

‘Language is never innocent’: translation and post-colonial identity in Ireland

Lidia Alonso Castro

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Caterina Riba Sanmartí

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Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*

Contents

Abstract	5
Introduction.....	8
Purpose and aims	8
Methodology.....	9
Structure	10
1 Different views on translation and (colonial) power	11
1.1 Translation in a post-colonial context	15
1.2 The different approaches to translation	19
1.3 The phenomenon of self-translation	21
2 The history of translation in Ireland	24
2.1 From religious translations to the Irish Literary Revival.....	25
2.1.1 The matter of the female translator	31
2.2 From An Gúm to the present day	33
3 The language issue in Ireland today	39
3.1 Language use in numbers.....	41
3.2 Legislation and promotion of the Irish language	45
3.3 The language issue in Northern Ireland.....	47
4 In between languages: an analysis of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections	49
4.1 The importance of studying Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill.....	50
4.2 Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections: the meaning behind <i>The Fifty Minute Mermaid</i> and <i>The Language Issue</i>	55

4.3 Views on Ní Dhomhnaill's work and translated texts	57
Conclusions	63
Bibliography	65
Appendix I: Full interview with Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Lorna Shaughnessy	74

Abstract

The relationship between translation and identity in Ireland has come to be a very polarising topic as a result of the country's history of colonisation. To understand how translation is affected by the context of post-colonial Ireland it is important to pay attention to the evolution of this relationship and study the power dynamics between Irish and English.

This essay will analyse the relationship between translation and identity in Ireland both in the past and the present, paying special attention to the power dynamics between English and Irish in Ireland's post-colonial context and to the current critical debate surrounding the controversial topic of translation in Ireland.

The purpose of this paper is to prove that translation from minority to majority languages such as Irish-English nowadays can indeed help promote marginalised languages when using translation strategies that give visibility instead of replace the original.

The methodology for this essay will consist of the reading of articles and books on translation theory, post-colonialism, and translation in post-colonial Ireland from experts on the field such as Mariavita Cambria, Anne O'Connor and Maria Tymoczko. This paper will also draw information from, on the one hand, several censuses on language use carried out in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland; and on the other hand, interviews carried out through email with Irish writer Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Northern Ireland's writer, translator, and academic Lorna Shaughnessy. These interviews will help give an inside perspective into the topic of translation from two writers with different backgrounds and stances on translation.

In terms of distribution, this essay will be divided into four chapters. Chapter one will include the critical debate surrounding the topic of translation in a post-colonial context and the different approaches. Chapter two will show the history of translation in Ireland, from early translation to current trends. Chapter three will cover the language issue in Ireland and show with censuses and graphics the current status of the Irish language. Chapter four will analyse Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections, their reception, and showcase their importance in the sphere of translation in Ireland. Following the conclusions and the bibliography, this paper will include the full content of the interviews with Ní Dhomhnaill and Shaughnessy.

Keywords: translation, post-colonialist theory, language, identity, Ireland.

Resumen

La relación entre traducción e identidad en Irlanda se ha convertido en un tema muy polarizante como resultado de la historia de colonización del país. Para entender como la traducción está afectada por el contexto de la Irlanda poscolonial es importante prestar atención a la evolución de esta relación y estudiar las dinámicas de poder entre el irlandés y el inglés.

Este trabajo va a analizar la relación entre traducción e identidad en Irlanda tanto en el pasado como en el presente, prestando especial atención a las dinámicas de poder entre el inglés y el irlandés en el contexto poscolonial de Irlanda y al actual debate crítico alrededor del controvertido tema de la traducción en Irlanda.

El propósito de este trabajo es demostrar que la traducción de lenguas minorizadas a mayorizadas como irlandés-inglés actualmente puede en efecto ayudar a promover lenguas minorizadas cuando se usan estrategias de traducción que dan visibilidad en lugar de reemplazar al original.

La metodología de este trabajo consistirá en la lectura de artículos y libros sobre teoría de la traducción, poscolonialismo, y traducción en la Irlanda poscolonial por parte de expertos en el campo como Mariavita Cambria, Anne O'Connor, y Maria Tymoczko. Este trabajo también extraerá información, por una parte, de varios censos sobre el uso de la lengua en la República de Irlanda y en Irlanda del Norte; y por otra, de dos entrevistas llevadas a cabo por correo electrónico con la escritora irlandesa Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill y la escritora, traductora, y académica de Irlanda del Norte Lorna Shaughnessy. Estas entrevistas ayudarán a ofrecer una perspectiva desde dentro al tema de la traducción de dos escritoras con diferentes historias y posturas sobre la traducción.

En temas de distribución, este trabajo está dividido en cuatro capítulos. El capítulo uno incluirá el debate crítico alrededor del tema de la traducción en un contexto poscolonial así como los diferentes enfoques. El capítulo dos mostrará la historia de la traducción en Irlanda, desde las primeras traducciones hasta las tendencias actuales. El capítulo tres abarcará el problema de la lengua en Irlanda y mostrará con censos y gráficas el

estatus actual del irlandés. El capítulo cuatro analizará las colecciones bilingües de Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, su acogida, y mostrará su importancia en el ámbito de la traducción en Irlanda. Siguiendo las conclusiones finales y la bibliografía, este trabajo incluirá el contenido completo de las entrevistas con Ní Dhomhnaill y Shaughnessy.

Palabras clave: traducción, teoría poscolonial, lenguaje, identidad, Irlanda.

Introduction

In November of 2015, French essayist Roland Barthes declared in a conference at Boston College that 'language is never innocent'. This statement stated that language, and consequently translation, was not neutral, that it was embedded in its cultural and political context. Nowadays, we study translation taking into account its linguistic and cultural context, however, this was not always the case. In the 1990s, translation studies underwent a major change in perspective, what is called the cultural turn. This shifted translation analysis' traditional linguistic approach into a cultural approach, influencing the relationship between translation and post-colonial literature. Language was no longer studied in isolation, it was now seen alongside culture, and issues such as identity, gender, ideology and ethnicity became of interest for translation studies.

For this reason, when studying translation –especially translation in a post-colonial context– we need to take into account the environment in which it takes place. In these multicultural spaces where the culture of the coloniser was introduced and the native culture was marginalised, translating makes even more apparent how the events of the past still affect post-colonial nations today.

In the case of post-colonial Ireland, two languages coexist nowadays in quite an unbalanced environment as a result of centuries of colonialism; English as the language imposed by the coloniser and Irish as the native language. A third language is added in the case of Northern Ireland, where the regional dialect Ulster Scots, a variant of Scottish Gaelic, is spoken in the Ulster region. A crucial point of this paper will be studying the relationship between English and Irish in relation to translation and how the centuries of English hegemony and oppression in the island have affected how these two languages coexist today and the notion of identity.

Purpose and aims

The idea and motivation to write an essay on the topic of translation in a post-colonial context came from my own interest in translation in the context of bilingual nations, as I myself come from one. Like Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and some of the other writers mentioned in this paper, I am a product of bilingualism. I have lived in translation my whole life, living in a territory where my native language, Galego, coexists with Spanish. For this reason, I am always interested in learning about the sociolinguistic situation of

other territories where two or more languages coexist. For this essay, I wanted to study the implications of colonialism in present-day Ireland in order to understand the power dynamics between English and Irish, especially in the translation realm. For me, language is a big part of my identity, and so I wanted to explore the topic of post-colonial identity in Ireland to see how it affected translation, a practice where two languages are in conversation.

The purpose of this paper is to argue that translation in the Irish context today, primarily from Irish to English, helps promote the Irish language instead of further marginalising it when certain translation strategies are used, such as replacing translated versions with dual-language collections.

This essay aims at; firstly, investigate the different stances on translation in a post-colonial context and see how they apply to Ireland; secondly, research the history of translation in Ireland to see its evolution; thirdly, understand and interpret the sociolinguistic situation of Ireland; and lastly, analyse Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections and their impact.

Methodology

The methodology for this essay will combine the reading of several articles and books on the topics of translation theory, language and cultural identity, post-colonialism, and translation in the Irish context from experts on the matter such as academics Anne O'Connor, Mariavita Cambria, and Maria Tymoczko. Furthermore, this paper will also include excerpts from an original interview with writers Lorna Shaughnessy and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, carried out via email on 3 February 2023 and 7 March 2023, respectively. This conversation will help give an inside look into the topic of translation from the perspective of two writers from different backgrounds who speak and write in different languages. On the one hand, Shaughnessy was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland and was raised speaking English. She helps give an insight into the matter from the perspective of a Northern Ireland native who does not speak Irish, an academic, a writer and a translator. On the other hand, Ní Dhomhnaill was born to Irish-speaking parents and lived in County Kerry, Ireland from the age of five on. She spoke Gaelic at home since she was little and is today one of the most renowned Irish writers to write in Irish. For context, the full interview with Ní Dhomhnaill and Shaughnessy will be included in an appendix at the end of this paper.

In addition to this, chapter three will contain an analysis and comparison of statistics and surveys carried out in Ireland investigating language tendencies amongst its population, focusing on the 2011, 2016, and 2022 censuses organised by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Furthermore, section 3.3 will analyse the censuses of 2011 and 2021 carried out in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to look at the language situation in Northern Ireland. The results will show whether or not the initiatives to promote Irish in recent years have proven to be successful or not as well as show in numbers the power imbalance between English and Irish in Ireland. Studying these censuses will prove relevant for this paper as they reflect the current language situation in Ireland and how language tendencies have changed from 2011 to 2022, which ultimately affects the power dynamics between English and Irish in translation. The censuses consulted for this analysis can be accessed through the CSO's and NISRA's websites.

As part of the methodology, this paper will also look at Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections to perform a comparative language analysis between Irish and English and study the impact of dual-language editions as well as to demonstrate the promotion of the Irish language through translation.

Structure

This essay is divided into four chapters. Chapter one is dedicated to the critical debate regarding translation and the different views on the topic, what makes a good translation, what is the role of the translator, and translation's capability to preserve and transmit cultural references. This chapter will focus on two main positions on the topic: pro-translation and anti-translation, when translation is accepted, why, involving which sets of languages, etc. Chapter two covers the topic of translation in Ireland, its relation with religion, nationalism, and gender all the way back from religious translations to contemporary translations. Chapter three offers a look into the language situation in Ireland today, the status of the Irish language, and current government initiatives. It also dedicates a subchapter to the language issue in Northern Ireland. Chapter four consists of an analysis of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections, the importance of studying this particular writer, her achievements, and what the critics think of her work. Lastly, the essay will end with a conclusion explaining what has been found through this research. In addition, this paper will include an appendix at the end detailing the transcribed interview with writers Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Lorna Shaughnessy.

1 Different views on translation and (colonial) power

When speaking of post-colonial sites and post-colonial literature it is often in relation to Africa, Asia, and the Americas, territories impacted by the European conquests of the 15th century and onward. For this reason, Ireland is often forgotten when talking about colonialism. Contrary to the more commonly studied post-colonial areas, Ireland is located in Europe and its conquest dates from before the 15th century. However, according to professor Tok Freeland Thompson (2021), Ireland, similarly to the territories aforementioned, suffered “the full force of colonialism” (p. 221), having its language and culture repressed in favour of the English. Moreover, American translator and scholar of comparative literature Maria Tymoczko (2014) claims that “few nations have experienced more cultural suppression and estrangement than Ireland under English colonialism” (p. 18). Nonetheless, because of the centuries that separate the Irish invasion and those that followed in later centuries, dominance took a different form. The goal was not to conquer new ‘discovered’ land but rather achieve annexation, for Ireland to be a part of English territory.

To properly analyse the role that translation plays in the Irish identity, we have to look at the role it plays in the colonisation and post-colonisation periods respectively as well as what critics think about the activity of translation and the different approaches to it. While most of the articles and books used for research focus on the colonisation of non-European territories, this paper will apply this to the context of Ireland, as all colonised territories follow similar patterns of colonisation.

As mentioned before, language is not a neutral tool and therefore neither is translation as the activity operates in the space between languages. Author and professor of Comparative Literature and Translation Research Tarek Shamma (2009) says that translation “can never be a purely technical activity” (p. 191). Translation cannot be seen as a simple transfer between languages, it is embedded in the history, culture and politics of a nation and therefore no translation can be analysed in isolation. This statement applies both to translation as a practice of trespassing of information between languages and cultures as well as translation as a physical entity seen in juxtaposition to an original text. To study translation, we must take into account the space in which the linguistic and cultural exchange takes place, only then we can understand the power that translation has in shaping a nation’s identity.

In the context of colonisation, translation as an activity is not only biased but it is also used to further establish the colonialist agenda. According to Indian professor Tejaswini Niranjana (1992), translation “shapes and takes shape within the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism” (p. 2), it works with and for the colonial powers. Translating meant colonisers could trespass the barriers of language, gaining the knowledge they needed to rule and ultimately resulting in gaining more control. Spanish professor Elena Bandín (2004) considers that “language has been one of the most effective and powerful weapons of colonial discourse” (p. 38). Colonialism was an act of domination and to achieve that colonisers not only had to take control of the people and the land but also the language. Once they had control over the language they had control over the mind and, therefore, over the land.

Under colonialism, language relations are never equal as part of the domination involves trying to impose the language and beliefs of the coloniser while repressing those of the colonised. The practice of translation reflects this unequal power dynamic between the two languages and nations involved. For many centuries translation was a one-way process, where texts were translated *into* the coloniser’s language *for* the coloniser and because of that colonial powers were often accompanied by major translation movements. This was not so that the colonisers educated themselves on the native culture and language, but because translation served as a way to transcribe the local culture to the new rulers so that they had the necessary knowledge to control the region. It was not about appreciation but rather appropriation. In this sense, translation aided and perpetuated colonial rule and expansion. It was a form of domestication. Language was one of the many ways of colonial domination and one of the most powerful and effective. The colonised had to adapt to European views, adopting their language and culture by force. The native language, culture, and identity were being erased while the dominant linguistic and cultural norms were being imposed.

This accommodation to European standards still applied after colonisation. Imperialistic powers fabricated an image of the colonised countries that was still present decades after colonisation, an image based on the premise that the west was superior and more developed, therefore they had to ‘teach’ the east to talk, act, and be like them. This idea follows Palestinian-American professor Edward W. Said’s notion of orientalism, where the ‘Orient’, as he calls it, was and continues to be an idea built in European thinking. This western monopolisation of the ‘Orient’ impacted literature too. Works that were

translated into English by post-colonial authors had to accommodate European views, and ultimately their success would be decided by the former colonies' opinions of the text. Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore is just one example of this accommodation. He translated his works into English and had to adjust to the stereotyped image of India that England had produced. Even decades after colonisation, colonial enterprises still held power over the image of former colonies.

Colonial discourse tried to justify this control by creating an image of the colonies as uneducated and unable to rule themselves. On the contrary, Europe was superior, more civilised and educated. The goal was to justify colonialism by painting the coloniser as a saviour with the task of sharing their knowledge and educating the colonised, something that could only be achieved through assimilation. This idea of inequality, as seen previously by Tagore's experience of assimilation, lived on and even affected the practice of translation through the idea of the 'original versus copy' metaphor. This analogy presents the conception that in translation the original is more valuable than the copy, that is, the translated text, which is a metaphor for the unequal power relations between the coloniser and the colonised. This draws, again, from the conception that the west is superior and overall more developed. Today, the power of the original is being questioned, but there was a time when the original text was seen as superior to its translated version, which was viewed as a mere copy written in a different language. Even though the idea of ownership over a text originated back in medieval times with the invention of the printer, the equality of value between original and translation is a relatively recent phenomenon. Coincidentally, the idea of an original versus a copy originated during the first colonial expansions, when European countries started searching for a territory to conquer and appropriate. As explained before, Europe was seen as the original and the land of the colonised, that of those that had to assimilate to foreign norms, was the copy. Bassnett and Trivedi (2002) explain it this way:

the notion of the colony as a copy or translation of the great European Original inevitably involves a value judgement that ranks the translation in a lesser position in the literary hierarchy. The colony, by this definition, is therefore less than its colonizer, its original (p. 4).

During the post-colonial period, the empire started to lose power and according to Bassnett and Trivedi (2002) it was common to find "radical concepts of translation emerging from [...] former colonies around the world that challenge established European norms about what translation is and what it signifies" (p. 4). This and the aftermath of

western colonialism provided a new framework for translation to exist. Translation's one-way process started to shift into a more reciprocal practice, not serving only the coloniser in its conquering purposes but also being a tool for the colonised, an instrument of resistance against the European norms inherited and imposed from imperial times.

Post-colonial literature is metaphorically considered a form of translation. Although it is different from translation, according to Gambier and Doorslaer (2010), they both employ similar strategies for linguistic and cultural representations. The issues of identity, ideology, and power relations are as fundamental to post-colonial literature as they are to translation. Post-colonial literature often uses the language of the coloniser to write about –that is, translate– the experiences of former colonies through post-colonial voices. According to Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, post-colonial literature in English is intrinsically a form of translation. In wa Thiong'o (2009) he explains that “all writing in a language that is not the mother tongue, or the first language of one's upbringing, is largely an exercise in mental translation” (p. 18). He uses his own experience to explain this process of mental translation from the native tongue to English, explaining how when he was writing his work in English he would unconsciously be translating mentally his thoughts and ideas, which originally came to him in his native tongue, Gĩkũyũ, into English. Only when he started writing in his native tongue and this mental translation disappeared he realised it was happening.

In post-colonial literature, the language of the oppressor is used by the oppressed as a form of resistance against colonial discourse and subjugation. They rebel against the system by bending the language of the coloniser to write about the reality and views of previously colonised societies. Language is no longer used to solidify and spread colonial discourse but to reject and debunk its ideas. According to Polish writer and professor Dorota Kolodziejczyk (2018), post-colonial literature in English has a history of “confronting the imposed language of the empire and the authority carried out by that language” (p. 8). For Kolodziejczyk, post-colonial literature became a confrontational space where two different cultures, languages, politics, and so on met and negotiated, a symbol of cultural difference. Some main elements of this confrontation according to Kolodziejczyk (2018) are: resistance, counter-discourse, appropriation of the language, overcoming of peripherality, and marketing of the margins. Post-colonial literature discards the Eurocentric narrative about the 'Orient' and creates its own. Kolodziejczyk (2018) claims that post-colonial literature reclaims “the subjectivity of formerly colonised

individuals and societies and develops collective and individual identities in the process of revisiting history and the ideology of colonisation” (p. 16). After centuries of European biased, post-colonial literature reclaims history for the formerly colonised and voices their experiences. However, wa Thiong’o (2009) believes there is a problem with post-colonial literature and, referring specifically to African literature, criticises that post-colonial literatures are mainly written in European languages while native languages should be at the centre of these literatures. He makes a very interesting distinction between African literature written in African languages and African literature written in European languages. The first he calls ‘African literature’ while the second he calls ‘Europhone African literature’. As he says, African literature in African languages must be at the centre. Therefore, African literature written in non-African languages, while still classified as such, belongs in another group. According to wa Thiong’o (2009), there is a need to differentiate the two giving more importance to African literature in African languages.

1.1 Translation in a post-colonial context

Regarding this need to differentiate between languages, I contacted authors Lorna Shaughnessy and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill to know their opinion on the matter. I wanted to ask them if they considered that literature written in English was not Irish literature, the same Ngugi wa Thiong’o made a distinction between African literature written in African languages and African literature written in English. To this, Ní Dhomhnaill agreed with wa Thiong’o, saying that “It’s the same for Irish literature”. However, Belfast-born Lorna Shaughnessy believed otherwise, answering the following:

it’s a very interesting statement. The obvious linguistic parallel between Kenya and Ireland is that English was imposed as the language of the coloniser. There are important differences, however, firstly that English was introduced into Ireland centuries before it was in Kenya, and secondly, East African countries have a ‘lingua franca’ of their own which is Swahili, which is spoken and written alongside English by many millions of people. The fact that Irish people have been living with English for over 400 years means that it has become a vehicle of expression for what we know as Irish culture and experience. Joyce and Yeats’s works are both steeped in Irish experience and culture, though very different. Likewise Mary Lavin, Eavan Boland, Anne Enright. If they are not writing Irish Literature then what are they writing?

As we can see from Ní Dhomhnaill and Shaughnessy’s responses, Irish literature and what it entails is still a subject for debate. Likewise, the practice of translation is very

polarising in post-colonial contexts due to the underlying relations between the languages and cultures involved.

While actively contributing to colonisation in the past, some authors and academics believe that translation has the capacity nowadays to be a weapon of resistance. As mentioned before, translation employs similar strategies and representations to those used in post-colonial literature to tell the reality of the 'other' through a dominant language. While translations serve as a common ground, translators Vanamala Viswanatha and Sherry Simon claim in a chapter included in Bassnett and Trivedi (2002) that they also act as "catalysts in the emergence of contestatory forms of writing. Translations provoke cultural change" (p. 163). American translator and professor of Comparative Literature Edwin Gentzler (2001) claims that post-colonial translators use translation as "a strategy of resistance, one that disturbs and displaces the construction of images of non-western cultures" (p. 176), rather than using it to perpetuate western views and ideas.

Similarly to post-colonial literature, Irish academic Anne O'Connor (2017) believes that translation happens in an unstable cultural space, where two cultures are confronted with "challenging homogeneity and perceived continuity" (p. 5). The environment for this confrontation is what Indian scholar Homi K. Bhabha calls the 'third space'. According to Italian professor of English Language and Translation Marina Manfredi (2010), this 'third space' is a place where cultures meet and overlap "in mutual contamination" (p. 54). Bhabha called this cultural interchange 'hybridity'. He identifies three types of hybridity in translation: linguistic hybridity, cultural hybridity, and generic hybridity. The first one, linguistic hybridity, refers to the linguistic contamination between languages, "with phenomena reminiscent of heteroglossia, creolization and code-switching" (p. 97) that coexist in the same territory. In Ireland, this linguistic hybridity created a new variety of English called Irish English. The various dialects of Irish English in Ireland draw features from the Irish language as a result of the many centuries of contact and contamination between the Irish and English languages. The second type of hybridity, cultural hybridity, refers to the way a translated text combines elements from the source and the target language. Translation works between two cultures, and therefore it is the place where elements from the two cultures meet. Lastly, the third type of hybridity in translation is generic hybridity, which results from the mixture of conventions from the languages involved, when the norms of one language overlap with those of the other language.

Apart from this more factual information about translation, critical views on translation are varied, as seen before with Ní Dhomhnaill and Shaughnessy's answers. While some see translation as a positive thing regardless of the languages involved, others are against the translation from a native language to a coloniser's due to translation's past history with colonialism. The different views could be classified into two categories: pro-translation and anti-translation. The first category is represented by Irish academic Michael Cronin and the second by Irish poet Bidy Jenkinson. Cronin is in favour of translation both from and to minority languages and believes that in the context of post-colonial literature, it gives birth to two national languages. Other authors share Cronin's views on the matter. Professor Paul F. Bandia, in his chapter on post-colonial literatures and translation included in Gambier and Doorslaer (2010), claims that translation helps minority languages reach a global space, saying it "plays a central role in the struggle of marginalised cultures for acceptance and recognition in the global literary space" (p. 266). Spanish professor and translator Isabel Pascua Febles (2018) thinks similarly, asserting that in the context of African literature, "for many postcolonial bilingual and bicultural African writers translation provides a method of exhibiting their culture, hybrid language and fragmented identity across frontiers" (p. 70). Canadian translator Judith Woodsworth adds to the discussion claiming that as well as for personal reasons, there are also political reasons for translating. She declares that translation strengthens the language and culture of a minority, helps revive it, and promotes national identity. For these authors and many others, translation does not eclipse the original, it created roads that lead back to it. When asked about her stance on translation Lorna Shaughnessy answered that

Translating is a way of constructing bridges between languages; it is a fascinating in-between place to be. [...] In terms of positive or negative impacts on minoritised languages, I respect the position of some writers in Irish who refused to have their works published in English translation because they felt that literature in Irish shouldn't have to be mediated by English - that it shouldn't have to depend on English in order to be read widely. But the reality in Ireland is that the majority of people do not have enough Irish to read poetry or fiction in the Irish language but still want to read it. Translation into English certainly opens up a much wider readership for these writers in Europe and North America, and opportunities for funding.

However, despite kindly agreeing to weigh in on the issue of translation, it is important to note that Lorna Shaughnessy writes in English, therefore, she speaks from the

perspective of a writer whose work is translated *from* English and not from a minority language.

Doctors Eithne O'Connell and John Walsh (2006) stand between pro- and anti-translation, seeing translation as a double-edged knife. They recognise the recent work that translation has done in helping maintain minority languages, however, they do not forget the role translation played in the past and the importance it had in the history of colonisation and of minority languages. Tejaswini Niranjana (1992) has a similar opinion to them, believing that translation safeguards and transmits linguistic and cultural differences to the European world. Nonetheless, she does not forget either about translation's past with colonialism and views translation with suspicion because of the way it was used to further the colonialist agenda in the past. She urges the discipline to look back on its flawed image and evaluate the repercussions of creating a space for exchange where there is a power imbalance between the languages involved. Adding to Niranjana's statement, Gambier and Doorslaer (2010) say that the translator needs to intervene and "deconstruct colonising translation strategies as well as resist colonialist ideological impositions" (p. 267).

As previously mentioned, the second group, those that are against the translation *from* minority languages to European languages, is represented by Irish poet Biddy Jenkinson. Jenkinson is one of the many critics and academics to believe that translating from minority languages to European languages perpetrates the legacy of assimilation of the colonialist period. Jenkinson has expressed in the past her wishes to not be translated into English in Ireland. In Jenkinson (1991) she expresses her belief that "it is a small rude gesture to those who think that everything can be harvested and stored without loss in an English-speaking Ireland" (p. 34). She continues by saying that translators view Gaelic linguistic production as "a resource to be exploited, that the translations reduce the originals' inherent cultural value, that they distort them, and remove any incentives to learn the language" (p. 226). As we can see, her opinion on translation differs greatly from Cronin's or any of the other authors mentioned in the first group. However, she is not the only one to see translation this way, other authors such as professor and writer Tok Freeland Thompson share her views. Thompson (2021) says that he believes it is dangerous to glorify translation and describe the Gaelic world as a 'ghetto' that needs to be rescued by translators. However, he does not object to translations to and from other languages, he even claims that those could prevent

linguistic isolation. His issue is specific to translations to and from English in the Irish context, and in Thompson (2021) he explains how he sees a power imbalance between the “colonial, dominant English and the struggling, marginalized Irish” (p. 227). He even charges against those that are pro-translation, claiming that they fail to consider that the “effects that translation may have on a threatened linguistic community are reckless in the sense that the linguistic community is the very fount from which their resource flows” (p. 227). Indian literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993) adds to the discussion and claims that unequal power relations in post-colonial contexts lead to colonising translation practices whose goal is to minimise the difference of minority cultures for the benefit of the target audiences’ culture. She claims that translation *still* has a colonialist role in marginalised cultures and that it creates the impression that the latter are inferior copies of the coloniser’s world. South African poet Mazisi Kunene (1992) accuses African writers who write in European languages, saying that they should not be considered as such. He argues that by using a foreign language they cannot be representatives of the African culture and values, and therefore, they should not be referred to as African writers. In Kunene (1992) he considers that authors who write in “a foreign language are already part of the foreign institution” (p. 32). His views contrast with wa Thiong’o’s, who despite making a distinction between African literature written in African languages and that written in European languages, still considers the latter to be African at its core. All authors categorized into this group agree that translations from minority languages to European languages do not benefit the minority language but the majority language and perpetuate its legacy of appropriation of marginalised cultures.

1.2 The different approaches to translation

As well as different views, we can also find different approaches to translation. There are two possible ways to tackle a translation, either the translator moves the reader towards the writer or the other way around. American translator and theologian Lawrence Venuti (1995) gives a name to these two approaches. He calls the first one ‘foreignization’, a practice where the intention is to preserve as much of the source text’s essence in the translation as possible. This way, the conventions of the target language are broken to ensure that the meaning of the original text is not lost in the translation process. The translation will not be seamless, it will contain elements from the source language and culture that will feel ‘foreign’ to the target audience. The intention here is not to replace the original and adapt it to the norms of the target language but to make it visible through

the translated text. The second approach is called 'domestication', where the strategy is to bring the text closer to the reader. Here the norms of the target language are prioritised over the conservation of the original meaning. There is an adaptation to the target audience instead of an adaptation of the reader to the text. Out of the two, Venuti (1995) advocates for the first one, believing the latter erases the cultural meaning of the original. However, he does recognise in certain occasions domestication is better suited, that is, the times the translator wants to ensure total comprehension of the text. He agrees that for that purpose domestication does a better job in helping readers understand the text fully, even though it means that cultural references from the source text will inevitably be lost.

As well as touching on their opinions on translation, some authors also touch on what they consider a good translation as well as what the role of the translator is and what are the responsibilities that come with it. When asked what makes a good translation, one that is faithful to the original or one that accommodates to the target language, writer Lorna Shaughnessy answered

I don't think it's ever this simple. The grammatical differences between languages alone make total faithfulness impossible, then there are cultural differences reflected in the lexicon (or lack of it) to describe certain things or experiences. Most translations involve both conservation and adaptation.

For author Alexander Fraser Tytler (1791) in his *Essay on the Principles of Translation* a good translation consists of one that possesses "the ease of original composition" (p. 9), in other words, a translation that feels effortless and reads like an original work. According to Thompson (2021), being a good translator not only means being good at it, but rather being "concerned with and involved in the protection of the language, even if it means taking extra cautionary steps, or even occasionally knowing when not to undertake the work" (p. 227). In the same way, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993) calls on the translator to be well acquainted with the history, language and culture of the colonised. According to Niranjana (1992), the 'otherness' of these languages is to be safeguarded with translations that employ calques and loanwords. For these authors the job of the translator includes being principled, they must be able to differentiate what is right from what is wrong and work for the protection of languages, and for that, they need to be familiarised with the history and culture of the languages they are working with.

1.3 The phenomenon of self-translation

There is another approach to translation that is usually ignored by publishers, critics and scholars when addressing the subject of translation in a post-colonial context and that is the phenomenon of self-translation. The reason for it to be such an overlooked practice in translation studies, despite existing many authors who translate their own work, is that for some it is not even considered a form of translation but rather a case of bilingualism.

There are also controversies surrounding the practice of self-translation, such as whether it is faithful or if it is a translation or a retelling of the original. Some critics like Michael Oustinoff (2001) believe that self-translation is a second original, a recreation. The fact that both the original and the translation are written by the same author leads Oustinoff and others to believe that the latter is more of a new version rather than a translation of the original. Scottish novelist and translator Christopher Whyte (2002) agrees with Oustinoff and believes that an author writing their own work in another language is simply a reproduction of the original in a second language. Authors who self-translate have exclusive access to the foundations of the original work in a way an outside translator does not. They have access to their own mind, the mind of the creator, and the foundations and knowledge that created the first text. For authors like Whyte, translation is viewed as a reinterpretation of the original in a different language, the text seen through different eyes. For that reason, they do not believe that self-translations should be considered as such, because the second text is seen through the same eyes as the first. Spanish professor and philologist Elena Bandín (2004) thinks similarly and believes that the lines that separate the source language from the target language are blurred in self-translations. She claims that writers who self-translate exist in the space between the two languages, belonging to both and neither at the same time.

Contrary to ordinary translations where the focus is put on the translated text, in self-translations we must pay the same attention to the original text as we do to the translated one, as the lines between primary and secondary text are blurred. For Bandín, as well as Oustinoff and Whyte, both texts are originals, they are created by the same author, and therefore they could be seen as interchangeable. According to Bandín (2004), self-translations are not “governed by principles of equivalence or adequacy” (p. 40), they are hybrids that complement the previous text. She warns that self-translation cannot be studied in isolation. This translation method is very common in countries and regions where two or more languages coexist. In these spaces self-translators are bilingual, they

live in-between two languages and cultures, therefore have a bilingual identity. Because of this, we must study their work in relation to the concepts of language, culture and society. To this, Whyte (2002) argues that in environments where there is a prestige-non-prestige relationship between the languages involved in the translation, we must take into account the political implications that the translation carries.

Despite being carried by the own author of the work, Bandín (2004) claims that self-translation is not innocent either and “in these contexts, [it] has political, cultural and social consequences” (p. 37). According to Bandín (2004), there are ulterior motives for the author in these situations, who use self-translation as a form to mobilise their audience, being “aware of the political force of their writings” (p. 37). In some cases these translations have put the author’s life in jeopardy, forcing some into exile and sending others to jail. Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o is just one example of the political implications of writing in a language other than English. After years of writing his works in English, he decided to write his first work in his native language, a play in Gĩkũyũ. This decision led to his arrest by the Kenyan government in 1977 and one year of imprisonment without trial. After his time in prison, he took up exile in London and started writing exclusively in Gĩkũyũ as well as working in translating works from Gĩkũyũ into English. In an interview for the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, he speaks on the suppression of writers in the hands of authoritarian governments, claiming that authoritarian governments suppress writers because “they want to suppress the capacity of people to imagine different futures” (CCCB, 2019, min. 12), something that literature is capable of doing. These politics of language meant that if a post-colonial writer wanted to reach a wider audience they had to translate their works into a European language. Authors such as South African-born Mazisi Kunene, who wrote his works in Zulu and afterwards translated them into English, are pressured to translate their own work from their native languages into the language of the coloniser to reach a wider audience and share their history and language with the rest of the world. Elena Bandín (2004) claims that authors who self-translate, by using both the language of the coloniser and the colonised, are being decolonised through their own translations. She argues that self-translation can be yet another form of resistance against colonialism, as it is a way for the author to preserve their culture and language.

For Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (2009), the process of self-translation is very different depending on the text and whether or not it is a finished work or not. When he translated his work

Devil on the Cross, he wanted to make the reader aware of the fact that they were reading a translated text and connect them with the original work by bending the rules of the target language in a way that they would resemble the way the text was written originally. For wa Thiong'o then, preserving the essence of the original text and language was more important than creating a translated text so seamless that it did not read like a translation. However, this changed when he translated *Wizard of the Crow*, a novel he began translating into English as he was writing it in Gĩkũyũ. He states that this was a very different experience from the previous one, saying that he went back and forth many times, as while translating new ideas and changes to the original text would come to him. In wa Thiong'o (2009), he states that this way there was a "continuous dialogue and interaction between Gĩkũyũ and English in a way that would have been different had [he] been translating from a finished and published text" (p. 20). By writing simultaneously the original and the translated text, he would create an atmosphere where both languages were equal and were interacting with one another and influencing one another. He felt like he no longer needed to make the original text known in the target language because the original text and the translation were created together. He, however, made sure that in the translated version, a page at the beginning of the novel would note that it was translated from Gĩkũyũ by the author.

Nonetheless, not everyone believes self-translation to be a retelling of the original work. Slovak translation scientist Anton Popovic (1976) considered that self-translation "cannot be regarded as a variant of the original text but a true translation" (p. 19). Similarly, Swiss translator Werner Koller (1979) claims that the only difference between translation and self-translation is the matter of authority. Their views are shared by German author Verena Jung (2002), who declares that the only difference between a translation and a self-translation is that self-translators can access the original intentions of the original text in a way ordinary translators cannot.

2 The history of translation in Ireland

The history of translation has long been linked to the processes of colonisation and decolonisation. For that reason, the history of translation in Ireland, as explained by American translator Maria Tymoczko (2014), “becomes a record of the subordination and taming of Irish literature and Irish culture, its accommodation to dominant English norms, values, and poetics, even while the translations also illustrate an Irish discourse of subversion and resistance” (p. 27). As explained in chapter 1, translation has been considered in the past a colonising tool, as territorial domination needed from linguistic domination to accomplish full power over the people. Translation had the sole purpose of translating *for* the coloniser and *to* the coloniser’s culture. During this time translation encompassed more than strictly translating written texts, it referred to all the different ways in which the world of the colonised was adapted or changed to fit the coloniser’s worldview. According to Tymoczko (2014), translation during the colonial era was a form of oppression,

it took the tangible and physical forms of transposition, transportation, transmission, and transference: the transposition of government, power, and law from Irish control and Irish standards to English-language traditions and English control; the transportation of Irish people during clearances and famines; the transference of land from Irish landholders to English ones; and the transmission of cultural and educational content from Irish-language centres to English-language centres (p. 19).

Because of this history of colonialism and oppression, and despite later efforts to change this image, translation today still has a controversial role and is met with scepticism and sometimes even rejection by some post-colonial writers. According to Irish academic Justin Harman (2020), for those trying to keep a minority language such as Irish alive, translation is both a blessing and a curse. To understand Harman’s views on translation, it is important to be aware of the history of translation in Ireland and the role it played throughout the centuries, as well as throughout the political changes that affected the country. However, researching the history of translation in Ireland is not an easy task as little attention is paid to Irish tradition in translation, with the exception of Irish academic Michael Cronin, who surveyed the diversity of translations in Ireland dating as far back as the 10th century up to the present day.

2.1 From religious translations to the Irish Literary Revival

The history of translation in Ireland begins in the Middle Ages. Irish academic Justin Harman (2020) reflects on this period and claims that medieval Ireland proved to be a very fruitful time for translation, with the earliest translations into vernacular ever being in Irish. During this time translation had a vital role, as monks and translators committed to translating texts from Greek and Latin to Irish. With the start of the Norman invasion in the 12th century, Normans switched from French to Irish and it continued to be so until the Tudor dynasty sat on the throne of England. With the reign of Henry VIII and the subsequent Tudor Conquest of Ireland came the repression of everything Irish and Norman descendents were urged to speak English. These efforts to promote English were not successful until the instalment of rigid laws against the Irish during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Under Tudor rule, translation was used as a weapon between colonisers and natives as well as a tool in the war between Protestantism and Catholicism. According to Harman (2020), the first book printed in Irish was a translation of a Protestant religious text. Translations of Protestant religious texts into Irish were authorised in an effort to sway Catholics from their religion and into Protestantism.

Together with religious texts, translation during this time also produced anti-Irish texts stereotyping the natives as barbaric and wild to justify Tudor and Cromwellian policies against the Irish people and language. The Irish fought back with translations from Irish about the history of the land, which according to Harman (2020) focused on emphasising “the antiquity and nobility of Gaelic civilisation” (p. 79). With the arrival of the 17th century came the political and military domination of Ireland by the English, together with the huge flow of emigration of the Irish nobility and the rising to power of the English Ascendancy. According to Maria Tymoczko and Colin Ireland (2003), these events led Irish-language culture to be seen as the underdog, the ‘other’, “subordinated to the developments and the dominant values in English-language culture” (p. 7). Tymoczko and Ireland’s views on the cultural and linguistic shift coincide with Michael Cronin’s (2011), who points to the 17th century as the start of Ireland “as a locus for English-language translation” (p. 53). He finds four reasons for the shift to an English-centric perspective of translation: firstly, he points to the foundation of Trinity College in 1592, an institution established by English authorities and therefore predominantly English-speaking. Secondly, he accounts for the mass land transfers and the rising of the English Ascendancy of the 17th century, who had the prestige and support needed to publish

translation. Thirdly, he considers the new settlers in the plantations, who had no reason or incentive to change their language from English to Irish. Lastly, English was the language of the established church, despite efforts from various churchmen to relax the policies towards Irish.

By the end of the 18th century came the first efforts to change the stereotypes surrounding the Irish. A movement began by translators and amateur antiquarians to change this image and reinforce the idea of Ireland as an independent and capable self-ruling nation. Tymoczko (2014) in her book *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* mentions some of the efforts to bring to light Ireland's cultural heritage: "John O'Donovan was mapping the antiquities of Ireland for the Ordnance Survey, George Petrie was investigating Ireland's ecclesiastical architecture, [and] Eugene O'Curry was doing research among the ancient manuscripts" (p. 64). Their efforts to showcase Ireland's heritage aimed to prove that Irish history was not dependent on the English and that Ireland was an ancient nation in its own right. Tymoczko (2014) further develops her views of Ireland and its past as "a realm of value that gives meaning and directives to the present, [...] a noble creature whose veins contain the blood of a lost kingdom, of a kingdom older and more noble than Great Britain" (p. 64). For these translators and antiquarians, translation was a way of connecting Ireland's roots with the present. The English were aware of the power this research had and in 1840 they stopped the subsidy for the Ordnance Survey before the idea of an ancient Irish civilisation could spread.

With the arrival of the 19th century, the penal laws, and the shift to English, the stereotypes surrounding the Irish accelerated at the same time ideas of race that confronted Anglo-Saxons and Celts grew stronger, and by the second half of the 19th century the image of the "wild Irish" had settled. Nonetheless, according to Tymoczko (2014), these stereotypes were contradicting as they both portrayed the Irish as "animalistic, uncivilized, irrational, musical, happy and melancholic, violent and gentle, lazy and able to work like blacks, ignorant and cunning drunkards" (p. 63). These stereotypes were used to validate English domination. They created the image that the Irish were incapable of governing themselves, unable to make decisions, inconsistent, and people that needed to be governed by a foreign force because they were incapable of doing so themselves. This image painted the picture of the English as saviours of a sort, doing the Irish a favour by doing what they were unable to do themselves.

The 19th century was also a time of religious tensions as the division between Protestantism and Catholicism increased. Translation was used in the religious battle between Protestants and Catholics and according to Irish academic Anne O'Connor (2017) in her book *Translation and Language in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, it allowed "Irish Catholics to rally to their side legions of continental thinkers, preachers, clerics and saints who could be used to argue the righteousness of their cause" (p. 79). Translation allowed the circulation of their religious ideas across linguistic barriers. Unlike Protestants, who already had published translations of their religious texts, Catholics started using translation during this time to expand the religious publishing material they lacked to support and promote their faith. One example of a Catholic periodical is the *Tipperary Vindicator* founded by Maurice Lenihan in 1843, a publication that translated foreign Catholic publications. According to O'Connor (2017), these translations served Catholics to expand their religious knowledge, train future generations, and reform and renew Catholicism. Translation was also a form of religious activism, a way of responding to Protestant accusations. This contestatory environment led Protestants and Catholics to publish large amounts of religious translations to support their arguments in the ongoing debate between the two religions, including according to O'Connor (2017), the translation of "sermons, religious histories, liturgical and devotional texts" (p. 76).

During the 19th century, Catholicism underwent a process of reformation where books and, as a consequence, translations and the circulation of ideas, played an important part. The increasing number of religious publications, most of them being translations, helped homogenise Catholicism at a time Irish Catholicism was adhering to Vatican orthodoxy. For this reason, many of the religious works translated in Ireland at the time were of Italian origin. Professor and translator Kenneth Haynes (2006) estimates that "one quarter of total literary translations in the English language in the nineteenth century were Christian texts" (p. 443). At this time, most translation activity was religious, and the number of Catholic translations surpassed those of Protestant translations. Most of these religious translations were from European languages to English. There were very few religious translations to and from Irish with the exception of the work of Archbishop John MacHale of Tuam. As well as translating the Bible into Irish, he also translated into Irish works from Homer, St Alphonsus Liguori, and Thomas Moore. Another figure that translated into Irish was reverend Daniel Sullivan. Despite the efforts of MacHale and others, translations in Irish were scarce and according to O'Connor (2017) the most popular religious texts in Ireland during the 19th century were in English, "much to the

detriment of the Irish language” (p. 78). According to O’Connor (2017), Irish clerks from all orders contributed religious translations during this time ranging from “lives of the saints to liturgical works, to spiritual books” (p. 88), choosing to translate texts rather than write them. For this reason, the members of the Church were amongst the most knowledgeable and skilled people in European languages in Ireland during this time. For them, translation was not a job. They were not paid for it, nonetheless, they still devoted to it. O’Connor (2017) mentions the case of Jeremiah Donovan, who claimed that he was willing to devote his spare time to translating religious texts and that if his work “furthered the cause of religion, his moments of leisure devoted to the work were well spent” (p. 89). Although most religious translators were members of the Church, some were not. According to O’Connor (2017), most of them would have some connection to Catholicism or the institution such as coming from Catholic backgrounds or being educated by multilingual members of the Church.

Alongside religious conflicts, the 19th century in Ireland was a period marked by the sparks of a nationalist movement to revive the Irish language. This new commitment to the language was reflected in the translation activity of the time. Much of what was achieved regarding the language movement was attributed to a group called the Young Irelanders, whose activity took place in the 1840s and 1850s. Regardless of their contributions to the revitalisation of the Irish language, according to Anne O’Connor (2017), they are remembered in history as agitators and nationalists, disregarding that some of them were also translators and that their “cultural mediations shaped the development of Irish nationalism in this period” (p. 145). According to O’Connor (2017), for Young Irelander Denis Florence MacCarthy and the other “translators involved in Irish cultural nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century, their ideological engagement and commitment to wider European trends made them active supporters of translation” (p. 165). The group translated European texts into Irish and most of their work was published in the nationalist newspaper *The Nation*, a patriotic newspaper dedicated to the publishing of translations. According to O’Connor (2017), the newspaper included “many nationalist poems from other European languages [...] intended to inspire the Irish people and generate a national community which could then write its own rousing nationalist literature” (p. 148). These publications proved the importance of translation in the nationalist movement in Ireland for the spread of ideologies, as much as it was in the religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics to spread their beliefs. The editors of *The Nation* argued that what differentiated Ireland from other independent nations was

the lack of knowledge caused by English rule. Through their translations, the Irish people could access the nationalist conversation in Europe. For this reason, accessing and reading translated literature from Europe was seen as a form of rebellion against English rule, which, in the words of Anne O'Connor (2017), had for centuries been purposely restricting "the flow of knowledge to Ireland and [causing] ignorance amongst the Irish population" (p. 147). This was so that nationalist ideas could not reach Ireland and create resistance against their rule. Regardless of the big impact translation had in the restoration of the Irish language and culture, it was not the only way to revitalise the language. The revitalisation of the Irish language and culture was partly due to the Irish language movement. In 1893, one of the most important projects of the language movement was born, the Gaelic League. The Gaelic League was an organisation to promote the Irish language in Ireland and around the world funded by Douglas Hyde, who would later become the first President of the Republic. The Gaelic League was not the only movement working for the revitalisation of the Irish culture. Other movements included the Irish games promoted by the Gaelic Athletic Association, an action intended to restore Irish customs. Nonetheless, according to O'Connor (2017), the recovery and translation of ancient texts "was the cornerstone of the movement" (p. 65). This involved a major project that took place during the 19th and 20th centuries for the translation of medieval texts written in old Irish. These were translated to reach wider audiences in and outside Ireland.

Patriotic Irish scholars involved in translation intended to show Ireland's ancestry and paint the idea of Ireland as an ancient nation. Translation in the Irish context was, according to author Tok Thompson (2021), not simply "a locus of imperialism, but a site of resistance and nation building as well" (p. 222). These translations were of great value, particularly for the writers of the Irish literary renaissance of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who relied on them for inspiration. According to Michael Cronin (1996), for authors such as Yeats or Synge these translations were seen as the beginning of a new literature in English, while for others such as Patrick Pearse, they proved the excellence of the original text as well as being a way of recovering the Irish language and creating a new literature in Irish. The recommitment to Irish of the 19th century was marked by cultural translation with the language shift to English and the integration and merge of the two cultures. This cultural translation and integration is very present in the literature of the Irish Revival with translations of Irish speech, retellings of Irish literature and the use of Irish mythos. According to Tymoczko and Ireland (2003), this resulted in a

“bicultural literary tradition in the twentieth century in Ireland” (p. 6). This way, Michael Cronin (1996) believes that “the two literatures of modern Ireland can be said to emerge from the translation movement in the nineteenth century” (p. 138). Nonetheless, Cronin (1996) believes that there were increasing inequalities between the two languages that were marked by repression and hostility towards native traditions following the establishment of the Republic of Ireland. These hostilities were amplified in Northern Ireland, where Catholics and Protestants coexisted. The animosity in the region notoriously led to the 30-year-long conflict of the Troubles.

The writers of the Revival had a key role in the language situation, they took the Irish language out of the marginalised position it was in by fighting for the Irish language and culture. In the words of Tymoczko and Ireland (2003), by uniting Ireland’s cultural domains and helping the Irish language and culture resist marginalisation, they provided “a means of decentering the structures of cultural power as well” (p. 9). The figures involved in the language movement challenged the ingrained stereotypes regarding the Irish that kept people from using the language and embracing the culture by creating new and alternate discourses to represent the Irish. Tymoczko and Ireland (2003) claim that defying the deep-rooted stereotypes and hegemony created by the English was fundamental for the decolonisation of the Irish identity.

One of the most important figures of the Revival was Douglas Hyde, mentioned earlier as the founder of the Gaelic League and soon to be the first President of the Republic. In 1890, he published a collection of prose translations named *Beside the Fire* that would change the tone of translation from Irish and prove to be very influential for later translators. According to Cronin (2011), these translations were written in the English vernacular of the Irish countryside. He would continue to publish translations in the following years, some of them being published in newspapers and consequently reaching a wider audience. Irish-born poet Mícheál Ó hAodha (1969) says about Hyde’s translations that they “marked a turning point in the Irish Literary Revival and revealed a new source for the development of a distinctive Irish mode in verse and poetic prose” (p. 5). His decision to recognise the Irish English vernacular in literature created the possibility for future translators and authors to publish literary works in the vernacular. Cronin (2011) believes that Hyde’s translations marked a before and after in the activity of translation, from being “an act of exegesis to [...] an agent of aesthetic and political renewal” (p. 54). Hyde’s translations were no longer mere witnesses in history, they

developed an active role in the shaping of the future. Other key figures of the Literary Revival were Dubliner playwright, poet and writer John Millington Synge and Galwegian dramatist Lady Gregory. Synge translated his own works into English and as Cronin (2011) declares, he reflects the centrality of the Revival as well as the future linguistic and cultural changes of 20th century Ireland that translation made possible. Likewise, Lady Gregory's translations are also considered very influential as she is one of the few authors to translate into the Anglo-Irish dialect. In 1902, she published one of the earliest English translations of *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, a version of the Cú Chulainn legends. The work of Hyde, Synge, and Gregory gave a new found value to the English spoken in rural areas until then seen as not fit for literary production. As Cronin (2011) estates, their decision to "positively champion the English language spoken in rural [Ireland] was to make an aesthetic virtue of a translation necessity" (p. 56). By translating to the language of the people, Irish English, they made translations more accessible to everyone. Tymoczko and Ireland (2003), called Ireland 'the translational island', where two languages and cultures long divided become one. The ultimate form of this merge is the emergence of a vernacular that draws from both languages.

2.1.1 The matter of the female translator

Despite the relevant role that translation had in the 19th century, the research done at this time focuses solely on male figures, proving that translation was and still is a male-dominated world. Research on 19th-century translation ignores female figures despite the fact that their presence and involvement in the activity is, in the words of Anne O'Connor (2017), "both striking and noteworthy" (p. 169). O'Connor is one of the few authors to bring light to the matter of the female translators, dedicating a chapter to the topic in her book *Translation and Language in Nineteenth-century Ireland*.

Even though her book focuses on the 19th century, O'Connor (2017) looks back on the 18th century to highlight the figure of Charlotte Brooke, who she believes to be a trailblazer in the translation and publishing of works from Irish to English. In this century, Brooke published her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, a composition O'Connor believes to be an important precedent for the female translations that followed in Ireland. Although some of them worked alone, with the arrival of the 19th century came clusters of female translators. Some of them were published in the periodicals *The Nation* and the *DUM*. Some Irish female writers and translators worked for *The Nation* through the use of pen names, a few being: Jane Elgee, known as Speranza, Mary Eva Kelly, known as Eva of

the Nation, and Olivia Mary Knight, known as Thomasine. According to O'Connor (2017), the reason for Elgee and Kelly's writing under a different name was that they came from unionist families and were afraid to have their real names attached to a nationalist paper. In the case of the *DUM*, their female translators were both from Ireland and England and published using their real names: Mrs James Gray, Louisa Steward Costello and Anna Swanwick.

The figure of the female translator in Ireland in this period is varied. Some of these groups were linked by religion and their affiliation to the Catholic church, and religious translators outnumbered non-religious translators. Female members of the church translated European religious texts for their circulation in Ireland during the 19th century, and according to O'Connor (2017) they "accounted for the largest output of translations by women in this period" (p. 171). Particularly relevant are the orders of the Ursulines and the Mercy Sisters. Some of the most prolific female religious translators of the period were Sister Mary Francis Clare and Sister Mary Vincent Deasy, though many times the religious translator remains unknown. Anonymity was typical among female translators of this time, both religious and non-religious. Religious texts were usually not signed and as we can see from the female translators writing for *The Nation*, non-religious translators tended to go by a different name for their publications. Nonetheless, O'Connor (2017) argues that the anonymity of translations cannot be seen as a gender issue as it was common during that period to not sign translations, and she notes that sometimes this anonymity would not hide the gender of the translator, as we can see in the case of Mary Eva Kelly, known as Eva of the Nation. Because of the high number of anonymous translations existing at the time, O'Connor considers it to be difficult to know exactly how many of them were translated by women. However, Susanne Stark (2000) estimates that in 1830 approximately 70% of translations were male, 4% female, 16% uncertain, and 10% anonymous. This number grew in the next sixty years, and by 1890 Stark (2000) estimates that translations were 75% men, 16% women, 2% uncertain and 7% anonymous.

In terms of their reception, according to Sherry Simon (1996), despite being historically considered as a weaker version of authorship, translation has oftentimes helped women enter male-dominated fields, acting as "a strong form of expression for women – allowing them to enter the world of letters, to promote political causes and to engage in stimulating writing relationships" (p. 39). Translation was one of the few activities that women could

take part in at the time, with some expanding to writing original material as well as expanding to other literary fields. According to O'Connor (2017), many professional female translators emerged during this time, as important women were paid for their translations, and together with the monetary compensation they also gained recognition for their work. Their literary activities were received with positivity, being finally appreciated and taken seriously. Translation created new opportunities for them and gave them a space to express themselves. Nonetheless, according to O'Connor (2017), translating came with limitations for women: they were paid less, for example, "Thomasina Ross was paid £15s less per article than her male counterparts" (p. 189), and while their translations of European texts were accepted, classic translations were still believed to be a man's job and "the exclusion of women from translating classical languages was reinforced by reviews" (p. 189-190). Author and professor of translation studies Mirella Agorni (2002) says that this exclusion made women choose certain fields of literature that were perceived as more appropriate for women. Despite their notable contributions to the field of translation and the freedom the activity provided them as a way to express themselves and earn their own money, they were still relegated to second place while men dominated the spaces of translation considered more valuable and important.

2.2 From An Gúm to the present day

The nationalist movements and repression that took place in the 19th century carried on to the next century. The 20th century in Ireland was a time marked by violence from the several conflicts between Protestants/unionists and Catholics/republicans, a time which would later be known as the Irish Civil War. These issues impacted all cultural expressions greatly and with it also translation.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the role of translation changed drastically from an imperialist tool to an anti-establishment tool. It was used to share nationalist slogans and demands as well as being an active form of resistance against the English and their impositions. According to Tymoczko and Ireland (2003), by using translation for political purposes "the link to both social and personal identity was explicitly drawn" (p. 12). Translations from Irish to English were usually carried out for nationalist purposes. As well as being a way to share their ideas, translation was a tool for patriots to promote their language and culture. By translating and publishing texts in Irish they were

promoting and giving value to a language that for so long was being marginalised and stereotyped.

During this time Irish translation expanded and reached fields other than the literary. Nationalists comprehended that to revive Irish, a minority language, and for it to be used in all spheres, the language had to be up to date with the ever-growing human knowledge. For this, the language needed to be upgraded and new concepts had to be introduced. Much of this was achieved through translation, where new terms could be introduced into society by people with extended knowledge of the language, that is, translators. This created an enormous and unprecedented need for translations. Scholars Eithne O'Connell and John Walsh (2016) speak on the importance of translation to and from minority languages for their survival and preservation. While translation *into* a minority language is necessary for its survival, translation *from* a minority language according to O'Connell and Walsh (2016) is essential for the preservation and recovery of its status and prestige.

The translation activity of the 20th century in Ireland was marked by the efforts of An Gúm, an Irish state company that during the 1920s and 1930s published educational materials in Irish to promote the use of the language, and which continues to do so today. Together with the efforts from the publications department of the Irish Department of Education they translated classics of world literature into Irish. According to O'Connell and Walsh (2016), who researched translation and language planning in Ireland in recent years, these contributions were printed in a "slightly pseudo-Celtic script" (p. 2) that was discontinued in the early 1960s. For this reason, they are not easily accessed today. Also during the 1920s was the establishment of the Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, also known as the Translation Section, a department part of the Oireachtas or Irish parliament, that, according to O'Connell and Walsh (2016), was responsible for over forty years for "language planning, standardisation and terminology as well as translation and interpreting services for the parliament and civil service" (p. 5). Between the years 1920 and 1959, they published 13 specialised glossaries in various fields such as music, geography, history, commerce and the law. However, according to O'Connell and Walsh (2016), some have long been left out of print. The main function of the Rannóg, according to O'Connell and Walsh (2016), was to translate into Irish the Acts of the Oireachtas as well as "translating statutory instruments, treaties, advertisements, official forms and administrative documents" (p. 5). O'Connell and Walsh (2016) refer to the great

importance and value of these documents, declaring that the English version and its correspondent Irish translation of the Acts of the Oireachtas constitute to this day one of the most “valuable legal terminological resources in existence in relation to contemporary Irish” (p. 5). Nevertheless, they are kept inside the Rannóg and have restricted access. Translation during the 1940s was marked by the translation of Irish medieval texts as an ideological and political activity. The task of studying medieval texts was fulfilled by the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies and, according to O’Connell and Walsh (2016), wanted to prove that the Irish language had a “great store of advanced knowledge as well as a sophisticated arsenal of specialised terminology to describe that knowledge in a number of highly technical fields” (p. 4). These efforts decreased as English started to position itself as the language of knowledge and progress, and with the decrease in the use of Irish the language slowly run out of innovative terms to export to other languages through translation. Maria Tymoczko (2014) believes that this change simulates the process and effects of colonisation as well as the resistance to it and the consequent process of decolonisation. Specialised fields of knowledge that were studied in Irish, influenced by the growing domination of English, switched languages.

With the arrival of the 1960s came the rise of world discourses of power, which impacted Ireland greatly. These amplified the frictions between English and Irish and reflected on the issues of language and identity in relation to colonialism, affecting literature and social life alike. Language had a central role in the protests carried out at the time as language was a divisive matter and a factor in the religious conflict. The language movement took a turn during this time and distanced itself from the goals of the previous century. Tymoczko and Ireland (2003) reflect on this change of perspective, commenting that what started in the 19th century as a nationalist movement “with the goal of language restoration, ended the twentieth century with very different objectives, meanings, and signification” (p. 14). The language situation in Ireland was changing as Irish was gaining more pull and language differences began to be seen in correlation to cultural differences. These questions impacted Northern Ireland more heavily, where these frictions were magnified. The state of the north was being questioned, and as explained in Tymoczko and Ireland (2003), there was a debate on whether it was a “historical residue of colonization or a matter of continuing, overt governmental policy” (p. 13). A debate that led to the referendum of 1998 and the consequent signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

The importance of creating new terminology and keeping the language up to date with its time influenced the funding in 1968 of the An Coiste Téarmaíochta, also known as the Terminological Committee. Its role was to develop new terminology in Irish. Nonetheless, according to O’Connell and Walsh (2016), the establishment of this committee led to a lack of consistency between the terms coined by the An Coiste Téarmaíochta and those coined by the Rannóg an Aistriúcháin. While the first one developed new terms, the second coined new terms as they emerged. These inconsistencies were not resolved as the state failed to devote enough resources to provide communication between the two bodies, despite the urgent need for new terms to maintain the language alive. O’Connell and Walsh (2016) reflect on the changes introduced with the arrival of the 1980s, a time when bilingual poetry collections became popular at the same time Irish folktales and sagas were being translated and adapted. With the arrival of the decade of the 1990s translation expanded to other areas, taking the form of subtitling. The RTÉ, Ireland’s national television and broadcaster, started using subtitles in the early 1990s and in 1996 the channel Tnag/TG4 followed. The decade of the 1990s also brought the foundation of the Irish Literature Exchange (ILE) in 1994. According to O’Connell and Walsh (2016), the ILE carried out the translation of “some 600 works of Irish literature *from* Irish or English into 40 different languages in 28 countries” (p. 3). On the work of the ILE, O’Connell and Walsh (2016) believe that it was critical for the spreading of Irish literary texts into other languages and cultures as well as possibly being responsible for the expansion of translation Irish-English into the audio-visual realm. The work of the ILE, together with that carried out by An Gúm, consists of some of the most culturally significant translation work of the 20th century.

The 2000s brought the creation of the Foras na Gaeilge, a body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. The Foras na Gaeilge provides help and materials in Irish through projects such as An Gúm, now a part of this organism which according to the Foras na Gaeilge website nowadays works with lexicography, the publishing of textbooks and school facilities as well as providing reading material for young people; Séideán Sí, which provides sound materials and games; Áisíneacht Dáileacháin Leabhar (ÁIS), also known as the Books Distribution Agency, which distributes Irish publications in and outside of Ireland, and according to the Foras na Gaeilge website is also tasked with ensuring a supply of Irish books on the market; and Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge, aimed to provide support for writers, publishers and the general public through several schemes and projects.

Most recently translation in Ireland has been devoted to the task of translating official or important documents and texts into Irish such as the Bible or the Constitution. This increasing demand for translation is partly due to the passing of the Official Languages Act of 2004, which aimed to ensure the availability of public services in Irish. As documents, laws, and services were to be available in Irish, considerable translation work had to be done. Another reason for this increase in translation activity is the recognition of Irish as an official language of the EU, which according to O'Connell and Walsh (2016), meant mainly an increase in translation activity *into* Irish. Translation also continued to be used in the media. The subtitling trend that started in the late 1990s continued and further established itself in the 2000s. Most of the subtitling which involved translation *from* Irish into English was –and still is to this day– done for commercial purposes and to reach wider audiences. Another trend that involved translation in the media was that of dubbing. According to O'Connell and Walsh (2016), it has “increased the amount of foreign material translated *into* Irish in recent years” (p. 6). Dubbing gained relevance as it was cheaper than making originals. O'Connell and Walsh (2016) predict that the activity of dubbing into Irish will keep growing as it is a way for the TG4 to expand its schedule while using very little budget.

Translation as a discipline is a very recent phenomenon. It is not until the 2010s that real attention is paid to the subject of translation and training translators in Ireland. According to O'Connell and Walsh (2016), Dublin City University was the first university to offer a MA in Translation Studies in Irish and a Graduate Diploma. The DCU has been offering these programmes for 30 years. Translation programmes are now also offered at the University of Galway, Queen's University Belfast and the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. Despite existing training available at university level and the need for highly skilled translators, most are insufficiently qualified. O'Connell and Walsh (2016) state that according to a recent report on “the Irish language translation sector carried out by Fiontar at DCU [...] only 10 freelance Irish translators were capable of working to the high standard required” (p. 7). O'Connell and Walsh (2016) weigh on the matter and comment on this lack of skilled translators, an issue that together with the lack of resources devoted to translation and the slow pace at which terms are made available, leads to a situation where unofficial terms are coined and used by the public before the correspondent official organisms can make available the official terms. Despite living in the fast-paced era of digitalisation and that An Coiste Téarmaíochta publishes now terminological lists online

on their website (www.acmhainn.ie), there are still matters that need to be improved for the process of creating new terms to work properly.

Nowadays, the situation in Ireland regarding translation is alarming. O'Connell and Walsh (2016) reflect on the discouraging situation regarding translation in Ireland today where

the fact that very few Irish language publications, apart from core textbooks, sell more than 1,000 copies indicates that only a very small number of people have high competency in the written language. Furthermore, many native speakers of Irish in the Gaeltacht are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the written standard form of Irish, and if they read in that language at all, tend to choose only local publications usually written in their own dialect (p. 8).

The lack of written competency in Irish, accompanied by the discontent with the standard forms of the language results in a very small audience for publications and translations in Irish. Despite the efforts to provide translations and services in Irish to better the status of the language, the impact is minimal as the majority of people are not proficient nor accounted with the standard form of the language.

The activity of translation in Ireland today is in itself a controversial matter. The centuries of linguistic, cultural, and religious tensions between English and Irish resulted in very different perspectives regarding translation, especially the translation from Irish into English. While some authors see the potential that translation has to cross language barriers and agree to translate their works, others are not so sympathetic and, in the words of Justin Harman (2020), “refuse to allow their works to be translated in English [as] they feel that to do so is to capitulate to those in Ireland who want to avoid the effort of attaining proficiency in their native tongue” (p. 80). For many authors that write in Irish having their works translated into English, the language of the coloniser, is not a step forward but a step back. It is a reminder of the past history of domination and assimilation in Ireland at the hands of the English. For those that do allow their works to be translated, many call to adopt foreignising strategies to avoid English from dominating their texts and their culture.

As we have seen, the survival of the Irish language relies greatly on the translation community, however, little can be done while the Irish speakers and the organisms that create the language norm are not on the same page.

3 The language issue in Ireland today

The efforts of the 19th century from groups such as the Gaelic League and the Young Irelanders did not influence the spoken language, where the division between Irish and English was also present. During this time, English was the urban language while Irish was being relegated to the impoverished highlands. According to academic Justin Harman (2020), the spoken language was seen as a badge of identity and national allegiance, and the main source of division regarding the speaking of Irish was the confrontation between pro-union and pro-autonomy. Indian scholar Homi H. Bhabha (1990) argues that the political and territorial domination happening in Ireland during the 19th century resulted in a mixed identity born from the mutual contamination between the English and Irish languages and cultures. These issues continue to impact the linguistic situation in Ireland today, where the use of the Irish language is declining.

The decline of the Irish language is, according to Irish linguist Raymond Hickey (2007), mostly due to the gradual “abandonment of the Irish language by successive generations”, reducing the number of Irish speakers to a small number mainly from the countryside (p. 212). O’Connell and Walsh (2017) estimate that the number of fluent and frequent Irish speakers is around 100,000, of which 20,000 are native speakers from the Gaeltacht². O’Connell and Walsh (2017) also report “falling standards of written and spoken Irish amongst native speakers and learners at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of literacy in Irish” (p. 6). Despite its small number of speakers, the Irish language still plays an important role in the linguistic attitudes towards English in Ireland today. Italian scholar Monica Randaccio (2014) argues that despite no longer being a “battlefield of identity [...], language remains a powerful ‘site of identity’” in Ireland (p. 13). Between 2006 and 2008, Raymond Hickey carried out a survey called *Language Use and Attitudes in Ireland*, from which Randaccio (2014) concludes the following:

First, the great majority of Irish people still regard the language issue as central to the history and culture of Ireland. Second, there is a widespread concern about the Irish language and about the institutions that support it [alongside a] desire for concrete measures, especially that Irish must be studied as a compulsory subject in school. Finally, the Irish people are aware of their own variety of the English language as different from

² The areas in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until very recently, recognised by the government as the primary language of the population.

other varieties of English, revealing their own linguistic identity which is unique to this country (p. 13).

Despite the widespread concern regarding the linguistic situation of the Irish language, there is a lack of trust in its capacity for communication in the modern world. This stigma surrounding the Irish language, together with the slow rate of introduction of new terms reflected in section 2.2, as well as the reluctance to adopt terms once coined, prevents people from speaking the language. The distrust regarding the Irish language positions it in a situation where the relationship between Irish and English is unbalanced. As seen in previous chapters, the relationship between the two languages was never one between equals. Stable bilingualism never occurred between English and Irish as the language shift of the seventeenth century never aspired to maintain both languages but to convert speakers of Irish to English and abandon the use of the Irish language all together. Hickey (2007) reflects on the intentions behind the language shift and the unequal relationship between the two languages, claiming that “there was never any functional distribution of Irish and English, either in the towns or in the countryside, so that stable diglossia could not have developed” (p. 212). Irish and English never coexisted peacefully, as they were in constant battle and the thriving of one led to the decay of the other.

Since the arrival of the English colonisers and the introduction of their language on the island, the Irish language has always been in a position of inferiority. Over time, this unstable diglossia asserted itself more and more and the English and Irish had different uses and functions. O’Connell and Walsh (2017) classify the two as being used for ‘high’ functions or ‘low’ functions. Irish is relegated to ‘low’ functions, mainly oral and in familiar and informal domains, while ‘high’ functions and more formal situations are reserved for English. This unbalanced relationship can be seen in the number of bilinguals in Ireland today and what their native language is. According to Hickey (2007), the remaining bilinguals in Ireland today are mainly native Irish speakers from Irish-speaking regions that can also speak English. This means that while Irish speakers are fluent in English, it is not the case the other way around, an aspect that highlights once more the unbalanced relationship between the two languages.

Despite the efforts from colonisers to install the English language and force the abandonment of the Irish language, the English spoken in Ireland was influenced by the many centuries of contact between Irish and English. It was different from the one spoken

by the colonisers, not the standard but a vernacular. This variety called Irish English presents characteristics of the Irish language from before colonisation as well as, according to Cambria (2014), “other characteristics caused by the mixing of Irish with the regional scots and English vernaculars of the new settlers” (p. 28). This variety was born from the contact between the English and Irish languages and cultures on the island, and it represents the mixed identity of Ireland post-colonisation. According to Cambria (2014), Irish-English could have been born as a way of resistance against colonialism, and “been perceived as a different vehicle for communication when compared to received colonial English” (p. 19). By creating a variety that was unique to them, that draw features from their native language and culture pre-existent to colonisation, Irish people were standing against colonialism and rejecting the imposed language by ‘contaminating’ it and introducing features of their language and culture into the coloniser’s. The use of this variety is a reflection of the extended contact between the language and culture of the coloniser with that of the colonised.

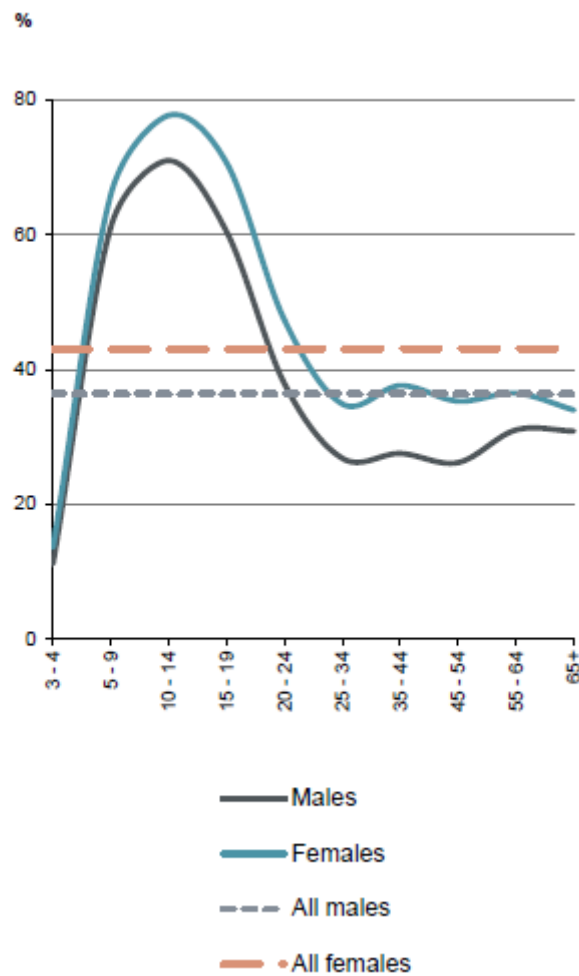
According to Mariavita Cambria (2014), in post-colonial contexts such as this where a new variety is born from the contact between languages under colonialism, language becomes a “battlefield of identity” (p. 30). The creation of a language that draws both from the language of the coloniser as well as that of the colonised as is Irish English has an impact on the collective identity of the community by originating a fractured identity. This identity is not born from a harmonious mixture but rather, as explained by Mariavita Cambria (2014), is the “result of a process of mixing with the other, negotiating one’s identity, following a pre-established notion pre-determined by the colonizer” (p. 24). For centuries the Irish language and culture have been silenced by the English, and these events of the past still influence the collective identity of the Irish people nowadays. The current attitudes towards Irish showcase the success of the colonialist efforts to abandon the Irish language as it has very little presence on the island today.

3.1 Language use in numbers

On the 24th of April 2016, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) held out a census examining population changes, geographical distribution, language, housing, and religion amongst other issues. In this census, it was gathered that 1,761,420 people (39,8% of the total population) could speak Irish. This presented a decrease of 0,7% from the results of the 2011 census where 1,774,437 (41,4%) stated being able to speak Irish. According to the census, the percentage of Irish speakers decreases with age,

being the ages 10-14 years the ones to have more Irish speakers (70% in males and close to 80% in females). The age brackets to have the least Irish speakers proved to be 25-34 and 45-54 years, with roughly the same percentages of a little bit over 20% of males and close to 40% of females. In total, results confirm that women speak more Irish than men, with 36,4% of men speaking Irish and 43,1% of women. These percentages are best explained in the following figure provided by the CSO.

Figure 1. Percentage of Irish speakers by age and sex in 2016



Note. Percentage of Irish speakers of the total population according to age and sex in 2016. Extraído de «Census 2016 Summary Results», de Central Statistics Office, 2017, p. 66.

From Figure 1 we can see that there is a bigger percentage of women that speak Irish compared to men. We can also see that the percentage of Irish speakers is significantly bigger in the ages 5-24. From 24 years old onwards it appears that while the percentage

stabilises it also decreases. This supports the idea that Irish people abandon the Irish language once they become adults because English provides more opportunities. It is possible that the thing pushing the youngest to speak Irish is the education system, where Irish is studied. However, figure 1 and its percentages do not contemplate frequency of use, meaning that while a bigger percentage of people aged 5-24 speak Irish, the results drawn do not contemplate how often they speak the language, or if it is just within the education system. According to the 2016 census, out of the 1,76 million people that can speak Irish, 73,803 speak Irish daily outside the education system, a 3,382 decrease from the 2011 census. The census also states that 111,473 speak Irish weekly (an increase of 831 people from the 2011 census), and that 586,535 speak Irish less often than weekly (a decrease of 26,701 from the 2011 census). According to the CSO, more than 1 in 4 people never speak Irish, a total of 421,274 people.

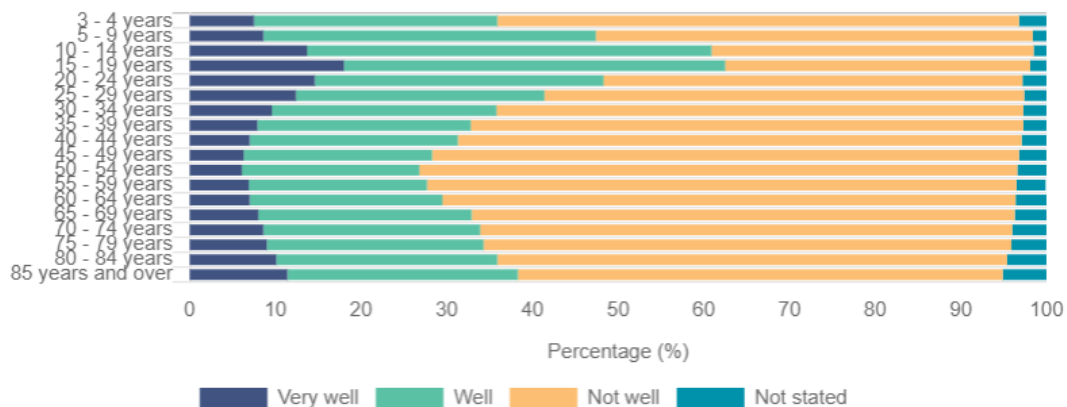
The CSO reports that a total of 69,7% of people over 3 cannot or do not speak Irish, while the remaining 30,3% do speak Irish. Of this 30,3%, 12,5% speak Irish daily only within the education system, 1,7% speak Irish daily outside of the education system, 2,5% speak Irish weekly, 13,2% do so less often than a week, and 0,3% do not state. From these results, we can gather that 17,4% of people speak Irish outside of the education system. It is important to note that from the 73,803 people that speak Irish daily outside of the education system, 20,586 (27,9%) are people from the Gaeltacht, a region where in the past the bigger number of Irish speakers was concentrated. The total population of the Gaeltacht in 2016 was 96,090 people, of which 63,664 (66,3%) spoke Irish. Of this 63,664, 20,586 (21,4%) spoke Irish daily outside of the education system, (a 11,2% decrease from the 23,175 reported in the 2011 census), and another 16,137 spoke Irish less often than weekly (a decrease of 0.7% from the 16,244 reported in 2011). These results reveal that while the population values the Irish language, actual use is very low.

On the 3 of April 2022, the CSO held another census in Ireland. As of writing this paper, the full results are not yet available, however, summary results have been published. These summary results report that the number of Irish speakers has increased from 1,761,420 (39,8% of the population) in 2016 to 1,873,997 (40,4%) in 2022. This 2022 census included a new question that facilitates the calculation of the number of Irish speakers, their frequency of use, and their proficiency. The results have reported that the percentage of Irish speakers aged 3 years and over that speak: daily only within the

education system is 29,46% (551,993), daily within the education system and daily outside is 1,10% (20,581), daily within the education system and weekly outside is 0,32% (5,966), daily within the education system and less often outside is 0,20% (3,751), and daily within the education system and never outside is 0,11% (1,972). The census also gathered that the percentage of Irish speakers aged 3 and over that speak only outside the educational system: daily is 2,74% (51,387), weekly is 5,82% (109,099), less often than weekly is 32,60% (610,976), never is 25,23% (472,887), and recorded as not stated is 2,42% (45,385). Overall, the biggest percentage of Irish speakers is attributed to those that speak the language outside of the education system less often than weekly. The number of 51,387 daily speakers represents a decrease from the 73,803 reported in 2016.

Now, regarding fluency, the following figure created by the CSO represents the level of proficiency according to age group.

Figure 2. level of proficiency in Irish according to age group in 2022



Note. Population aged 3 years and over by level of Irish spoken and age group, 2022. Extraído de «Census of Population 2022 - Summary Results», de Central Statistics Office, 2023. Recuperado de <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/educationandirishlanguage/>

As shown in Figure 2, the age group with the biggest percentage according to proficiency is 15-19, with 18% claiming to speak Irish very well and 44,5% claiming to speak Irish well. This is probably due to the fact that they are at a point in their educational journey

when they are at the highest level of learning. However, once they leave the educational system they stop learning Irish, which is reflected in the fall of proficiency in the following age group. The age group to report the biggest lack of proficiency is that of 50-54 years, where 69,8% claim to speak Irish not well. Overall, of the total of Irish speakers aged 3 and over, roughly 10% claim to speak it very well and 32% to speak it well.

Now, regarding the distribution of Irish speakers, it is reported by the 2022 census that 1 in 5 of the counties of Galway and Donegal claim to speak Irish very well. According to the CSO, this is the “highest percentage at county level recorded in the State” (Central Statistics Office, 2023).

Contrasting these numbers with the Census 2016, we can gather that there has been an increase in the number of Irish speakers, with the biggest number of individuals with high proficiency being among the youth. Nonetheless, while we can see an increase in the overall number of speakers, the number of daily users is actually lower than in 2016.

3.2 Legislation and promotion of the Irish language

Several steps have been taken in the past 10-20 years to ensure the survival of the Irish language through legislation and the promotion of the language. One of the most important steps to revalue the language was the passing of the Official Languages Act in 2003. On their website, the Government of Ireland explains that this law meant to improve the “provision of public services through the Irish language [...] through the provisions of the Act along with regulations made by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media” («Official Languages Act», 2023). Each of these departments meant to provide services in Irish to the public and promote the use of the language over time. Some of the sections of the Official Languages Act include: every Act of the Oireachtas must be published with an Irish translation alongside the English version, all and any public document of importance must be published simultaneously in English and Irish, citizens have the right to communicate with all public bodies in either of the official languages with equal treatment ensured, and other regulations regarding the rightful use of the Irish language.

In the following years the Irish government would take new steps in promoting the use of the Irish language, the first one coming in 2006 when they implemented what is called the ‘Government Statement on the Irish Language 2006’, an initiative to officialise the

government's support in the "development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht" («About the Language»). Alongside legislation, another important achievement for the Irish language came in 2007 when Irish became an official language of the EU. Furthermore, in 2010 the Irish government launched the '20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030', a strategy to increase the use of the Irish language during the 20 years that followed the creation of the initiative. Some of its objectives include increasing the number of daily Irish speakers to 250,000 and increasing the number of people with knowledge of the Irish language to 2 million. However, looking at the results of the 2022 census we can confirm that these goals have not been achieved yet. Lastly, in 2021 the Irish government published The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, a reformulated version of the 2003 Official Languages Act with 32 amendments. The amendment aimed to strengthen the initiatives of the Official Languages Act 2003 and better the quality of the services provided in Irish by public bodies.

In terms of initiatives for the promotion of the Irish language in recent years, the most relevant work is done by Literature Ireland, a national agency funded by the Arts Council and Culture Ireland that has been operating since 1995 to promote the Irish language. According to their website, Literature Ireland has funded "the translation of over 2,000 works of Irish literature into 56 languages around the world" («Stats and Achievements») and supports translations both into English and Irish by publishers based in Ireland. As reflected in their website, their services include: running grant programmes to fund translations from Irish and into Irish and English as well as bursary programmes to literary translators, attending international book fairs and events managing Irish national stands, offering support to international author and translator events, helping publishers, providing information to publishers, agents, translators, writers and others interested, publishing and distributing publications such as the annual catalogue *New Writing from Ireland*, and participating in international projects regarding literary translation. Alongside offering a number of services to publishers and translators, Literature Ireland also offers several materials to the public to promote the Irish language such as the aforementioned catalogue *New Writing from Ireland*, an annual publication offering a selection of the best Irish works published that year; the podcast *Talking Translations*, where an Irish writer and a translation get together every episode to share stories; and their online Translation Directory, which contains "all the translations supported by Literature Ireland through its translation grant programme since 1995 («Home»)." Another one of the initiatives carried

out by Literature Ireland is their Summer Translation Workshops, which started in 2021. This is a summer workshop open for postgraduate students of literary translation and literary translators. It consists of several training sessions through Zoom that take place over one week in the month of July. Their courses are offered in various languages and in 2021 they were imparted in French, German, Italian and Spanish. In 2022 the courses were taught in Bulgarian, French, Polish and Spanish. The aim of this summer workshop is to help literary translators of Irish working with the aforementioned languages master their skills as translators of Irish literature.

3.3 The language issue in Northern Ireland

The situation of the Irish language in Northern Ireland is far more complex than the one in the Republic. Since the partition of Ireland, the Irish language in Northern Ireland has been associated with republicanism and Catholicism. This rejection of the Irish language was intensified by the conflict of The Troubles, where religion and segregation played a huge part. Currently, three languages are spoken in Northern Ireland: English, Irish, and Ulster Scots. This last one is a dialect spoken in the Ulster province that draws features from Scottish Gaelic. Ulster-Scots is another example of the 'contamination' of the language of the coloniser, this time not by the Irish language but by another Gaelic language, Scottish. It was introduced in Ireland with the arrival of Scottish people during what is called the Plantation of Ulster, an effort from the English to colonise the Ulster region.

The segregation in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants, unionists and republicans, made it hard for the Irish language to survive. Irish speakers, long seen as Catholics and republicans, suffered for many years from marginalisation in housing and jobs. Nonetheless, it appears that times are changing and there is a new wave of Irish speakers. According to the newspaper *The New European*, Northern Ireland is harvesting a new generation of Irish speakers alongside a cultural revival that, according to writer Clár Ní Chonghaile, "could bring communities closer" (Ní Chonghaile, 2022). This new generation of Irish speakers have no memories of The Troubles and therefore do not associate the Irish language with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or republicanism. For this younger generation, it is not a question of choosing one language or the other, one side or the other in a conflict, they can speak both languages and be a part of both cultures. As Ní Chonghaile puts it, "they could have it all" (Ní Chonghaile, 2022). According to Ní Chonghaile, this cultural revival is being led by Irish language

schools, the only schools together with Catholic schools that teach Irish in Northern Ireland. In his article, Ní Chonghaile quotes Mac Guiolla Bhéin, spokesperson for the Irish activist group An Dream Dearg, who claims that “In the last 10 years, we’ve had around 70% growth in (Irish language schooling)” (Ní Chonghaile, 2022). With more people learning Irish and the Irish language no longer being seen as Catholic nor Protestant, unionist nor republican, there is an increasing demand for services to be available to the public in Irish. Times are changing, and in 2022 the Irish language finally acquired the status of official language in Northern Ireland. It appears that after years of decline, the Irish language is starting to rise from its ashes.

To analyse actual data on the use of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, we will examine and compare the results of the 2011 and 2021 censuses held in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). According to the 2021 census, of a total of 1,836,612 people over 3 years, 71,872 (3,91%) could speak, write, read, and understand Irish, an increase in percentage compared to the 3,74% registered in 2011, while 87,55% had no ability in Irish in 2021, a decrease from the 89,35% reported in 2011. While the 2011 census did not reflect the frequency of use, the 2021 census did, reporting that as of 2021: 43,551 people speak Irish daily (2,37%), 26,285 speak Irish weekly (1,43%), and 47,143 do so less often than weekly (2,56%). According to these numbers collected by the NISRA, we can confirm that there is an increase in the use and knowledge of the Irish language in Northern Ireland compared to what was surveyed in 2011. These results appear to confirm Ní Chonghaile’s claims, we are witnessing a time where the Irish language is finally being accepted and appreciated in Northern Ireland.

4 In between languages: an analysis of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections

When analysing the relationship between translation and identity in Ireland and between the two languages that coexist in that territory, it is important to look into the literary production in addition to the history and translation initiatives in the country that we have previously delved into. In the literary realm in Ireland, one of the most prominent authors to write in Irish is Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill. Her stance on translation together with her initiative to publish her work through dual-language collections make her stand out amongst the group of authors writing in Irish today.

Ní Dhomhnaill has spoken several times of the double marginalisation she suffers as both a female poet and an author writing in Irish, a minority language. Despite these difficulties, she is one of the most prolific and well-known Irish authors today both in and outside of Ireland. Ultimately her purpose to write comes from this deep appreciation for the Irish language and her goal is to revive the Irish language as well as challenge English hegemony. In an interview with scholar of medieval and modern Irish language and literature Kaarina Hollo (1998) Ní Dhomhnaill talks about how her writing is “an attempt to alleviate what I think is a great loss and to promote a more inclusive, holistic attitude to the rich linguistic environment in which we all live” (p. 91). She is aware of the language situation in her country and she tries to actively ease these tensions through her work. She aims to challenge English hegemony through her poetry by appealing to Irish traditional forms as a means of demonstrating that the Irish language is capable of keeping up with today's world and literature. Contrary to other authors writing in Irish, she believes that translation can ease these tensions instead of hardening them.

Ní Dhomhnaill has also delved several times into the topic of Irishness and the role language plays in it. She considers that denying Irish is also denying identity and Irishness, claiming that “if we deny that Irish is part of what makes us Irish here on this island we are also getting a very inadequate answer to who we are” (RTÉ, 2014). In an interview with Sibel Sezen (2007) on the topic of poetry and identity she says that “Irish identity is very complicated and very fragmented” (p. 127) due to the country's historical past of colonisation and the marginalisation of the language that followed that period. She believes that the Irish identity is continuously changing as the relationship between the Republic of Ireland and England, as well as the relationship between the Republic

and the north of Ireland, changes. She adds that the new generations of today are in a different position from her generation. These new generations are born in an Ireland that is part of a bigger picture, an Ireland that is a member of the European Union. They are seeing Ireland as one part of the world and not their whole world. Her wish to preserve the Irish language has often classified her as a political figure of sorts –a label she does not claim for herself– and therefore, her decision to write in Irish has too been understood as a political choice. She responds to this question in Sezen (2007) explaining that for her there is no other option than to write in Irish, claiming that she cannot write poetry in English, that she “can write a discursive prose in English but that’s a different part of the brain” (p. 131). Thus, her decision to write her poetry exclusively in Irish is seen as a statement. To this, Ní Dhomhnaill admits that while she does not intend to make it a political issue, it is. In Sezen (2007), she says that Irish is “a hot spot in the culture [...], my writing in Irish, therefore, has to be political” (p. 131). She continues speaking of the tight connection that unites culture and politics and how one cannot be conceived without the other, which leads to her writing in Irish, since literature is culture, to also be a matter of politics. In a country like Ireland where language choice has such underlying meaning, choosing one or the other will inevitable carry political significance.

Despite this declaration of intentions, Ní Dhomhnaill emphasises that she does not only write about Irish folklore and mythology, as some say. She confesses in Sezen (2007) that “no matter what I do, because I write in Irish and because I use that mythology and everything else, I’ll be pushed in this heritage box” (p. 131). She claims that she does not only delve into Irish folklore and mythology but also other mythologies. However, because she is an Irish writer writing in Irish –a rather political choice– her poetry as well as her choice of language is politicised. On this matter she responds that she does not look for stories but that stories find her, telling Sezen (2007) that “I use anything that comes to mind that I find useful. For seven years, I was fascinated about mermaids and got to a stage that anything I touched turned into mermaids” (p. 129). This reference to mermaids refers to her poetry collection *The Fifty Minute Mermaid*, where she creates a series of poems all centred around the lives of merfolk.

4.1 The importance of studying Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill

There was a reason to choose Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and not any of the other past or present Irish writers to analyse in this paper. She stands out from other contemporary writers because her translations created a before and after for Irish literature. Instead of

publishing her work in Irish and later on publishing the translated version in English she did something different and new. She chose to publish her poetry as dual-language collections, merging into one publication the original text in Irish and the translated version in English. She started this tradition of publishing bilingual editions with the publication of *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta* (1988). This was her first bilingual collection and the second edition of *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta*, which was published for the first time in 1986 including only the English text, a decision made by the publisher. As both Ní Dhomhnaill and her translator were not happy with this decision, the first edition was followed by the second two years later, this time including the original in Irish. Cary A. Shay (2014), author of the book *Of Mermaids and Others: An Introduction to the Poetry of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill*, believes that this second edition set a “precedent in publishing and was a significant event because it placed an Irish-language text on equal footing with an English one” (p. 29). According to Ní Dhomhnaill (2000), the publication of this bilingual version helped Irish and English writers come together and create a better relationship between the two groups.

Dr Kenneth Keating (2021) from the University College of Cork claims that with *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta* (1988), Ní Dhomhnaill became “the first Irish language poet to release an individual volume of work in translation” while also being “the first dual-language publication by a single Irish-language poet, albeit with translations by another poet, bridging the division between Irish-language and Anglophone poetry in a substantial manner” (p. 288). This second edition marked the first time a publication put in one volume the original text and the translation one next to the other on the page. As we will study later on, this had a massive impact on the promotion of the Irish language and literature. Keating (2021) comments on the impact of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’s poetry and says that her translated poems “serve functions beyond the scope of simply carrying them from one language into another. They are a reification of the multiple tensions that are constitutive of the poet’s work as a whole” (p. 19). By publishing bilingual editions where the Irish and English versions are equals, she eases the tensions and the centuries-long confrontation between the two languages. In her poetry, both languages sit in harmony next to one another.

Nonetheless, despite her efforts to use her work as a reconciliation field for these two languages, she is aware of the negative implications that translation from Irish to English has, as well as the positive. Shay (2014) talks about how Ní Dhomhnaill seems to

“welcome translation with gratitude and hope” (p. 29). Ní Dhomhnaill believes that translation between Irish and English can have a positive outcome, and contrary to some of her colleagues she fully encourages it, however, with conditions. For her to allow her works to be translated she establishes the condition that the publication must include both the translated text and the original, otherwise, she would not allow for it to be translated. This decision to publish dual-language versions has rewarded her with gratitude from Irish people. In her chapter “Linguistic Ecology: Preventing a Great Loss” in Isabelle de Courtivron’s (2009) book *Lives in Translation: Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity* Ní Dhomhnaill expresses how thankful she is by the response to her dual-language versions and explains how people have come up to her in Ireland to thank her because “this format has encouraged them to take up Irish again” (p. 89). According to Shay (2014), because most of Ní Dhomhnaill’s readers access her work through translation, her work is an example of “the ways in which Irish can potentially be assisted in its survival by the very language that would seem to spell its demise” (p. 11). Laura Kirkley (2013) weighs in on the matter explaining that translating from Irish to English can have a positive impact: “firstly, it heightens awareness of Irish-language poetry in Anglophone communities; secondly, particular strategies of postcolonial translation can challenge the Anglophone linguistic and cultural hegemony” (p. 290). However, she does take into account that in the context of post-colonial Ireland, certain translational strategies can have the opposite impact and dive the Irish language into further colonisation.

What many wonder about Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill is why she chooses to have someone else translate her work when she is capable of translating to English herself. While the job of a translator is different from the one of a writer, and one can be a translator and not a writer and vice versa, some writers do choose to translate their own work instead of hiring a professional translator. In spite of having translated some of her poems in the past, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill has only ever self-translated out of necessity. The only time she translated her work was for *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta* (1988). She explains to Hollo (1998) how she only made an exception because she needed translations for the Poets’ Tour of Scotland and she “didn’t know any poet in English well enough to twist their arms to do the translations for me in time” (p. 104). According to Hollo (1998), Nuala has stated before that she does not wish to translate her own work as it “might interfere with [her] composition in Irish” (p. 104). By having to write thinking of future translations, she might compromise the original work in order to make it easier for it to be translated,

a risk she is not willing to take. This decision leaves her, as she admits to Shay (2014), “at the mercy of [her] translators” (p. 29), something that does not appear to trouble her as she admits to Shay (2014) she does not intervene in the translations unless it is “question of absolute mistranslation” (p. 27). As an author she is not very concerned with the notion of fidelity to the original and she even believes the translated text to be a new creation that belongs to the translator and not her. In her article *Paradoxical self-translations: Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’s remarkable admission*, Linda Revie (2020) explains how for Nuala someone else’s translations of her work are “somebody else’s babies” (p. 334) opposite to her self-translations, that are “her own creations, conceived of in her subconscious (*lios*) through a “fatherness” parthenogenetic process” (p. 334). She is not worried about the translations being extremely faithful to her work and admits there is room for reinterpretation in translation, telling Hollo (1998) that

every act of translation is first of all an enormously careful act of reading, and you really have to give the reader his/her due, as well. Does it make it a better or worse piece of art if they then get something out of it that the writer had not consciously intended?” (p. 107).

On the topic of fidelity, Ian Kennedy (2014) talks in his essay about Ní Dhomhnaill’s stance on translation and fidelity and explains how for her “translation isn’t so much about the literal meaning of the word but the voltage that is behind the words” (p. 3). While Ní Dhomhnaill is not preoccupied with translations being faithful to the original, she does care about meaning. As mentioned before, she gives a lot of freedom to her translators, however, she will step in if they completely mistranslate something. For her, the translations of her work don’t have to be a literal translation of her originals but translations of the meaning to another language so that the translation has the same effect on the reader as the original. In my interview with her, she stated that a good translation “has all the many subtle meanings of the original poem included and also accommodates to the target language”. Ní Dhomhnaill’s wish to maintain meaning is something that Kennedy (2014) also highlights and believes it is such an important aspect for her because she “tries to re-evaluate and extend the understanding of the Irish language among the broad audience that she wishes to cultivate” (p. 3). Through translation Ní Dhomhnaill can transmit the message behind her poems to people that do not speak Irish. She recognises this capacity to communicate behind language barriers that translation has and says it is the reason she allows translations of her work. It serves as a communicative tool for her, to spread her ideas and expand her audience beyond

Irish readers. She is aware that Irish folktales are only given a voice outside Ireland through translation, and so she allows translations as long as they do not undermine or intend to replace the original, which for her means that the translated versions must also include the original.

Nonetheless, despite her positive stance on translation, Ní Dhomhnaill is aware of its problems and understands the decision of some of her colleagues to reject translation, specifically to English. Ní Dhomhnaill (2005) explains it saying that she understands “the context of a threatened minority language attempting to resist the colonial pressure to assimilate. We all make our peace with the language in a different fashion” (p. 200). The way for Ní Dhomhnaill to make peace with translation and the implications of translating from a minority language such as Irish into English is by publishing dual versions, this way the original text is not replaced. However, she has expressed in her interview with Kaarina Hollo (1998) how she is opposed to the translation from English to Irish when the translation is a literal copy of the original, using language structures that are not entirely Irish and therefore creating an Irish translation that is more English than Irish. In her opinion, these translations may damage instead of benefit the Irish language, saying to Hollo (1998) that they are “translated into the kind of pseudo-Irish gibberish that gives the language a bad name, and the ready acceptance of which may actually do the language damage” (p. 106). One of her fellow Irish writers to reject translation is Dublin-born poet Biddu Jenkinson, mentioned previously in chapter one.

In spite of the problems that it may carry, others like Cary A. Shay speak of a ‘need’ for translation, to open paths of communication between the two languages in Ireland and its writers. Isabelle de Courtivron (2009) also emphasises the importance of translation in today’s world, pointing out that “the whole act of translation is sometimes a murky business, yet where would we be without it? Like life itself it offers no ready answers” (p. 90). When speaking to me this past February, author and academic Lorna Shaughnessy also emphasised the importance of translation in today’s world, saying that

I feel translation has never been more important. We are living in challenging times. On the one hand, our societies in Europe are becoming increasingly multilingual, which is something we should celebrate. On the other, we are witnessing the rise of xenophobia everywhere. We need to employ many more translators and interpreters at community level and train members from every ethnic and linguistic group in this area to improve communication and to empower them.

Regarding the uncertainty of translation, Courtivron (2019) believes that a solution to the problems might be publishing multiple translations, saying that each translation would highlight a different element of the original, the same way “differing cuts of a diamond can bring out different lights in the stone” (p. 90). Ní Dhomhnaill has also recognised that translation may be problematic, however, she believes publishing bilingual collections is the solution to these tensions. Nonetheless, translators María Tymoczko and Michael Cronin believe that in the context of Ireland, there is no miracle solution to the challenges that translation presents. In Tymoczko and Cronin (1996) they debate that in a nation such as Ireland where language has long been a political issue, translational strategies cannot have a fixed meaning, they cannot be consistently complicit or resistant to English dominance. For writer Cary A. Shay, translation in contemporary Ireland serves as a form of communication between Irish- and English-language writers. According to Shay (2014), this is especially true in the case of translated poetry, where Shay believes the “literary and functional relationship between Ireland’s two main languages continues to be examined and interrogated” (p. 20). In translated poetry works such as Ní Dhomhnaill’s bilingual collections this dialogue between the two languages is even more noticeable as the disposition of the original next to the translation makes it appear as if there is a conversation between the two languages.

4.2 Ní Dhomhnaill’s bilingual collections: the meaning behind *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* and *The Language Issue*

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’s first bilingual collection was *Selected poems: Rogha Dánta* (1988), which was published for the first time in 1986 with translations to English by Michael Hartnett, and with the last fourteen poems translated by the writer herself. As previously mentioned, for this first edition the publisher refused to include the original Irish text, a decision both the author and the translator were upset with, and so two years later, in 1988, the second edition was published including the original text. As mentioned before, the 1988 edition was self-translated only out of necessity. The publication of *Selected poems: Rogha Dánta* in 1988 was followed by five other bilingual collections with the first one being *Pharaoh’s Daughter* (1990), a set of forty-five of her most remarkable poems translated to English by thirteen of Ireland’s most prominent writers including Seamus Heaney, Michael Hartnett, Medbh McGuckian, Paul Muldoon, and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin. The last three would work with her again in future projects. Two years later she published *The Astrakhan Cloak* (1992) with translations to English by

Paul Muldoon, a collection of newly translated poems from her Irish collection *Feis* (1991). This was followed by the publication of *The Water Horse* (1999) with translations by Medbh McGuckian and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin. Her fifth bilingual collection was *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* (2007), for which she worked alongside Paul Muldoon again. This was a collection of forty dual-language poems about merfolk who, according to Revie (2020), “made the transition from water to The Promised (Ire)Land” (p. 328). The mermaids leaving their lives under water behind to adapt to the land is to signify the loss of the Irish language in the process of assimilation. *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* deals with themes of loss, confrontation, and healing. In 2018, she published her latest bilingual collection called *Northern Lights* with translations to English from Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Eamon Grennan, Bernard O’Donoghue and Dennis O’Driscoll. This was a collection of newly translated poems as well as old poems that had never been translated before.

In her work, Ní Dhomhnaill often draws from folklore and mythology to tell a story, oftentimes one that relates to the Irish identity. In the case of *The Fifty Minute Mermaid*, the story uses the image of the mermaid that leaves her home in the water and rejects her past to accommodate to life on land as a means to make us reflect on the post-colonial reality of Ireland. This is a reality where the native language and culture have been displaced in favour of the coloniser’s and the internal and external conflict that this change brings to a community and its individuals. Professor Luz Mar González-Arias (2008) comments on this metaphor on the website Estudios Irlandeses saying that the poems in *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* “become a powerful tool to inscribe the cultural trauma that the Irish went through when the English language superseded their previous mode of communication and skillfully address the stagnation and anti-creative implications of such a transition” (Estudios Irlandeses, 2008). In *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* collection the mermaid leaves behind and refuses her music and her language as she accommodates to the ways of the world inland, a rejection of her roots that González-Arias compares to the “schizophrenia faced by communities where bilingual situations result from a colonial past” (Estudios Irlandeses, 2008). For Ní Dhomhnaill her native language is such an important part of her identity that it being taken away from her is comparable to a mermaid being stripped from her world underwater. This collection is just one of the examples of how Ní Dhomhnaill uses mythology and folklore as a way to tell the story of contemporary Ireland.

Her poem “Ceist na Teangan/The Language Issue”, included in the 2011 publication *The Wake Forest Book of Irish Women’s Poetry*, is another example –as the very title suggests– of the language issue in Ireland being referenced in her work. In the poem she compares the language with an infant put in a basket by the edge of the river, hoping it would take the child somewhere safe and sound. She ends the poem by including a reference to her collection *Pharaoh’s Daughter* (1990), saying that maybe the child would end up in the lap of a Pharaoh’s daughter. According to Shay (2014), the story told in “Ceist na Teangan/The Language Issue” is a metaphor for Moses’s story as his mother put him in a basket and sent him down the river Nile, a story used to describe the “long and continuing history of retreat of the Irish language in Ireland” (p. 4). The mother would signify the Irish people sending the Irish language (Moses) away without knowing or caring where it would end up, similarly to how the Irish people abandoned the Irish language for English without caring whether or not the language would survive. Just as Moses or the child in the basket in this poem, the language is left to fend for itself, with the author hoping it would end up somewhere it could be safe. The reference to the Pharaoh’s daughter is not only a call back to her previous work, it also represents a figure of power, someone with the means to care for the child. In the reality of the Irish language, the Pharaoh’s daughter could signify a new wave of Irish speakers, new laws and regulations for the promotion of the language, or the figure of the author herself, writing in Irish as a way of caring for the language.

Both the poem “Ceist na Teangan/The Language Issue” and the poetry collection *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* have been translated into English by Ní Dhomhnaill’s long-time collaborator Paul Muldoon. According to Laura Kirkley (2013), his translated version reflects the “paradox of bilingual collections” (p. 284) by shedding light on the Irish language issue, a minority language, through the very language responsible for its marginalisation.

4.3 Views on Ní Dhomhnaill’s work and translated texts

Ní Dhomhnaill’s work has been praised by many critics and fellow writers. Professor Eamonn Wall says of Ní Dhomhnaill that she has “renewed interest in poetry written in Irish, has revolutionized how poetry in Irish is written, and has widened the thematic possibilities available to Irish poets, writing in both Irish and English” (Poetry Foundation, 2023). However, the views on her translated texts and her long-time collaborator Paul Muldoon are mixed.

Writer and professor Barra Ó Séaghdha (1993) comments on Ní Dhomhnaill's willingness to translate saying any writer of a minority language such as her that is "in regular contact with translators, who appears indeed to regard translation as an inherent part of the writing process, is running a risk" (p. 144). He argues that writing with a future English translation in mind could unconsciously compromise and influence the otherness of the original. Laura Kirkley (2013) shares Ó Séaghdha's opinion and says that in some of her translations "fluency and cultural analogy combine in a translational strategy that threatens to "colonize" Ní Dhomhnaill's source text by eliding the vast linguistic and conceptual distance travelled in translation from Irish to English" (p. 279). Cary A. Shay (2014) also comments on Ní Dhomhnaill's willingness to translate reflecting on the 'critical dilemma' that affects translations from Irish to English and how the dominance that English asserts over Irish affects translation. She states that Ní Dhomhnaill's work is mainly known through her English translations and that her English readers surpass her Irish. While Ní Dhomhnaill originally writes in Irish, Shay believes that she only finds visibility once she translates, that is, accommodates, to English. Despite critiquing how Nuala's work has to assimilate to English to be noted, she also acknowledges the visibility it gives to the Irish literary traditions that otherwise could only be accessed by Irish speakers. Translation facilitates an exchange, a way for non-Irish speakers to read Irish poetry. However, according to Laura Kirkley (2013), this visibility only affects the translator, leaving the author and the original work in the dark while the translation and the translator get all the praise and recognition. Some critics even started to view her work as secondary and the translated versions as the real poems.

Responding to critics that say that her translations have replaced her original texts and that she is mostly known through her translations, Nuala has stated to Hollo (1998) that translations are never to replace the original, they are "never more than a second consideration, and should not be taken to stand for, or to stand I for, the originals" (p. 102). Despite being grateful for the exposure translation has offered her, she reinforces the idea that the Irish text will always be the main version and that her primary audience is those that read her in Irish. However, despite her Irish audience being the main focus for her, she sympathises with those that do not know Irish but that read her work anyway through translations. In Hollo (1998), she expresses that "there is a disenfranchised audience [that do not have Irish] [...] and it's not their fault [...]. that's where translation comes in" (p. 102). Translation is the only way for those that do not speak Irish to access her work. She also has some sympathy for those that did learn Irish in school but that

have since lost this skill because in their day-to-day life had no chance after school to speak the language. She confesses to Kaarina Hollo (1998) how being skilled in both English and Irish gave her the choice to write in English but decided not to. This was partially due to this group of people, because she wanted to help them pick up Irish again. She tells Hollo that these now monolinguals are too intimidated by the Irish language to pick a piece of work in Irish. In Hollo (1998) she talks about how she feels sorry that not many people in Ireland have the real chance to choose between the two languages as they only learn one, something that she says “would seem to be their constitutional right” (p. 102). Ní Dhomhnaill believes that her bilingual collections would help these people and serve as a less intimidating reintroduction to Irish by having the Irish and English versions side to side. She says that these monolinguals would normally start reading the English version and before they knew it they would be looking over at the Irish one and recovering the language skills they lost. She reinforces to Hollo (1998) the importance to reach this audience and help them access the language in a less intimidating way, as with just a little help they could recover the linguistic knowledge they have lost. These are lost Irish speakers that could resume their relationship with Irish through reading. For Ní Dhomhnaill, being able to help people pick up Irish again through her work is a massive honour and she is delighted every time people come up to her to thank her for helping them pick up Irish again.

As a consequence of her translations capturing all the attention from critics, Ní Dhomhnaill started to be perceived by some critics as a sort of muse to her translators, a label Ní Dhomhnaill has denied adamantly. In Linda Revie (2020) she explains how she was given this label after the publication of *Pharaoh's Daughter*, a collection translated by thirteen well-known authors that, as she mentions, happened to be mostly male. To Revie (2020) she clarifies that “I was not their Muse: they were my translators” (p. 325). While stating numerous times that the translated poems are someone else's work, she is the artist and not the muse. Kirkley (2013) reflects on this privileging of the translators over the original author and claims that this change in perception illustrates “the impact that fluent translation might have on Anglophone Irish understandings of literature in the Irish language” (p. 288). She speaks of the dangers of translation from Irish to English when the original is being replaced by the translation as the real text by critics.

Despite the liberty she allows translators she confesses to Hollo (1998) that she wishes she could have a more collaborative relationship with them, admitting that “mostly the degree of collaboration is absolutely nil” (p. 100) due to temperamental or geographical reasons. However, there are two collaborators that she praises and has worked with more than once. In my interview with Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill this past March she confessed that she feels “very lucky to have found 2 excellent translators in Paul Muldoon and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin”. Of Muldoon’s translations she says to Shay (2014) that she gave him free rein because “Paul is very erudite in Irish [and] knows what works and what doesn’t work in English” (p. 30). Muldoon has translated two of Ní Dhomhnaill’s poetry collections, *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* and *The Astrakhan Cloak*.

While the translated texts sometimes receive more attention than their originals, in the case of Muldoon’s translations, this attention from critics is not always to praise his work. While some critics in Kirkley (2013) believe Muldoon plays a rightful homage to Ní Dhomhnaill’s work, others “decry what they see as gratuitous concessions to an Anglophone readership” (p. 278). To Kirkley (2013), these polarized views reflect the different stances on translation from Irish to English, which are influenced by Ireland’s colonial past and the marginalization of the Irish language. In our interview, Ní Dhomhnaill expressed that she feels that “there is no harm at all to have my work translated into multiple different languages. It is proof that Irish poetry appeals to all cultures in all languages”.

Some critics have received Ní Dhomhnaill’s multiple collaborations with Muldoon with positive responses, while others have not so much. In Revie (2020), some critics qualify Muldoon as the “most ingenious and assiduous [of Ní Dhomhnaill’s] linguistic suitors as he is thought to share her poetic sensibility” (p. 333). Her ‘laissez-faire’ attitude has permitted Muldoon to prioritise adaptation over fidelity, something that, according to Kirkley (2013), is a reflection of the shift that translation studies were going through at the time, leaving behind fidelity as a condition to a good translation and prioritising adaptation instead. On Muldoon’s ability to adapt Nuala’s texts to English, Kirkley (2013) says that by adapting seamlessly to English and conforming to Anglophone conventions, he makes it harder for English monoglots to perceive “the subversive potential of his textual patchworks” (p. 287). She is not the only one to believe Muldoon’s translations leave behind what lies beneath the surface of the original to adapt better to the culture and language of the translation, Michael Cronin (1996) expresses a similar concern

saying that translations that are as fluent as Muldoon's risk eliminating "the linguistic and cultural otherness of the source text" (p. 177). Irish poet and critic David Wheatley (2001) classifies Muldoon's translations as "site[s] of linguistic disturbance" (p. 127) that all the while reflect "the translated lives of native Irish-speakers, colonized peoples or land-locked merfolk" (p. 286) when shaping their native language and culture to accommodate their new reality. All these difficulties that come with translating between Irish and English and the challenges that the translators involved in this task have to overcome are acknowledged by Kirkley (2013), who says that "the practical challenge for translators is to retain and celebrate the cultural specificity of Irish through translational strategies that also embrace transformative interactions between the source and target languages" (p. 281). For this, she offers some advice; Kirkley believes that Muldoon's method could benefit from "translational strategies aimed at high-lighting the linguistic peculiarities of the Irish language and heightening the reader's understanding of its cultural freight and the distinctive formal qualities of its literature" (p. 288). While dual versions are a great way of promoting modern Irish, she believes Muldoon's translations could do a better job at transmitting to English monoglots the underlying Irishness of the text. Some of the translational strategies that Kirkley (2013) proposes include adding footnotes and introductions to bilingual editions with the intention to give "Anglophone monoglots some insight into the linguistic and cultural otherness of Irish" (p. 288). Despite Muldoon's ability to reach wider audiences to Irish poetry, Kirkley (2013) insists his strategies must coexist with "strategies of subversive literalism and paratextual explanation that promote the Irish language and its attendant culture" (p. 290) in order to keep the Irish language alive. Nonetheless, even after stating the positive impact that bilingual collections have on the survival of the language, Kirkley (2013) cannot overlook how "the partial success of the British imperial enterprise is clear in the subdual of supernatural elements for an Anglophone readership" (p. 290), and adds that "cultural analogy, then, treads a fine line between self-consciously ghosting the source culture, and diluting and distorting it" (p. 290). Even though she proposes strategies to further promote Irish through English translations and advises Muldoon on how to do so, she still believes that ultimately bilingual collections partially have to surrender to English.

All of these contrary stances on translation derive from the issue between language and identity in Ireland. Authors Ríona Ní Fhrighil, Anne O'Connor and Michelle Milan believe that the Irish translational context, as a bilingual country, is multifaceted. In Ní Fhrighil (2020) they describe the translation situation in Ireland as a "site of contest, a form of

mediation, a shaping force, a performance space, a workspace, a platform for creativity and innovation, a link to Europe, a disruptive presence, a modernizing force” (p. 129-130). Translation is a very controversial topic in Ireland due to its past links to colonialism and the unstable relationship between Irish and English today, all of which makes for a space where the conversation around translation is always complicated. This makes for a situation where everyone sees a different side to it. It is only natural then that in this environment the responses to Muldoon’s work are very polarizing, and no point of view is wrong, just different.

Nonetheless, translator and academic Michael Cronin claims he has a solution to the matter of translation in the Irish context. Cronin (1993) says that Irish should “break the taboo [of translation] and develop its own translation hermeneutic” (p. 62). He implies that Irish should develop its own rules and adapt translation to its situation in order to avoid assimilation. This adaptation to the Irish context is something that Ní Dhomhnaill has achieved by approaching translation through dual-language versions that change and balance the dynamic between Irish and English. She has created her own rules in translation and her bilingual collections are an example of this success.

Conclusions

This essay meant to demonstrate that translation in Ireland nowadays can in fact promote a minority language through the language that caused its marginalisation in the past.

Through the analysis of translation and identity in the Irish context, this paper has gathered that translation does not have a fixed meaning, rather it changes depending on the intentions and translation strategies used. Many critics have condemned translation for its role in the colonisation of Ireland and the marginalisation of its native language. Nonetheless, translation was a colonising tool because that was what the English intended it to be, a way to replace the native language and culture with their own. What we have shown in this paper is that translation can have a positive impact on minority languages when using translation strategies that aim at preserving the cultural value of the original instead of replacing it with the translated text. These include publishing bilingual collections instead of standard translated versions, (self-)translating at the same time as writing the original and so allowing a conversation between the two texts, creating translations rich in calques and loanwords, and adding to the translators' job the responsibility of protecting minority languages as well as being accounted with the history and culture of the languages involved.

While investigating the different stances on translation in a post-colonial context and how they applied to Ireland, we have seen that translation from Irish to English is a controversial topic. In the Irish context, we have determined that there is not a consensus between Irish writers. While some like Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill approve the translation of their works believing it gives visibility to minority languages like Irish, others like Bidy Jenkinson refuse to have their works translated because they believe translation from Irish to English perpetuates assimilation.

In researching the history of translation in Ireland we have seen proof of how translation has served as a way to promote Irish identity. This promotion took many forms; from being a tool to spread religious beliefs to being a way for nationalists to spread their ideas. While translation tendencies have changed from its early days to now, it has always had the same purpose; to defy stereotypes and English propaganda and promote Irish identity. Most recently, translation has been key to the revival and promotion of the

Irish language through the creation of new terms, the translation of important public documents, and subtitling and dubbing in the media.

By interpreting the sociolinguistic situation of Ireland we can determine that there is still a lot of stigma surrounding the Irish language and its capacity to hold itself in today's world. The censuses carried out between 2011 and 2022 support this idea, showing that while the number of Irish speakers has risen, there has been a decrease in the frequency of use. In addition, while there has been some legislation put into place to promote the language, they have not been successful.

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's bilingual collections have shown that translation can favour minority languages, and more specifically, that it is possible to translate from Irish to English without sacrificing or replacing the original text to attract more readers. Ní Dhomhnaill's dual-language versions offer a way to share Irish culture behind language barriers while also giving unskilled people in Irish the opportunity to be reintroduced to the language in a less intimidating way.

In the future, it would be interesting to do a follow-up to this paper analysing the similarities between Ireland and Galicia's translation activity as two nations with their own native languages and cultures, and study how similarly or differently they have been impacted by English and Spanish respectively. Is the critical view of translation in Ireland similar to that of translation in Galicia? Are their pasts of oppression and resistance similar in any way? Can English and Spanish be compared? And Irish and Galician? And if so, does the relationship between translation and identity in Ireland share any resemblance to that of translation and identity in Galicia?

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Appendix I: Full interview with Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Lorna Shaughnessy

The following section is an interview with Irish poet Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Northern Ireland born poet, translator, and academic Lorna Shaughnessy. I contacted Nuala and Lorna this past February with questions on the topics related to this essay and they kindly answered my questions.

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill was born in Lancashire, England to Irish parents. She spoke Gaelic at home and at five years old she moved to County Kerry, Ireland to live with her aunt, where she immersed herself further in the language. She went on to study at University College in Cork where she studied Irish and English.

As well as Irish, Ní Dhomhnaill is also fluent in English, Turkish, French, German and Dutch. In her poem “*Ceist na Teangan*” (The Language Issue) she explains her decision to write entirely in Irish in order to create interest and acceptance in the Irish language. She has published four collections of poems in Irish: *An Dealg Droighin* (1981), *Féar Suaithinseach* (1984), *Feis* (1991), and *Cead Aighnis* (1998). The Gallery Press has published five of her poetry collections with translations into English: *Pharaoh’s Daughter* (including translations by thirteen writers, 1990), *The Astrakhan Cloak* (translations by Paul Muldoon, 1992), *The Water Horse* (translations by Medbh McGuckian and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, 1999), *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* (translations by Paul Muldoon, 2007) and *Northern Lights* (translations by Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin and other four writers, 2018). She is one of the most relevant poets writing in Irish today as well as an inspiration even for authors writing in English.

Lorna Shaughnessy was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where she also graduated in Spanish and English at Queen’s University Belfast. In 1986 she moved to Galway, where she currently lives and where she teaches at the University of Galway as part of the Department of Hispanic Studies. Her teaching responsibilities also include translation workshops on Literary Translation and postgraduate programmes in Creative Writing.

She has published four poetry collections: *Torching the Brown River* (2008), *Witness Trees* (2011), *Anchored* (2015), and *Lark Water* (2021), as well as a chapbook called *Song of the Forgotten Shulamite* (2005). She has also translated works from Galician, Spanish, and Latin American poetry.

She is the Director of *Crosswinds: Irish and Galician Poetry and Translation*, a collaboration between poets, translators, and academics from Galicia and Ireland to produce publications and organise events on Irish and Galician poetry.

Despite not speaking or writing in Irish, Shaughnessy's contribution to the field of translation as well as her efforts to preserve and share Irish literary culture and productions with the initiative *Crosswinds* makes her a great choice for interviewee.

Interviewer: Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o believes that literature in English is not African literature³. Do you agree with his statement? Is it the same for Irish literature?

Nuala: I would agree with Ngugi wa Thiong'o. It's the same for Irish literature.

Lorna: it's a very interesting statement. The obvious linguistic parallel between Kenya and Ireland is that English was imposed as the language of the coloniser. There are important differences, however, firstly that English was introduced into Ireland centuries before it was in Kenya, and secondly, East African countries have a 'lingua franca' of their own which is Swahili, which is spoken and written alongside English by many millions of people. The fact that Irish people have been living with English for over 400 years means that it has become a vehicle of expression for what we know as Irish culture and experience. Joyce and Yeats's works are both steeped in Irish experience and culture, though very different. Likewise Mary Lavin, Eavan Boland, Anne Enright. If they are not writing Irish Literature then what are they writing?

I: Nuala, did you already know when you wrote your first collection of poems that you would continue to write in Irish throughout your career? Was it a conscious effort to do so?

N: My first collection of poems was in Irish and very consciously so. I never, ever, thought of writing in English.

³ In CCCB (2019) Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o talks about reserving the term 'African literature' to the works written in African languages, classifying those written in European languages as 'Europhone African literature'.

I: What does translation mean to you? Do you believe it has a positive or negative impact in a minority language?

N: I am very lucky to have found 2 excellent translators in Paul Muldoon and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin. There is no harm at all to have my work translated into multiple different languages. It is proof that Irish poetry appeals to all cultures in all languages.

L: I think these are two very separate questions. For me, as both a reader and a writer, translation is a vital portal into the wider world. They are an essential part of my ongoing education as a world citizen and an artist. Reading translations from other languages gives me insights into other world views and cultures. Translating is a way of constructing bridges between languages; it is a fascinating in-between place to be. I always learn as much about English as I do about Spanish or Galego when I translate.

In terms of positive or negative impacts on minoritised languages, I respect the position of some writers in Irish who refused to have their works published in English translation because they felt that literature in Irish shouldn't have to be mediated by English - that it shouldn't have to depend on English in order to be read widely. But the reality in Ireland is that the majority of people do not have enough Irish to read poetry or fiction in the Irish language but still want to read it. Translation into English certainly opens up a much wider readership for these writers in Europe and North America, and opportunities for funding.

I: Nuala, your book *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* is written in Irish with translations into English by Paul Muldoon. Have you ever thought about translating your work yourself? What is your stance on self-translation?

N: I have never thought of myself as a self-translator.

I: Lorna, you have translated work from other authors, have you ever thought about translating your own work? What is your stance on self-translation?

L: I don't have a stance on self-translation, really. I have had poems translated into Spanish and Galego and Italian. I prefer if it's done by other poet-translators because I think their 'ear' will be better than mine. The rhythms and music of the mother tongue are acquired instinctively, and while I work with these in a very intuitive way in English, I don't know if I could produce a musicality in another language that would sound authentic and

natural to that language. This opens up another whole debate about whether or not a translation should strive to sound natural in the target language (Venuti).

I: When your work is being translated into other languages do you give notes of any kind to translators or do you give them the liberty to decide?

N: Yes. When my work is being translated, I give a rough translation which they may or may not use as a guideline.

L: In my experience as both translator and poet, it is very helpful to have dialogue between translator and writer to help clarify context, factual information (political events etc), particular features of the landscape (eg peat bogs/turberas), or specific images.

I: In your opinion, what makes a good translation? One that remains faithful to the original or one that accommodates the target language?

N: a good translation has all the many subtle meanings of the original poem included and also accommodates to the target language.

L: I don't think it's ever this simple. The grammatical differences between languages alone make total faithfulness impossible, then there are cultural differences reflected in the lexicon (or lack of it) to describe certain things or experiences. Most translations involve both conservation and adaptation.

I: Is there anything else you want to add about the topic of translation?

L: Just that I feel translation has never been more important. We are living in challenging times. On the one hand, our societies in Europe are becoming increasingly multilingual, which is something we should celebrate. On the other, we are witnessing the rise of xenophobia everywhere. We need to employ many more translators and interpreters at community level and train members from every ethnic and linguistic group in this area to improve communication and to empower them.