate captured in the inchoate transposition of Gaelic metrical structures.

"A Visit to Croom, 1745" is a further poem in a visionary mode: here the poet-speaker travels back in time to the townland of Croom. As the poet's own note specifies, this is an "Area in County Limerick associated with [the poet] Andrias Mac Craith (d. 1795); also, seat of the last 'courts' of Gaelic poetry; also, my birthplace" (*CW*, 245). 1745 marks the end of hope for

restoration of Gaelic Ireland with the defeat of the Jacobites and the Young Pretender, Charles Stuart (Ó CUIV, 1986, 406–407). The speaker reaches his destination, a crumbling, verminous cottage, which nevertheless seems to hold an intrinsically literary charm for the speaker: "Whitewashed walls were silver/limeflakes opened like scissored pages" (*CW*, 140). Inside, he meets "Five Gaelic faces" who "stopped their talk" at his entering. The encounter is a crushing defeat, shadowing the Jacobite losses that year. The choice of language, as in the historical examples studied by Cronin, shows the "linguistic consequences of political defeat for the native Irish". The poet bears imaginative witness to the defeat of the Irish language, as its last court of poets marks its submission to an English king by exchanging their language for a corrupt version of his. In Cronin's terms, "[t]he colonial Other is translated into terms of the imperial Self" (CRONIN, 1996, 92):

> I had walked a long time
> in the mud to hear
> an avalanche of turf fall down
> […]
> now to hear a Gaelic court
> talk broken English of an English king.
> It was a long way
> to come for nothing (*CW*, 140).

2. Anglo-Irish Translation in "A Farewell to English"

"FE" is a poem in seven sections, alternately elegiac, satirical and lyrical, moving back and forwards in time to survey, in subjective terms, Ireland's continuing relation to its past through language and translation. The figure of the grandmother recurs and inspires the poet in the first section of "FE": "her mountainy body tripped the gentle/ mechanism of verse". Thus prompted, he writes: "I sunk my hands into tradition/ sifting the centuries for words". The words which came were in Irish and left untranslated in the text:

> *mánla*, *séimh*, *dubhfholtach*, *álainn*, *caoin*:
> they came like grey slabs of slate breaking from
> an ancient quarry, *mánla*, *séimh*, *dubhfholtach*,
> *álainn*, *caoin*, crashing on the cogs (*CW*, 141).[7]

Quarrying is a metaphor of exploitation, posing the ethics of translation of these staple-terms of love poetry in Irish; in its development here, the metaphor also poses the question of the

English-language poet's capacity to handle these terms. These word-slabs "[crash] on the cogs" and "[clog]/ the intricate machine". In an ironic, deflating image, the hubristic poet is flung as "Pegasus" rears up, the too-heavy load of "foreign" words throwing the poet back "on the gravel of Anglo-Saxon". "FE" immediately foregrounds dangers of shifting between languages, incarnated subjectively in the "I" of the poem.

Another vision in section 2 builds up the righteous anger that will be directed at Yeats in the following section. The poet sees a group of silent old men attired in antiquated Irish fashion with straw-rope belts and the by now tell-tale coats: "*sugán*[8] belts and long black coats/with big ashplants". They are identified as poets by their destinations, all close to his native Limerick: "then took their roads/ to Croom, Meentogues and Cahirmoyle" (*CW*, 142). In a note, he identifies Meentogues as the birthplace of Aogán Ó Rathaile and Cahirmoyle as the home of John Bourke, a patron of Ó Bruadair (*CW*, 245). As they turn to look back at the speaker, he sees, concentrated in their eyes, the wrong done to the ancient lineage they represent:

> They looked back once,
> black moons of misery
> sickling their eye-sockets,
> a thousand years of history
> in their pockets (*CW*, 142).

"Can we not build up a national tradition, a national literature, which shall be none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language?" (KIBERD, 1995, 155). This question, evidently rhetorical, was asked by Yeats in 1892 and defined his national literary project. It also defines the fundamental divergence between Yeats and Hartnett's views at this stage in the latter's career. English prose translations of Irish poetry gave Yeats his vocation (KIBERD, 1995, 155–156; CRONIN, 1996, 137–139, 142) but he had failed to learn the language. The "meaningless euphonies" (HEHIR, 1983, 94) of "Clooth-na-Bare", a placename invented by Yeats, are one example of what one critic has called his "cod Gaelic" (O'NEILL, 2012, 46); the contrast with Hartnett's humble reverence for the language, grounded in accurate knowledge of it, could hardly be clearer. My reading of this third, satirical section of "FE" is intertextual, seeing it as a poetic rebellion against a Yeatsian mode of textual appropriation.

Yeats gave famous instructions to the Irish poets to come in his last poem, "Under Ben Bulben": "Irish poets, learn your trade/ Sing whatever is well made" (YEATS, 1990, 400). Hartnett's

poem is a deformed, irregularly-rhymed, thirteen-line sonnet: it aims at a brutal truth to contrast with what is painted as the heady, perhaps intoxicating, but ultimately false Yeatsian recipe:

> Chef Yeats, that master of the use of herbs
> could raise mere stew to a glorious height,
> pinch of saga, soupçon of philosophy
> carefully stirred in to get the flavour right,
> and cook a poem around the basic verbs.
> Our commis-chefs attend and learn the trade,
> bemoan the scraps of Gaelic that they know:
> add to a simple Anglo-Saxon stock
> Cuchulainn's marrow-bones to marinate,
> a dash of O Rathaille simmered slow,
> a glass of University hic-haec-hoc;
> sniff and stand back and proudly offer you
> the celebrated Anglo-Irish stew (*CW*, 143).

The association of cooking with false rhetoric goes back to ancient times (PLATO, 1967, 465b–c) but the conceit intertextually echoes the scorn contained in the list of ingredients in the last lines of Patrick Kavanagh's "Memory of Brother Michael", which evokes a Gaelic scholar of the seventeenth century (KAVANAGH, 2004, 118). I see a key to the poem in the translation of another seventeenth-century figure, already evoked, though not named, in the preceding section: "O Rathaile".

Aogán Ó Rathaile was a poet educated in the bardic tradition but who, through colonization, was deprived of his patron, of his position and of his public. Frank O'Connor published much-anthologized translations of some of his poetry, some of which was written, according to O'Connor, in close collaboration with Yeats (O'CONNOR, 1959, vii, 107). In a poem considered his epitaph, Ó Rathaile, clear-eyed yet unbowed, acknowledges the death of his social world with a final boast of his ancient Gaelic poetic inheritance. He chooses to be buried with his McCarthy patrons. I give the original as well as the O'Connor/Yeats version:

> rachad 'na bhfasc le searc na laoch don chill,
> na flatha fá raibh mo shean roimh éag do Chríost" (Ó TUAMA, 1981, 166).
>
> I shall go after the heroes, ay, into the clay —
> My fathers followed theirs before Christ was crucified (O'CONNOR, 1959, 107).

In the apparently anti-colonial "The Curse of Cromwell" published in his *Last Poems* (1939), Yeats, a member of the privileged Anglo-Irish class, condemns Cromwell's "murderous crew"

(YEATS, 1990, 350). He goes on to extensively align his unhappy experience after partial Irish independence in 1922 in what he saw as the philistine Free State, with the decline of the bardic class, and Ó Rathaile in particular. It is as if Yeats, like Hartnett's speaker, looked into Ó Rathaile's eyes and saw his own condition reflected in the "black moons of misery" (*CW*, 142). Translation is the means of his rapprochement with Ó Rathaile. The last line of the stanza is a line of the latter's, translated and made famous by O'Connor (in collaboration with Yeats), converted to the third person:

> You ask what I have found, and far and wide I go:
> Nothing but Cromwell's house and Cromwell's murderous crew,
> The lovers and the dancers are beaten into the clay,
> And the tall men and the swordsmen and the horsemen, where are they?
> And there is an old beggar wandering in his pride —
> His fathers served their fathers before Christ was crucified (YEATS, 1990, 350).

Translation is here a means of a self-centred commemoration, an appropriation of Ó Rathaile which elides the differences of language or culture so essential to Hartnett to establish a continuity between the conditions of the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish poets.

To return to "FE" and its imagery, Yeats shows himself a "master" in his use of a translation of Ó Rathaile to give a certain flavour – "a dash of O Rathaille simmered slow" – but this approach is vigorously condemned. The political line of Hartnett's poem, given away in the ethnic/racial terms employed, is to reject "Anglo-Irish stew", as a merely tricked-up version of "Anglo-Saxon stock". The accusation seems easily-formulated in postcolonial terms: Yeats and his train of "commis-chefs" have an assimilationist approach to "Gaelic" material ("scraps" of the language, mangled like "Clooth-na-Bare"; the legend of Cuchulainn), that, though modulated to allow for a delusory "Anglo-Irish" difference, in fact reproduces the colonized Irish self in terms of the colonizer. The native bard is seamlessly domesticated in perpetuating a colonial order as Yeats dares paint himself as "the last voice of feudalism" (O'CONNOR, 1959, 107). The first term in the hyphenated identities dominates and the "celebrated Anglo-Irish stew" becomes a counter-model to be resisted.

Christian sectarianism (Catholic/Protestant) does not seem to bear on this judgement of Yeats; love, knowledge and use of the language are the essential identity markers which emerge and which disqualify Yeats who never rose above "cod Gaelic". It is interesting in that perspective

to consider the Irish parallel to recent debates, sparked notably by translation of the Black, American poet Amanda Gorman, opposing similar subaltern identity and universalist criteria in selecting a translator. The debate is summed up in the title of a recent anthology of contributions to the debate: *Faut-il se ressembler pour traduire ?* (SAINT-LOUBERT et al., 2021). Hartnett, in 1975, adopts an anti-universalist position, resisting Yeatsian cultural appropriation which serves a purpose at odds with Ó Rathaile's Gaelic ideology.

In the following section, Hartnett offers an alternative practice of translation while continuing his rough satire, with an imagined genealogy for contemporary Ireland and the Irish. Reading intertextually, the following analysis will suggest how an obsessive leitmotiv of translation seems to propel the poet irrevocably towards a renunciation of poetry in English. The central motif is an image of Ireland from the works of Seathrún Céitinn, already infamously exploited by James Joyce. In his poem "Óm sceol ar ardaigh Fáil" ("At the news from Fál's high plain"), Céitinn (1580-c.1644) cries out against the shame that Ireland, in the traditional personification as the goddess, Fódla, now nourishes a people unworthy of her noble lineage. The abuse of Ireland is captured in an image wrought by an aristocratic mind, disgusted by the advent of a degraded foreign stock and consequent betrayal of Ireland by the Irish. Céitinn's text is followed by the translation of Thomas Kinsella:

> A Fhódla phráis, is náir nach follas díbhse
> gur córa tál ar sháirshliocht mhodhail Mhíle ;
> deor níor fágadh i gclár do bhrollaigh mhínghil
> nár dheolsad ál gach cránach coigríche.
>
> O brazen Fódla, it is shameful you do not see
> it were fitter to nourish Míle's sweet high race.
> not a drop is left in the plain of your smooth bright breast
> — drained dry by the litter of every alien sow (Ó TUAMA, 1981, 84–85).

With publication of the first critical edition of the poem in 1900, the image could chime with the aspirations of the Irish nationalist movement. The brutality of the image certainly struck James Joyce, for he reached for this image, and inverted it, in representing Stephen Dedalus's resistance against nationalism of any kind in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (KIBERD, 2001, 31). Urged to put "Ireland first", Dedalus shoots back that Ireland is not the victim but the guilty party: "Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow" (JOYCE, 1992, 203).

A similarly vituperative spirit can be perceived in Hartnett's translation of Céitinn's motif in the potted history of the failure of Irish nationalism, focused on language revival, up to and after independence in section 4: "our Gaelic/ or our Irish dream" is a "fate" at last in Irish hands but which culminates in a bourgeois and bureaucratic "art/ of writing forms in triplicate" (*CW*, 144). The weak half-rhyme "fate"/"triplicate" gives the sense of opportunity lost. The image of the sow is translated and developed in lines which can claim to modernize Céitinn's own Gaelic ideology; it becomes an obsessive leitmotiv, recurring in sections 6 and 7. The violence of the colonial fate, with a Joycean recognition of Irish collusion in its own misfortunes, lead Hartnett to a totally unJoycean focal point; that is, the fate of the language:

> We woke one morning
> in a Dublin digs
> and found we were descended
> from two pigs.
> The brimming Irish sow
> who would allow
> any syphilitic boar
> to make her hind-end sore
> was Mammy.
> Daddy was an English boar
> who wanted nothing
> but
> a sweaty rut
> and ownership of any offspring.
> We knew we had been robbed
> but were not sure that we lost
> the right to have a language
> or the right to be the boss (*CW*, 144).

The boar's claim to "ownership of any offspring" of this union calls into doubt the very possibility of any legitimate use of the colonizer's language, including translation, notwithstanding the ideological affinity between Hartnett and Céitinn. Hartnett's thinking on language as the saving grace of Irish humanity, post-independence, is wracked by the leitmotiv of the pig. In section 6, "Gaelic" is opposed to the falsity and hollowness of late capitalism and its "boardrooms of mock oak" (*CW*, 146). "Gaelic can save the collective first person ("our", "we") from the bestiality of the herd of pigs that is imposed on a colonized people:

> Gaelic is our final sign that
> we are human, therefore not a herd (*CW*, 146).

The translated leitmotiv is also a leitmotiv of translation, as the relation between the bardic poets and the English language poet in Ireland is rehearsed and the poetic self and translator into English identified with the bestial other, the "offspring" of colonization. Despite the edification of poets from other cultures and languages discovered through English translation in section 5 (""my Lorca", "Pasternak", *CW*, 145), a more forceful duty of memory imposes again the image of the bardic poets reduced to trading in swine in section 6. The poet is clear-eyed and humble about the dim prospects of popular revival, given the dominance of the mercantile and the material ("the perfect language to *sell* pigs in", emphasis added). Yet, he announces his intention to honour the memory of those "great men" and "to court the language" of his people:

> I am not a maker of new things.
> I cannot hew
> out of the vacuumcleaner minds
> the sense of serving dead kings.
> […]
> But I will not see
> great men go down
> who walked in rags
> from town to town
> finding English a necessary sin
> the perfect language to sell pigs in.
> I have made my choice
> and leave with little weeping:
> I have come with meagre voice
> to court the language of my people (*CW*, 147).

The final conclusion is of an ethical untranslatability and the necessity of a renunciation of English. Through acts of translation and a sustained poetic reflection on translation, Hartnett arrives at this particular ethical aporia. The sense of defeat in the last lines quoted indicate that this renunciation is not an act of political resistance, but of resistance on behalf of a culture, fronted by family and poets, and borne by a language.

3. "Survival" and "Betrayal" in *O Bruadair*

In a preface to his translation, Hartnett describes his "obsession" (*OB*, 9) with Ó Bruadair, which began somewhat fancifully when he was a child, impressed that a famous poet could have come from his own locality; he dates serious engagement with his "idol" (*OB*, 10) to 1962.

Aside from formal difficulties in translating such technically precise poetry (to be discussed below), Hartnett had difficulty with an aspect of Ó Bruadair's outlook as an "unrepentant aristocrat" (*OB*, 12). This did not chime with Hartnett, from a working-class, small-town background, and a caustic critic of Ireland's post-independence established order. His resolution of the broader political problem, as so often in his work, has an intense personal resonance. Ó Bruadair was a client-poet of a disappearing Gaelic aristocracy. Hartnett in his preface justifies the latter's disdain for Irish peasants who embraced the English language (and its customs) as arising from the clear threat to Ó Bruadair's own position. He concludes:

> If he is anti-democratic it is because he confused survival with betrayal. He was concerned with culture.
> He would not have liked our Ireland (*OB*, 15).

If Ó Bruadair mistook "survival" for "betrayal", not "betrayal" but "survival" seems to be Hartnett's oblique comment here on his return to English in "our Ireland". The poems selected and translated for the volume certainly visit again and again the chiasmus between Ó Bruadair's early-modern denunciations of the coming power of English and laments for bardic poetry and Hartnett's contemporary translations of these into English. As an example of this foregrounding, the volume's opening lines – "Bereft of its great poets"/ our old world's in darkness" – are drawn from a poem from the end of Ó Bruadair's career, in the third volume of the critical edition which Hartnett used (Ó Bruadair, 1910–1917, vol. 3.4, henceforth *DBB*). Seen in this light, the *OB* volume seems as lacerating of the poetic self as the lines quoted above from *Inchicore Haiku*. It wholly revises the view of translation in *FE* explored above, acknowledging and perhaps ultimately espousing the condition of being a "turncoat" (*OB*, 24). In *OB*, I wish to argue, translation is more than possible: it may be necessary, a question of "survival". Translation can attain to poetry if the translator "loves the author more than he loves himself". Beyond vague sentiment, Hartnett's ideal can only be realized "within the strictures laid down by the original author" (*OB*, 13); that is, by replicating the complex syllabic and accentual metres of the original language in English. I wish to go over in some detail Hartnett's estranging metrical procedures in English in some short poems in order to come to a definition of translation in *OB*.[9]

In each case, I will give Ó Bruadair's metres and some of the classical rules pertaining to them. In the opening poem "Bereft of its great poets" ("D'aithle na bhfileadh n-uasal"), the metre of

the first two stanzas is *rannaigheacht bheag* (little versification) while the last stanza is in *amhrán* or song metre (*DBB*, 3.5). Visually, in Irish this gives two stanzas made up of short lines, followed by a stanza of long lines; it is a deliberate shape immediately evident on Hartnett's page:

> Bereft of its great poets
> our old world's in darkness.
> The orphans of those masters
> offer answers that lack sharpness.
>
> Their books are sadly mildewed —
> books that were not flippant —
> their lore unjustly *passé*,
> though lore of wisdom-drinkers.
>
> I pity the man who must witness the fate of himself,
> now that poets are gone, who valued both wisdom and verse:
> while their sons retain not one jot of that lore in their heads
> old volumes disintegrate, dusty and mouldy, on shelves (*OB*, 17).[10]

The principal requirements of this *rannaigheacht bheag* quatrain form are: lines of seven syllables, the end-word being of two syllables, with rhyme occurring between *b* and *d*, while "*ac* consonate with them". There should be two internal rhymes in each couplet, while the final word of *c* rhymes internally with a word in *d*. Two words should alliterate in each line (KNOTT, 1974, 13–15). Considerable effort has been taken to conform to some if not all of these "strictures" to reproduce the sonic experience and variation of Ó Bruadair's lines and stanza-structure. The lines are of seven syllables (except l. 4, eight syllables and l. 6, seven syllables) with disyllabic end-words. In the first quatrain, *bd* rhyme, while *acbd* consonate (sibilance). In the first quatrain at least, the stressed "mas" of *c* rhymes internally with the stressed "ans" of *d*; in the second, the internal rhymes are the repetitions of "book" and "lore" in each line of the respective couplets. Two words alliterate in every line of the poem. The stanza in *amhrán* metre is looser, based on the repetition of the same accentuated vowels in each line in the order [(_) a _ _ ɪ _ _ ɪ _ _ é _ ú] (*DBB*, 3.5). Hartnett varies the vowels but sticks to the basic five-stress pattern, augmented with notable alliteration, assonance and internal rhymes.

Translation is a means of acknowledging Ó Bruadair's tragedy: in Hartnett's version the later poets are "orphans" of the "masters", not simply their children ("clann"). The precision employed in translating Ó Bruadair's reproach is expiatory of the abandonment of Irish, even though his "answers lack sharpness". Hartnett moves the fate of the individual to opening line

of the *amhrán* stanza (l. 10 in the original): he gives prominence to the image of a solitary survivor, a traitor perhaps, but one perpetuating the metrical memory of Ó Bruadair's caste. The suppression of the original dedication (for the children of Cúchonnacht O Dálaigh, *DBB*, 3.4) facilitates reading the seventeenth-century occasional poem as a comment on the very conditions of its translation.

There are many further examples of Hartnett's care in translating metres in poems which bitterly lament the rise of English and the adoption of English customs. To facilitate metrical analysis, I will take one of a pair of one-quatrain poems. The order of the critical edition (*DBB*, 1.18) has been reversed in *OB* inversed to prioritize the predominance of "béarla" ("English") and I will focus on this poem.[11]

> Pity the man who English lacks,
> Now turncoat Ormonde's made a come-back
> As I have to live here, I now wish
> To swap my poems for squeaky English (*OB*, 24).[12]

The metre in question is *deibhide*, with an irregular eighth syllable in the second line (*DBB*, 1.19). The *deibhide* quatrain composed of "four heptasyllabic lines, *a* riming with *b*, *c* and *d*." Importantly, *deibhide* rhymes are between words of unequal syllabic length; more importantly still for what will follow, the form demands that a stressed syllable rhymes with an unstressed syllable (KNOTT, 1974, 18–19). Hartnett, perhaps because of the metrically irregular second line in the original, focuses on rhyme. The rhyme scheme *ab*, *bc* is preserved. In also maintaining the rhyme between stressed and unstressed syllables, he transposes Irish versification in a way which violates the tradition of English prosody and disturbs the natural accentuation of the disyllabic rhyme-words. "Come-back" and "English" are stressed on the first syllable; the pull of the rhyme-words "lacks" and "wish" produces a confusion in English pronunciation owing to the strong Irish metrical structure: Irish writes back, as it were, against the canon of fluency in translation identified by Venuti (2008, 16).

By affronting in translation Ó Bruadair's designated enemies of Gaelic Ireland, Hartnett's speaker subjects himself to Ó Bruadair's irony on those who abandoned Irish for English. His close translation is caught up with the key terms from his preface to *OB*: "betrayal" as he sides with the "turncoat Ormonde" (James Butler, Duke of Ormonde), even as the ironic plea of compromise in the name of "survival" ("As I have to live here") echoes literally Hartnett's

return to English. Close reading of these translations repays the effort, as it gives solid grounds for considering Hartnett's translation, in Tymoczko's term, an "ostensive" one. She compares this type of translation to the "emergence of a decolonized identity in which the dyadic relationship of colonized/colonizer is superseded" (TYMOCZKO, 1999, 178): Hartnett's translation points to its own hybridity, substantially incorporating, through knowledge of the language, the Gaelic metrical and thematic heritage into English, the language of "most of the men [and women] of Éireann" (*OB*, 25) in Hartnett's century. Kiberd, referring to Hartnett's linguistic background between English and Irish, calls it a "hyphenated world, neither fully Gaelic nor fully anglicized" (KIBERD, 2006, 34). Shields sees Hartnett's embrace of translation as a celebration of his "existence as a hybrid being" (SHIELDS, 2000, 141). Coming to terms with a post-Yeatsian Anglo-Irish poetic identity is not a smooth or self-sparing procedure in Hartnett's work:

> To see the art of poetry lost
> with those who honoured it with thought —
> its true form lowered to a silly chant,
> sought after by the dilettante.
> […]
> God of Heaven, preserve and keep
> the one man who protects from need
> the climbers who scale true poetry
> and avoid the lovers of English and ease.
>
> *Ámen* (*OB*, 27).

This demanding technical translation of Ó Bruadair, designed to "[love] the original more than the [translator]" appears one of the chief means of treading the line between "survival" and "betrayal" as a poet in a primarily English-speaking country.[13]

This linguistic settlement does not, however, imply complacency; the texts of Ó Bruadair/Hartnett remain those of a gadfly, probing with a Juvenalian energy the state of the nation beyond the colonial binary. In these versions notably, the English-language reader discovers a satiric voice honed against Irish society in the seventeenth century, which through certain translation choices, redoubles its harangues against contemporary Ireland.

A case in point is the translation of "Nach iongantach é mar theannta grinn" ("All the same, it would make you laugh"). The laughter in question is the bitter laugh at the ridicule of a new social order, judged by the standards of an older one, which knows its days are numbered. Ó

Bruadair's text echoes, as Mac Erlean states (*DBB*, 2.35), ironically, a song of joy, marking Maytime celebrations of the coming summer, and still known and sung in Ireland today (THE GLOAMING, 2014, tr. 10). Traditional "games" and "dances" ("craobh", "damhsa") have disappeared while a new "cacophony" ("camchor") reigns. The anti-capitalist, anti-materialist vein in *FE* is renewed in *OB* as Ó Bruadair's lament concerning poets' loss of status and his own personal *déclassement* has a broader social application in Hartnett's translation into contemporary idiom:

> Do goineadh ár gcléir le sainnt fa ríor
> is d'imthigh an éigse i bhfanntais bhrígh,
> turrainn is géire dhamhsa dhíobh
> gan simide céille i gceann gan mhaoin (*DBB*, 2.34).[14]
>
> Our priests are scarred with greed and pride,
> and all our poets are cut down to size:
> but worst of all, I realise
> that no one poor is considered wise (*OB*, 26).

The insistence on the contemporary comes through strongly in the translation of the stanza railing against a personification of the world; Mac Erlean's archaicizing, decorous version provides an interesting counterpoint to Hartnett's opposed strategy:

> Tubuist a shaoghail fhallsa an fhill
> id ghoile 's id thaobh nach cabhrann linn,
> cár miste dhuit féile leamsa luighe,
> 's gurab ionann do ghaolsa thall is tíos (*DBB*, 2.36).
>
> O deceitful world of falsehood, who deniest aid to me,
> May distressing pains assail thee in thy body and thy side;
> Shouldst thou suffer any loss, if bounty shared her couch with me,
> Seeing that thou carest little what thy kindred's fortune be (*DBB*, 2.37).
>
> Blast you, world, you sneaky bitch,
> May your guts and liver in agony split!
> What's it to you if I become rich?
> You don't care when your children slip (*OB*, 26).

The last point to be made relates to the refrain of stanzas 1 and 5, which inverts the values of the song mentioned above. The refrain of the song (often given also as the title) is "Thugamar féin an samhradh linn" ("We brought the summer-garland with us"). Ó Bruadair writes, "acht gur chuireamar féin an samhradh i gcill" ("but that we ourselves have put the summer-garland in the grave") and "acht gur chuireamar féin an samhradh dhinn" ("but that we ourselves have thrown the summer-garland away") (*DBB*, 2.34, 36). Hartnett's translation makes various

changes to augment the impact on a contemporary audience of this refrain. It omits the last two stanzas (which invoke the intervention of Jesus and the Virgin Mary) so that this refrain concludes the entire poem; it repeats the refrain unchanged from stanza 1; a dash in the second-last line simplifies the syntax of the stanza and obviates any necessary grammatical changes; the use of italics, lastly, focuses the eye of the contemporary Irish reader:

> The once-proud men of this land have swapped
> giving for gaining, culture for crap:
> no tunes on the pipes, no music on harps —
> we *ourselves* have buried the summer at last (*OB*, 26).[15]

No external force or foe is to be blamed for the state of the country. '(We) Ourselves' is the translation of *Sinn Féin*, the political party founded in 1905 which was the principal political vehicle of the Irish independence movement, in the run-up to the declaration of the Irish Free State in 1922. Highlighting the English translation of the party's name is a searing reminder of the shallow virtue-signalling in relation to language revival which prevented the "Gaelic/ or our Irish dream" from being realized in "FE" (*CW*, 144, 146). Hartnett wittily plays between languages in translation, laying bare, ostensively, both linguistic constituents of his hyphenated identity. His translation of Ó Bruadair works to demonstrate the relevance of bardic voices to contemporary Ireland, wherein translation is a means of valuably repossessing that Gaelic heritage, while orienting English poetic language and appealing for a new political future.

In addition to translating the bardic poets Ó Bruadair, Pádraig Haicéad (HARTNETT, 1993) and, finally, Ó Rathaile (HARTNETT, 1998), Hartnett also went on to translate from far outside the Irish and what has been called the "Anglocentric prism" (NÍ FHRIGHIL et al., 2020, 134): the Hungarian Juhász Ferenc and John of the Cross into Irish, under the Irish version of his name, Ó hAirtnéide (HARTNETT, 1987a, 1991); Heinrich Heine and Catullus, *inter alia*, into English (HARTNETT, 2003). In so doing, his translations made a singular contribution to a transnational literary culture in both languages. Within this canon, the *OB* volume remains singularly important. In the passage from *FE* to *OB*, there is a creative and ethical reckoning with the language question and translation. Ostensively transposing his interpretation of the "strictures laid down by the original author" for his present-day audience is the means by which Hartnett arrives at a legitimate form of Anglo-Irish translation.

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[1] For a wide-ranging study of the language question in modern Irish-language literature, see Nic Eoin (2005).

[2] All quotations from Hartnett's poetry, as distinct from his translations, will be from this edition (henceforth *CW*).

[3] Kathleen Shields briefly reviews the similarities between the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Hartnett who both bade farewell to English; she maintains that “post-colonial writings from India are the most pertinent to the Irish situation” (SHIELDS, 2000, 135–138).

Kiberd delineates in greater depth the similarities and differences between them. Given their shared use of English, a comparison between Hartnett and Chinua Achebe seems more than justified.

[4] Her assimilationist model is derived, to a small degree, from Yeats's practice (TYMOCZKO, 2004 175). I omit her intermediary stage, not relevant to my study.

[5] Unattributed translations are my own.

[6] This is Apter's gloss on Cassin's "intraduisible" (APTER, 2022, 7).

[7] Hartnett's note reads: "*dubhfholtach*: blacklocked. *álainn*: beautiful. *mánla*, *séimh*, and *caoin*: words whose meanings hover about the English adjectives graceful, gentle (*CW*, 245).

[8] The word was correctly accented as "*súgán*" in a previous publication (Hartnett, 1984, 158).

[9] Hartnett's attention to Irish metres in the poem, "Seirbhíseach seirgthe", has been praised by O'Grady, 1997. Shields includes *OB* in her account of Hartnett but does not mention metrics (2000, 140–141).

[10] D'aithle na bhfileadh n-uasal / truaghsan timheal an tsaoghail/ clann na n-ollamh go n-eagna/ folamh gan freagra faobhair./ Truagh a leabhair ag liatha/ tiacha nach treabhair baoise/ ar ceal níor chóir a bhfoilcheas/ toircheas bhfear n-óil na gaoise./ D'aithle na bhfileadh dár ionnmhus éigsi is iul/ is mairg do chonnairc an chinneamhain d'éirigh dúinn/ a leabhair ag tuitim i leimhe 's i léithe i gcúil/ s' ag macaibh na droinge gan siolla dá séadaibh rún (*DBB*, 3.4). I have used the Latin-alphabet version of the text available from the Royal Irish Academy (*Historical Irish Corpus*, n.d.)

[11] "How daft this mode" ("Nach ait an nós", *DBB*, 1.18) is, however, remarkable: the order of the accentuated vowels in the *amhrán* metre is very closely, if not perfectly, respected. Further, in English terms, the poem does not or barely rhymes. It acclimatizes, however, Irish-language conventions of accentuated vowel-rhyme. On rhyme in classical Irish, see Knott (1974, 4–9).

[12] "Mairg atá gan béarla binn/ ar dteacht an iarla go hÉirinn;/ ar feadh mo shaoghail ar chlár Chuinn/ dán ar bhéarla dobhéaruinn" (*DBB*, 1.18).

[13] Another means, explored in *Inchicore Haiku*, is to seek poetic models outside the English tradition (Ikeda, 2018).

[14] This versified translation, aiming at literal accuracy, is Mac Erlean's (*DBB*, 2.35): "Avarice, alas, hath wounded all the learned bands of clerks/ And on poets there hath fallen languor like to fainting fit;/ But the bitterest by far of all these painful pangs to me/ Is that no one who is poor is deemed to have one spark of wit."

[15] "Tugadar tréinfhir cheannsa an fhoinn/ cruinnios ar fhéile is greann ar phoimp,/ níl seinnm ar théid ná bann ar píp/ acht gur chuireamar féin an samhradh dhinn" (*DBB*, 2.36).