Translating with All Five Senses:
A Call for More Humanities Education in Translation Training

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ABSTRACT

Translators in the age of globalization and increased automation risk becoming reduced to mere end-stage editors of machine translation. While translator training courses strive to prepare students for notional specialization and continuously expiring technical skills, they also recognize the enduring need for cultural competence and understanding. The aim of this article is to argue the case for a stronger presence of humanities learning in translation training as the foundation and medium for a more open, flexible, emotionally aware, culturally sensitive and intellectually curious mentality and skill set. The analysis examines three examples from the language combination Galician and (Irish-)English of translators who use their humanistic knowledge to overcome translation challenges and find an equivalent flavour and texture in their own language to that of the original text. The analysis is complemented by the translators' reflections on their own work and the task of translation obtained through email interviews.

KEYWORDS: Galician, humanities education, minoritized language, sensitivity, translation training

1. Introduction

In the Irish language, when we talk about the fluency and feeling of a language spoken naturally, a language with soundings of place and a sense of belonging, we call it the *blas*: the taste of the language. It is something that new and non-native speakers rarely achieve. Those of us who come to a language from new must be content simply to love it: to use it, care for it, promote it if needed, and, in doing so, repay something of that new breath it gives us, the colours and sensations it awakens in us by virtue of seeing the world with other words and, therefore, with other eyes. The title of this article invokes the need in translation to keep our

senses awake at all times, to be attentive to every sound, every word, every gesture, every silence. The aim of the study is to show the need for a stronger presence of humanities learning in translation training as the foundation and medium for that more open, flexible, emotionally aware, culturally sensitive and intellectually curious mentality and skill set.

The article examines the work of three translators from the language combination Galician and (Irish-)English who use their humanistic knowledge to overcome translation challenges and find an equivalent flavour and texture in their own language to that of the original text. The analysis focuses on the pairing of Irish (and Hiberno) English[1] with the minority/minoritized Galician language[2] as an example of the more complex social, cultural, historical and political considerations translators often face beyond the surface meaning and demands of individual words and phrases.[3] The challenges, dilemmas and potentialities of translation in such contexts are magnified by the frequent disparity of power between source language and target language: the pressure of assimilation; the "classic double bind" choice between foreignizing and domesticating strategies; yet also the opportunity for engagement and empowerment through regeneration and alliance (Cronin 2003:146-147, 168-169). Cronin (2003:170) concludes his study of translation and globalization by calling on translators to adopt an ethics of care in their translation practice: "Translators have to care for the language they translate if the work is to be of any merit." The analysis that follows demonstrates the enduring importance of that care, attention and cultural connection in translation practice, in order to illustrate how formal translation training is impaired by its neglect. Trainee translators should be made more humanistically aware and skilled *through* their training, and not left to their own devices to acquire this necessary sensitivity through accidents of personal and professional fortune subsequently.

2. The Art of Noticing Things

Translation is fundamentally about knowing how to listen: listening to the rhythm of the words on the page; listening to the author's voice, with its tones and tensions; recognising his or her intentions and the accent given to them by their culture and history and the language or

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[1] On the difference between Irish-English and Hiberno-English, see Christiansen (2019:63).
[2] On the deteriorating status of the Galician language in Galicia, see Monteagudo (2024).
[3] On the complex dynamics of minority languages in situations of language contact, coexistence and interaction, see Civico (2019).

languages they speak. It consists of finding the music of each person and their words, and transferring that same music into one's own language. That sensitivity and discernment, that palate for the flavours and textures of language, cannot be achieved solely by studying the theory and tools of translation. Just as it makes no sense to teach computer programming to children before fostering their curiosity, ingenuity and verbal expression skills, so too translation requires a prior foundation in communication, creativity, cultural awareness and compassion.[4] It requires, in short, a humanities education.

Translation starts with knowing one's own language thoroughly, and to be a literary translator, one has to know and understand the poetry, prose, drama and other narrative forms in that language first. Michael Cronin (2003:170) notes that "[o]ne of the most common difficulties experienced by trainee translators is that they suffer from a deficit of particular attachment to their native language and tend to neglect it or take it for granted and so fail to produce acceptable work in the language which is their own". Translators have to be able to move through the multitude of voices around them, listening, feeling and redrawing them continuously. The Galician painter, writer, publisher and cultural promoter Luis Seoane once wrote: "I drew and painted as I walked. No pencil, no paints, no paper. It only looked as if I was walking" (my translation; quoted in Braxe 2019).[5] This is what the humanities and more specifically philology invite us to do: to focus on the details of everyday life and think about how to give them a written or spoken form; to inhabit a language and its literature; to read and learn about realities other than our own; to learn how to recognize diverse tonalities and rhythms; to hear voices of all kinds, and to find our own.[6]

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[4] For a recent summary of the copious and insistent yet ultimately inconclusive discussion of the potential benefits of introducing programming early on in the education curriculum, see Hermida (2024). By contrast, insider accounts by developers themselves often advocate for an initial focus on more general life skills and cultural knowledge; see, for example, Morgan (2018) and Sullivan (2017), who notes: "The liberal arts teach logic, rhetoric, and how to see the big picture, which comes in handy when you're trying to make connections in complex systems."

[5] "Ía debuxando e pintando mentres paseaba. Sen lapis, pinturas nin papeis. Simplemente parecía que paseaba." See also Ingold (2010) on "ambulatory knowing" and his distinction between going *along* and going *across*: "the wayfarer, as he goes along, has continually to attend to his path, adjusting or "fine-tuning" his movement as the journey unfolds. Only when he has reached a place can he truly be said to have found his way there" (p. 130).

[6] On the enduring need for philological inquiry, see Turner (2014).

Specific translation studies are also essential, but as a continuation, complement or means of specialization.[7] Access to and familiarity with specialized vocabulary is undoubtedly useful, but that is what dictionaries and corpora are for, and if translation were limited to dictionary work then those who speak of it as a dying profession would be right. Unlike the human brain, for example, Google Translate and AI bots have instant access to every online dictionary, corpus and language resource available, yet experience and research tell us how unreliable their interpretations continue to be.[8] In practical terms, moreover, not all translators can afford to specialize in just one field, not to mention the uncertain definition of specialized translation itself and the shifting needs of the market which demands it. As Marco Fiola (2013:61) warns, "[t]ranslator educators should never forget that their role is not to train specialized translators for today's employers, but translation specialists for today, for tomorrow and potentially for the next 40 years". Cronin (2003:66), likewise, calls for translator education to take into account "the role of translation in the culture, economy and body politic of the modern world". More fundamentally and sustainably than specialized vocabulary and the informatics of translation, therefore, what translation requires is attentive, precise reading, writing, research and analysis, cultural intelligence, global consciousness, agility and imagination, which are the very qualities and skills that are nurtured and demanded by a humanities education.

3. Current Priorities in Translation Training

Research in translation training in the past decade rightly highlights the need to steer students away from word-level transcoding (Baer 2017:64) towards the concept of translation as a creative "interpretive act that varies the form, meaning, and effect of the source text according to the intelligibility and interests of the transmitting culture" (Venuti 2017:8). Johnson and Losensky (2017:26) write of the need to "decenter and broaden the concept of translation itself […] and to show its relationship to other forms of rewriting and textual transcreation". However, while noting that translation is central to the humanistic pursuits of anthropology, literature, history and sociology, among others, and "in fact basic to human cognition, active in the pursuit of intelligibility, and in the negotiation of linguistic and cultural differences"

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[7] On the use of a teaching framework combining corpus linguistics, terminology management and consultation with domain experts, for example, see Kübler et al. (2018).
[8] See, for example, Tian (2024). On error taxonomies in machine translation and the criterion of "human acceptability", see also Kasperė and Motiejuniene (2020).

(Venuti 2017:11), what these studies do not defend so explicitly is the inverse importance of humanities education in translation.[9]

For example, in María González Davies's compendium of translation activities, tasks and projects, *Multiple Voices in the Translation Classroom* (2004), she laments the omission of psychology and pedagogy from the areas of expertise more usually required of translation trainers: communication theory, linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, cognitivism and translation studies. Arts, literature, history, religion, philosophy and other humanistic fields are never contemplated among these areas of specialization. Likewise, in an undergraduate course in translation presented by Ben Van Wyke (2017), core subjects include advanced professional writing, grammar and linguistics (p. 18), while workshops focus on addressing specific translation challenges such as culture-specific references, untranslatables and target audience (p. 19). Yet beyond a brief "upper-level course in source culture" (p. 18), no other specifically humanistic training is mentioned. In Johnston and Losensky's (2017) postgraduate certificate course, a similar pattern emerges: while the focus on history and theory of translation (p. 28) seems geared towards future researchers rather than translators, the practical workshop component trains students to assess their work in terms of "the effect of particular macro- and micro-level translation choices" and to aim for consistency of tone and voice, resourcefulness and idiomaticity (pp. 28-29). At no point, however, does the course provide for the acquisition of such sensitivity to the music and meaning of the text as a whole, or of the "open, flexible and questioning attitude" identified by Davies (2004:4) as a basic requirement of translation.

Most recently, translator training research has begun to focus on the need for greater "technology preparedness" among trainees, especially at postgraduate level (Venkatesan 2023). The 2017 European Master's in Translation (EMT) survey findings reflected an already pronounced response among university translation training programmes to the shift in

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[9] In this regard, see also Cronin (2003:127), who remarks that translation studies is "a discipline in the contemporary world that is both an area of study with specific vocational concerns and a discipline whose potential importance for other areas of human enquiry is striking if often overlooked". Defending the "outward turn" in translation studies as "a hub interdiscipline within the academy and as the conjoined theoretical wing of a practice that spans the key human processes of becoming and being, of change and cognition", Susan Bassnett and David Johnston (2019:186) note that "within its itinerary of creative struggle, ethical interrogation, cultural negotiation, and transformation of embodied subject and contextual domain alike, [translation studies] both sustains and defines the parameters of theoretical enquiry… [across] a wide range of professional, cultural, social, individual and political activities."

the translation market towards increasing automation (Rothwell and Svodoba 2019:29, 31). Updated results for 2024 show major advances in the embeddedness of machine translation in postgraduate programmes, particularly in terms of post-editing and quality evaluation (Rothwell, Moorkens and Svodoba, preprint:17). Post-editing training has become one of the central pillars of translation training, as one way of preserving human relevance in the age of automation. Post-editing training modules include machine translation technology, terminology management, pre-editing, controlled language skills, programming, corpus analysis, quality metrics and customization of standards (Guerberof Arenas and Moorkens 2019:219, 222), with the core objective being to train students to have "a confident interaction with this technology" (p. 220). While both the existence of these technologies and market demands for reduced turnaround times and lower prices make this interaction inevitable and its inclusion in curricula a necessity, an excessive emphasis on technology and profitability risks preparing trainees for functional mediocrity: accepting lower quality in exchange for efficiency, and learning "to do no more than required" based on the text's "disposability" (Venkatesen 2023:25, 33).

The growing focus on instrumentalist pragmatism in translation training threatens literally to dehumanize the translation process by removing the human translating agent and ignoring the affective-sensory component of language. Yet human beings are inherently relevant to translation on the basis that "[c]ommunication is not only a matter of transmitting content, but also about issues such as inclusion, empowerment, belonging and identity" (Koskinen 2015:176). In its updated reference standard of EMT competences, the European Commission (2022:2) states that "human intelligence, knowledge, and skills are still key factors in delivering quality translations and the growing range of language services which translators and translation companies can provide", and stresses the importance of "human skills as a differentiator in a technological employment market". The framework establishes no specific learning outcomes for the competence of "language and culture" but rather recognizes it as "the driving force behind all the other competences".[10] Kaisa Koskinen's (2015:179-180) theory of "affective translation" likewise highlights

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[10] The framework defines a total of five competences: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, and service provision.

> [the] need to learn to read more carefully *the individual text* we are dealing with and to recognise and to value the unique network of cultural affiliations it develops, and to grasp the intended and equally unique affiliations of the target text which we need to learn to draft creatively and emphatically into each context of use.

A humanities education teaches translators not only to perceive the human interplay in a text between different cultures, contexts, values and histories, but to become aware of – and therefore seek to fill – the gaps in their own cultural knowledge.

4. Guided Socialization Through the Humanities

The humanities-based approach to translation training espoused by this study is closely related to the transdisciplinary lens of experiential translation. Experience, as Karen Fox (2008:41) explains, is "a multilayered phenomenon":

> individuals make sense of experience through cultural, cognitive, subconscious, and personal interpretive layers, by negotiating norms and dominant values, attending to immediate human relationships, and through an individual's context within larger societal and historical positioning. Furthermore, these webs are interconnected with larger networks of culture, history, political economy, and power.

The source text for any translator, therefore, is a manifestation of the author's experience, which is in itself "social, relational and externalized" (Campbell and Vidal 2025:7). It represents an act of framing in terms of the author's "habits of perception" (Fox 2008:47), which are in turn the product of "language, prejudice, biases, culture, consciousness/non-consciousness, and scholarship" (p. 49). Experiential translation thus takes into account how meaning is constructed by both the source author and the target reader, since "[t]he visual or auditory form of a word or phrase is a linguistic sign only when it is treated as such when it is experienced by a semiotic agent capable of treating it as a sign" (Haapeniemi 2024:32). The task of the translator, then, is not to transfer "meaning as something separate from the signs from which it is constructed and the semiotic agent by whom it is constructed" (p. 28) but to produce a target text "that constrains the target readers' meaning construction in their linguistic and cultural context in ways comparable to how the source text constrains its

readers' meaning construction" (p. 33). As the brief survey of translation courses and programmes above shows, however, current translation training practices do not address the humanistic knowledge gap that prevents new translators from fully understanding and exploring that framework. Experiential translation expertise should not be the sole purview of the seasoned and largely self-taught translator, but may be initiated more effectively by "guided socialisation" (Martín Ruano 2024:183) through the humanities in the construction and experience of human perception.

Translation today, like every other aspect of human life, is marked by the inexorable and ubiquitous economic, technological and political phenomenon of globalization. The increased speed and breadth of communications demands transmission times that ignore the "multiple, various and difficult" reality of texts and languages (Cronin 2003:108-109), while the machine translation solutions created to overcome these human limitations raise issues that range from ethical questions of translation quality and cultural sensitivity (Le Quang 2024:175) to the impoverishment of language itself through adaptive strategies such as "controlled authoring", in reference to the limitation of lexicon and grammar to accelerate and improve machine translation processing performance (Cronin 2003:114). In response to the misgivings relayed by Cronin (2003:115) regarding the ability of machines to deal with "infinite word sequences, homographs and homophones, idiomatic expressions, non-equivalency, neologisms, the language of subcultures and incommensurability", the obvious answer is that, increasingly and worryingly, they simply may not have to. The question is, therefore, if translators are to be reduced to end-stage technicians in the machine translation process, mere post-editors of culturally and creatively flattened utilitarian texts;[11] or if translation can remain that "bothersome", transformative, regenerative "unwelcome reminder of otherness" (Cronin 2003:136).[12]

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[11] On the undesirability of "pre-translation" using machine translation, see Anjana Martínez-Tejerina (2024): "I think machine translation flattens the text. If I already have the text in Spanish [when translating into Spanish], it's harder to be creative. […] I like changing, jumping from the original text to my translated text, and be creative in that transfer, in that change. But if I already have the text in Spanish, my feeling is that it will hinder my creativity. And all the aspects that we need to take into account, machine translation doesn't take, does not interpret the image, the music, the characterization, the intonation. So all these aspects from the semiotics of translation that are fundamental are not taken into account. […] I would have to work harder and it would be less nice, so what's the point?"

[12] On the challenge facing translation education in this context, see Martín Ruano (2024:174-175): "at a time when workflows are becoming increasingly automated and are incorporating machine translation at and as the foundation of professional activity, it is urgent that trainees develop strategies for engaging in a reflective and

To illustrate the centrality of transcultural humanistic learning and understanding in translation, the rest of this article will examine three examples from the language combination Galician-(Irish-)English of translators in search of an equivalent flavour in their own language to that of the original text: the actor, director and storyteller Avelino González and his intuitive translations of the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's dramatic work; the Irish poet and translator Keith Payne and his translation of *Diary of Crosses Green* (2018) by the Galician poet Martín Veiga; and my own more prosaic work in the translation of articles, conference papers and other non-literary texts within the world of Spanish academia. All three are professional translators with more than 20 years' experience and no formal translation training.[13] The analysis is complemented by reflections on their work and the task of translation by the translators themselves obtained through email interviews conducted by the author.

4.1 Avelino González and the Galician Sense of Irishness

Martin McDonagh's plays are set in the social, economic and emotional desert of an imaginary west of Ireland, paralyzed by generations of mass emigration and stagnation. What is fascinating about González's translations is how he manages to reproduce in Galician all the brutal, trivial tragedy and vicious humour of the plays' rebellious, sideways-glancing Hiberno-English, which is in turn the depository of the historical failure and frustration of the Irish nation.[14] Despite the cultural obstacles and linguistic ambiguities, González misses out nothing of the original text and at the same time succeeds in making the drama and humour of McDonagh's text resonate with a Galician audience.

Admirable as González's feat may be, it could be argued that, as a Galician translator, he has a head start on other non-English-native professionals in tackling McDonagh. Saving the obvious historical and linguistic differences between the two countries, the cultural context in

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self-reflexive practice which may overcome the limitations of models based on, and ultimately fostering, linearity, convergence and uniformity."

[13] Payne holds an MPhil in Creative Writing from the Oscar Wilde Centre for Irish Writing (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland); the author holds a joint honours BA in History and Hispanic Studies and a PhD in Galician Literary Studies, both from University College Cork (Ireland).

[14] González has translated all three plays in McDonagh's so-called "Leenane trilogy": *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lonesome West*.

Ireland prior to the fallacious economic boom of the 1990s is not far removed from that of Galicia with its inheritance of rurality, poverty, and affective and intellectual oppression by a traditionalist church.[15] Whatever advantage he may have at the outset, however, González's genius lies in his ability to listen to and understand the setting of the plays and its people. He recognizes in McDonagh's texts the violence and degradation born of colonial oppression and cultural self-cannibalism. In the poem "Me basta así" (It's enough), the Spanish poet Ángel González (1997:29) writes "I listen to your silence / I hear / constellations: you exist. / I believe in you. / You are. / It's enough" (my translation).[16] Avelino González listens to the words, the silences and the subtexts spoken and unspoken by each character. He perceives how each of them moves in relation to the others, the tensions between them, and the dead stars among the constellation of every Irishman and woman, which are the ghostly memory of a betrayed past: the victims of the Great Famine of the nineteenth century; the dead heroes of the struggle for independence. He understands, with all its nuances and neuroses, the one pathetic, heroic weapon of survival that all of these characters have left: humour.

González's text competence is demonstrated, firstly, by his empathetic reading of the text, which allows him to recognize himself and his native Galicia in McDonagh's wounded and self-wounding other. In contrast to Christiane Nord (2005:12), who situates the translator in a central position between the source text situation and the target text situation, I would argue that González inhabits both situations, not just the space between, and in doing so expands both source text reception and target text reception. By inviting the target receiver to participate with him in the source text situation, his translation negates the separateness of source and target situations, and invites the target audience to become more critically aware of itself and its experience through the other.

An additional feature of his text competence is the way he balances strategies of adequacy and acceptability. Like McDonagh's use of a heightened Hiberno-English idiom in the original, González highlights the value, relevance and universality of the minoritized Galician language and its dialects by finding in them an equivalent, familiar form of speech for the play's characters. In this way, he succeeds in "keeping the audience in mind without

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[15] González has always claimed that he was drawn to McDonagh's plays because he identified so easily with them (Serra Porteiro 2012; Lyons and Dixon 2025)

[16] "Escucho tu silencio. / Oigo / constelaciones: existes. / Creo en ti. / Eres. / Me basta."

necessarily giving them what they want to hear" (director Cándido Pazó, in Lyons and Dixon 2025). As Maria Tymoczko (1999:297, 50) notes, particularly in a postcolonial context, fluency (in the form of domestication) "may be a translation tactic within a larger movement of cultural resistance" but so may (foreignizing) "aspects that challenge the receiving system and that remain eccentric". The equivalences sought by González extend beyond linguistic correspondence. Instead, his culturally and historically perceptive reading and re-rendering of the source text carries with it a weight of linguistic prejudice, cultural self-loathing, sexual frustration, moral corruption and flight from self-awareness.

The linguistic competence of the translation is a less precise measure since González's registered translation is a provisional version of the text as it is transmitted on the stage.[17] He explained in my conversations with him how many aspects of his translations are subject to "on-stage solutions" (*solucións escénicas*) reached in collaboration with the actors and director in each case (González 2025). Furthermore, as he acknowledges elsewhere (Serra Porteiro 2013:76-77), his focus when translating is on the "speakability" of the text and his methodology is, he claims, intuitive rather than strictly philological: "I am not a translator; I find myself translating."

Lexically, González does not bend to the temptation to domesticate or naturalize certain references for fear of leaving the Galician viewing public out of the joke. As a rule, he does not force symmetries where they do not exist. He trusts not only in his translation, but also in his audience. He knows that the incompatibilities between one language and another are rarely insurmountable, and that what may be lost in a word or sentence is almost always recovered through other elements of the text, including visual or performative cues. The most prominent example of these textual "eccentricities" is his retention in Galician of the Irish place names and character names of the original.[18] Though potentially alienating elements in the text, González makes a calculated decision not to domesticate them, based on his assessment of both the transparency of the human drama on the stage and the willingness of his audience to participate mentally and affectively in its presentation.

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[17] My thanks to Avelino González for generously permitting me to use his unpublished translation of the play for this analysis.
[18] On the "foreignizing" use of non-standard forms of the target language to preserve and convey the foreignness of the source language, see Venuti (2008:15-20).

In the case of McDonagh's exaggerated use of Hiberno-English idiom, many of the features represented in the original have no natural equivalent in Galician. These include the frequent use of question tags, it-fronting, discourse marks, and non-standard continuous tenses. The loss of these elements is compensated in particular by the prosody and dialectal phonology (e.g. accent and *gheada*) of the performed text.[19] Additional compensations are offered by parallel but not always coincident strategies in both texts, such as repetition, alliteration, diminutives, euphemism and understatement. In terms of metonymy, González trusts once again in the fundamental transparency of McDonagh's numerous references to Irish popular culture (including television series, popular actors, women's magazines and food items). While the precise connotations of each may not be as fully available to a Galician receiver as to an Irish one, their fragmentary familiarity becomes a spur to the audience to investigate, learn and invent as they watch.[20]

In a 2019 interview, the Galician actor Evaristo Calvo stated that McDonagh "is the writer whose work I feel most comfortable acting". He talked about how "actors have to have chemistry with playwrights. You understand some better than others." I would speculate that the chemistry Calvo feels is to a large extent thanks to the perfectly tuned ear, judgement and intuition that Avelino González demonstrates in his translations. Not alone that but González achieves that almost impossible balance adverted to by Cronin (2003:146-147) in translating minoritized languages: to preserve the specificity of the minority target while keeping it open to the regenerative potential of the dominant source. Lamentably, these texts have never been published, despite numerous awards, repeated performances in the region's theatres,[21] and productions of a standard at times superior to those achieved even by Irish companies and Irish actors too "cosmopolitan" (or culturally flattened) to recognize the flavour and nuances of their own language.

4.2 Keith Payne and the Irish Sense of Galicianness

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[19] *Gheada* refers to the lenition of the voiced velar stop in Galician. For a defence of this often stigmatised feature of popular speech in Galician, see Monteagudo (2022).

[20] On the creative power of not understanding, see also Boyd White (1995:335): "We can never understand completely [even within our own language]; what is more, our sense of incompleteness is itself a spur to investigation, learning, invention."

[21] As González (2024) himself explains, "there's no money in [dramatic writing]". Unconcerned by this, he reasons that "theatre is written to be spoken and, crucially, to be heard. Theatrical translation assumes these principles."

One Irishman whose memory, nuances and five senses remain very much intact is Keith Payne, a poet and translator whose work draws in long, savoured draughts from the voices and experiences around him.[22] Apart from *Diary of Crosses Green* (2018), examined in more detail below, Payne's work also includes a selected anthology of poetry by contemporary Galician poets entitled *Six Galician Poets* (2016) and, more recently, a co-translated trilingual volume of poetry in Irish, English and Galician entitled *A Different Eden: Ecopoetry from Ireland and Galicia* (Payne, Shaughnessy and Veiga 2021). Talking about the creative process involved in *Six Galician Poets*, Payne (2017) has told – against himself – of how at first he decided to search for an equivalent voice in English for the poems of Xosé María ("Pepe") Cáccamo (one of the poets featured in the volume), which in this instance was going to be a Dublin voice. Very quickly, however, he was stopped in his tracks by the project coordinator Manuela Palacios with a sharp "that's not Pepe's voice!" Payne could only agree: the voice he had been moulding was no longer Cáccamo's. Because the point was not to find an equivalent voice, but to find a way to make the original music sound in English. Retracing his steps back to the original text, Payne decided to make a recording of Cáccamo reading his own poetry, which he then listened to over and over again until he felt he had caught the tonalities, tastes and tracings of each line. More than the words in each poem, it was this sense of it that he needed for his translation.

For *Diary*, the process was similar, although the experience was more profound. In my conversations with Payne (2019b), he talked of the experience as a privilege: "a magnificent space to inhabit every morning". In view of how rewarding he had found it, I asked if it is important or even necessary for the translator to like a text in order to make a good translation of it. He replied that, while in theory a good translator should be able to face any text and achieve the same result whether he or she likes it or not, the reality is different. In practice, he said, it is difficult to respond with the same intensity, delicacy or affection to a text with which one cannot connect or whose merit one doubts. However, that does not mean that the translator should have a similar voice to that of the author, far from it. Veiga's lyricism, for example, is far removed from Payne's "sharper, more quotidian, more urban and urbane" style. The task, then, is to filter the light of Veiga's ideas and perceptions through the prism of

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[22] See, in this regard, a series of short readings by Payne recorded by University College Dublin (UCD) in 2019.

English, which is in turn an English inflected by thousands of Irish voices and memories (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Dispersion of the source text meaning through the prism of the target language

Source: Pinterest: https://kr.pinterest.com/pin/117375134031829268/

In his own analysis of such "prismatic translation", Matthew Reynolds (2020a:135) explains that translators

> remake [text] in their own ways in their own idioms and cultures. Of course, sometimes there are changes that can be called mistakes; but more often there are variances which reveal the differences between people using language differently in different places and times, and thereby open up the wealth of potential meaning in the source text, its signifying energy.

Yet, as he notes elsewhere (2020b:10), there must remain a necessary residue of sameness between source text and target text "if translation is not to dissolve completely into general textual proliferation".

The changes and absences that occur in a translation do not always have to be interpreted as loss. Sometimes, indeed, it is the other way round. What at first sight appears as a loss is almost always recovered in some other way (Venuti 2017:8). The attentive, sensitive translator knows that fidelity does not lie in insisting on literal symmetry, which is the wasteland of poetry, and prioritising prima facie detail over the flavour that detail gives to the poem and the imaginative and emotional space it occupies. As Reynolds (2020b:6) cautions, "if you look closely at a phrase or sentence and ask where does 'spirit', or 'tone', or

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'illocutionary force' stop, and where does 'literal meaning' or 'verbal meaning' or the 'word' begin, you will find that there is no boundary". In order to be able to communicate the full weight of meaning of a word, phrase or image, the translator must be capable of listening, tasting and intuiting more deeply than a normal reader, who may never decipher, interpret, savour or suffer the full nuances of the text. Not alone that, but after dispersing the poet's light into the spectrum of colours it comprises, he or she then has to recombine them for the target readers, to preserve for them what is one of the main pleasures of poetry: the possibility of returning to it again and again, and finding something new with each reading, shifting and expanding their enjoyment and understanding (Fig. 2). Necessarily, the translator can only render the author's ideas once so this recombined ray must, ideally, hold latent within it this ongoing journey of discovery and "sensory entanglement" (Ingold 2010:136) within the poem.

Figure 2: Recombining the light spectrum of the source text through the prism of the poet

Source: Pinterest: https://kr.pinterest.com/pin/19069998408221568/

To give just one example of Payne's acumen in recreating the content, effect and intention of the source poem in the target language, I will refer very briefly to the title of the poem "Música azul contra o medo / Blue Music to the Fear". The translation question is obvious: why not "Blue Music *against* the Fear"?[23] My explanation is that Payne is demanding and does not settle for the part when he can reach the whole. He gets involved in Veiga's words and ideas, and feels them in all their beauty and depth. He knows and feels, just like Veiga (Irish by adoption), that Ireland is not just the image sold to EU officialdom and American tourists. Ireland is also, as it has been since the time of Joyce, that sow that eats her young:

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[23] Payne himself shrugged, "I don't know how in the hell I got it!"

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that does not protect citizens from the speculators and the insurance companies, from the banks and the international financial agencies; that does not promote and protect art and language as it does its foreign multinational corporations. In such a context, the heroes are those great small men and women who have no other weapon than their word or brush, or, to use a phrase by the Galician author Manuel Rivas (2019), "the most extraordinary technology ever invented: that slight and simple inclination to listen to people" (my translation).[24] To people and, one might add, to the landscape. The listeners mentioned by Veiga in "Blue Music" – Seán Ó Riada, T P Flanagan, Pearse Hutchinson – are the misfits of society fighting against sterile fear and its instigators.[25] Payne's translation, in my view, leans into the world of sport when talking about a situation in which the opponent is much stronger and a defensive retaining strategy is of no use. The only real defence under such circumstances, the only chance of survival and success, is to attack: to set the pace and terms of the confrontation; to take the game to the opponent. Payne does not translate the preposition here: he translates the poem's message of hope and non-violent strength. He translates Veiga's faith and belief in the power of art, beauty and truth.

The poem "A luz dos días / The Light of Day", also from this collection (pp. 68-69), prompts an analysis of a different kind: of how the reader's understanding and response can be transformed by translation.

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[24] "La tecnología más extraordinaria jamás inventada: esa leve y sencilla inclinación para escuchar a la gente."
[25] For a historical Galician point of view, see "Nós, os inadaptados" (We, the misfits) by Vicente Risco (1933), a short essay on the rebellious non-conformism of a generation dissatisfied with the materialist, imperialist march of history.

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A luz dos días	**The Light of Day**
Mentres o mundo se esfarela derredor	While the world around crumbles
arden lonxe as lumaradas do pasado,	the lumber of the past burns in the distance,
afúndense as lembranzas dos perdidos	memories of lost moments are drowned
momentos que nunca volverán,	and will never surface,
da friaxe concentrada en alvarizas	as the stinging cold of the beehuts
coma nun poema de Uxío Novoneyra.	in Uxío Novoneyra's poems.
Mentres o corazón oculta un tempo roto	While the heart hides the bleak hours
do túnel nos recantos máis escuros,	in the darkest alcoves under the quays,
un arco da vella escintila nunha ouriza	a rainbow flares on a chestnut burr
alí onde mofo e brión tantísimo proliferan	where the moss and lichen grow
e vibran aterecidas as oucas	and the crowfoot trembles by the riverbank
a carón da augusta pasaxe dos cisnes.	at the glorious passing of swans.
Mentres canta leda a mocidade	While the children sing lightly
nas escadarías que descen cara ao río,	on the stone steps to the river,
constrúe o estorniño a súa casa baleira	the starling builds its empty nest
baixo as lousas brillantes pola chuvia,	under the rain-bright roof slates,
entre os laños que abriron ventos agres,	between the cracks made by bitter winds,
nas recónditas físgoas da lombriga e a sombra.	in the hidden crevices of worm and shade.
Mentres a tarde espella os rostros devastados	While the evening casts the devastated faces
da multitude que prega xunto á ponte,	of the crowd praying by the bridge,
baixa coas augas un remuíño de flores,	a spray of flowers floats by on the water,
coroas aínda vivas que han iluminar as beiras	living wreaths that will illuminate the shores
do recordo, as beiras da morte, as beiras do que fica	of memory, the verge of death, the tip of what's left in your hands when everything ends.
entre os dedos das mans cando todo remata.	
Mentres en Crosses Green se esparexe a luz dos días,	While in Crosses Green the light of day dissolves as the wake of the boat weeps through the riverbend,
mentres o ronsel das barcas bagulla na revolta	
e na rampla respiran cercetas apencadas	the mottled teal rests on the slipway
tremeloce o sol contra o metal das chemineas,	and the sun shudders against the iron chimneys,
aroman as estancias torradas pradarías, aroman	rooms are perfumed from roasted prairies, love
o amor funéreos crisantemos, gris incensario de nardos.	perfumed by funereal chrysanthemums, the grey incense of tuberose.

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In approaching this poem initially, my intention was to account for why, though moved and engaged by Veiga's original, it was Payne's version that brought forth actual tears. The explanation I found was that, as a subject with which I have more experience and connection in my native Irish English than in Galician, Payne's words reached me in a stronger and deeper way, not because they were superior, but because they had a more direct imaginative and emotional path to me. The problem with that logic was that, following repeat readings of the poem and its translation, I discovered that I was now moved in the same way by both. The explanation lies in that prismatic spread involved in translation that allows the source text to reveal "new colours of meaning" (Reynolds 2020a:137) and "[bring] to light what the text hides in its interstices" (Vidal Claramonte 2024:3; quoted in Campbell and Vidal 2024:10). In this way, as Reynolds (2020a:134) observes, "we can use translations not only to get a sense of books in languages we do not know, but to learn more about works that we can already read in our own tongue(s)".

When moving between Galician and English, particularly in poetic language, the challenge is to recreate the images, textures, tonalities and silences of the original in the target poem in a way that is meaningful to English-language readers yet retains the different perspective that the Galician language and linguistic context gives to Veiga's writing. English has a richer vocalic inventory than Galician, for example, yet is also characterized by a strong tendency towards vowel reduction and consonantal endings. Matching Veiga's free lyricism, Payne adapts the meter and line length to create a more natural reading and recital rhythm for his English version, and echoes but does not copy the alliterations (often found internally) that provide unity and flow in the Galician. Alliteration is also used to reinforce or replace the effect created by a more complete verb, noun or image in the original for which an equivalent word in English may not suffice. In the case of highly textured or dynamic images in Galician, for example, such as *friaxe* (cold), *lousa* (slate), *remuíño* (eddy), *esparexer* (disperse) or *ronsel* (wake), Payne, respectively, accretes an adjective to match the verb after the noun ("stinging cold of the beehives"); strengthens the modifying adjective by compounding alliteratively using the verb ("rain-bright roof slates"); expands the subject noun phrase to complement the alliteration with a watery homograph ("a spray of flowers floats by on the water"); alliterates internally and externally to recreate the soft, spreading dispersal evoked by the slow sibilance of the original ("light of day dissolves"); and

repurposes the alliteration in Veiga's Galician to reinforce the sense of liquid motion ("the wake of the boat weeps through the riverbend").

What is of particular interest in this poem is the channel created by Payne's translation that allows Veiga's words to reach a reader like me, new-Galician but with English as my native language, as they should, as they were intended by the poet; and, equally, to communicate to non-Galician speakers the purity of the poetic moment enclosed within these lines. I use the word "purity" because of the delicate clarity with which Veiga perceives and penetrates human feeling: helplessness and desolation, waste and senselessness, and the need for community to come together and feel the physical company of people against the loss of hope that suicide brings with it. For this is the scene we encounter in "The Light of Day": a suicide vigil in a place in Cork city known as "The Lough", one of countless others held each year all over the country. The beauty and strength of the portrait created lies in Veiga's eye, ear, skin and soul for detail. Sadness does not begin and end with this moment of the vigil; it is, rather, a continuum. It is when the community cries together and leaves alone afterwards. It is while dinner is being prepared for the children at home, and the sound of their playing drifts up from the lake. It is in the earthworms and the momentarily solitary starling's nest. Veiga notices all of this, and is filled with the people's feelings and sensations. And Payne sounds it all out into English, so that it reaches the English-speaker, and eases and enriches the journey back and forth for the bilingual reader.

4.3 Translation Challenges and Dilemmas in Minority Language Translation

This final section examines the difficulties facing translators generally and, more specifically, those working between Galician and English. The most obvious obstacle, particularly in the case of a minority or, more accurately, minoritized language such as Galician, are lack of knowledge and gaps of knowledge. In talks and my own interviews with Payne, he does not hide the fact that he speaks Spanish better than Galician, which limits his ability to express himself in the latter. This problem is compounded by the relative lack of reliable linguistic resources online and in print in Galician compared to diglossically dominant varieties such as English and Spanish, which allow translators to trace, compare, contrast and model the turns of phrase and tone in the source and target texts. So what can we do, one might ask, if our knowledge, the library and even the internet fail us? We get creative and cast our net wider,

activate the human resources we have around us and around the world: friends, partners, colleagues, teachers, neighbours and acquaintances.[26] Even casual encounters can make us more aware of nuances of tone, register, cadence, accent, subtext and other linguistic cues.

A further complication for the newcomer to Galician when translating from Galician to English is the conflict surrounding the official standard and the presence of elements from Portuguese and other dialectal and non-normative forms. In this regard, both our community of contacts and the academicians may fail us. Deviations from the official standard can pose a significant challenge for translators, all the more so when compounded with an a priori lack of mastery and fluency in the language. When interviewed, Payne recognized the difficulty this "non-normative" quality in Veiga's work gave him, but he had the intelligence, sensitivity, creativity and *translationlust* to overcome it. The absence of words from the dictionary in the case of Galician illustrates the importance of both a deep philological understanding of the language (origins, varieties, regional variation), and a humanistic knowledge of and sensitivity to the culture it expresses. Word choice in this context is not only aesthetic but sometimes sociopolitical. While it may not be possible to reproduce that political connotation in the translation, it may be important to recognize it when it exists.

My case in this regard is different because my day-to-day life is conducted through Galician. I also have knowledge of Portuguese and believe it positive and necessary to bring Galician and Portuguese closer together, and to increase recognition and representation of the diversity of voices and accents within Galicia.[27] The problems (and solutions) I encounter are, therefore, of a different nature and the ability to triangulate between the plurality of voices and varieties of Galician, Spanish and Portuguese can prove a necessary advantage. In the course of my work translating texts in Spanish by Galician authors, for example, I have encountered words that do not appear in either the DRAE (Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Spanish) or the DRAG (Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Galician). However, knowing the author and knowing his "reintegrationist" leanings, I turn to the Portuguese Priberam and find the

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[26] It is within this "meshwork of storied knowledge" (Ingold 2011:168), this "tangle of interlaced trails, continually ravelling here and unravelling there, that beings grow or "issue forth" along the lines of their relationships. *This tangle is the texture of the world*" (my emphasis) (p. 71).

[27] On the disconnect between the diverse regional and dialectal reality of Galician and the model of Galician used on the national television channel, TVG, see Méndez (2008).

solution there.[28] In other cases, a source text in Spanish may be interpolated by a lexical form or grammatical structure from Galician (or vice versa) that needs to be recognized and translated according to its intended meaning, not according to the unintended code mixing.

This leads us to the related matter of mistakes generally in the source text. What should we do? We are translators after all, not editors: what we are asked to do is to translate the text we are given. One school of thought is that a poorly written text in the source language deserves a poorly written text in the target language, and that it is the author who is responsible for any misunderstandings or embarrassments that arise from it. Such a view is not entirely without merit. Why should the translator correct mistakes that the author did not bother to detect and emend before handing over the text? Indeed, does an "improved" translation not misrepresent the original? However, let us consider the alternative, first from the point of view of professional ethics. A target text that adheres rigidly to the original with all of its flaws risks becoming not just as deficient as the parent text but worse since flaws and deficiencies have the uncomfortable habit of becoming amplified in translation. Ethically speaking, can a translator ever justify delivering work that is even more slipshod than the original?

As an additional perspective, let us consider the question of professional solidarity. Should the author be punished for being an irregular or even bad writer? Should their chances of publishing the results of their research in a high-level journal be damaged and, with that handicap, their chances of professional advancement in the era of publish-or-perish? Editing while translating undoubtedly increases the translator's workload: fragmentary sentences, pronouns that change mid-sentence, sentences that start at the beginning of a paragraph and finish at the end after an interminable stream of confused and confusing subordinate clauses, paragraphs of ten lines or more, not to mention repeated words and compulsive (inaccurate) paraphrasing, incomplete or unmarked quotes, and all kinds of ambiguities. So what do we do? Do we reject the assignment or reject all future manuscripts by the author? Yet what if all of us who work in translation and consider ourselves good professionals reject them? What about this researcher's work and his or her desire to fulfil one of the fundamental principles of university life: the dissemination of knowledge? As translators, we have the opportunity to be

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[28] "Reintegrationism" (*reintegracionismo*) is a linguistic movement that advocates for the common classification of Galician and Portuguese in all its varieties as a single Galician-Portuguese language. For more information, see the Galician Language Association (Associaçom Galega da Língua – AGAL) website: https://a.gal/o-que-e-o-reintegracionismo/

part of this community dedicated to the cultivation and circulation of knowledge. The choice is clear: help contribute to the advancement of dedicated knowledge professionals and the advancement of knowledge in all fields; or sit back and wait for clients more worthy of our time and talents.

To bring the discussion back to the case of Galician translation, it is interesting to consider how to respond to unintentional mistakes that may occur in a text owing to simple oversight or lack of knowledge, such as the use of calques from Castilian ("Castilianisms"), misplaced pronouns, errors of spelling or grammar, etc.[29] Should we look for a form in English that reflects the momentary lack of care or attention, or that reveals the attitude of linguistic subjugation to a higher prestige language? Unless this is the author's intention, the answer must be no. Since it is highly unlikely in most cases that the author's intention is to comment on the situation of diglossia in Galicia, just as it is unlikely that they should wish to give an impression of incompetence or lack of professionalism, excessive fidelity to the detail of the source text in this case will be a disloyalty to the author and to what they intended to communicate.[30]

The question of how to deal with mistakes in the source text is just as much linked to the tangle and texture of human experience and expression as the sensory and experiential intricacies of poetry or theatre translation. The challenge is to identify the sounds and flavours of the source text above the noise and confusion of ill-advised commas, misconjugations and imperfect plurilingualism. The more sensitive the translator is to the environment and intention of the text and its author, the more precisely he or she will be able to grasp fully both its meaning and the author's reality, and relay them to the new reader. As Tim Ingold (2011:161) observes, it is not a matter of "how *much* you know but of how *well* you know".

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[29] In relation to the imperfect use of Galician by native Galician speakers, consider, for example, that according to the 2006 University of A Coruña *Plano de normalización lingüística* [Linguistic Normalization Plan], only 47% of teaching faculty reported a (self-assessed) ability to write well or very well in Galician (p. 28). On the continued decline in the use of Galician since then, see Monteagudo (2024).

[30] On translator ethics in this regard, see Baer (2017:64): "release [novice translators] "from the corset of an enforced—and hence often meaningless— literalness" […], transforming transcoders into experts, capable of making and defending conscious and purposeful decisions based on the communicative environment in which they are translating". See also Martín Ruano (2024:183) and the call for "'detective' translators who actively contribute to the quality of the different language versions, for instance by pointing out the weaknesses of 'original' institutional messages".

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5. Conclusion

In the poem "Afterwards" by Thomas Hardy, the poet wonders how he will be spoken of after he dies and he describes, among others, the image of a hedgehog as a symbol of the delicate and vulnerable things of nature and life that he as a poet must protect. Hardy speaks as a poet but the same principle applies to the translator: the fragile and frightened thing in this case is that subtle quality, so hard to detect or intuit, that is the distinct flavour that the source author gives to his or her words, and that it is the translator's responsibility to preserve and convey to the reader in the target language. It is, likewise, the "irremovable strangenesses" that we "must know", as Clifford Geertz (1986:120) once warned, "or end marooned in a Beckett-world of colliding soliloquy". Empathy, intuition and the science of imagining difference are not automatic processes: they are skills that must be cultivated and trained, and the humanities is a good school. In Hardy's poem, the author hopes that he will be remembered as "a man who used to notice things". It seems a worthy aspiration for the translator as well.

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