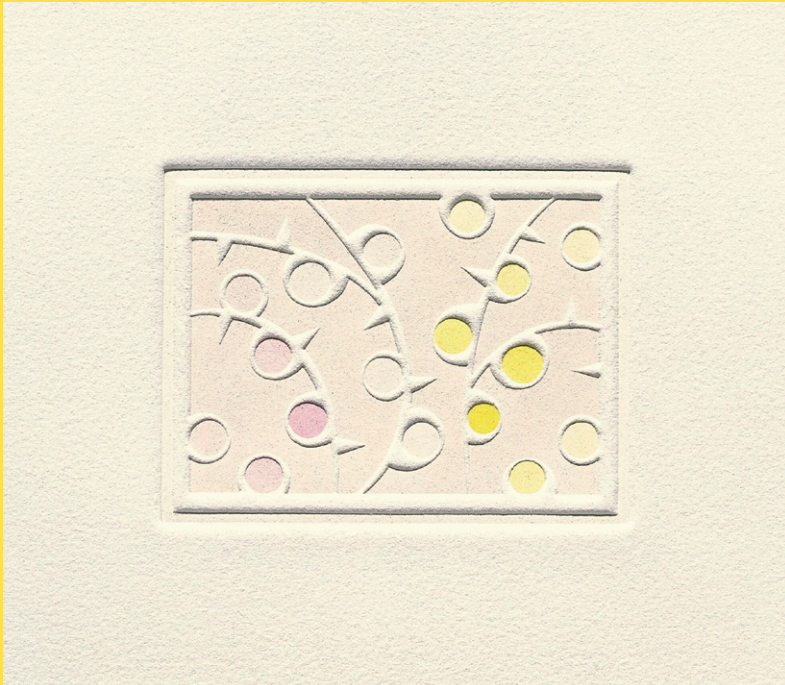


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Vol. 21, No. 2 (2024)

IRISH LITERATURE AND NON-ANGLOPHONE EUROPE

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Aidan O'MALLEY and Anamarija ŠPORČIČ

Journal Editors: Smiljana KOMAR and Mojca KREVEL

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Part I

Introduction

Aidan O'Malley

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Introduction: Rethinking Irish Literature and Non-Anglophone Europe

In his short 1947 “creative history of the growth of a racial mind”, *The Irish*, Seán O’Faoláin traced how “the Irish mind” and “Ireland” itself, “with her own distinctive qualifications”, entered “into the great general stream of European culture” (O’Faoláin 1969, 9). O’Faoláin’s historical texts invariably spoke directly to mid-20th century Ireland, and the stress he placed on Ireland’s natural and historic ties with continental Europe not only pointed to how the country’s colonial history had weakened these, but, more urgently, it underlined the fact that these links had not been restored under the aegis of the new conservative and inward-looking postcolonial state. Europe, therefore, signified an aspiration and a desired destination for O’Faoláin. More precisely – and as he developed these thoughts in the pages of *The Bell* (1940–54), the journal he co-founded and edited from 1940–46 – Europe embodied a form of modernity that was beyond the new Irish state’s grasp: it was a site that always already stood in contrast to the provincialism that was seen to be constricting Ireland’s cultural, social and political life.¹

If, on a social and political level, O’Faoláin’s vision of a more progressive and sophisticated continent beyond the primordial squabbles that defined the island helped to mould an emerging liberal middle-class in the Republic of Ireland, echoes of this construction have also reverberated in literary discourses. When, for instance, John Banville is heralded as “a quintessentially European writer” (Smith 2016, n.p.), there is a sense that this means something more than the fact that many of his novels are set in locations on the continent, and that his style is informed by European writers; it also gestures to the idea that he has broken free of the narrow, national (and perhaps implicitly nationalistic) concerns of Irish literature.

O’Faoláin’s critiques of the new Irish state were also mobilized by second-wave revisionists – historians and cultural commentators who emerged in the 1970s in the wake of the eruption of the Northern Irish “Troubles”, and who worked to undermine what they believed was a nationalist bias in accounts of Irish experience.² As an element in this campaign, over the past three decades a number of revisionists have invoked Europe as a bulwark against the use of postcolonial theory in Ireland, which they have tended to view as little more than an exotic rendering of nationalism. For instance, Edna Longley, never afraid of employing gross characterizations in her polemics, wrote that postcolonial scholars, such as those associated with Field Day, who “throw theory at Ireland, hoping that bits of it will stick”, are apt to “deny Ireland’s European past” (Longley 1994, 28, 30). In a more considered vein, she noted elsewhere that:

¹ For an overview of this dynamic, see O’Malley 2020.

² For a short, recent survey of revisionism, see Bourke 2024.

European frameworks for Irish literature have been underemphasised or treated selectively. They often figure in binary modes: the Irish or British Isles as opposed to the European, the Irish and European as opposed to the British. (Longley 1999/2000, 75)

Oddly, this is in the opening paragraph of an article that, as its title – “Postcolonial versus European (and Post-Ukanian) Frameworks for Irish Literature” – indicates, places Europe in another binary: this time it is lined up alongside, or as a supplement to, a regionalized conception of British literature, and these are pitted against postcolonial understandings of Irish literature. But, as becomes clear in her conclusion, the European dimension of this framework is secondary at best: “what we really need is *post-ukanian* theory – Ukania being Tom Nairn’s satirical name for the United Kingdom” (Longley 1999/2000, 92). Europe has fundamentally collapsed here into the archipelago – into the relationship between the British and Irish islands and their constituent regions, which is where, in common with many of the leading self-proclaimed revisionists, Longley’s critical attention has generally been focused throughout her career.³

To be sure, the polemical use of the idea of Europe is by no means an exclusively Irish phenomenon. In fact, as Shane Weller chronicles in his 2021 *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History*, Europe has long been a floating signifier, and definitions of it through the centuries, such as Christendom or as an expression of Enlightenment rationality, have relied on delimiting the other – who or what is not European. Moreover, the Irish sense of being and not quite being a part of what is seen as a more cosmopolitan and responsible Europe is also to be found in smaller countries on the periphery of the continent.

In light of this comparable positioning, and in order to foster exchanges between Irish academics and their counterparts in Rijeka and Ljubljana that are not immediately mediated by a metropolitan centre, Anamarija Šporčič and I, supported by the Irish embassies to Croatia and Slovenia, inaugurated an Irish Studies Lecture Series in 2019. The talks that have been given in this series by Irish Studies scholars from different disciplines have by no means been confined to comparative studies of Ireland and Croatia/Slovenia/Central and Eastern Europe. While work in this field is valuable, the idea behind this series was that the lectures would offer windows into current research trends and approaches in Irish Studies for academics and students at the universities of Rijeka and Ljubljana, who might conceivably bring these insights to bear on their own work, which may or may not include Croatian and Slovenian topics. This lecture series, and the interactions it established, laid the groundwork for this special issue, which takes a very broad perspective on how Irish literature and non-Anglophone Europe might be understood. The five essays here do not focus on one region of Europe, nor do they concentrate on a specific era. Moreover, they are not confined to a particular set of languages (in Europe or Ireland), or even just to literature.

The opening contribution by Andrew Fitzsimons provides a thorough excavation of the multiple and tangled Italian roots in W.B. Yeats’s work, and brings to light the ways in which Baldassare Castiglione and Dante Alighieri underpin his important 1915 poem, “Ego

³ For an insightful account of how postcolonial conversations might be generated between Irish and European cultural experiences, see Laird 2015.

Dominus Tuus”. In doing so, the essay also reminds us of the inherently transnational nature of the Irish Literary Revival. While the Revival was a key element of, and was propelled by, the multifaceted wave of cultural nationalism that swept the country in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, it was far from being an inward-looking project. It was never just confined to Dublin and the island of Ireland, with London and Paris, especially, also playing key roles in its development.⁴ Furthermore, the major writers of the period, such as James Joyce, John Millington Synge, Sean O’Casey and, of course, Yeats, explicitly acknowledged their debts to a huge range of non-Anglophone authors and artistic movements, from Giambattista Vico to Henrik Ibsen, Symbolism, and Expressionism. Fitzsimons’s article deepens our appreciation of Yeats’s engagement with Castiglione and Dante by paying close attention to how his imaginative and idiosyncratic reading of these authors played a crucial role in his responses to personal and political crises, and influenced the ways in which he understood the relationship of the self and art in the later decades of his life.

Yeats, as Fitzsimons notes, knew these Italian authors through translation, and translation is the indispensable facilitator of communication between Irish literature and non-Anglophone Europe. If the first essay explores one of the routes through which classics of European literature found expression in Irish letters, John Stubbs’s contribution inspects the cultural counterflow, in the sense that its focus is on how two classic works by Jonathan Swift have been translated beyond the borders of Ireland. Walter Benjamin famously averred that “since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translator at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life” (Benjamin 1996, 254). Stubbs’s essay essentially endorses this perspective and illustrates the continued life *Gulliver’s Travels* and *A Modest Proposal* enjoy in 21st-century Slovenia. Set within an account of Swift’s translation history and his attitude to translation, the article examines the essay by the Slovenian philosopher, Mladen Dolar, which accompanies a recent translation of *Gulliver’s Travels*, and Tina Mahkota’s 2013 translation of *A Modest Proposal*. If Mahkota’s rendering and the context in which it was published allow the *Proposal* to speak to the contemporary political moment in Slovenia and beyond, Dolar’s essay brings Swift’s text into dialogue with contemporary theory, as it employs the idea of parallax to probe the shifts in perspective in *Gulliver’s Travels*.

The first two essays in this special issue tackle two of the biggest names in Irish and world literature; in contrast, the other three examine writers who have received little or no critical attention. Surveying the chapters in the collection, *Ireland, West to East*, Eve Patten and I noted that several of the connections between Ireland and Central and Eastern Europe that are discussed in the volume are simply the result of “individual and personal links” with places and people that came about through travel or emigration (Patten and O’Malley 2014, 16). Examples of this are scattered across the continent; for instance, experiences of living in non-Anglophone Europe have marked the very different outputs of Hubert Butler, Aidan Higgins and Philip Ó Ceallaigh, to name but three Irish writers. What these three have in common, though, is that they have all lived in parts of Europe – Yugoslavia, the south

⁴ For a noted account of how the Revival is a paradigmatic case study in world literature, see Casanova 2004, 303 ff.

of Spain, Romania – that lie at or beyond the borders of metropolitan conceptions of the World Republic of Literature, and, perhaps not unrelatedly, would generally be considered to occupy more minor positions in the Irish literary canon. However, they have all attracted a lot more attention than the subject of Verónica Membrive's contribution here, F.D. (Florence Daphne) Sheridan, whose sojourns in Spain and Italy informed her 1980 short story collection *Captives*. Membrive's article is an explicit act of (re)discovery of this ignored author, and so she approaches Sheridan's work by first locating her in terms of her intellectual and cultural formation, including her interactions with other Irish writers, especially Pearse Hutchinson. Membrive's then examines the images of Spain in Sheridan's short stories, and how these perspectives from an "outsider" relate to the political life of Spain in the 1950s and 1960s.

Aneta Stepień's essay is the first piece of academic work on the poet Fíona Bolger. Cóilín Parsons has recently observed that "[t]ransnationalism is now an everyday feature of the daily lives of all those living on the island" (Parsons 2024, 4), and, speaking squarely to the present, Stepień's article raises fundamental questions about how we define "Ireland" and "Irish", "Europe" and "European", and the languages of these places. Stepień focuses on how Bolger has worked to develop a plurilingual poetics and poetic practice that draw on her own understanding of living abroad to accommodate the experiences of recent migrants to Ireland. Bolger does not simply speak for migrants but, both through her poetry and her work as a facilitator of writing workshops for migrants, she looks to offer spaces in which their voices might be heard in English and in their own languages. At the front line of the inherent contradictions of the idea of free movement that constitutes contemporary globalized capitalism, these migrants traverse and speak to a Europe – which includes Ireland – that is at once both amorphous and tightly defined, with borders that are not theoretical, but zones in which physical and psychological violence takes place.

Since the 1990s Ireland has forged a role for itself in the shapeshifting world of globalized capital. In July 2000, one of the more devoted disciples of this ideology, the then Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) Mary Harney, claimed that "[g]eographically we are closer to Berlin than Boston. Spiritually we are probably a lot closer to Boston than Berlin" (Harney 2000, n.p). Silently informing the propinquity Harney saw obtaining between Ireland and a free-market US, and the distance between that and what she viewed as a welfarist Europe, is the matter of language. In some respects, what Harney offered was a profit-oriented deterritorialization of ideas associated with German Romantic writers such as Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who saw language as an expression of the spirit of a nation and a definition of its parameters. English is the language of globalization, and there can be no doubt that this fact increased the appeal of Ireland to international capital. Jonathan Arac coined the term "Anglo-globalism" to denote how "English in culture, like the dollar in economics, serves as the medium through which knowledge may be translated from the local to the global" (Arac 2002, 40). In this view, English, like the dollar, has become not just a currency but a standard of worth. Due to this hegemonic position, Anglo-globalism fosters an increasingly provincial perspective on political life and world literature: while the scope of the Anglosphere continues to grow, the apparent need to get beyond it diminishes. Irish literature, though, has never been exclusively in English, and resistance to the hegemonic pull of Anglo-globalism can be found in Irish-language writing and culture. Irish has long been

stereotyped as the language of more insular and reactionary attitudes and politics, but Irish-language writers have increasingly been searching out and forging connections with other “minor” languages and cultures across Europe and beyond. Máirín Nic Eoin has seen in the output of writers who have been working in this manner “the possibilities for new kinds of cross-cultural communication and dissemination within transnational networks and creative multilingual communities” (Nic Eoin 2013, n.p). Sorcha de Brún’s reading here of how the Irish-language author, Pádraig Ó Cíobháin, employs forms of European classical music in his novel, *Desiderius a Dó*, furthers our understanding of this transnational tendency. This article illustrates how music structures and drives Ó Cíobháin’s novel, which is also a homage to a 1616 text – *Desiderius* – composed in Leuven by an Irish Franciscan, Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, which in turn was a rendition of earlier Spanish, Catalan and Italian devotional texts. As such, what is unveiled is an ever-expanding palimpsest of complicated transnational and transdisciplinary links between Ireland and Europe.

The five articles in this special issue not only cover a very wide range of writers and approaches, but they disrupt presumptions about the nature of the connections between Ireland and non-Anglophone Europe. In short, the hierarchical binaries within which O’Faoláin framed that relationship have no resonance whatsoever in the essays presented here. Indeed, it might be said that it is Europe that undergoes a form of “provincialization” in these pieces, to co-opt Dipesh Chakrabarty’s concept, which he employed to “decenter [...] an imaginary figure [of Europe] that remains deeply embedded in *clichéd and shorthand forms* in some everyday habits of thought” (Chakrabarty 2000, 4). What these articles examine are not unproblematic, fixed terminuses at either end of a cultural corridor between an Ireland and a Europe; rather, what they demonstrate is that the dynamic of this encounter exposes different Irelands and forms of Irish literature, as well as different Europes and modes of cultural expression.

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Part II

Special Issue Articles

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Ego Dominus Tuus: Castiglione, Dante, and Yeats

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the centrality of the poem “Ego Dominus Tuus” (1915) to Yeats’s thinking about the role of crisis and biographical self-fashioning in the creation of great art, and the significance of Italy and Italian examples in Yeats’s work. The vision of art that emerges in Yeats’s mature poetry, the doctrine of the mask and the anti-self, and the full articulation of his personal myth in *A Vision* (1925), are generated to a significant degree out of Yeats’s encounter with the courtly ideals of Baldassare Castiglione, which in turn informed his idiosyncratic, but for the development of his mature vision of art crucial, reading of Dante Alighieri. “Ego Dominus Tuus” is the poem in which the twin influences of Castiglione and Dante merge, and the poem which signals an imaginative fresh start for Yeats.

Keywords: Italy, *sprezzatura*, courtly ideals, the mask, crisis

Ego Dominus Tuus: Castiglione, Dante in Yeats

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek raziskuje osrednjo vlogo pesmi Ego Dominus Tuus (1915) v Yeatsovem razmišljanju o vplivu krize in biografske samostvaritve na ustvarjanje vrhunske umetnosti, ter pomen Italije in italijanskih zgledov v Yeatsovih delih. Vizija umetnosti v Yeatsovi zreli poeziji, doktrina maske in anti-jaza, ter popolna artikulacija njegovega osebnega mita v delu *A Vision* (1925) so v pomembni meri rezultat Yeatsovega srečanja z dvornimi ideali Baldassareja Castiglioneja, ki je vplival na njegovo svojevrstno, vendar za razvoj njegove zrele umetniške vizije ključno, branje Danteja Alighierija. Ego Dominus Tuus je pesem, v kateri se združita vpliva Castiglioneja in Danteja, in pesem, ki pomeni nov ustvarjalni začetek za Yeatsa.

Ključne besede: Italija, *sprezzatura*, dvorni ideali, maska, kriza

Yeats loved the “high rocky places” and the “little walled towns” of Renaissance Italy, its courts peopled with “those who understood that life is not lived, if not lived for contemplation or excitement” (Yeats 2007, 184), and it was to Italian examples he turned at moments of public and personal crisis for his vision of art. Indeed, the vision of art that emerges in his mature poetry, the doctrine of the mask and the anti-self that he began to formulate around 1909, and the full articulation of his personal myth in *A Vision* (1925), are generated to a significant degree out of Yeats’s encounter with the courtly ideals of Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), which in turn informed his idiosyncratic, but for the development of his mature vision of art crucial, reading of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321).

“Ego Dominus Tuus” (1915) is the poem in which the twin influences of Castiglione and Dante merge, and the poem which signals an imaginative fresh start for Yeats. The centrality of the poem to Yeats’s thinking about the role of crisis and biographical self-fashioning in the creation of great art can be seen in how often he rehearsed the poem in other forms. In the essay “A Tower on the Apennines” (1907), for instance, with its vision of a perfected poet who knows that from “behind that laborious mood, that pose, that genius, no flower of himself but all himself, looked out as from behind a mask” (Yeats 2007, 211); and in “Art and Ideas” (1913), where the language of the ending of the essay foreshadows “Ego Dominus Tuus” (and indeed “Lapis Lazuli” and “Mediations in Time of Civil War”), rehearsing the thematic thrust of the ideas the poem will dramatize:

Shall we be rid of the pride of intellect, of sedentary meditation, of emotion that leaves us when the book is closed or the picture seen no more; and live amid thoughts that can go with us by steam-boat and railway as once upon horse-back, or camel-back, rediscovering, by our re-integration of the mind, our more profound Pre-Raphaelitism, the old abounding, nonchalant reverie? (Yeats 2007, 256)

In her essay on the influence of Renaissance Italy on Yeats, Edna Longley remarks on the phrase “nonchalant reverie”. It is, she says, “an oxymoron that wants to be a tautology” (Longley 2023, 157). This quandary plays out in “Ego Dominus Tuus”, and in that tension between “contemplation or excitement” that drives his mature art. The goal of art articulated in the late poem “Under Ben Bulbin”, “the profane perfection of mankind”, the idea of self-overcoming and self-fashioning, has its origins in Castiglione’s *Il libro del Cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*, 1528) and in particular its most noted coinage, *sprezzatura*, and it is the idea of *sprezzatura* as an overcoming of the conditions of the self and its circumstances, and its instinctive inclinations, which also underlies Yeats’s emphasis on biography in his reading of Dante.

The word *sprezzatura* offers challenges to translation, and thus has by now taken on its own untranslated life in English.¹ To look at its etymology, however, may help in understanding how Yeats arrived at his preferred version of the word, “nonchalance”. When added to a word, “s” in Italian confers a negative connotation, as in *sfortuna* (“bad luck”) from *fortuna* (“luck”). *Sprezzatura* thus is the negative of “to prize” or “to value”. Castiglione glosses his use of the word in Book 1:

¹ See, for example, *Sprezzatura: 50 Ways Italian Genius Shaped the World* by Peter D’Epiro and Mary Desmond Pinkowish (New York: Anchor Books, 2001).

But having before now often considered whence this grace springs, laying aside those men who have it by nature, I find one universal rule concerning it, which seems to me worth more in this matter than any other in all things human that are done or said: and that is to avoid affectation to the uttermost and as it were a very sharp and dangerous rock; and, to use possibly a new word, to practise in everything a certain nonchalance that shall conceal design and show that what is done and said is done without effort and almost without thought. From this I believe grace is in large measure derived, because everyone knows the difficulty of those things that are rare and well done, and therefore facility in them excites the highest admiration; while on the other hand, to strive and as the saying is to drag by the hair, is extremely ungraceful, and makes us esteem everything slightly, however great it be. (Castiglione 1902, 35)

This is the translation, by Leonard Epstein Opdycke, from which Yeats derives his use of “nonchalance” in “Ego Dominus Tuus”.² In Opdycke’s note on the term, he writes: “The word *sprezzatura* (rendered ‘nonchalance’) could hardly have been new to Castiglione’s contemporaries, at least in its primary meaning of disprizement or contempt. He may, however, have been among the first to use it (as here and elsewhere in *The Courtier*) in its modified sense of unconcern or nonchalance” (Castiglione 1902, 338). From Opdycke’s note we can also see how, as well as “nonchalance”, *sprezzatura* enters Yeats’s conceptual lexicon as a word that will figure in crucial and multivalent ways in many of his greatest poems: “indifference”.

That Yeats could be drawn so strongly to Castiglione when he did eventually encounter his work, through Lady Gregory, is understandable given that the ideals of Castiglione’s courtier can be found in as early a poem as “Adam’s Curse” (1903) where Yeats invokes his own version of *sprezzatura*: “I said ‘A line will take us hours maybe; / Yet if it does not seem a moment’s thought, / Our stitching and unstitching has been naught’” (Yeats 1997, 78). Terence Brown captures well what it was Yeats admired in Castiglione and the focusing force and effect of his ideas: “The Italian’s vision of the whole man brought into existence by lifelong dedication to poetry, love and physical prowess, but expressed with *sprezzatura*, effortlessly, became a governing ideal for Yeats as well, defining the poet’s sense of true aristocracy” (Brown 1999, 171). Almost twenty years later, in “A Prayer for My Daughter” (1919), Yeats was still working on the implications of the courtly ideals of Castiglione, and later still, at the moment of his greatest public triumph, in the Royal Palace in Stockholm in 1923, Yeats returned in his mind to the trip to Italy he had made in 1907 with Lady Gregory and her son, Robert:

Then my memory had gone back twenty years to that summer when a friend read out to me at the end of each day’s work Castiglione’s commendations and descriptions of that Court of Urbino where youth for certain brief years imposed upon drowsy learning the discipline of its joy, and I remembered a cry of Bembo’s made years after, ‘Would that I were a shepherd that I might look down daily upon Urbino’. (Yeats 1999, 400)

² “Yeats owned a 1900 edition of the [Sir Thomas] Hoby translation [*The Courtier* (1528; Eng. tr. 1561)] . . . ; he read the translation by Leonard E. Opdycke, *The Book of the Courtier* (London: Duckworth, 1902)”, Yeats 1994, 433, note 66.

Yeats's Italy, much like his Ireland, is fictive. The trip with Lady Gregory in May 1907 was his first, and he did not return again until January and February 1925, when he and his wife, George Yeats, toured Sicily alongside Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespeare, visiting Palermo and the Byzantine mosaics in Monreale, and the Greek amphitheatre at Syracuse, and then travelling on to Naples, Capri and Rome. This trip gave him the fillip he needed to complete the first version of *A Vision* and would provide images for his poetry for years to come (see Foster 2003, 279). His fullest experience of Italy was from 1928 to 1934, when, as an antidote to despondency and ill-health, he wintered in Rapallo, renewing his friendship, temporarily at least, with Pound, who had settled there in 1924.

With regard to the Rapallo period and his experience in Mussolini's Italy, Lauren Arrington has written of how the attraction to the Fascist regime that had coloured his trip in 1925 had cooled by the time of his winter sojourns and "proximity to the increasing totalitarianism of the regime", though she also notes that "'aesthetic fascism' continued to inform his work for the rest of his life" (Arrington 2023, 236). He took great interest in contemporary Italian philosophy, and the work of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile were important to him and would have a significant influence on the second iteration of *A Vision*, as would Gentile's ideas on education which affected "Among School Children" (see Foster 2003, 322; Arrington 2023, 240–42). However, all Yeats's knowledge of Italian things came through translation. He did not speak Italian, and even during the protracted periods of time he spent in Rapallo he had little interest in learning the language, much to George Yeats's frustration, and for the most part the company he kept there was not Italian (Foster 2003, 378–80).

Yeats's abiding imaginative concern was with the Italian past, and a fictive past at that. The very fictive nature of his Italy, and his Ireland, is the source for Yeats of imaginative power. There is warrant for this in Castiglione. His *Courtier* is also fictive, as Castiglione admits in the dedicatory letter that prefaces the book, a pre-emptive strike against his would-be detractors:

Others say that since it is so very hard and well nigh impossible to find a man as perfect as I wish the *Courtier* to be, it was superfluous to write of him, because it is folly to teach what cannot be learned. To these I make answer that I am content to have erred in company with Plato, Xenophon and Marcus Tullius, leaving on one side all discussion about the Intelligible World and Ideals; among which, just as are included (according to those authors) the ideal of the perfect State, of the perfect King and of the perfect Orator, so also is the ideal of the perfect *Courtier*. And if in my style I have failed to approach the image of this ideal, it will be so much the easier for courtiers to approach in deeds the aim and goal that I have set them by my writing; and even if they fail to attain the perfection, such as it is, that I have tried to express, he that approaches nearest to it will be the most perfect; just as when many archers shoot at a target and none hit the very mark, surely he that comes nearest to it is better than the rest. (Castiglione 1902, 6)

The *Courtier* is thus an ideal of "profane perfection", and a kind of mask. *The Book of the Courtier* is also an exercise in nostalgia, for a time and for friends and companions now gone. The book was written over a twenty-year period and published in Venice in

1528, and harks back to Castiglione's time in the service of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and Francesco Maria Della Rovere, his successor. The narrative purports to reconstruct philosophical conversations by a group of courtiers over four nights in the ducal palace in Urbino, led by Elisabetta Gonzaga, the sickly Guidobaldo's wife, a figure who blended in Yeats's mind with Lady Gregory (as did Coole Park with Urbino). Castiglione writes that he was "more bound to [Duchess Elisabetta] than to all the others" (Castiglione 1902, 2). Yeats so closely associated Lady Gregory with Duchess Elisabetta that in February 1909, when she had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage (Foster 1997, 398), lines from Castiglione's dedicatory letter, if imperfectly remembered, ran through his mind: "Never be it spoken without tears, the Duchess, too, is dead" (Yeats 1972, 163; see also "A Friend's Illness", Yeats 1997, 96).

Castiglione's dedicatory letter, its evocation of times past and companions now dead, informs "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" (1918) and even a late poem, "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" (1937). Castiglione took firmest hold on Yeats's imagination in the 1910s, however, when, as Justin Quinn and James Longenbach have noted, there was a retrospective turn within Yeats's writing, coincident with a strategic re-positioning of himself within contemporary letters:

In the early 1910s, his reputation as a poet of the *fin de siècle* was indisputable. But such past glory did not guarantee contemporary interest. Yeats was in danger of becoming a museum exhibit. To avoid this, Yeats became a curator, writing memoirs and poems that canonized his friends and associates from the preceding era, while giving himself a new freedom of movement. (Quinn 2023, 300)

W.H. Auden, rather more acidly, made the same point: "Yeats spent the first part of his life as a minor poet, and the second part writing major poems about what it had been like to be a minor poet" (Fenton 2007).

The best-known of the references Yeats made to Italy occurs in "To a Wealthy Man who promised a second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were proved the People wanted Pictures",³ where the Renaissance courts of Ercole d'Este I, Duke of Ferrara, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro of Urbino, and Cosimo de Medici, represent a social formation within which art flourishes due to an enlightened aristocracy indifferent to the opinions of shepherds and shopkeepers. Indeed, the poem implies that for art *to* flourish the best society is one controlled by the enlightened indifference of a powerful, cultured elite. This Italy, which he had found in Castiglione and in Edmund H. Gardner's *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara* (1904), is the model for an imagined Ireland, yet it is one continually thwarted by the forces of frustration in the actual Ireland of Biddy's halfpennies and Paudeen's pence: the new middle-class of "minds without culture" (Yeats 1997, 604), and of *should*-be patricians and patrons, such as the unnamed "Wealthy Man":

³ The poem was composed in late December 1912, and published as "The Gift" in the *Irish Times* on January 11, 1913; see Foster, 1997, 477–81. The "Wealthy Man" is most commonly considered to be a reference to Sir Arthur Guinness, Lord Ardilaun.

What cared Duke Ercole, that bid
 His mummers to the market place,
 What th' onion-sellers thought or did
 So that his Plautus set the pace
 For the Italian comedies?
 And Guidobaldo, when he made
 That grammar school of courtesies
 Where wit and beauty learned their trade
 Upon Urbino's windy hill,
 Had sent no runners to and fro
 That he might learn the shepherds' will.
 And when they drove out Cosimo,
 Indifferent how the rancour ran,
 He gave the hours they had set free
 To Michelozzo's latest plan
 For the San Marco Library,
 Whence turbulent Italy should draw
 Delight in Art whose end is peace.

(Yeats 1997, 106)

When utter change does come, in “Easter 1916”, the “terrible beauty” is Italianate and the sacrifice *sprezzatura*-like, even if the protagonists are not “high-born” they are assumed into the Yeatsian aristocratic pantheon by virtue of having, like the ideal courtier, “weighed so lightly what they gave” (“September 1913”, Yeats 1997, 108).

Much critical energy has been expended deriding the fictive nature of Yeats's Ireland, in particular the ahistorical preposterousness of his view of a land of “peasantry” and “hard-riding country gentlemen”, and the vicious, ludicrous Elizabethanism of that same poem's reference to “Base-born products of base beds” (“Under Ben Bulbin”, Yeats 1997, 335), but rather than repeating these arguments I want instead to emphasize Yeats's claims for the prerogatives of art, and his struggle to justify those prerogatives, not least to himself, given his acute awareness of, and engagement with, his own historical moment. In 1914 Yeats wrote of “the Lane debacle”, along with the fall of Parnell and the Playboy “riots”, as one of the “three public controversies” that “had stirred his imagination” (Brown 1999, 201). In this situation, it was to Castiglione and Italy that Yeats turned. While Robert Gregory could be called “Our Sidney and our perfect man” in a poem of elegiac praise (“In Memory of Major Robert Gregory”, Yeats 1997, 133), turning to the English Renaissance to castigate Irish philistinism “would not have been politic” (Longley 2023, 148).

In “To a Wealthy Man” Italy is figured as “turbulent”, and the patrician ideal and “aesthetic fascism” is, as Yeats was well aware and intimates in the poem, founded upon something other

than natural grace and benign authority: military prowess and violent control. Yeats is, though, more than a Harry Lime figure in arguing that great art is predicated upon social tumult. In the poem's punning use of "draw", "Delight" is extracted from the replenishing nutritive source that is Art, "whose end is peace" but whose own source may indeed be the very turbulence (from the Latin *turba*, which means *turmoil* but also *crowd*) to which it offers a countervailing force. Yeats admits as much in a later poem, written during the turbulence of civil war in Ireland:

O what if gardens where the peacock strays
 With delicate feet upon old terraces,
 Or else all Juno from an urn displays
 Before the indifferent garden deities;
 O what if levelled lawns and gravelled ways
 Where slippered Contemplation finds his ease
 And Childhood a delight for every sense,
 But take our greatness with our violence?

("Meditations in Time of Civil War", Yeats 1997, 204–5)

It is important to remember that, though "slippered" and easeful here, contemplation for Yeats is not simply, or not only, that space cleared by violent force for the leisure of the privileged mind and that achieved leisure itself is not necessarily passive. Yeats writes of Dante as one of that kind who "alone *earn* contemplation, for it is only when the intellect has wrought the whole of life to drama, to *crisis*, that we may live for contemplation, *and yet keep our intensity*" (Yeats 1999, 217; emphasis added).

The haughtiness of Yeats's regard is tempered by the questioning, rhetorical though it be, of accrued privilege. Yeats's praise is not so much for a social dispensation which favours a privileged caste in the exercise of power, but one which, as manifested in Renaissance Italy, produces, or enables the creation of, the greatest art. In this view, in the long run, it is art "whose end is peace", that is the mark and the guarantee of the "long-legged fly" (Yeats 1997, 347) of civilization.

Both the historical "reverie" produced out of the splendour of the palace in Stockholm and the "excited reverie" of "A Prayer for My Daughter" turn upon concatenated ideas of self and service, intellect and beauty, and pit the aristocratic ideal of a "tested long-enduring stock" (Yeats 1999, 401) against the modern "individualistic age" (Yeats 1999, 402). These ideas connect Yeats's imagined Italy to his imagined Ireland, and do much to test the patience of even the most sympathetic of Yeats's readers today, and not entirely because the "sort now growing up / All out of shape from toe to top" (Yeats 1997, 335) are grown and gone, and our own age is chiefly the work of the things Yeats decries. And yet, as if to both concede and, at times, nullify the force of the arguments against himself, Yeats's poems stage questionings of the ideas the work purports to forward, as when a polemical thrust is decelerated by its phrasing as a rhetorical question: "How but in custom and ceremony / Are innocence and beauty born?" ("A Prayer for My Daughter", Yeats 1997, 192); and when imaginative daring is tempered by imaginative disquiet and troubled and troubling ambivalence: "Did she put on his knowledge with his power? /

Before the indifferent beak could let her drop” (“Leda and the Swan”, Yeats 1997, 218). There is a link here, again, with Castiglione’s *sprezzatura*. To call this element in Yeats scepticism would be too strong, but Edna Longley’s characterization of this resource as a “defensive manoeuvre” (Longley 2013, 106) is useful here. That there are rhetorical strategies at work is undeniable, and Yeats’s manipulation of pose partly accounts for the force of otherwise objectionable, easily dismissed, attitudes. There is also a drama of attitude in Yeats, where the “indifference” of a Renaissance *condottiere* can elicit praise but the “indifferent beak” of Zeus provokes a more ambiguous category of feeling. As Elizabeth Cullingford reminds us with regard to Yeats’s “representation of the feminine”: “the distance between poet and speaker, autobiography and creative fiction, differs from poem to poem” (Cullingford 2006, 183).

Much that is objectionable in Yeats derives from his indebtedness to courtly convention in his treatment of woman, where the female is often presented in terms of the nation and vice versa. In Yeats’s ruminations in the “vast hall” in Stockholm, woman and nation are interchangeable, are seen indeed in terms of each other, one as compensation for the lack of the other:

I had thought of how we Irish had served famous men and famous families, and had been, so long as our nation had intellect enough to shape anything of itself, good lovers of women, but had never served any abstract cause, except the one, and that we personified by a woman, and I wondered if the service of woman could be so different from that of a Court. [. . .] I had run through old family fables and histories, to find if any man of my blood had so stood, and had thought that there were men living, meant by nature for that vicissitude, who had served a woman through all folly, because they had found no Court to serve. (Yeats 1999, 400)

Castiglione’s ideal of the courtier melds here with that other Italian influence, briefly mentioned earlier, that had emerged in its most significant form in 1915, in the poem “Ego Dominus Tuus”. George Bornstein writes that Yeats “exalted Dante as a sort of perfected Romantic, free of the flaws of Keats and Shelley” (Bornstein 2006, 31). Castiglione had given Yeats his “governing ideal”, and in the decade between the writing of “Ego Dominus Tuus” (1915) and *A Vision* (1925), Dante becomes for Yeats the figure of the poet he would will himself to become. As Bornstein relates, Yeats placed himself in the same seventeenth phase of the moon as Dante and Shelley, but his higher regard for the Italian and his ambitions for his own work can be seen in how he compares their achievements:

Dante, having attained, as poet, to Unity of Being, as poet saw all things set in order [. . .] and was content to see both good and evil [. . .] Dante suffering injustice and the loss of Beatrice, found divine justice and the heavenly Beatrice, but the justice of *Prometheus Unbound* is a vague propagandistic emotion and the women that await its coming are but clouds. (Yeats 2015, 107, quoted in Bornstein 2006, 32)

The diction and ideas echo “Ego Dominus Tuus”, and, intriguingly, the ending of “The Tower”:

Now shall I make my soul,
Compelling it to study

In a learned school
 Till the wreck of body,
 Slow decay of blood,
 Testy delirium
 Or dull decrepitude,
 Or what worse evil come –
 The death of friends, or death
 Of every brilliant eye
 That made a catch in the breath –
 Seem but the clouds of the sky
 When the horizon fades;
 Or a bird's sleepy cry
 Among the deepening shades.

(Yeats 1997, 203)

As with the variety of attitude and feeling evoked in his use of the word “indifference”, Yeats’s disparagement of Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* is qualified by the use in this altered context of the very terms of his criticism (“the women that await its coming are but clouds”) to evoke the “profane perfection” wherein the achieved soul can make “every brilliant eye / That made a catch in the breath – Seem but the clouds”.

According to Curtis Bradford, Yeats “beginning in 1915 and 1916, in poems such as ‘Ego Dominus Tuus’, ‘The Wild Swans at Coole’, and ‘Easter 1916’, . . . experienced a breakthrough to a greater art than he had hitherto created” (Bradford 1965, 48). The contribution made to this “greater art” by Yeats’s own particular interpretation of Dante is significant, and the emphasis in his interpretation relies as much on biography as on a reading of Dante’s poetry. The theory of art adumbrated in “Ego Dominus Tuus” through the figure of Dante appears in expanded form in Yeats’s prose piece, *Per Amica Silentiae Lunae* (1917), which offers, in effect, Yeats’s own reading of his own poem. The relationship between these two texts enables us to see how greatly Yeats’s theory of art as “compensation for some accident of health or circumstance” (Yeats 1994, 5) relies on biography to articulate an art where, as Yeats writes of Dante, the “verses are at moments a mirror of his history, and yet more” (Yeats 1994, 7).

The rhetorical strategy in “Ego Dominus Tuus” is dialogue, with two characters: “Hic” (This one) and “Ille” (That one). The first passage sets up both the scene and the terms of the debate. Ille has “passed the best of life”, Hic says, and questions why Ille “still trace[s], / Enthralled by the unconquerable delusion, / Magical shapes” (Yeats 1997, 161). To which Ille replies:

By the help of an image
 I call to my own opposite, summon all
 That I have handled least, least looked upon.

(Yeats 1997, 161)

Through “magical shapes”, he says, re-termed here “image”, he can access what has hitherto, for one reason or another, been unavailable. To which Hic offers, on the surface at least, a very reasonable response: “And I would find myself and not an image” (Yeats 1997, 161). We begin to see that Ille is the mouthpiece for Yeatsian ideals rather than Hic, not only because, like Ille, Yeats had in his own view also passed the best of life (he was over 50 at the time of the poem’s composition, and unmarried) but because Ille’s reply to this statement rephrases Yeats’s criticism in *Per Amica* of what he calls the modern “doctrine of sincerity and self-realization”:

Ille. That is our modern hope, and by its light
We have lit upon the gentle, sensitive mind
And lost the old nonchalance of the hand;
Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush,
We are but critics, or but half create,
Timid, entangled, empty and abashed,
Lacking the countenance of our friends.

(Yeats 1997, 161–62)

Hic counters by using Dante as an example of an artist who sought to find himself and not an image. And it is at this point that the poem begins to articulate Yeats’s theory of art as “compensation” for an abject life. Does the “spectral image” that we have of Dante, Ille asks, really correspond to the living man who had such friends as Guido Cavalcanti and Lapo Gianni? Ille believes that Dante sought what was “counter”, in the Hopkins sense of that word. Because he was lacking in virtue in life, he sought it in art:

Being mocked by Guido for his lecherous life,
Derided and deriding, driven out
To climb that stair and eat that bitter bread,
He found the unpersuadable justice, he found
The most exalted lady loved by a man.

(Yeats 1997, 162)

Dante finds Beatrice, that “most exalted lady”, who is, in the terms of *Per Amica*, both “Daemon” and “sweetheart” (Yeats 1994, 11), and it is useful to recall here that Yeats in *Per Amica* says that the Daemon “would ever set us to the hardest work among those not impossible” (Yeats 1994, 11); in “Ego Dominus Tuus” the command is internalized: Dante “set his chisel to the hardest stone” (Yeats 1997, 162). I will return to the phrase “unpersuadable justice” later, but will say for the moment that to me it calls to mind another ringing Yeatsian phrase, when in the introduction to *A Vision*, a work which is the final stage of the theory of the Daemon that is sketched out in “Ego Dominus Tuus” and elaborated upon in *Per Amica*, he speaks of the occult images of sun and moon as having “helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice” (Yeats 2015, 25).

The Latin title of Yeats's poem derives from the opening sections of *La Vita Nuova*. Dante first met Beatrice when he was nine and she was eight. He places their ages within a magical sphere: with himself "almost at the end" and she at "the beginning of her ninth year" (Dante 2004, 29). Her image, Dante writes, "incited Love to dominate me" (2004, 30). From this began his "Vita Nuova" ("New Life"). She was, Dante says, like a woman that Homer had sung of, "She did not seem the daughter of a mortal man, but of a god" (2004, 30). Over the following years he saw her occasionally, but it was not until he was eighteen that she spoke to him. She was walking down a street in Florence, with two older women friends, and was, appropriately, dressed in purest white. It was also, appropriately, 9 o'clock, a May morning in 1283. After this momentous encounter, Dante retired to his room to be alone and recounts the vision that then occurred, which is rendered thus in the Dante Gabriel Rossetti translation that Yeats read and quotes from in *Per Amica*:

There appeared to be in my room a mist of the colour of fire, within the which I discerned the figure of a lord of terrible aspect to such as should gaze upon him, but who seemed therewithal to rejoice inwardly that it was a marvel to see. Speaking he said many things, among the which I could understand but few; and of these, this: Ego dominus tuus. (Yeats 1994, 293, note 8)⁴

In her notes to the Italian text Manuela Colombo maintains that the phrase "Ego dominus tuus" alludes to the Ten Commandments "Ego sum Dominus Deus tuus": "É un Dio che si presenta qui a suo fedele [A God who presents himself here to his faithful/his believers]" (Dante 1999, 42) and whose command must be followed. Dante is a believer in this command from outside himself, and Yeats's poem carries on, though obliquely, this Dantesque origin in its theme of mastery/control and call to service deriving from a mysterious visitation. Yeats explores in both the poem and in *Per Amica* whether the imagination's contents originate within or outside the self. This question was of crucial import to the poet, and is one to which he returns in many guises:

When a man writes any work of genius, or invents some creative action, is it not some knowledge or power has come into his mind from beyond his mind? It is called up by an image, as I think; . . . but our images must be given to us, we cannot choose them deliberately. (Yeats 1999, 216)

Note the similarity of phrase and image to that in "Leda and the Swan": "knowledge" and "power", but this time coming into the mind from beyond the mind rather than inflicted from above upon the body of a staggering girl. The meditation upon instinct here is connected also to "A Prayer for My Daughter" in that Yeats writes of watching his child, Anne, and seeing "so many signs of knowledge from beyond her own mind" (Yeats 1999, 216).

In the opening passage of *Per Amica* Yeats, like Dante, forsakes the crowd for the solitude of his room, to invite a "Marmorean Muse, an art where no thought or emotion has come to

⁴ *The Early Italian Poets from Ciullo d'Alcamo to Dante Alighieri (1100–1200–1300) . . . together with Dante's Vita Nuova*, tr. and ed. D.G. Rossetti. London, Smith, Elder, 1861, p. 226 and reprinted in *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti [1887–88; repr. London, Ellis and Elvey, 1897, II, 32, and in *The New Life [La Vita Nuova] of Dante Alighieri*, ed. William Michael Rossetti. London, Ellis and Elvey, 1899, 28.

mind because another man has thought or felt something different, . . . and the world must move my heart but to the heart's discovery of itself" (Yeats 1994, 4). In this intoxicating mood, before the hard work of composition, "for a moment" he says, "I believe I have found myself and not my anti-self" (Yeats 1994, 4), a belief the rest of the text questions. The drama in "Ego Dominus Tuus" derives from the claim that both Hic and Ille make on Yeats, and illustrate the truth of Yeats's dictum (which derives from *Per Amica* itself) that "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry" (Yeats 1994, 8). Through a reading of *Per Amica* we get a sense indeed that what we have in the poem is a dialogue between two stages in Yeats's thinking. The earlier one, Hic, which can still occasionally tempt, and Ille, arrived at later and which, like Dante's vision, is more difficult to understand and more demanding. The terms which the poem serves up: self and anti-self, self and image are more fully, if not more satisfactorily, explicated in Yeats's prose.

In *Per Amica*, Harold Bloom writes, Yeats "attempts another fresh start for the imagination" (Bloom 1970, 198), as if this were Yeats's version of a *Vita Nuova*. The years between late 1915 and late 1917 were, he says, "the most important in Yeats's imaginative life" (1970, 198), and also in the political life of Ireland. Much happened between the writing of the poem and the second part of the prose text, *Anima Mundi*, not least the Easter Rising in 1916. "Ego Dominus Tuus" has been undervalued in the context of this imaginative fresh start, as has the power with which the poem dramatizes the dilemma of art as a response to what Yeats calls "the desolation of reality" ("Meru", Yeats 1997, 295). In this dramatization, the figure of Dante that Yeats creates for this new articulation of his imaginative life re-defines the ideal he had found in Castiglione for an age whose art has lost, among other things, *sprezzatura*: "the old nonchalance of the hand" (Yeats 1997, 162).

Yeats's view of Dante derives from one clear source, the *Life of Dante* by Giovanni Boccaccio.⁵ Boccaccio's work is not a biography in the modern sense, but rather a treatise, as the Italian title has it (*Trattatello in laude di Dante*), on Dante's poetry and an imaginative work in its own right. Boccaccio was eight when Dante died, so for Boccaccio he was already an historical figure, and his account relies on hearsay and legend, and acquaintance with some who knew the older writer. Much like Yeats's version of Dante, it is tendentious, and full of Boccaccio's own grievances and hobby horses, not least of which is his digression upon "the woe that is in marriage" when he notes that Dante did not bring his wife in exile with him, nor did she merit so much as a single poem within Dante's work (Boccaccio 2002, x). But as with Yeats and Boccaccio, so with Dante himself: as A.N. Wilson writes, "the number of facts which are indisputable about Dante is very few . . . We can not disentangle [Dante's] claims . . . from the emblematic uses he makes of them" (Boccaccio 2002, ix). Boccaccio's book, as Wilson puts it, is "a reminder that what interests us primarily about a great artist is not the gossipy detail of his private life but the spiritual essence of his work" (Boccaccio 2002, ix). The essence that Yeats distils from Dante drives both "Ego Dominus Tuus" and *Per Amica* toward an evocation of a mysterious encounter, but "gossipy detail" is also essential to the drama in that it is the dissatisfying matter of the messily lived life that drives Ille/Yeats's imaginative reaching. "Ego

⁵ Yeats's source was Giovanni Boccaccio, *Life of Dante (Vita di Dante)* (c. 1354-55), in Philip Henry Wicksteed's translation, *The Early Lives of Dante*. London: Chatto and Windus; Boston: Luce, 1907. See Yeats 1994, 295.

Dominus Tuus” is a poem not only of the dramatic interaction of life and art but of an art that would go beyond bookishness, and beyond its own theory of art as compensation for an unsatisfactory life, into the realm of an achieved, complete “image” (Yeats 1997, 163). The quandary the poem dramatizes will continue to inform Yeats’s subsequent art. In “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” we read that, “Those masterful images because complete / Grew in pure mind but out of what began?” (Yeats 1997, 356). This carries on from *Per Amica*, where Yeats muses on the origins of the dream life of his own images: “That which comes as complete, as minutely organized, as are those elaborate, brightly lighted buildings and sceneries appearing in a moment, as I lie between sleeping and waking, must come from above me and beyond me” (Yeats 1994, 4).

To get a sense of how Yeats began to systematize this dream life, we need to backtrack a little. In May 1912, according to Foster, at a séance in London, Yeats opened communication with a “Leo”, who introduced himself, in an Irish accent, as Yeats’s “appointed guide” (Foster 1997, 465). In subsequent contact, the voice was revealed to be Leo Africanus, the sixteenth century Spanish Arab, Moorish, explorer, geographer, diplomat and poet, and a supposed model for Shakespeare’s Othello. In the “Leo Africanus” manuscript we can see the seeds of Yeats’s theory of the Daemon. Yeats writes:

[You said] You were my opposite. By association with one another we should each become more complete [. . .] Then you said if I would write a letter to you [. . .] & and put into it all my difficulties and afterwards answer it in your name you would overshadow me in my turn & answer all my doubts. (Yeats 1982, 21)

Leo’s “answers” show Yeats’s evolving thought:

We are the unconscious as you say or as I prefer to say the animal spirits freed from the will, & moulded by the images of Spiritus Mundi. I know all & all but all you know, we have turned over the same books – I have shared in your joys & sorrows & yet it is only because I am your opposite, your antithesis because I am in all things furthest from your intellect & your will, that I alone am your Interlocutor. (Yeats 1982, 38)

Through all this Yeats maintained a scepticism, struggling with what Foster calls a “powerful emotional wish to believe” (Foster 1997, 466). As he says to “Leo”: “I am not convinced that in this letter there is one sentence that has come from beyond my own imagination” (Yeats 1982, 38; Ellmann 1948, 204). For Yeats the importance resides in the nourishment given to the creative impulse. Yeats, to borrow Richard Ellmann’s term, “somersaulted over the question of literal belief” because “Metaphor made irrelevant” the question (Ellmann 1948, 205). The clearest statement of Yeats’s ultimate position is in the introduction to *A Vision*:

Some will ask if I believe in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and moon. . . . To such a question I can but answer that if sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally, my reason has soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience [...] They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice. (Yeats 2015, 24–25)

But before *A Vision* came *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and Yeats's first title for the work, *An Alphabet*, reveals its status as a preparatory text for further elaboration. The Latin title this time comes from Virgil, Dante's guide in the *Commedia*, from Book 2 of the *Aeneid* (*A Tenedo tacitae per amica silentia lunae*). The Greek ships are sailing by night from Tenedos to attack Troy, "in battle formation, under the moon's quiet light, their silent ally" in Robert Fagles's translation (Virgil 2008, 83), or as Yeats renders it in a June 1917 letter to Lady Gregory, "through the friendly silences of the moon" (Yeats 1994, note 1, 293). In *Per Amica* itself he uses the Latin, in a context far removed from the Virgilian: "[I] have put myself to school where all things are seen: *A Tenedo Tacitae per Amica Silentia Lunae*" (Yeats 1994, 17).

The essay has five parts: a whimsical *Prologue*, addressed to "Maurice" (a code name for Iseult Gonne), "Ego Dominus Tuus" itself, two prose explications of the anti-self/Daemon entitled *Anima Hominis* and *Anima Mundi*, and an *Epilogue*, once again addressed to "Maurice". In his explication of the "anti-self" Yeats declares that "The other self, the anti-self or the antithetical self, as one may choose to name it, comes but to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality" (Yeats 1994, 8). "Ego Dominus Tuus" enlarges the claim: "art / Is but a vision of reality" and ends with a haunting evocation of the moment of encounter with this vision:

Ille: [...] I seek an image, not a book.
 Those men that in their writings are most wise,
 Own nothing but their blind, stupefied hearts.
 I call to the mysterious one who yet
 Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
 And look most like me, being indeed my double,
 And prove of all imaginable things
 The most unlike, being my anti-self,
 And, standing by these characters, disclose
 All that I seek; and whisper it as though
 He were afraid the birds, who cry aloud
 Their momentary cries before it is dawn,
 Would carry it away to blasphemous men.

(Yeats 1997, 163)

This extraordinary ending, in which *Ille* evokes in haunting cadences the yearned-for doppelgänger who would decipher *Ille*'s own mysteries, has one reaching for explicatory materials. Richard Ellmann sees the ending as different in quality to the earlier theory of compensation evoked by the examples of Dante and Keats, where "the opposite seems to be the artist's own creation", and in these lines Ellmann sees Yeats "lean[ing] towards a more supernatural hypothesis" (Ellmann 1948, 201). Harold Bloom criticizes this moment as too deliberately Yeatsian, a Yeats "written by a committee of his exegetes" (Bloom 1970, 197). We know that the figure evoked is, or has connection to, the Daemon and specifically the figure of Leo Africanus. And yet, as with the "Wealthy Man" of the poem discussed earlier, the figure is

not named, and the power of the lines, their grip on the imagination, derives in no small way from the emblematic quality derived from this namelessness. It is well to recall what Anthony Cronin has written: “Yeats’s belief in the effect of the phases of the moon on human affairs, . . . may be interesting as an illustration of how far the credulity of a great man can stretch, but it contributes nothing to the impact of ‘Ego Dominus Tuus’” (Cronin 1991, 184).

The details that biography and exegesis of sources summon do not account for the extraordinary power, the sonorous charge of the lines, the authority of the cadence, nor the credence lent to the poem’s visionary ends by the way the lines mimic rational discursiveness (“being indeed my double”, “being my anti-self”). Though we can almost concur with Laurence Lipking when he undercuts the sonority of this ending by remarking that “a shrewd reader of men, viewing these lines in 1917, might well have guessed that Yeats was looking for a wife” (quoted in Brown 1999, 245), we can also see that despite the shrewdness of the comment, how far short such an account comes. As Foster has shown, the poem does indeed have sources in the tangled emotional life Yeats was leading in 1914. Yeats had sketched out the poem “a few days before” a visit to Mirebeau, near Poitiers, in France:

[I] had schemed out a poem, praying that somewhere upon some seashore or upon some mountain I should meet face to face with the divine image of myself. I tried to understand what it would be if the heart of that image lived completely within my heart, and the poetry full of instinct full of tenderness for all life it would enable me to write. (Quoted in Foster 1997, 518–19)

Yeats entered the “scheme” into his occult notebook, where the relationship between the mysterious alter ego of “Ego Dominus Tuus” and another poem in *The Wild Swans at Coole*, “The Fisherman”, is also revealed, as well as the Dantesque elements to the search in that poem for the “man who does not exist / A man who is but a dream” (Yeats 1997, 149):

Subject of poem: Now I know what it is I have sought in the dark lanes of the wood, always thinking to find it at every new corner: what I have sought on the smooth sand of little bays of the sea, places delightful under the feet; what I have sought behind every new hillock as I climbed the shoulder of the mountain I have sought that only I can see the being that bears my likeness but is without weariness or trivial desires that looks upon far off things, bearing its burden in peace. (Quoted in Foster 1997, 519)

The alter ego summoned in both poems has burned off the distractions of the everyday and the burden of social personality (“the being that bears my likeness but is without weariness or trivial desires”). *Per Amica* begins with a description of the irritations *to* the self of social encounters and the irritation *with* the self that can be turned by momentary mood, swayed by sympathies and antipathies, without the countervailing force of an ultimate kernel of forceful selfhood. The “unpersuadable justice” of “Ego Dominus Tuus”, as in “The Fisherman”, reveals itself here as an escape from the pitfalls of the social personality, but in neither poem is it presented as achieved; characteristically, it remains a goal. Though art arises out of the mundane, or is, as “Ego Dominus Tuus” and *Per Amica* maintain, a reaction to the mundane, it is not reducible back into those terms, neither through biography nor exegesis. It has altered the very terms out of which it has grown.

In the *Hodos Chameliontos* section of *Autobiographies*, Yeats chooses lines from “Ego Dominus Tuus” as among those which pleased him most:

And as I look backward upon my own writing, I take pleasure alone in those verses where it seems to me I have found something hard and cold, some articulation of the Image which is the opposite of all that I am in my daily life, and all that my country is; yet man or nation can no more make this Mask or Image than the seed can be made by the soil into which it is cast. (Yeats 1999, 218)

The poem’s success for Yeats is founded on its origin in what he calls the “age-long memoried self” (Yeats 1999, 216) and, at the same time, the drama the poem enacts does not neglect an origin in personal crisis, either. It is crisis that drives the desire for transformation of the “bundle of accident and incoherence” (Yeats 1994, 204) of quotidian experience: “genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind” (Yeats 1999, 217). Castiglione and Dante, and in a wider sense the art of Italy, provided Yeats with the ambition for an art of “earned contemplation” and “excitement”, an art in which the artist is “mirrored in all the suffering of desire” and in which, finally, “we gaze not at a work of art, but at the re-creation of the man through that art” (Yeats 1999, 217).

In his remarks on *The Book of the Courtier*, Yeats returns most often to the last image of the work, when the gathering, after a long night of talk, greet the dawn:

The windows having then been opened on that side of the palace which looks towards the lofty crest of Mount Catria, they saw that a beautiful dawn of rosy hue was already born in the east, and that all the stars had vanished save Venus, sweet mistress of the sky, who holds the bonds of night and day; from which there seemed to breathe a gentle wind that filled the air with crisp coolness and began to waken sweet choruses of joyous birds. (Castiglione 1902, 309)

This dawn informs the dawn at the end of “Ego Dominus Tuus”, and the dawn that closes “The Fisherman”, a poem that arises once more out of scorn for a philistine audience, out of the site and sight of “great Art beaten down” (Yeats 1997, 148), an image that combines the courtly with the poetic ideal in a seeming oxymoron that is Yeats’s finest formulation of *sprezzatura*:

And cried, “Before I am old
I shall have written him one
Poem maybe as cold
And passionate as the dawn.”
(Yeats 1997, 149)

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The Presence of Swift in Slovene Translation and Commentary

ABSTRACT

Although the Slovene milieu has yet to afford Swift's works a multi-volume critical translation of the kind available in other European languages, this paper argues that Slovene representations of Swift's writings illuminate crucial aspects of his meaning. This can be seen especially in Mladen Dolar's afterword to a new unabridged translation of *Gulliver's Travels*, in which he approaches Swift through a versatile and profoundly contemporary – yet still accessible – conceptual vocabulary, and in the first Slovene translation of Swift's *Modest Proposal*, which retains and transmits the original's power as a political act. The essay surveys the enduring international presence of Swift in translation and translation studies, outlines aspects of translation theory that prove relevant to its own inquiry, and proceeds to consider the Slovene contribution to Swift's legacy.

Keywords: Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, translation, Mladen Dolar, parallax, voice, *A Modest Proposal*, Tina Mahkota, *Mladina*

Prisotnost Swifta v slovenskem prevodu in spremni besedi

IZVLEČEK

Čeprav v slovenskem prostoru Swiftova dela še ne obstajajo v obliki obsežnih kritičnih prevodov, kot jih poznamo v drugih evropskih jezikih, članek zagovarja tezo, da slovenske reprezentacije Swiftovega pisanja osvetljujejo ključne vidike njegovega pomena. To je razvidno tudi iz spremne besede Mladena Dolarja k novemu slovenskemu prevodu celotnih Gulliverjevih potovanj, ki k Swiftu pristopi z uporabo večnamenskega in izjemno sodobnega, a še vedno dostopnega, konceptualnega besedišča. Prav tako kot dober primer služi prvi slovenski prevod Swiftovega esaja Skromen predlog, leta 2013 objavljen v slovenskem političnem tedniku Mladina, ki uspešno ohrani in bralstvu posreduje moč izvirnika kot političnega dejanja. Prispevek ponudi pregled dolge in vztrajne mednarodne prisotnosti Swifta v prevodu in prevodoslovju, predstavi relevantne vidike prevodoslovne teorije in obravnava slovenski prispevek k Swiftovi dediščini.

Ključne besede: Jonathan Swift, Gulliverjeva potovanja, prevod, Mladen Dolar, paralaksa, glas, Skromen predlog, Tina Mahkota, Mladina

1 Introduction

My first concern here will be to consider the enduring international presence of Swift in both translation and translation studies. I will then address Swift's place within Slovene translation culture. Although the Slovene milieu has yet to afford Swift's works a multi-volume critical translation of the kind scholars have supplied in other European languages, I will argue that Slovene representations illuminate crucial aspects of Swift's meaning. An essay on *Gulliver's Travels* by the philosopher Mladen Dolar that accompanies a new unabridged translation of this work enables a reader to comprehend Swift's fiction in terms of parallax. Dolar's versatile theory of voice, while not overtly considering Swift, opens a tantalizing perspective on the longstanding problem of Swift's bearing, as author, on the personae he assumes. The publication of *A Modest Proposal* in the Slovene political journal *Mladina*, meanwhile, precisely captures the spirit of the Swiftian text as an act, indeed as a deeply political intervention. Together, I will suggest, these Slovene contributions reaffirm why Swift remains a presence in contemporary culture.

2 Swift's International Presence in Translation and Translation Studies

Jonathan Swift's "Irishness" is a matter of longstanding academic discussion. It was a sore point, for much of his life, for Swift himself. Yet, notwithstanding his complex sense of national identity, and his not uncomplicated meaning within Irish culture, he remains one of the best known of all writers born in and firmly associated with his country of birth. In Ireland, his image has haunted banknotes, souvenirs, and tourist information of all kinds; one mass-produced poster in particular, which depicts an array of (exclusively male) Irish writers – set together like a panel of Interpol's most wanted – seems to turn up everywhere.¹ Those of a certain age with family in Dublin will remember a "life-size" (that is, fifty-foot) inflatable Gulliver floating down the Liffey during the city's millennial celebrations in 1988. However, Swift's writings and associated iconography have long roamed and resided beyond his native land, in Europe and beyond.

Even a cursory survey of Swift's continuing international presence in translation and commentary tells us that he remains a significant, vital and relevant figure within "world literature". On the whole, studies of Swift in adaptation and translation reflect a synthesis (although at times a conflict) of two common methodologies. This can be seen in Herman J. Real's extremely interesting anthology of considerations of Swift's reception in Europe (Real 2013). The essays in this important volume continue work of the kind begun by L.H.C. Thomas's sortie into the field of Swift's presence in nineteenth-century German literature (Thomas 1967). They reflect a mode of engagement in "translation criticism" typical of what the theorist Antoine Berman called the "Tel Avivian" or socio-critical school: the appraisal of translations and adaptations that attunes itself to the cultural "norms" translators follow and the cultural discourses in which they participate (Berman 2009, 39–43).

¹ Having grown up with this poster on my bedroom wall, I encountered it in bars and bookshops across Europe and, finally, hanging in the classroom where I do most of my teaching in Ljubljana. It was printed by "Real Ireland Design" in the 1980s and '90s. Mahony 1995 is a reliable guide to such manifestations; Ferguson 1962 provides the classic commentary on Swift's relationship with the Irish historical context.

Such commentary reflects to a lesser extent the traditional rigorist preoccupation with exactitude and accuracy that characterizes “philological” scholars of translation, as Katherine Reiß defined that older and historically more prevalent school of thought (Reiß and Vermeer 2014, 124–25). Reiß’s conception of “philological” translation scholarship bears comparison with a school of translation criticism that Berman defines as “*engagé*”. *Engagé* analyses, as he calls them, are all about denunciation; “denouncing,” moreover, “with precision”. They involve the “meticulous tracking of the incoherencies, poor systematicity, and biases of the translators” (Berman, 2009, 32–33). He insists that socio-critical studies, however, should by no means disregard this methodology. The danger with the socio-critical approach, for Berman, lies with a temptation to condone whatever the target culture accepts as translation, and as such to license bowdlerized versions of the source text. Berman warns that translations can all too easily sacrifice challenging content to “the literary norms of the receptor culture” (2009, 43). An example of the socio-critical trend in scholarship that Berman would surely have admired would be Elisa Fortunato’s account of how Italian translations of Swift reflected the pressures of Fascist authoritarianism. Equally, Olga Borovaia, beginning a very different study, epitomized socio-critical priorities in describing how “Aleksander Ben Ghiat’s translation of *Gulliver’s Travels* is an important literary document as well as a valuable resource for the student of Sephardic social and intellectual history” (Borovaia 2001, 149). Such work places the stress on the position, or as Berman would have it, the “hermeneutical horizon” of the translator (Berman 2009, 63).

More traditional, “philologically” and bibliographically oriented studies still perform their necessary task, although in practice the methodologies interact and often meld. Fortunato grounds her appraisal of Fascist treatments of Swift, for instance, on textual details in his original texts that the regime’s censors doctored. José Luis Chamosa González gives an invaluable round-up of Spanish translations and editions of Swift, while admitting that his survey is only a first approach upon a dense and largely uncharted terrain (Chamosa González 2007) – evidence of how the diversity and robustness of target culture norms, the province of the socio-critical scholar, confound the more clinical philologist. Other papers in the volume to which Chamosa González contributed (Navarro and Hornero 2007) accordingly pursue more openly socio-critical approaches, but a basic awareness of what exactly has been done with the source text remains essential.² Further afield, it becomes clear that a similar philological drive frames and regulates Xiao Yang’s chronicling of Chinese translations of the *Travels* (Yang 2021), while a concern for the target culture’s norms informs the entire discussion. I hope to strike a similar balance between the two perspectives in the remarks I offer here on Swift’s presence in Slovene translation and commentary.³

Some professional areas, nevertheless, leave little space for compromise. The preparation of reliable scholarly translations remains the purlieu of the philological specialist, especially when one bears in mind Sir Harold Williams’ stark warning, in his 1952 Sanders Lectures, on the

² The affinities of *Gulliver* and *Quixote* made Spain especially ready to read, adapt and occasionally rewrite Swift as early devotees did Cervantes; reciprocally, Swift’s willingness to pun in Spanish, often obscenely (as with the floating island of *Laputa*, *la puta* being “the whore”), adds particular pungency to the relationship.

³ In Stubbs 2023 and 2024 I offer further perspective on these broad schools of translation theory in relation to Slovene treatments of Shakespeare and Donne, respectively.

onerous labours awaiting any diligent editor of *Gulliver's Travels*: establishing a stable text is a notorious challenge (Williams 2013).⁴ The continuing emergence of such critical editions of a writer's oeuvre remains a steady indicator of that author's presence within a literary culture; while multi-volume editions of a foreign-language author – ancient, medieval or modern – reflect and bestow a still more rarefied status. Some authors, naturally, place a greater demand on resources than others, and some target language cultures have more reserves to bestow.

Swift has respectable form when it comes to multi-volume critical translations. There are lovingly produced compendiums in both French and German, for example (Swift 1965 and 1967), yet both are selective. To my knowledge, there is no complete translation of all Swift's published works (let alone his letters, which fill several volumes). It might seem absurd to expect a Slovene-language equivalent to the editions produced by French and German Swiftians, as Slovenia is one of Europe's smaller countries, by land mass and population. Closer consideration of the field proves, however, that such assumptions are misplaced if not condescending. Substantial Slovene-speaking populations exist in neighbouring countries, with university departments of Slovene studies in Trieste (or Trst) and other close-lying cities. Slovenia has a thriving translation culture – Martina Ožbot even speaks of a “translation-oriented culture” (Ožbot 2021, 97–114) – with a record of remarkable translators who have single-handedly produced versions of several huge works or indeed entire corpuses. Marjan Strojan, the critically acclaimed translator of *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales* and *Paradise Lost*, among a great range of other texts, is perhaps the exemplar in the field of Slovene-language renditions of English-language classics.

The university publisher in Ljubljana may never issue a large-scale edition of Swift in Slovene with exhaustive annotations. Slovene-language engagement with his writing nevertheless indicates that Swift's authorial presence, and his historical standing, remain important, and that his texts still have the power to move, entertain and chasten. Let us consider his translator Tina Mahkota's answer to the question “Why Swift Now?”, in a biographical headnote to her version of *A Modest Proposal*:

The Anglo-Irish writer, raconteur, political pamphleteer and polemicist Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), who with *Gulliver's Travels* assumed a permanent place in the western literary canon, is regarded as one of the great masters of English prose style and one of the most prolific and vehement satirists of human stupidity and arrogance. *A Tale of a Tub*, *The Battle of the Books*, *A Modest Proposal*, *A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, *Upon Falling Asleep in Church*, *The Drapier's Letters* and *Directions to Servants*, to name only a few titles, are superlative satires, which indisputably rank among the masterpieces of eighteenth-century prose. In these he launched unflinching and on many occasions rawly defamatory attacks on his political enemies and other personages, and scourged common human failings. Despite acquiring the reputation of a curmudgeonly and

⁴ See also Williams' introduction to Swift 1939–74, XI, ix–xxviii. Herbert Davis supports Williams' conclusions in his textual notes to the same volume, echoing a remark of Swift's on his own text: “Gulliver vexeth me more than any” (1939–74, XI. 302).

insensitive cynic, misanthrope and misogynist, he did not lack humour or light-heartedness. (Mahkota 2013, 49)⁵

Mahkota's translation appeared in one of Slovenia's principal political and cultural magazines, *Mladina*: she accordingly informed readers unfamiliar with Swift of his historical significance. "Why Swift Now?" was nevertheless a question to be answered by Swift's text, and Mahkota's handling of it.

The works Mahkota lists above would furnish a selection of the sort compiled by Swift's French and German translators. Mladen Dolar, in his afterword to a new translation of the *Travels*, recommends much the same works (for the most part still unavailable in Slovene). While speaking of Swift's overall achievement in similar terms to Mahkota, he is able to devote greater space to the Augustan intellectual context and, for example, Swift's relationship with the genre of travel writing his masterpiece parodied. Dolar also points out that Swift lived long enough to see his works receive the multi-volume treatment.

His book [*Gulliver's Travels*] enjoyed instant success. The first edition [1726] sold out in a matter of days, reprints followed in subsequent weeks and by the end of the year some 20,000 copies of the work existed (to give some context, London at that time was home to around a million inhabitants); many more appeared in the years that followed. The work became one of English literature's greatest best-sellers (outdoing close competition from *Robinson Crusoe* – published in 1719 and written by a rival Swift despised, [Daniel] Defoe): indeed, one of all literature's great best-sellers. The second edition, corrected and revised, was published in Dublin in 1735, this time as the third volume of Swift's collected works. (Dolar 2020, 318)

These recent Slovene commentators thus acknowledge Swift's stature and international appeal and, in the absence of a larger critical translation of his work, do him considerable justice. The next section will approach Slovene treatments of Swift's best-known best-seller, and address more particularly Mladen Dolar's stimulating consideration of it in terms of "parallax".

To conclude the present section, and to return to the slightly vexed symbiosis of "socio-critical" and *engagé* translation studies, Swift himself might be given the final word on whether the norms of the source or target culture should carry precedence. It was a question on which he had distinct views. His forthright response to one of the first translators of the *Travels*, Pierre-François Guyot Desfontaines, would appear to reject equally the claims of both philological and socio-critical approaches. Desfontaines, while excited by Swift's sales, found much to tailor and redact in the text itself. Here is Irvin Ehrenpreis' summation of the translator's crimes:

In the first edition of his translation [1727], [Desfontaines] had devoted a section of the preface to the coarseness and obscurity of the original book; and in the body of his version he ruthlessly abridged, enlarged, and distorted Swift's narrative in order to fit it to what he regarded as the French taste. (Ehrenpreis 1983, 521)

⁵ Translations from Slovene are mine unless otherwise stated.

It was not long before a copy of the Parisian translation reached Swift's hands. Later, on learning that Swift planned a journey to Paris, where he had friends and admirers, Desfontaines was embarrassed by the prospect of a meeting. Corresponding with Desfontaines beforehand, Swift declined the translator's invitation to brush off the changes he had made as side effects of superficial cultural differences. Swift's French was equal to the task of transmitting his acidity:

You have not feared to present the public with the translation of a work which, you aver, is full of pranks, nonsense and infantilism [*puérilités*: Swift is citing the preface to Desfontaines's translation], etc. Here we agree that the taste of nations is not always the same. But we are brought to the belief that *good* taste is the same wherever there are people of spirit, judgement and discernment. As such, if the books of *Sieur Gulliver* are deemed fit only for the British Isles, this traveller will pass for a very poor scribbler. The same vices, the same follies reign everywhere, or in all the civilized countries of Europe at least, and the author who writes only for one town, one province, one kingdom, or even one century, has so little claim to be translated that he does not deserve even to be read. (Swift 1965–72, III, 217; my translation)⁶

Since Swift posits that vices are universal, so is the moral law that governs them; so too is the standard of good taste which determines whether resources of wit have succeeded in exposing the vices in their breach of moral law. Swift is outraged much less on behalf of his own text than of principles he sees as universal, in particular the capacity of literary meaning to transcend cultural settings and the ability of people of sense and taste to discern that meaning. He is accusing his translator, in short, of violating essential codes of practice. Swift's outlook and vocabulary are assuredly High Augustan, yet his position is also pragmatic. He has accepted unequivocally that nations will differ in tastes and customs, and, as such, that his fiction may seem strange or invite censure beyond the "British" Isles. More than implicitly, he appears to accept, too, that his writing will have to adapt in manner and dress in order to gain an audience overseas. His Master Gulliver will need to become "*Sieur Gulliver*". Up to this point, the socio-critical school might claim Swift as one of their own. His willingness to compromise makes the point on which he insists all the more trenchant, however. Swift demands that his translator honour his text sufficiently in letter and spirit for it to bear scrutiny under the criteria of *good taste*, which he sees as unifying nations. His vision of translation is one that puts faith in the ability of what he frames as intelligent readers, regardless of their background, to come to terms with, and perhaps transcend, issues of cultural difference. In this manner, it might be said that Swift engages with and brings together the approaches of the "socio-critical" and *engagé* schools of translation studies.

3 *Gulliver's Travels* in Slovenia: Adaptations, Translations and a "Parallax" View

In places, the Slovene tradition of translation and commentary inevitably disappoints the requirements Swift made of Desfontaines and the Frenchman's successors. In others,

⁶ As the endnotes to more recent studies such as Just 2002 bear witness, Goulding 1924 remains the standard work on Swift's French encounters: on Swift's clash with Desfontaines, see 60–71. In the end, Swift never made his projected journey to Paris.

especially in work of the last ten or twelve years, Slovene representations of Swift's writing arguably exceed his demands.

It is commonplace to lament the abridgement of the *Travels*, and children's editions traditionally contain only truncated versions of books I and II of the original, the voyages to Lilliput and Brobdingnag. Yet one popular post-war Slovene version for children, a translation by Jože Zupančič (1968) of a Serbian retelling by Slobodan Lazić, with colour illustrations by Giorgio Scarato, contains compressed accounts of all four original books. Zupančič did not, admittedly, find space for Gulliver's necromantic encounters in Book III, but he evidently felt that his young readers were equal to learning about the Yahoos and also hearing Gulliver confess his difficulty readjusting to life in England.

Living in the Houyhnhnms' Land altered me so much that I needed a long time before I could again accustom myself to people, among whom I discovered many Yahoos, and also many good and noble Houyhnhnms.

This children's book ends with Gulliver declaring, "My main intention has been to teach, not entertain you" (Swift 1968, fol.17^v); it thus preserves Gulliver's original valediction to the reader at the beginning of Book IV, chapter XII ("my principal design was to inform, not to amuse thee" [Swift 2005, 272]).

An earlier adaptation, prepared by Pavle Flerè "za slovensko mladino" – for the young people of Slovenia – performed the standard curtailments. The 1926 volume has real charm for its wood-cut illustrations and Flerè's transparently paternal clarifications. Lilliput becomes "Dežela Pedenmožičkov" (Land of the Inch-high-manlings) and Brobdingnag "Dežela Goljatov" (the Land of the Goliaths). Yet the story ends, as with most abridgements of the *Travels*, with a lie.

I live a peaceful life within my family circle, who all wept from joy when they saw me alive and well. When we had greeted one another and dried our tears of joy, I had to make a sacred promise to my wife that I would stay with them and never go again – never abroad again.

And I have kept my word to this day. (Swift 1927, 203)

Perhaps Flerè counted on some readers interpreting "this day" ("danes") intuitively and proactively: that is, as a day which heralded the voyages of the still untranslated second half of *Gulliver's Travels*.

In any case, a full Slovene version of the *Travels* was in print, and ready to divert if not entirely satisfy such readers, before Zupančič's later children's version appeared. Barbara Simoniti established that by 1991 seventeen adaptations of the *Travels* for children existed in Slovene, dating back to the nineteenth century. Among them was an abridged retelling by Izidor Cankar, who had also produced the first full translation of the work (Swift 1951). For Simoniti, Cankar's subsequent willingness to tailor Swift's text (in Swift 1953), in order to sustain the Slovene tradition's image of Gulliver as "a fairy tale hero", reveals a great deal about his approach as literary translator. Her study of Cankar's full translation thus pays close attention to what she

terms his stylistic “miseffects” (Simoniti 1991, 327). She notes that his overall approach is “painfully old-fashioned” and led to “intolerable mistakes” – “adaptations of names and titles, changes of punctuation, even changes in the formation of paragraphs”. Simoniti’s own approach suggests alignment with Reiß’s philological school of translation scholarship. She observes that Cankar was working from a faulty English text and, where his solutions are accurate as well as innovative, she suspects him of relying on a German crib (1991, 345).⁷

A new complete treatment of the work by Andrej E. Skubic (Swift 2020) has sought to redress the weakness Simoniti identified. Skubic had previously translated works as diverse as Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* and Norman Davies’s *Europe: A History*, and on that basis would seem ideally qualified to cope both with Gulliver’s overtly factual narrative register and the teasing sub-tones that perforate it.

A further article would be called for to explore the nuances of this new treatment, alongside that of Izidor Cankar, in sufficient detail, and to set their efforts concisely in the wider European tradition of translation of the *Travels*. I should defer that task to a “native” Slovene scholar of translation, who would be more qualified than I am to extend Simoniti’s analysis to Skubic’s achievement: at present, to the best of my knowledge, there is no such study on which I can report. For now, as such, my concern is with the basic completeness of the Slovene text currently available. With respect to Skubic’s translation, a checklist of contentious passages regularly redacted or distorted in early editions, and bowdlerized translations, may be duly ticked off. Skubic reproduces the notorious fourth voyage in its sometimes distressing entirety. “Scandalous” passages, such as the one in which Gulliver confesses his horror (and possibly Swift’s, too) at the Brobdingnagian gentlewomen who undress before him and pet him in Book II, chapter 5, are unflinchingly rendered (Swift 2020, 125–26). Skubic allows Swift, meanwhile, the barbs against Whig ministers, notably Walpole, which his early publishers deleted. Those libels will be invisible to most contemporary readers, but there is always a delayed justice to savour in their inclusion. Equally, Skubic ensures that no attentive reader should miss the strange lurches of attitude, and the jolts from lucidity to dim-wittedness (and, at a few moments, outright monstrosity) that characterize – and complicate – Gulliver. He preserves the Gulliver who is at one moment capable of shrewdly perceiving the avarice and stark moral pragmatism of his Brobdingnagian captor (“who apprehended that I could not live a month”, Book II, chapter 3), and, in the next, is fatuously disdainful about the astronomical fortune in gold the Queen of Brobdingnag pays for his release. Skubic as such joins a tradition that respects what must be the cardinal imperative for any translator of Swift, namely Swift’s own professed desire, as set out to Desfontaines, that his book expose the universal “follies and vices” for people of discernment beyond the “British Isles”. Accordingly, Skubic’s treatment preserves the *Travels*’ pranks and *puérilités* as well as the work’s not infrequent moments of perspicuity, humaneness and something close to grandeur.

No explanatory notes accompany the translation, which is unfortunate. An afterword to the translation by the Slovene philosopher, Mladen Dolar, nevertheless draws the reader’s attention to the narrative games in which Swift involves his reader. This essay is arguably

⁷ I quote from Simoniti’s English introduction and summary.

of still greater interest to Swift scholars than Skubic's adept translation. We are very far, in this afterword (entitled "Parallax") from an involvement with Gulliver as a hero of fairy tale; indeed, Dolar is incredulous that the book was ever presented to children (Dolar 2020, 332). He pays particular attention to Gulliver's changing viewpoint. That ongoing shift of perspective is for Dolar the chief formal mechanism of Swift's fiction. Dolar describes and explains it as a device offering instances of "parallax", a term heard often in contemporary theoretical exchanges, particularly in the writings of Dolar's colleague, Slavoj Žižek. A parallax is an object's seeming shift in location when it is in fact the observer whose position has changed. The simplest demonstration is given by a raised thumb, viewed first with one eye closed, and then the other. Below, Dolar comments on the most famous discrepancy in perspective in *Gulliver's Travels*, that of the little Lilliputians and the giant Brobdingnagians:

Each of those journeys offers a particular parallax, for example a simple shift in perspective, which renders foreign [*potuji*] all that is taken by default and assumed to be self-evident and allows us to see our existence in a radically different light. In a parallaxic shift we see things from two perspectives, which are in themselves irreconcilable:⁸ there can be no synthesis or compromise between them and we cannot adopt the position that either, or a combination of both, is true – the sting of truth lies in the parallax itself. (2020, 324)

Parallax provides Dolar with an elegant means of gathering together the sharp transitions and contrasts with which Gulliver's journeys present the reader. The concept also allows him to discriminate precisely between the kinds of transition Swift's grand performance involves. "The parallaxes offered by the third and fourth books", Dolar continues, "are decidedly more demanding and unusual; indeed, all serious readers and interpreters agree that the essence of Swift's message is to be found in the fourth book". As one ventures beyond the earlier sections of the work, Dolar argues, the parallaxes encountered throw one between modes of thought rather than differences in scale.

The first two parts [of the *Travels*] have offered a shift in perspective that operates like the Brechtian alienation effect [*potujitveni učinek: verfremdungseffekt*] – that which is self-evident, will seem unusual and foreign to us, contrary to received [*nasproti tradiranim*] ways and patterns of thinking. The parallax at work in the third book [in which Gulliver is stranded in Laputa, a land where impractical science dominates the kingdom's thinking and its madcap intellectual and political culture] goes in the opposite direction, not underpinning the alienation effect with which modern science has profoundly shaken our perception of the world, but as a quite contradictory defence of common sense, the acceptance of obvious, healthy reason and common experience, everything that science has undermined. Here the shaking of old certainties becomes ambiguous, and the point seems to be this: we know everything that we need to, and need not search elsewhere. In contradiction to his century, Swift has no faith at all in progress. (Dolar 2020, 328)

⁸ Rendering Dolar's exact sense idiomatically is a challenge here, since a literal translation of "v paralaktnem zamiku vidimo stvari v dveh perspektivah" would be "in a parallaxic shift we see things in two perspectives". The nuance seems significant, and so I note it here.

Dolar then applies the parallax metaphor to the radical inversion of values seen in Gulliver's fourth book. The nobler elements of humanity are (apparently, at least) to be found in the equine Houhnhnynms and its degraded, bestial aspects in the Houhnhnynms' biologically human slaves, the Yahoos: "here there is a basic parallax between human and animals, a radical exchange of perspective" (2020, 329).

Dolar's afterword absorbs the *Travels* into a critical and philosophical lexis that is both versatile and profoundly contemporary. Nevertheless, he does not pursue one area on which one might have expected him to comment further: namely the problem of Gulliver's mutability and unreliability as a narrator. Instead, towards the end of his essay Dolar asks:

But where amid all these parallaxes is Swift, what is his voice, where does he lead us, what does he defend? Does his voice blend with Gulliver, the first-person narrator? Is Gulliver his alter ego? By no means. Gulliver is above all, as his name says, *gullible*, and in his common-sensical naivety does not understand what happens to him (although the last part of his name, *ver*, hints at *veracity*, love of truth and trustworthiness [...]). That we always see more than the narrator, who often does not realise the implications of what he says, is part of Swift's narratorial mastery. (Dolar 2020, 332)

The critical consensus is that there is somewhat more to the matter than that. Gulliver is, as Herbert Davis put it long ago, a "bundle of inconsistencies" (Swift 1939–74, XI, xlvi). As commentators such as Allan Bloom and Hugh Kenner observed, Gulliver is a flickering hologram, one of literature's most unreliable narrative voices.⁹ Dolar's point about the echoes of *gullibility* and *veracity* in *Gulliver's Travels* is indisputable, yet another, simpler pun is also present in that name, one reflecting Swift's love of more child-like wordplay. Gulliver is certainly the butt, the gull of countless jokes; however, it is also Gulliver who gulls, who constantly deceives, who is *Gull-ever*. At moments he is Swift's marionette, as when he explains European civilization to the king of Brobdingnag or his Houyhnhnm master; at others, when he spots sharp dealing or comments on specimens of villainy, and especially when he denounces the British colonial enterprise as mere piracy in the final chapter of Book IV, he is manifestly Swift's alter ego, an acute observer of humanity. In those last pages, with their denunciation of "the proud", the persona is close to collapsing altogether. Swift's irony shimmers on and off; such ripples and breaches in the vocal performance mean that as readers of the *Travels* we undergo countless micro-parallaxes, as it were, not only from voyage to voyage, but often several times within the space of a single page.

Dolar has written extensively in a theoretical vein on the question of vocal mutability. His monograph (in English) *A Voice and Nothing More* (Dolar 2006) stands as a paradigmatic work on "the voice" as a problem of philosophy. While the book does not comment explicitly on Swift, the theory it develops has resounding implications for the difficulties he presents. "Voice" for Dolar is a purely phonic aspect of utterance that is entirely separable from *logos* or meaning:

⁹ For a brief bibliographical summary of this critical tradition, see Stubbs 2017, 658.

It is, rather, something like the vanishing mediator (to use the term made famous by Frederic Jameson for a different purpose) – it makes the utterance possible, but it disappears in it, it goes up in smoke in the meaning being produced. (Dolar 2006, 15)

Such remarks are rich in implication for Swift's often enigmatic status with respect to Gulliver and many of his other personae. His vanishing act – his constant anonymity, along with the elaborate and sometimes theatrical self-concealment that accompanied his major publications – is a precondition of the "utterance" his text conveys.

Dolar's chapter on "the Metaphysics of the Voice" is especially relevant to Swift's case. There Dolar postulates a voice that underlies the voice we hear, as the terrifying authority of God is heard through the sound of the Judaic shofar, a horn blown at dawn during Elul and four long times when Yom Kippur comes to a close. By means of Lacan's conception of vocalization as a signifier's *passage à l'acte*, which allows the speaker to avoid confronting unconscious anguish by re-enacting traumatic experience in symbolic form, Dolar argues that such a voice, one that carries the force of moral law, "is what endows the letter with authority, making it not just a signifier, but an act" (Dolar 2006, 54–55). Applying this very complex mesh of thought to the Swiftian voice is naturally to take a great liberty with Dolar's intended meaning. Yet Dolar would seem to invite such interpretations. The trope of the shofar, firstly, encapsulates both Swift's obsession with mystery and his deep (at times, grandiose) sense of the dignity of his satirical vocation – as expressed, for example, in the letter to Desfontaines discussed earlier. Turning Dolar's theory to Swift furthermore deepens the sense so many of Swift's writings convey of being acts, events, even stunts, in which Swift participated as a silent vocalist or invisible actor. In the Lacanian terms Dolar invokes, Swift's text required him to absent or negate himself, to re-enact some formative torment that consigned him to invisibility or symbolic non-existence: his writing, in those terms, is the sign that is in itself a performance of this *passage à l'acte*. The outcome was a further act – communal, public, ethical and political as well as literary. The nature of that act may of course be understood as a deliberated Austinian speech act; Swift's publishing tactics also make sense in behaviourist terms, indeed as very sound responses to the great legal and bodily risks that satire in his time incurred. Yet those theories do not account for the performative nature of Swift's self-silencing, or the anonymity he invariably made use of, both within his text and in the great shows of stealth that accompanied publication – often with the equivalent of a trumpet blast if not the shofar itself. The Lacanian angle offers something more when Dolar's metaphysics of voice is mapped on to Swift's text. From the elaborate stage management that went into publishing the *Travels*, to the sustained guerrilla campaign Swift waged against Walpole's government in the guise of "the Drapier", to the unanswerable interjection made by the *Modest Proposal*, Swift's major publications were deeds, but with an intentionality and manifestation more complex (and more tortured) than the Austinian or behaviourist models adequately describe. The Swiftian performance has an ethical scope and directedness, even in its *puerilités*, that Dolar's theory, if applied to it, restores with singular acuity. His metaphysics of voice captures Swift's paradoxically exhibitionistic, yet still personally and artistically sacred strategy of self-effacement.

This is to pursue a path of conjecture. The conceptual focus of Dolar's afterword to the *Travels* remains parallax, which has provided a rich source of relativistic reflection since Joyce adopted

it as one of his astronomical motifs in *Ulysses* (Gilbert 1955, 33, 200–1, 377). The cultural discourses that have employed the term emphasize the mutual indeterminacy of observer and observed, and the non-definitive status of any perspective. Slavoj Žižek speaks, for example, of the “Kantian parallax” derived from the impossibility of reconciling “phenomenal” and “noumenal” levels of perception (Žižek 2006, 21–22). Such theory is arguably somewhat selective in its uses of parallax. In its original astronomical context, the phenomenon provides the standard basis for measuring the distance of a star from the Earth (Moché 2009, 66–67). As a term of science, it offers a means of reaching fairly stable, rather than uncertain, observations. Yet the overall point Dolar uses parallax to make is clear: reading the *Travels* involves radical shifts in viewpoint – with respect to the reader, Gulliver, his varying location and the very different customs and attitudes he encounters. Above all, Swift’s intellectual relevance is never in doubt, in Dolar’s account.

Parallax is an infectious idea. Considering that Dolar’s essay accompanies a translation, some might wonder whether translation itself is parallaxic. At an intuitive level, the shift of perspective implied in the transition from source to translated text, indeed even in the conceptual and cultural distance that separates a single pair of cognates, surely involves a parallax of a sort, as may the further changes of viewpoint that emerge in successive translations. The consciousness of one translator of another implies a parallaxic relationship, between twin observers of a single entity. There is possibly a danger, nevertheless, of seeing parallaxes everywhere, which would dilute the precision and thus the value of this versatile term. It is worth bearing in mind the distinct and not altogether compatible notion of shift or transport ascribed to the highly diverse structures and practices defined as translation since antiquity. *Translatio* (as metaphor) historically involves the conjoining of two entities through a transfer of qualities, rather than the singular object of a parallax;¹⁰ the practice of translation, for which the word was in time selectively adopted, accordingly does more than offer a shift in perspective on the text with which it begins. In translation, the text is said to be *carried* “over or across” (*trans* + *latus*, past participle of *ferre*) – into another region of linguistic or cultural space. The same movement is inherent in the still more forceful term *traductio* (*trans* + *duco* “to haul or draw across or over”).¹¹ Translation is, as it were, more hands-on labour than observation: and one cannot experience parallax with respect to something one has rendered composite, and which one is carrying or dragging. That principle must apply both to the act of translating and any analysis of a given translation. Overlaying parallax onto the longstanding conceptual metaphor that inheres to translation is, as such, perhaps less helpful than it might at first appear. If we spoke of parallax in translation, then strictly we would cease to speak of translation.

4 Swift’s *Modest Proposal* in Slovene

Dolar’s theories of parallax and voice will remain relevant in this closing section, in which I turn to Swift’s second best known work. The first Slovene translation of *A Modest Proposal*

¹⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 8.6.4–18 and the *Ad Herennium*, 4.34.45 are standard reference points.

¹¹ Berman (2009, 7–11) is illuminating on the intersecting provenances of this terminology (*translatio* initially denoted poetic “adaptation” or *imitatio*, such as Virgil’s treatment of Theocritus, Hesiod and Homer). He points out, moreover, that the transfer inherent in translation/*traduction* is more complex than that summarized above, since it goes “in two directions that are to a certain extent opposed” (2009, 7).

(“Skromni Predlog” in Slovene) preserved the social and political power of the original, as it too was published in the midst of a national emergency. Swift’s text famously suggested that Ireland might eliminate poverty and over-population by farming the infants of Catholic peasants as a delicacy for the tables of the rich. By means of the irony to which he subjects his persona, Swift essentially told his readers what the Anglo-Irish establishment was in effect already doing. The Slovene translation appeared in an issue of *Mladina*, a magazine devoted to social and political journalism that also allots considerable space to cultural commentary, reviews and satire, a setting distinctly congenial to Swiftian interrogations of power. The magazine published Tina Mahkota’s treatment of the *Proposal* early in 2013, deep in the aftermath of the 2008-9 financial crisis, and in the midst of the Europe-wide programmes of “austerity” that ensued. The name of the journal (which means “youth”) lent an accidental but still significant pathos to Swift’s satire. The exposure to a national readership brought by the place of publication, the status of the original text and the urgency of the socio-political background called for a translation of some distinction. Responding to those pressures, Mahkota caught both the rationalistic coolness and the moralistic shrillness of Swift’s sociopathic projector. Readers of Slovene will appreciate, for instance, the vibrato she gives the following flutter of self-satisfied indignation:

There is likewise another great Advantage in my *Scheme*, that it will prevent those *voluntary Abortions*, and that horrid Practice of *Women murdering their Bastard Children*; alas! Too frequent among us. (Swift 1939–74, XII, 111)

Moj načrt ima še eno veliko prednost, in sicer to, da bo zaježil hotene splave in tisto odvratno navado žensk, da umorijo svoje pankrte, ki pa jo, žalibog!, pri nas še vedno vse prepogosto srečujemo. (Swift 2013, 48)

Mahkota has domesticated Swift’s syntax to some extent, but to no substantial loss. The somewhat archaic expostulation “*žalibog*” (“lamentably”, rendering “alas!”) is exquisite. The harpsichord tremor of the expression is exactly right, and it is a well-judged pairing on Mahkota’s part.¹² Swift’s register might tempt the translator to overplay the comedy at such moments: a lure Mahkota resists. The proposer’s expressive restraint, his pleasure in dry and numerical data, are integral to Swift’s illusion; accordingly, there is a danger of parodying in translation what is a carefully understated parody in the original. Mahkota’s phrasing in the quotation above is typical of the way she avoids such excess. *Zaježiti* (“thwart, impede”) invokes an arguably more elevated register than Swift’s “prevent”, but only to the extent that it captures the proposer’s undeniably formal mode.

In all, Mahkota preserves both the expostulatory and mordantly reserved tone of the original. Simultaneously, the publication context of the translation, as I suggested above, invests the text with forceful and quite intentional contemporaneity. A politically mindful reader would be hard put to avoid reflecting on this particular passage in the light of the US Supreme Court’s recent disabling (in 2022) of the 1973 ruling in *Roe v. Wade*. The view that emerges here, through the prism of Swift’s irony, is in fact a startling one. As Mahkota recognizes

¹² Etymologically, “*žalibog*” involves an appeal to sadden (*žaliti*) (or stir the pity of) God (*bog*) (Slovenski etimološki slovar, 1 and 2).

in her biographical headnote on Swift (quoted above), he has often been regarded as a misogynist.¹³ However, his sympathy and solidarity with the position of women is often lost. In the proposer's horrified reflection on "voluntary abortions", Swift's irony floats the idea, radical for a churchman in any age but extraordinary in his own, that women living in extreme poverty who deliberately ended their pregnancies may have acted quite reasonably, indeed morally. The implication of that stagey "alas!", too, is that the conception of "Bastard Children" was a lesser crime, for Swift, than others being perpetrated at that moment in Ireland. It would be interesting to know how this often overlooked passage resonated with a Slovene readership – in a country where the Roman Catholic Church is influential, yet where a woman's right to abortion enjoys constitutional protection.¹⁴

Such densely nuanced and profoundly contentious moments naturally complicate the more generic image of Swift that Mahkota's headnote supplies. It is obviously beyond such a summary, however accurate and valuable, to account for what a leading Swiftian has called "the mercurial indirections of the satirist's voice" (Rawson 2017). All a translator can do is try to preserve those switches of tenor. At times, Swift in fact offers assistance by his way of slipping out of persona and drawing attention to what Dolar calls the voice of the "jouissant father", the voice that accompanies a moral law (Dolar 2006, 55). Swift does this in the *Modest Proposal* when the proposer concedes that "this Food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very *proper for Landlords*; who, as they have already devoured most of the Parents, seem to have the best Title to the Children" (Swift 1939–74, XII, 112). The proposer's loyalties hitherto have lain entirely on the side of capital and property, rather than the impoverished tenants or itinerants whose babies are to be eaten. Swift's sympathies, we now discover, rested elsewhere. The satirical shofar, as it were, has been sounded. The effect is surely a case of parallax: our view is split between an image of the proposer and a glimpse of the satirist who has used him to deceive us. Yet the result is a clarification, rather than a crisis of meaning, as the text's presiding irony becomes clear. Without this calculated breakdown of the vocal illusion, one wonders if *Mladina* would have commissioned the translation. Indeed, this moment is arguably crucial to the modern reputation Mahkota's note on Swift enshrines.

As it is, Mahkota's translation and its appearance in the pages of *Mladina* both preserve and renew Swift's vocal presence. The very ephemerality of the setting brings one closer to that of Swift's anonymously published pamphlet of 1729. If Swift's text lacked its original advantage of surprise in its new iteration, it carried the gravitas of a classic, and made its own contribution to the journal's concern for truth and informed commentary. If you missed *Mladina* that week, then *A Modest Proposal* will have passed you by; if you read it, however, you are likely to remember the strange missive from eighteenth-century Ireland that it contained, and the warning it offered contemporary Europe. Encountering the translation reminded me of a similarity Edmund Wilson observed between Swift and Marx, in a comparison supported recently by Leo Damrosch. Those two very different observers of life shared, for Wilson, "a

¹³ Swift's reputation for misogyny derives in large part (though by no means exclusively) from a number of notorious late poems such as "The Lady's Dressing Room". These are as yet untranslated in Slovene.

¹⁴ A very recent decision by the Slovenian Constitutional Court (RSUS 2024, paragraph 32), reaffirmed this right, referring to Article 55 of the country's constitution.

deadly sense of the infinite capacity of human nature for remaining oblivious or indifferent to the pains we inflict on others, when we have a chance to get something out of them for ourselves" (Damrosch 2013, 419; citing Wilson 1940, 46). The editors of *Mladina* evidently recognized and shared Swift's hatred of that "infinite capacity" for indifference.

5 Conclusion

These remarks have considered how Swift has fared in translation and commentary in the wider European and specific Slovene contexts. Swift's presence in Slovenia throws competing methods of translation into sharp relief, and invites, I have suggested, scholars of translation to strike a balance between "philological" and "socio-critical" expectations. Swift himself expected such a balance. The Slovene milieu looks unlikely to support extensive scholarly translation of his lesser known works, but has nevertheless offered fascinating responses for Swift scholars to consider. In particular, Andrej E. Skubic's recent translation of *Gulliver's Travels*, which has made the unexpurgated work newly accessible to Slovene readers, provided an occasion for Mladen Dolar to demonstrate the enduring relevance of Gulliver's distinctly parallactic voyages. Elsewhere, Dolar's work on voice offers implicit but invaluable insight into the nature of the Swiftian persona, and casts tantalizing light on the complex phenomenology of the acts his publications often comprised. Still more strikingly, Tina Mahkota's translation of the *Modest Proposal* is remarkably faithful to Swift's own understanding of his mission as a *vindicator*, literally, an avenger of liberty – indeed of the unfree, the voiceless.¹⁵ Her version of the *Proposal* illustrates how a text translated with meticulous, "philological" care can reflect the "socio-critical" concerns of the culture into which it is brought. At the level of theoretical inquiry and of cultural event, Slovene translation and commentary demonstrates why, with or without the multi-volume treatment, Swift is still with us.

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¹⁵ As per the Latin epitaph he composed for Swift's memorial in St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin: on the wording of the epitaph see especially Rawson 2014, 262–64.

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“More at Home Here than in Her Native Land”: F.D. Sheridan’s Image of Spain

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to (re)introduce the largely overlooked Irish writer Florence Daphne Sheridan and critically examine her portrayal of 1950s and 1960s Spain in her short stories written in the 1980s. While other Irish authors such as Kate O’Brien and Pearse Hutchinson have received moderate attention in relation to their depictions of Spain, Sheridan’s literary representation of the country under Franco’s dictatorship remains largely ignored. This study explores Sheridan’s images of Spain using the framework of Imagology Studies, which focuses on the cultural construction of national identity through literary representations. Sheridan’s works offer a distinctive perspective on the intersections of Irish and Spanish cultural relations, moving beyond the romanticized or stereotypical images of Spain often found in British literature. Her fiction captures the complex realities of Spain during its developmental stage under Francoism and focuses on the effects of economic hardship, political oppression, and the influx of tourism.

Keywords: F.D. Sheridan, Spain, imagology, short story, Hiberno-Spanish cultural relations

“Bolj doma tu kot v svoji rodni deželi”: podoba Španije v delih F.D. Sheridan

IZVLEČEK

Članek poskuša predstaviti in ponovno opozoriti na pogosto zapostavljeno irsko pisateljico Florence Daphne Sheridan in kritično preučiti upodabljanje Španije petdesetih in šestdesetih let dvajsetega stoletja v njenih kratkih zgodbah iz osemdesetih let. Upodobitve Španije v delih drugih irskih pisateljev, na primer Kate O’Brien in Pearsa Hutchinsona, so že bile deležne vsaj nekakšne obravnave, Sheridanine literarne upodobitve te države v času Francove diktature pa ostajajo večinoma prezrte. Pričujoča študija obravnava Sheridanino podobo Španije s pomočjo imagološkega okvirja, ki se osredotoča na kulturno oblikovanje narodne identitete skozi literarne upodobitve. Dela F.D. Sheridan ponujajo posebej prepoznavno perspektivo presečišča irskih in španskih kulturnih povezav in presegajo romantizirane in stereotipne podobe Španije, ki jih pogosto najdemo v britanski književnosti. Njena leposlovna dela prikazujejo večplastno realnost Španije in njen razvoj v času diktature generala Franca in se osredotočajo na posledice ekonomske stiske, političnega zatiranja ter rasti v turizmu.

Ključne besede: F.D. Sheridan, Španija, imagologija, kratka zgodba, irsko-španski kulturni odnosi

1 Introduction

Spain has held a notable place in the imaginary of an array of 20th-century Irish authors who visited the country in different periods and have written about it in a variety of literary genres: Kate O'Brien (1897–1974) depicted the 1920s and 1930s in her novel *Mary Lavelle* (1936) and in her nostalgic *Farewell Spain* (1937); Walter Starkie (1894–1976) published four travel diaries (*Spanish Raggle Taggle* (1934), *Don Gypsy* (1936), *In Sara's Tents* (1953) and *The Road to Santiago* (1957)); Máirín Mitchell (1895–1986) published *Storm over Spain* (1937) after rambling around the country in the mid-1930s, just before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War; Pearse Hutchinson (1927–2012) depicted the difficult years of the Spanish dictatorship in his poetry of the 1950s and 1960s, focusing in particular on regional language restrictions in Catalonia and Galicia; and Aidan Higgins (1927–2015) captured the contradictions of the apparent liberalization and economic expansion of Spain in the last years of Franco's regime in his experimental novel *Balcony of Europe* (1972). Considerable research has been done on the literary image of the country posed by these authors, and on how Spain and its landscape have found expression in their works – see, for example, Asensio Peral (2023), Beja (1973), Davison (2017), Hurlley (2005), Ladrón (2010), Losada-Friend (2023), Membrive (2019), Membrive-Pérez (2020), Mittermaier (2012; 2013; 2014; 2017), Murphy (2020), Pastor Garcia (2011), Pérez de Arcos (2021), and Walshe (2017).

But if critical attention has been given to Irish authors who visited the country before the Spanish Civil War and the interwar period, the work of those who wrote about post-war Spain has not been that widely studied beyond the poetry of Hutchinson and the fiction of Higgins. Indeed, the literary contribution of Hutchinson's beloved friend, Florence Daphne Sheridan, has been largely overlooked if not completely ignored by academic research. Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold: to (re)discover the contribution of Sheridan to Irish literature in the 1980s and to explore her literary image of 1950s and 1960s Spain. The analysis of Sheridan's production is conducted through the prism of Imagology Studies, defined as “the critical analysis of national stereotypes in literature (and in any other forms of cultural representation)” (Beller and Leerssen 2007, n.p.). The relevance of this field has grown in recent years, particularly in the context of globalization and the resurgence of nationalisms, as it offers insights into the dynamics of identity and otherness (Bakhareva 2022). Its interdisciplinary character allows for the combination of socio-historical, ethnological, cultural, and political approaches, which results in a suitable framework to understand the connection between literature and national identity (Zocco 2022). Thus, this paper also considers how the underlying ideologies that underpinned the images of Spain in Sheridan's fiction were informed by her time in the country.¹ This approach bears in mind that the “pre-given eternal categories [visitor and visited], are literary constructs in themselves, and result from the confrontation, projection and the articulation of cultural differentiation and discontinuity” (Corbey and Leerssen 1991, x). The visitor's generally partial knowledge of

¹ Following the tenets of Imagology, for the purpose of this paper the term “image” refers to analyses of an author's fiction as “the mental silhouette of the other. Cultural discontinuities and differences (resulting from languages, mentalities, everyday habits, and religions) trigger positive or negative judgements and images” (Beller 2007, 4).

the visited culture led anthropologists and new historicists to turn their attention to the study of the textual image of a given location. Clifford (1997) considered the village as the “unit” which allowed the anthropologist “to centralize a research practice, and at the same time it served as synecdoche, as point of focus, or past, through which one could represent the ‘cultural’ whole” (98). This trope, through which comprehension of the visited culture might be gained by simply “looking at” or “gazing at” only a fragment of it, can be thought about in terms of to the broader opposition, vision/knowledge. Pratt believes that travellers have tended to represent other cultures through “all-seeing, all-knowing ‘imperial eyes’, and take a ‘monarch-of-all-I-survey’ stance” (1992, 201). That is, the textual attitude towards the image of the visited location is always culturally mediated (Siegel and Wulff 2002, 109–10). Imagology, then, studies and identifies fractured depictions of geographical spaces and explores the fundamental fictionality of all images. As will be shown, Sheridan’s approach to the image of Spain aims at, to use Pratt’s terminology, “decoloniz[ing] knowledge” (1992, 3), as her impressions veer away from the traditional romanticized depiction of the country that, since the 19th century, has frequently been found in British authors who visited or lived in the country. This paper, however, does not seek to determine the reliability or untrustworthiness of Sheridan’s work; rather, it draws attention to traits of the Irish literary image of Spain (Mittermaier 2017) that have been overlooked and which build on hidden links and forgotten histories of cultural contact.

2 F.D. Sheridan

Sheridan (Dublin, 1929–2002), who always went by the name Sammy (Ryan 2023), attended University College Dublin (UCD) in 1947–1948 to obtain a diploma in Social Studies, but had to give her place up when she was affected by a polio infection which disabled her left arm for life. She was a member of the Labour Party and was considered a “milder sort of nationalist” (Ryan 2023). While, with the encouragement of Hutchinson (Ryan 2023), Sheridan did a lot of writing, she published very little. Her publications comprise a short story collection, *Captives* (1980a), reviewed by both P.J. Kavanagh and the theatre critic Gerry Colgan, who claimed to know “nothing of the author or of anything else that she may have written” (Colgan 1983, 10); the short story, “Olympia”, included in *The Anthology* (1982);² and two short stories published in the literary journal *Cyphers* (1983 and 1990).³ However, in order to locate Sheridan in the context of the Irish literature of the 1980s, as well as to provide a broader understanding of her image of Spain in the 1950s and 1960s, this paper also considers the letters and postcards she exchanged with Pearse Hutchinson (1950s–1990s), and her unpublished personal memoir titled “La Ciutat Condal” (1993), in which she recalls her Catalan years (1954–1965). These works are held as part of the Hutchinson archive at Maynooth University (Ireland) and have not received any attention

² Edited by her friends, Leland Bardwell and Joseph Ambrose, and published by Co-op Books. Sheridan’s story opened the collection in which a number of renowned authors such as Anthony Cronin, Sebastian Barry, Desmond Hogan, Macdara Woods and Neil Jordan also had contributions.

³ *Cyphers* is a literary magazine that published poetry and criticism from Ireland and abroad. It was established in 1975 by Leland Bardwell (1922–2016), Pearse Hutchinson (1927–2012), Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (b. 1942), and Macdara Woods (1942–2018).

to date. The fact that Sheridan does not have her own archive reveals how overlooked this author's contribution to Irish literature has been.

While at UCD Sheridan met the poet and critic, John Jordan, who revived *Poetry Ireland* in 1962 and played an important role in shaping Ireland's cultural life in the middle decades of the 20th century (McFadden 2012, 137). Jordan was later best man at her wedding (*Meath Chronicle*, 1959), and became her son's godfather. Her interactions also extended to Patrick Kavanagh, Leland Bardwell, and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, as well as the painter Edward McGuire. These artists and others (such as Aidan Higgins, John Montague and Brendan Behan, to name a few) were part of Dublin's so-called Baggotonia, the bohemian quarter around Baggot Street that was particularly vibrant in the 1950s. This hub for writers, artists, and intellectuals has contributed significantly to Dublin's cultural and literary heritage. Baggotonia was known for its unconventional and anarchic lifestyle, and was the site of a "cultural radicalism" (Quinn 2003, 293) that was at odds with the conservative societal norms of the time.⁴ Travelling to other countries was a rite of passage for most members of this generation.⁵ These writers met in pubs, such as McDaid's (on Harry Street in Dublin), which has been acclaimed as the centre of "Ireland's literary and bohemian life" (Wall 2005, 33). There, in some cases, they were able to foster collaborative dynamics despite the occasional air of mutual distrust and jealousies (Cronin 1999, 62, 113). Academic scholarly publications agree on which authors convened there, but although Sheridan was "part of the group who used to drink in McDaid's" (Ryan 2024), she is never mentioned.⁶

After a short period living in Hampstead (London) and then Ireland, Sheridan moved to Barcelona, Spain in September 1954 (Sheridan 1993, 1). She left Ireland with her oldest brother, the painter Bryan Sheridan (Hutchinson 1994), and Pearse Hutchinson, who was described by Mittermaier (2017, 288) as her "early love" and, by Woods (2010, 114), as "a close companion".⁷ She left Ireland as she felt the country was culturally

⁴ The documentary *Ghosts of Baggotonia* (released in 2022 and directed by Alan Gilsean) explores the history and cultural significance of that time and place.

⁵ Anthony Cronin visited Spain intermittently in the 1960s, while John Jordan wrote poems in the books *A Raft from Flotsam* (1969) and *With Whom Did I Share the Crystal?* (1980) related to his sojourns in the country, where he went in the 1960s because he felt that his lifestyle in Dublin was "claustrophobic" (McFadden 2012, 129). He maintained connections with Gerald Brenan, Robert Graves, and Kate O'Brien (all of whom also travelled to Spain), and his affinity for Spanish culture and religion confirms that he "thought not merely in Irish, but in European, indeed in world, terms" (Martin 1988, 264). Other poets of what Mittermaier refers to as the "Irish Beat Generation" visited the country in this period, including Michael Smith, Seamus Heaney, Paul Durcan, Brian Lynch, Philip Casey, Joseph Hackett, Dorothy Molloy, and Macdara Woods (2012, 79).

⁶ McFadden (2015) makes a list of the authors who reunited there: Leland Bardwell, Anthony Cronin, John Jordan, John Montague, Pearse Hutchinson at times, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Macdara Woods, Sheila Bradshaw, Pat Broe, Marie-Louise Colbert (Sheridan's best friend, a well-known Irish social worker and the godmother of her son), Therese Cronin, Kay O'Neill, Pauline Bewick and Beatrice French Salkeld. In a letter, Sheridan's sons also mention Brendan Behan and photographer Neville Johnson as other artists that gathered there and were friends of Sheridan (Ryan 2024).

⁷ In her personal memoirs, Sheridan never mentions Pearse Hutchinson and only refers to him once as "my companion" (1993, 1).

isolated, stating that “Dublin had been too small, in every way” (Sheridan 1993, 7). She and Hutchinson intended to move to Andalusia, but they “fell in love with Barcelona” (Woods 2010, 114) because of its vitality (Sheridan 1993, 1; Ryan 2024), which, to her, contrasted with Ireland’s cultural insularity. She stayed in the city until 1957, renting an apartment whose living room was a restaurant (13), and working as an English teacher in the prestigious Escuela Massé (Sheridan 1993, 10). Before she began teaching there, the director Señor Morres specified that there was only one rule: “no politics and no religion” (10). This reflected the regime’s strict censorship and repression, with political opposition and religious dissent being severely punished. In 1955, during her time in Spain, where she “led the typical existence that young people everywhere lead when they have shaken off their upbringing” (Sheridan 1993, 12), she met Sebastian Ryan.⁸ Sheridan’s international experience continued with her stay in Milan (Italy) for six months in 1957 to teach at the British School. Her letters to Hutchinson from this year reveal that she insistently wrote asking him to meet her in Milan, but he did not seem to reply, which led to her becoming “utterly depressed by [his] silence” (Sheridan 1957). Therefore, her Italian experience was marked by her distressing relationship with Hutchinson and by the feelings of isolation, detachment, and boredom that are reflected in her Italian short stories.

When she returned to Barcelona in 1959 she started a relationship with Ryan, who she later married in Dublin, after which they moved back to Barcelona, “poor, married and not feeling in the least ‘respectable’” (Sheridan 1993, 13). In 1965 they resettled in a small village in Almería called Mojácar, where they stayed until 1968. Just as she did in Ireland, Sheridan surrounded herself with artists and intellectuals from different countries, especially “Germany, The Netherlands, and England” (12). While in Barcelona, she met with the American cartoonist David Omar White, the British actor Charles Gibson Cowan, the Spanish writer Luis Goytisolo (8), and the educator Pamela O’Malley⁹ and received visits from John Jordan and Antony Cronin. In Mojácar, she had a close relationship with the Danish couple Paul and Beatrice Beckett, who were artists, and the Australian painter John Olsen. Although Sheridan and Ryan resettled to live permanently in Lucan, Dublin, from 1968, leading what the author referred to as a “monastic life” (Sheridan 1987), Ryan “was anxious to get back” (Ryan, 2024) and the couple visited Mojácar and/or Barcelona for short periods almost every year until the 1990s. She always felt “at home” in Spain (Sheridan 1993, 18) and recognized that Barcelona “caught [her] imagination” (2).

The 1970s saw the emergence of a number of new Irish publishing houses, notably Co-op Books and Poolbeg Press, co-founded by David Marcus, to encourage new talent and to exhibit a “pride of place” (O’Brien 1980, 138-9). This period was considered by the Arts

⁸ Sebastian Read Ryan (1934–1994) was the son of a New-Mexican mother, Leona, and an Irish father, Desmond Ryan. In her unpublished memoirs, Sheridan recalls how Sebastian spent his childhood in Beauvallon and how, during the Second World War, in 1940 he and his mother escaped through Barcelona to Bermuda.

⁹ Pamela O’Malley (1929–2006) was an Irish-Spanish educationalist and radical. A friend of Kate O’Brien and Brendan Behan, and a member of the Communist Party in Spain, she taught at the British School in Madrid until 2003 when she retired.

Council as the “take-off phase of Irish publishing” (Hutton and Walsh 2011, 277).¹⁰ It was MacDonogh (Ryan, 2024), together with Hutchinson, who encouraged Sheridan to publish her stories as a collection. The result was *Captives* (1980a), which was strongly affected by her experiences abroad and was “called this as there are three captive stories of Spanish situations” (Sheridan to Pearse Hutchinson, undated), and “Olympia” (1982). There is little critical commentary on this co-operative (Farmer 2018; O’Brien 1980), and even though Sheridan was “known in [her] time, very well” (Ní Chuilleanáin, 2019), and considered “a very capable writer” (*Evening Herald* 1983, 26), she is never mentioned, nor is her work analysed or referred to.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when Sheridan was writing, the short story was often thought of as being most representative of Irish literature, and was even considered a “national genre” (D’hoker 2017, 3). However, critics also pointed to a tendency that had been growing since the 1960s for authors to use the stories as “essentially bourgeois entertainment, avoiding the dangerous and the challenging” (Bardwell and Ambrose 1982, 6). Madden-Simpson marked the 1960s as the beginning of contemporary Irish women’s writing (1984), and it is not surprising that both Poolbeg (through the work of David Marcus) and Co-op Books continued promoting short fiction written by women which aimed at reassessing family life, sexuality, personal relationships to, simultaneously, “reapprais[e] [the] terms of identity” (O’Brien 1980, 155).¹¹

In the 1980s book sales collapsed, and by 1983, after the international success of Jordan’s *Night in Tunisia* and Hogan’s *The Icon Maker*, Co-op Books ceased publishing because, according to MacDonogh, while they were able to launch new writers, they could not hold them and thus they were “confined to an area of publishing which was inherently uneconomic” (Farmer 2018, 170). Sheridan only published two further short stories in the literary journal *Cyphers* after Co-op Books shut down.¹² The author continued writing throughout her life and, although she had a good relationship with Joe Ambrose after he took over as the head of the Co-op and enjoyed working with him, it did not result in the publication of another title (Ryan 2023). F.D. Sheridan died in Hampstead, London, in 2022.

¹⁰ These new ventures looked to create a solid, purely Irish publishing industry (not one based only on reprints) that would challenge the dominance of British publishers on the island. Many members involved in the foundation of the Irish Writers’ Co-operative in 1974 had met at UCD: Fred Johnston, Neil Jordan, Peter Sheridan, and Ronan Sheehan, who acted as secretary of the Co-operative from 1975 until 1983. This so-called “generation of 1976” (O’Brien 1995, 16) created their publishing arm, Co-op Books, in 1976. It and the other new publishing houses of the 1970s “initiated a period of local innovation, drive and (occasionally) aggression that was quickly noticed by the media” (Farmer 2018, 171). By 1978, the Co-op had a dozen members who aimed at publishing new writers, “including themselves” (Hutton and Walsh 2011, 159). Amongst others, Sebastian Barry, Desmond Hogan, Leland Bardwell, Benedict Kiely, Anthony Cronin, and Steve MacDonogh, who was chairperson from 1977 to 1981, were involved in this venture.

¹¹ Other women writers who published short stories during this period and addressed these themes were Mary Lavin, Evelyn Conlon, Leland Bardwell, Anne Devlin, Edna O’Brien, Julia O’Faolain, and Maeve Binchy. This was also facilitated by the work carried out by Nuala Archer, Ruth Hooley, the Women’s Community Press, Arlen House Publishers and Attic Press to promote short fiction by Irish female authors.

¹² Overall, the Irish literary scene benefited from Co-op’s “bid to contest centralization, homogenization, and globalization in the publishing scene” (Hutton and Walsh 2011, 159).

3 Sheridan's Image of Spain

To examine Sheridan's literary image of 1950s and 1960s Spain, this paper analyses twelve of the stories she published in *Captives*, *The Anthology*, and *Cyphers*.¹³ *Captives* (published in hardback in 1980 and republished in paperback in 1983) is the only collection entirely authored by Sheridan, and is unquestionably affected by the author's time abroad, especially her years in Spain. Although the title of the collection refers directly to the three Spanish "captives" in the stories, "Captive I", "Captive II", and "Captive III", the protagonists of all the stories in the collection feel captive in one way or another, and lonely.¹⁴ The collection was considered "highly experimental" (Casey and Casey 1990, 6) due to the author's ability to trace intricate thought patterns in the stories and her emphasis on individuality. Sheridan's work follows a pattern of the desire to escape that was customary of the fiction of this period (O'Brien 1980, 147), and her stories combine national (mostly Dublin) and international settings, namely Italy, Mexico, England, and, above all, Spain, for she was "more at home here than in her native land" (*Evening Herald* 1983, 26). Her use of foreign settings aligns with Fogarty's contention that the best Irish short stories from this period "have always persistently linked the local to the global, the parochial to the worldly" (Fogarty 2002, 8). In Sheridan's case, Spain pervades her approach to universal social and political themes because, to her, "what was happening elsewhere was more noticeable here" (1993, 6). Sheridan's portrayal of "lives which have reached some final limitations" (Colgan 1983, 10) in her character-driven narratives acknowledge and resist the Joycean tradition, since while Sheridan also portrays characters with limitations – whether personal or societal – she differs from Joyce in the way her characters respond to these challenges. In this way, Sheridan acknowledges the Joycean focus on human constraint but also resists its inherent pessimism by offering more nuanced or transformative character arcs.

Her approach to Spain is pervaded by a constant interrogation of visitors' and foreign residents' attitudes towards, and involvement with, the country and its people. In fact, one of the few mentions of Sheridan in an academic text concerns this issue: Mittermaier recounts her visit to the British writer Gerald Brenan in Malaga with Hutchinson in the late 1950s. During the visit, a naked Andalusian girl appears in the house and Sheridan is said to have "[broken] the spell", dissipating "any illusions that he [Hutchinson] and his friends have nothing in common with those other voyeuristic tourists and exiled artists invading the Costa del Sol from the late 1950s" (Mittermaier 2012, 88). An analysis of her short fiction shows how Sheridan, in fact, aims at disenchanting the inherited romanticized literary image of Spain.

One of the main themes that permeates her Spanish short stories is Franco's economic policy of the 1950s and 1960s, *desarrollismo*. She was not a supporter of the "new" Spain.¹⁵ The regime was now settled, the development programme was at its peak, promoting its "bombastic

¹³ The remaining stories are set in Ireland (four), Italy (two), France (one), and Latin America (five).

¹⁴ According to D'Hoker, loneliness was "the privileged emotion" in the short story of the 1980s (D'Hoker 2017, 3).

¹⁵ This can be seen in her letters and postcards to Pearse Hutchinson. In a postcard from 1978 with a Francoist stamp, she drew an arrow to it and wrote: "Lo siento. No había otra cosa" ["Sorry. There was nothing better", author's translation].

rhetoric of triumphalism, claiming victory on every hand, with Franco the true leader of all western civilization” (Payne 1987, 414). At the same time, Spain was slowly opening to the world: it joined UNESCO in 1952 and the United Nations in 1955, and signed the Pact of Madrid with the United States in 1953.¹⁶ By the mid-1950s, and especially in the 1960s, the tourist industry was established as a profitable source of income for the country, and the regime was determined to exploit this sector to attract more wealth to the peninsula. Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Minister of Information and Tourism from 1962 to 1969, made it possible for the country to receive over 30 million northern Europeans a year by the end of the 1960s (Grugel and Rees 1997, 117). “Spain is Different” replaced the former slogan “Visit Spain”, and the substantial development of the tourist industry seemed to be designed by the regime with a two-fold aim: to banish the idea of a land hostile to foreigners and to undermine the idea of a country that clung to archaic traditions. This gave the impression that the regime’s firm repression was being relaxed. In short, tourism was central to attempts to refashion Francoism and the industry worked to “put a friendly, hospitable face on a repressive military dictatorship” (Crumbaugh 2009, 5), and the image of Spain abroad began to evolve. Tourism as a “modern mechanism of power” (Crumbaugh 2009, 20) appealed to liberal democratized countries. In her memoirs, Sheridan identified the regime’s strategic approach to tourism: “when change came, it came suddenly. The Pyrenees were not high enough to withstand it. Tourists arrived. Prosperity was on offer and Franco’s government took it on the hop. It was not interested in instigating real social changes of its own which would have been practicable” (1993, 6). Social unrest grew in the last two decades of the dictatorship, together with a rise in regionalist issues. The end of isolationism was glimpsed. Encouragement of industrialization through foreign capital, multinational investment and major economic developments brought prosperity to the country, with the result that there was an “Americanization of life” (Grugel and Rees 1997, 146): the birth of consumerism. There was a notable improvement in living standards; travellers in the country had at their disposal new means of transportation, such as the plane or the car, which were more common by the 1960s, while inns were seldom mentioned, as they were replaced by hotels. Tour operators and new package holidays to Spain flourished in Great Britain.¹⁷ The “sun and sand” type of tourism together with the promotion of traditional attractions such as flamenco shows became very popular. The paradox of the “Spain is Different” slogan was thus exposed: a fictional pretension of “modernizing” the country that valued old, commonplace, overused preconceptions, and that recuperated “traditional cultural stereotypes after years of embarrassed rejection” (Kelly 2000, 29). In Carr’s exploration of this “new” Spain, he claimed that the 1960s’ images of the country presented an “anti-Romantic vision” (1992, 19), as they were vulgar and simplified. As will be seen, Sheridan’s short stories do not offer this image of the country.

The story “A Summer’s Day”, included in *Captives* (1980a), was inspired by Sheridan’s own experience and provides a subtle approach to the political situation in Catalonia during

¹⁶ The Pact of Madrid (1953) was an agreement between Spain and the US which granted Spain economic and military help in exchange for the establishment of military bases in strategic points in the country.

¹⁷ The tour operator Horizon Holidays flew the first charter-paneloads to the Costa Brava and the Costa del Sol in 1954, and the guide *Everybody’s Travel Guide to Spain* was published in London (Mitchell 2004, 165).

Francoism and the contrast between the marked ruralism of the country and its evolution towards modernization.¹⁸ It tells the story of Paco and Mercedes, the owners of a bar in Catalonia, who both complain about the “strangers from Barcelona and Lerida” (1980a, 17) and, at the same time, do “business with the tourists flocking from all over Catalunya” (1980a, 17). The transformation of the bar from a community hub that is open all night to a business catering to tourists marks the changing environment. Paco’s reminiscences about the old days, with their street markets, animal fairs, and the priests’ holidays, reflect a longing for a time when the village’s life was more insular and traditional. The annual leave-taking and the villagers’ nostalgic remarks speak of a collective memory of a time before the economic changes brought by tourism. Sheridan thus captures the impact of economic modernization and the influx of tourists and how this clashed with a nostalgic yearning for the simplicity and familiarity of the past. In the story there is an annual changing of the guard, and the military police are leaving a Catalan village at noon, as an array of characters gather at the bar. The military presence represents the pervasive authority of the regime, and for Sheridan, Spain was a “19th century paternalistic society” (1993, 2). The group carry sub-machine guns, and the descriptions of the villagers’ reactions illustrate an environment of control and intimidation. However, when Senora Aurora, loyal to the Republic, calls the privates “buffoons” as she laughs and walks out of the bar (1980a, 20), there are hints of a resistance to the external changes imposed on their way of life and the loss of cultural identity and community cohesion. The arrival of the military police also causes the villagers to fall silent, and the bar takes on an oppressive atmosphere that emphasizes the normalization of fear and control.¹⁹ The interactions between the characters further draw attention to the Captain’s arrogance and the villagers’ careful engagement with him, as they switch from Catalan to Castilian Spanish to avoid conflict. Sheridan herself experienced the prohibition on speaking Catalan in Spain and drew a parallel with her native Ireland: “It is not unlike Ireland where it is necessary to speak fluent Irish or English in a bilingual situation. But then, I’m choosing between two dominant languages. There’s something sad about unhelpful pride, or impatience, when you are trying to respect a tradition that has been threatened” (Sheridan 1993, 9). Her approach to the language policy during these years might have been influenced by Hutchinson, who published several poems related to the banning of Catalan in Spain. Thus, in this short story, Sheridan creates an image of captives of political oppression, as, to her, Spain was a “police state” (1993, 11). She often set her stories in bars where an array of people gather, as Sheridan believed that religion and politics, “especially the latter, were talked about in bars. But not in depth” (1993, 11).

Although all the stories included in *Captives* tackle different manifestations of captivity of one or more characters, the most representative would be the trio, “Captive I”, “Captive II” and “Captive III”. The first one portrays the contradictions of a country coping with fierce and rapid economic development while many of its citizens remain trapped in destitution. The story opens with a depiction of rural hardship and poverty, as seen through the character of a child, Luis, and his family. Luis lives with his mother and three sisters in a small, modest

¹⁸ In her memoirs, Sheridan recalls that “I found in a bar a friend talking with a Guardia Civil. To put it mildly, my friend was not in favour of Franco’s regime yet here he was sympathetically having drinks with a uniformed man from the most hated police force in the country” (1993, 11).

¹⁹ As Sheridan noted, in Barcelona those years, “there was secrecy too” (1993, 7).

house in a village whose name is never mentioned – probably to show that this story could happen anywhere in rural Spain – while his father is “working in France” (1980a, 30), which marks the common reality of absent fathers seeking employment elsewhere due to limited local opportunities. The repeated presence of plastic flowers operates as a form of silent resilience, because just as the flowers endure without water or care, the villagers continue to survive despite their economic hardships. Moreover, plastic flowers, being artificial, suggest the encroachment of modern, industrial products onto the natural environment of the village and its traditional way of life. The living room, sparsely furnished, had a vase of plastic flowers on the table, a stark contrast to the bare essentials around it (1980a, 30). Plastic flowers may look lively on the surface, but they lack the vitality of real flowers, much like the villagers’ lives might appear stable outwardly while they face significant struggles internally. Luis’s mother represents the hardships that women face in Spain and which, in her memoir, Sheridan compared to the situation in Ireland:

Being a woman in Ireland at that time was difficult enough. Women Civil Servants were forced to retire on marrying, and retirement from other jobs too was expected. Spanish society made the same kind of demands and more. My first sight of Iberian inhabitants was of women bent in the fields beneath large, black umbrellas. There was not a man in sight. (Sheridan 1993, 15)

In both countries, the Catholic Church played a major role in shaping state affairs and defining the ideal family. It promoted the notion that a woman’s duty was to bear as many children as possible and regarded avoidance of pregnancy as sinful. Marriage was advocated, and there were strict prohibitions on abortion and contraception. The 1950s and 1960s were characterized by a rigid adherence to those traditional roles, and women were largely confined to the domestic sphere. After introducing Luis and his family, the story reveals the arrival of a foreign family – a mother, father and a child, Michael – who are there for a vacation. Michael’s lifestyle contrasts with Luis’s hunger and poverty and his parents see their difference from the other villagers. However, Luis spends a lot of time with the foreign family, so he can be fed every day. Michael starts to eat less and shares his food with Luis, eventually falling ill: “He grew thin and began to get sore throats, headaches, and inexplicable fevers” (1980a, 33). Through an apparently innocent observation of a friendship between two children, Sheridan highlights that in spite of the regime’s infrastructural improvements and the promotion of tourism, which mainly brought wealth to urban centres, rural poverty persisted, as peripheral areas were largely unaffected by *desarrollismo*, for “the crumbs which fell from the rich men’s tables were now somewhat more substantial than before, but they were still crumbs” (Sheridan 1993, 6).

“Captive II” provides an emotional depiction of the life of an individual trapped in social and economic constraints in Barcelona. Through Arturo, a shoeshine man, Sheridan highlights the issue of inadequate welfare provisions and, once again, contrasts this with the burgeoning tourist industry. Arturo is left to fend for himself, with minimal support from a welfare system that is ill-equipped to provide care or opportunities for recovery, as Arturo explains: “After a few weeks I was let go. I stood outside the hospital with the few pounds they’d given me and thought where do I go from here” (1980a, 37). The narrative reflects how the benefits

of modernization and economic development do not trickle down to the lower strata of society. Arturo's descent into poverty, through various towns and workhouses, emphasizes the geographical and social isolation experienced by the rural poor. As he pleads when he visits the Governor's house: "What am I that this should happen to me? What are you that this should happen to me? Do something for me. I cannot beg. I don't deserve to beg" (1980a, 39).²⁰ Arturo's dignity and determination to search for a better life is contrasted with the static prosperity enjoyed by the tourist destinations.

"Captive III" continues the theme of entrapment or captivity. In this story, told from the perspective of Jane, an Irish tourist in a small Catalan village, the reader learns about Ernesto, the local baker's son, who represents the younger generation of the working class in Spain and is caught between the demands of labour and the allure of leisure represented by the cinema sessions held regularly at Bar El Cine. Ernesto's father, Santiago, embodies the local authority within the bar, as he manages both the business and social interactions, and his method of control and occasional mockery reflects the social structures that govern local life. Similarly, the respect and deference shown to Santiago by the other villagers and the tourists reinforce the traditional social system. The most revealing element of this story is the way Sheridan tackles Jane's curiosity and her interactions with Ernesto and other villagers, which speak of her superficial engagement with, and understanding of, Spanish life. Her questions about local customs and her shock at the treatment of the baker's son (who is twelve and is drinking coffee to stay awake in order to help his father) reveals the gap between visitors' perceptions and assumptions and local realities. She feels helpless to learn that nothing can be done for the child: "it's illegal, she cried. You are a policeman, she said to the 18-year-old guard. Can't you do something about it?" (1980a, 46–47). The bird trap referred to at the beginning and end of the story gestures towards the societal and political constraints that trapped Spaniards: "One of the boys held out a square wire object and showed it to their children. It was a bird trap" (1980a, 42). This object, designed to capture and confine, mirrors the experience of the Spanish working class, who were caught in the rigid and oppressive structures of the regime, and the act of setting the trap "just under the sand" (1980a, 43) epitomizes how these constraints were often hidden beneath the surface, and thus went unnoticed or misunderstood by tourists.

"Tomorrow I Shall Sail Across Castile" follows a group of travellers navigating the Spanish countryside, heading towards France. They encounter different characters along the way, most notably an eccentric man named Sven, who offers them a ride in his old car. Throughout the journey they face intense heat and the harshness of the landscape, which contrasts with their encounters in small, rural villages where they rest, drink wine, and interact with locals. The travellers experience instances of reflection, discomfort, and surreal interactions with Sven, who oscillates between moments of philosophical introspection and erratic behaviour. Sheridan presents a journey through the Spanish countryside that once again explores

²⁰ In her memoirs, Sheridan also comments on the fact that the council office building is similar to a palace that opens once a year (1993, 4). This finds a parallel in Hutchinson's poem "The Palace of Injustice or the Swallow's Well" (Hutchinson 1990, 81), in which, besides criticizing political corruption, he revealed the distress he felt when bureaucratic obstacles prevented him from prolonging his stay in the city.

tourists' shallow and transient engagements with the locals, especially the poor: "They asked a young woman in a muddy uncobbled pathway between houses if they could buy some wine" (1980a, 64). In contrast, the tourists' encounter with the luxurious lifestyle of the young Catalan couple at the end of the story highlights Sheridan's awareness of class differences and prerogatives: "The young Catalan well dressed and a little overweight locked the door. His wife dark olive-skinned beautiful smiled distantly" (1980a, 69). The journey takes on an almost existential tone, especially when Sven refers to "sailing across Castile", which becomes a metaphor for his internal and external struggles. As they traverse desolate and isolated areas, the travellers are confronted with feelings of disconnection, both from the world around them and from each other. The landscape becomes increasingly barren, resembling a desert, reflecting the travellers' growing sense of unease. In the end, Sven's erratic behaviour and philosophical musings lead to his isolation. The travellers decide to part ways with him, and to continue their journey without him. They reflect on their surreal and disorienting experience, leaving Sven behind with a sense of sadness and mystery. The story refers to Castile as a "sea" across which the sense of isolation and disillusionment, and, obliquely, the socio-political situation of this period can be explored, as the desolate landscape in the story mirrors the country's struggle with stagnation and lack of development in this period. Sven is the focal point through which Sheridan presents the main themes of the narrative, as his unpredictable behaviour, his heavy drinking and melancholic disposition reflect a sense of aimlessness in a man who struggles to cope with inner unrest. Similarly, Sven's metaphor of "sailing across Castile" shows an idealized image of freedom that contrasts with the actual arid landscape, and this could be interpreted as a reflection of Spain's efforts to navigate its path forward, caught between traditional values and the pressures of modernization: "Fifty yards in front of them a car lay half submerged in sand. Sven walked forward. His feet, at first, sank in the sand, then he sank to his ankles. He got back to the car, drank from his bottle, his shoulders hunched. He sobbed 'My poor beautiful Castilian sea'" (1980a, 69). This moment captures the isolation and desolation experienced by many in the 1950s.

The sardonic title of "Perfect People" refers to the interactions between two wealthy Irish families (the O'Briens and the Richards), and the story allows Sheridan to build up the rapid social changes of the country through the two families' divergent approaches to them. The story is told in the first person by the unnamed daughter of the O'Brien family, members of which convey a more appreciative connection to Spain. The mother of the O'Brien family values the traditional and unspoiled aspects of the village and is annoyed by the presence of souvenir shops, package tours, hotels, and discotheques, which she finds too grotesque (1980a, 73). This is a lament about the economic shift to cater to tourists at the expense of local culture and traditions. She notices how the locals, now overshadowed by foreign residents and tourists, manifest a sense of loss and disconnection, and observes that "the foreign inhabitants or as I overheard someone call them inmates drank a lot and looked like warriors whose shields were a false unconcern" (1980a, 74). She and her husband, David, seek to reconnect with the culture of the village, as they came "to see the landscape" (1980a, 75), and she claims that the Richards "had never seen the village, the villagers, the 'inmates', the landscape. Only the apartments filled once a year had any reality" (1980a, 76). The Richards thus display their indifference to the reality of the country and embody a shallow and materialistic approach to Spain, since they are depicted as striving for perfection and

status: "Everything they did was imbued with the power of being just the right thing to do at just the right time" (1980a, 72).

Sheridan also explores individual struggles, cultural integration, and the impact of societal norms on individual lives in "Saint Crispian's Day". In this story, the Northern Irish Sheila is a foreigner who travels to an unnamed Spanish village seeking refuge and meaning in a different cultural context, while confronting her own internal battles after the death of her boyfriend, Dominic: "Sheila had fled the meaningless order of her own early life to live eat sleep at will" (1980a, 86). Sheila's interactions reveal her loss and search for understanding and closure following Dominic's death: "I knew he was kind, generous. I knew he loved me but I try to understand those seconds when he made a decision to be killed instead of me" (1980a, 91). Dominic is presented as a melancholic character, who felt the burden of the Troubles, "the tragic years since 1969" (1980a, 95),²¹ and Sheila believed that "society offered nothing for his fastidious nature. He could not have killed, and he was no totalitarian. He saw the changes needed to bring justice, politically and socially, but he could never have walked under a narrow banner" (1980a, 95). Dominic's existential quest parallels the search for meaning, the dissatisfaction with ordinary life and the restlessness throughout post-war Europe: "for Dominic was an explorer with nowhere to go. A revolutionary who could not kill or a drunkard who didn't like alcohol" (1980a, 96). Sheila's interactions with the villagers, especially Don Luis, the doctor, and her integration into their daily life show her trying to find a new sense of belonging: "She had been surprised at how much she enjoyed custom here" (1980a, 85). Despite this, she remains an outsider, evidenced by her self-awareness of never truly belonging in the village: "calmed by a small village's way of life (though I would never belong to it)" (1980a, 86).

"Inquiry" revolves around the unnamed narrator's reminiscence of a past romantic relationship with Luca, a man from Madrid who led a somewhat aimless and carefree life. Luca is depicted as charming, always surrounded by friends and laughter, but also irresponsible and not particularly stable. The narrator recalls the warmth and joy Luca brought into her life, and the ultimate futility of their relationship. Luca was unreliable, more interested in fleeting pleasures than in any deeper connection. Despite being drawn to him, their affair was temporary and eventually ended. The story hints at the repressive political atmosphere through the characterization of Luca and his group. Luca is described as a "spiv from Madrid", which carries connotations of a person living on the fringes of society, "engaging in dubious activities" (1980a, 99). His life of aimlessness and reliance on others mirrors the survival strategies of many during a time when jobs were scarce, and the economy was struggling to recover from the devastation of the Spanish Civil War. The bustling life of Barcelona, and especially the Ramblas, with its cafés, bars, and street vendors, embodies the vibrant yet precarious life in the city. The narrator's interactions with characters such as Don Antonio and Doña Dolores, who face economic hardships and the threat of bailiffs, also highlight the widespread poverty and difficulties experienced by many Spaniards in this period. Despite his outward charm, Luca's life is marked by a sense of escapism, and thus his constant inability to settle down shows his existential struggle to escape the hostility of the Spanish socio-political

²¹ The Battle of the Bogside, Derry, 1969.

environment: “Luca seldom silent always moving somewhere nowhere” (1980a, 100). Luca’s relationship with the narrator is complex, because while he provides moments of joy and excitement his presence also brings instability and danger: “I was safe from Luca; knowing he couldn’t harm me. For I was already sad in love and this frivolous aberration of my real life would soon be forgotten” (1980a, 101–2).

In “Flora and Johnny”, which closes *Captives*,²² the story is narrated by Flora who discusses her relationship with Johnny. This lower-class Irish couple struggle financially, a situation exacerbated by Johnny’s imprisonment. Just as Johnny becomes institutionalized in prison, Flora becomes trapped in the institution of marriage and domestic life: “she too was institutionalised. It surprised her as she had taken her own freedom of action for granted” (1980a, 118). Flora decides to escape to Spain with her children and start anew, and Barcelona acts as a catalyst for her attempt to maintain her independence and forget Johnny. While Flora’s move to Spain is intended to be a personal escape – an emotional and psychological release from her troubled marriage and domestic life – it runs contrary to the political reality of the country, where personal freedoms were curtailed under Franco’s dictatorship. Flora’s concept of freedom is more internal and personal than political. Her choice of Spain reflects a kind of naivety or selective blindness to the broader political climate, highlighting how personal desires for escape can sometimes overlook larger, more oppressive forces. Flora’s Irish friend in Barcelona, Betty, is an obscure character who acts as both an agent of change and criticism, and as a mirror of Flora’s emotional strife. Betty’s insistence on practical solutions and independence encourages Flora to think about her own capabilities and strengths, and this is evident when Flora starts to manage her life without relying on Johnny or Diego, her Spanish lover: “Already she was becoming good at looking after herself; a quality she had perhaps taken for granted even though she had never tried it out” (1980a, 120).

In her two stories published in *Cyphers*, Sheridan builds upon her image of post-war Spain. In “Fairy Tale” (1990), she tackles the transformative impact and the destructive effects of the tourist boom in Spain through the lens of a small village. Tom Dyer, the main character, personifies the complexities and contradictions of the expatriate experience in Spain during this period. He represents the influx of foreigners who settled in the country and brought with them new cultural and economic dynamics. The story describes a small, crumbling hill village in Spain, inhabited by both locals and expatriates. Tom is an Englishman who moves to the village with his wife Emerald, seeking escape and simplicity. Over time, the village, once vibrant and full of life, begins to fall apart. Houses crumble, infrastructure deteriorates, and the once-thriving expat community slowly diminishes. Tom and Emerald’s garden is no longer a site of life and beauty: “Tom Dyer dug and dug until the arid land spouted water. It now again fitted into the waste around it more normally, it seemed, than it had done in the years of plenty when green trees, shrubs, and plants had spread over the valley” (1990, 38). The garden deteriorates as both the physical and emotional lives of the characters break down. Emerald dies in a car accident, leaving Tom in a state of decline. Tom’s daily life becomes a routine of drinking and waiting, representing a broader disillusionment with the expatriate lifestyle. The villagers,

²² Also published in the “Saturday’s New Irish Writing” page in the *Irish Press* on the 29th of November of 1980 (Sheridan 1980b).

meanwhile, struggle with their own issues, and there is a sense of decay and hopelessness permeating the air. As the story progresses, the village metaphorically and literally collapses after a series of tragic but unexplained explosions. The story brings to light the destruction and transformation – the abrupt and often violent changes and the displacement of the local culture – that the tourism boom brought to traditional Spanish villages: “The houses fall, the television antennae like pointing fingers lead to the ground. Explosion followed explosion until, with a tired crunch sound, the last explosion left their domain at their feet” (1990, 43). The contrast between the prosperity that had been brought by tourism and the reversion to a desolate state after the explosions bring to the forefront the instability and impermanence of the economic boom, as observed by Sheridan herself in her personal memoirs: “With tourism came, too, destruction. The Government seemed not to care at all about beautiful Spain. The good fortune to coincide with the increased prosperity in Europe was like manna. It was not to be refused. But also not to be examined. Juan Goytisola [*sic*] was right” (1993, 6). She refers here to the Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo Gay (1931–2017). As stated in her memoirs, Sheridan was familiar with Goytisolo’s writings, in which he frequently denounced the superficiality and negative impact of tourism on local communities.

“The Man Who Stayed” (1983) is set in Barcelona, a city experiencing an influx of American sailors and the dynamism that comes with the presence of the Sixth Fleet. The story touches on the economic aspects of tourism, with references to bars and activities centred on the American visitors. However, it also hints at the superficiality and fleeting nature of these economic benefits. Sr. Manent’s bar is a refuge of resistance and authenticity amidst the chaos of tourism: “Now the quiet bar in that jumping street was his trench and at the door his gun that sardonic smile” (1983, 32). Sr. Manent’s persistent cough symbolizes the lingering effects of oppression and the struggle for survival, as “his cough alone was an outrage, his presence itself a protest” (1983, 34). At the most basic level, the cough indicates Sr. Manent’s deteriorating physical health, a persistent reminder of his declining strength. However, the cough extends beyond the physical realm, symbolizing the emotional and psychological decay that comes with living for years in a harsh and repressive environment. Just as his body is gradually worn down by illness, so too is his spirit, exhausted by the enduring pressures of life in a country governed by authoritarian control. Sr. Manent’s cough also suggests a silent, internalized resistance. Unlike a loud protest or an overt act of defiance, the cough is involuntary and subtle, yet it constantly disrupts the status quo around him. In this way, it can be seen as a metaphor for the unspoken dissent that existed within Spain during Franco’s regime. Many Spaniards, in a manner similar to that of Sr. Manent, may have felt stifled and oppressed, yet their resistance remained subdued, expressed only in small, personal ways rather than through open revolt. The cough also contributes to the image of isolation and detachment. Sr. Manent, although physically present and engaging with the narrator and other characters, remains emotionally distant, guarded by his bitterness and personal pain. His cough is a barrier, separating him from deeper connections with others, just as Spain, isolated by Franco’s policies, was cut off from the European community. Thus, despite his suffering, Sr. Manent’s ability to continue running the bar and his interactions with the patrons reflect an unbroken spirit and a silent protest against the severe social conditions under which he lives. The question posed to the unnamed female narrator and Carlo – “How COULD you live under a dictatorship?” (1983, 36) – reflects the outsiders’ incredulity at

the resilience of those who lived through Franco's regime. The protagonist's answer is a mix of defiance, adaptation, and the understanding that survival often requires compromising ideals. The transformation of Sr. Manent's bar into a neon-lit establishment after his death signifies the inevitable change brought by development: "When I walked down the street where Sr. Manent's bar was... I heard the sound of loud music and saw neon lights around the door" (1983, 37). Just as happened to Sheridan herself when she came back to the city in the 1990s, the return of the protagonist to Barcelona in search of comfort and familiarity reinforces her longing for the past status quo: "When I walked down the street where Sr. Manent's bar was [...] I sat day after day as if memory had no chronology" (1983, 37).

4 Conclusion

Through a (re)discovery of F.D. Sheridan's contribution to Irish literature and an extensive analysis of her short stories set in Spain, it can be argued that her work reflects both local and foreign experiences in the cities and rural areas of the country. Her fine observations stress the significant impacts of overwork and people's poor living conditions (1993, 3) and, at the same time, the expatriates' or tourists' multi-layered perceptions of the country. Spain, particularly Barcelona, is a recurring motif in Sheridan's work, a place that in some cases symbolizes an escape. However, this escape often proves illusory, as the city's essence is eroded by the tourist boom. This disillusionment parallels Sheridan's own reflections in her memoirs, where she describes Barcelona as a "mythical place, which is an irony, for there is no other city I know whose inhabitants have their feet more firmly attached to the earth" (1993, 1). This juxtaposition of idealization and reality is mirrored in her characters, who flee to Barcelona seeking comfort only to encounter failure. The bars in her stories, while sometimes reminiscent of those in the Irish Gaeltacht (Sheridan 1993, 8) in the ways in which they are central to social life, operate as microcosms of this cultural clash and personal disappointment.

Sheridan's writings reveal a thorough understanding of the Spanish socio-political situation of the 1950s and 1960s, as she identifies the regime's failed attempts to improve the situation of the nation, and shows that "although the economic changes certainly made for fewer hardships, they had not changed the fabric of the country" (1993, 6). Unlike other contemporary foreign writers in the country (especially those from Britain, such as Gerald Brenan, V.S. Pritchett, Laurie Lee, or Rose Macaulay) who took a more superficial approach to the underlying multifaceted realities of this period, Sheridan's reflections steer clear of both a nostalgic idealization and an anti-romantic image. Her ability to empathize with "the poor, the lonely, and the unlucky, and to inhabit her characters without patronage or interference" (Kavanagh 1981, 56) adds depth to her portrayal of Spanish life.

In the final section of her memoirs, Sheridan reflects on her short visit to Barcelona in the 1990s, comparing her perceptions of the city to those of Dublin. She notes,

We miss that ramshackle, endearing and downtrodden city that we first knew. Maybe it is that we have just outgrown it, as I feel I have Dublin. Both cities, in their different ways, have become similar, in the way cities can do. They look prosperous and it is good to wander along streets full of young people wearing unconstricting clothes. But poverty is still there. (1993, 20)

This reflection condenses her recognition of the superficial changes brought by prosperity in both her native country and her beloved Barcelona while the underlying issues of poverty persist, and this insight echoes the themes prevalent in her short stories. This paper reaffirms the importance of revisiting and re-evaluating overlooked figures such as Sheridan, whose work provides invaluable additions to Irish literary images of Spain.

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Migrant Voices in the Plurilingual Poetry and Creative Practice of Fíona Bolger

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the responses of Irish contemporary poetry to transnational migration and the attempts of poets to build empathetic connections with migrants and refugees, who face increasing violence across the European continent and beyond. More specifically, the article examines the centrality of this theme in the work of Fíona Bolger (b. 1972), whose plurilingual poetry and work in the field of creative facilitation demonstrate efforts to connect different cultures, languages and marginalized communities. Bolger's anti-racism and trauma informed creative practice, discussed in detail in the article, speaks to the power of poetry to create solidarity across various communities and as such may provide a valuable model for arts-based participation in other contexts. The article argues that her work exemplifies decolonial sensibilities (Phipps 2019) that resist the homogenizing views of national literatures as bound by one nation and language, thus escaping narrow understandings of what constitutes Irish and European writing.

Keywords: migration, plurilingual poetry, decolonial writing practice, national literature, anti-racism, trauma

Migrantski glasovi v raznojezični poeziji in ustvarjalnem pristopu Fíone Bolger

IZVLEČEK

Članek preučuje odzive sodobne irske poezije na transnacionalne migracije in poskuse pesnikov, da bi se empatično povezali z migranti in begunci, ki se po vsej evropski celine in tudi drugod soočajo z naraščajočim nasiljem. Besedilo raziskuje predvsem osrednjo vlogo omenjene tematike v delih Fíone Bolger (roj. 1972), ki skozi kombinacijo svoje raznojezične poezije in kreativnega vodenja drugih izraža prizadevanja za povezovanje različnih kultur, jezikov in marginaliziranih skupnosti. Avtoričina protirasistična in za travmo občutljiva ustvarjalna praksa, ki je podrobno obravnavana v članku, priča o moči poezije, da ustvari solidarnost med različnimi skupnostmi, zaradi česar je lahko dragocen model za umetniško sodelovanje tudi v drugih kontekstih. Članek predpostavi, da je njeno delo primer dekolonialne občutljivosti (Phipps 2019), ki se upira homogenizirajočim pogledom na nacionalne književnosti kot vezane na zgolj en narod in jezik, ter se tako oddalji od ozkih razumevanj tega, kaj naj bi irska oz. evropska književnost bila.

Ključne besede: migracija, raznojezična poezija, dekolonizacijski pisateljski pristop, narodna književnost, protirasizem, travma

1 Introduction

Seeking asylum is a basic human right available to people arriving in Ireland, and elsewhere across the globe, as codified in *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). However, a growing number of international studies points to the increasingly violent nature of European, and the Global North's, national refugee and asylum policies. Despite obligations under human rights law to care for migrants arriving in a country, it is increasingly noticeable that not only is there a departure from the core values enshrined in the Geneva Convention but, more importantly, there is a shortage of empathy and a general desensitization towards the plight of refugees. As a result, what has emerged is a system that is "increasingly restrictive, dehumanising and designed to deter applications for asylum" (Walsh and Ferazolli 2023). It employs methods including extreme forms of border violence and necropolitics, first theorized by Achille Mbembe (2019), which is manifested, for example, in the growing acceptance of refugee deaths at borders or at sea (Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi 2020). As Mbembe (2019, 4) writes, "the brutality of borders is now a fundamental given of our time. Borders are no longer sites to be crossed but lines that separate". After arriving in their country of destination, migrants and asylum seekers are met with more separating walls, such as language barriers, bureaucratic procedures that verge on harassment, and the sense of the incommensurability of their skills and cultural knowledge, including languages, in a new reality. In this context, demonstrations of solidarity with refugees and migrants are a powerful way of countering the violence they experience. They may also suggest growing decolonial sensibilities, if we understand decolonization as a part of a postcolonial legacy that emerged "in resistance to the homogenising cultural effects of globalisation" (Phipps 2019, 2).

This section provides a brief introduction to how Ireland-based poets have responded to the changing ethnic and cultural landscape of Irish society brought about by various migratory movements and refugee crises. Arguably, due to its capacious form, it is within the medium of poetry that we observe the most poignant articulation of what Villar-Argáiz described as the "attempt to achieve an empathetic identification with the migrant Other" (2016, 222). Noting this new aesthetics in the poetry of Eavan Boland, Mary O'Malley, Paula Meehan, and Michael O'Loughlin, she argued that these writers advocate a "rethinking of other, less restrictive understandings of Irish belonging and citizenship by challenging the rigid separation of cultures and/or drawing our attention towards the colonial power relations that attempt to maintain this separation" (Villar-Argáiz 2016, 222).

Such an approach can be seen as a part of a larger decolonial shift in literary studies in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Amongst other things, this finds expression in the contestation of the Eurocentric notion of European literatures as "single-language, nation-bound" entities, and in the recognition not just of "ancestral and regional enclaves within nation states", but also of how migration within, between and from beyond Europe, is central rather than marginal to society, and this has given rise to minority cultures and emerging communities across the continent (Averis, Littler, and Weiss-Sussex 2023, 1). Reflecting on globalization's impact on literary studies in *Global Matters: The Translational Turn in Literary Studies*, Paul Jay (2010, 73) advocated reading texts in a transnational context as a way of supplementing, complicating and challenging the "national models" of studying literature,

arguing that location and place are no longer fixed spaces “but are instead fluid, ambiguous and contested”.

Transnational, migration and minority culture perspectives problematize the notion of the “Irish writer” in various ways. The changing sensibilities of writers exposed to other cultures and languages is explored in the essay “Baggage Reclaim” by Justin Quinn (2009, 159), a Prague-based Irish poet, who, like other writers such as Polina Cosgrove, Nithy Kasa and Rafael Mendes, belongs to one of the new “hyphenated” categories of transnational writers. As Katarzyna Poloczec notes, these new sensibilities are present in the poems of Sinéad Morrissey, Leonita Flynn, Mary O’Malley, and Michael Hayes, whose empathy towards the “immigrant Other” has been shaped by their own experiences of migration (Poloczec 2014, 135). Their works consider different migratory movements, such as migrant workers from Poland in Flynn’s 2011 volume, *Profit and Loss*, or African asylum seekers in Michael Hayes’ work, which also incorporates the voices of nomadic groups, such as Irish Travellers and Roma in Ireland. They also often question the insider/outsider, foreign/local inhabitant dichotomies that are at the heart of the national discourse about belonging and the boundaries of Irish culture. In a number of cases, what has also emerged from this questioning is an encounter in which poets confront their own difference, and they articulate “the notion of the stranger within” as Lucy Collins put it (2015, 5). Sinéad Morrissey’s collection, *Between Here and There* (2002, 9), for instance, captures this sense of looking at one’s native country through different subjectivities, with a “flexible throat full of a foreign language” inhabiting many of the poems.

Postcolonial renderings of other cultures must resist the “commodification of ethnicity as ‘enrichment’ of major culture” (Averis, Littler, and Weiss-Sussex 2023, 8) or use it simply as a mode of literary innovation (Compton 2024, 8). Alison Phipps (2019, 4–6) powerfully argued that a decolonial practice involves acknowledging the voices of refugees, minority cultures and emergent communities, including their languages, within one’s work. Citing the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Phipps calls for a recognition of the position of English as a language of the colonizer, and of how the imposition of colonial languages “inhibited communication and the carriage of culture for those whose languages were sliced up by the lines drawn by the colonisers”. Engaging with non-dominant languages that were not “part of the colonial project” can play a role in the process of decolonization. Coming from the background of language teaching, Phipps’s *Manifesto for Decolonising Multilingualism* offers broad insights into how to “break with colonial, epistemic ways of seeing” within creative practices (2019, 4). This, she insists, can be expressed through engaging with migrant writers “who live and work in languages other than English”, and by citing from indigenous and displaced peoples, asylum seekers, refugees and other diasporic groups, who “know all about the loss of land and language” and whose known worlds are dissolving. Decolonizing, Phipps argues, cannot rely on theory but should become a “lived and felt practice” that is in a dialogue with the decolonizing attempts of others (2019, 5).

It is within this postcolonial contestation of nationalistic approaches to European literatures, and informed by Phipps’s notion of language as carrier of cultural heritage that is not bound by national borders, that I frame my readings of the plurilingual poetry of Fíona Bolger (b. 1972), a

Dublin-based poet and creative facilitator. The approach to migration in her poetry bears the hallmark of her own experience of living in India for over a decade and, for a shorter period, in Poland (Bellappa 2018). Words from the many languages she encountered in those contexts are present in her poems as transmitters of national and transnational experiences, histories and cultures, and it is in this light that I consider her work as essentially plurilingual, a term I discuss later in this article. Bolger's most recent collection of poems, *Love in the Original Language* (2022), most clearly articulates her care for justice and for the dignity of migrants and refugees, some of the most vulnerable and traumatized people in society, and the poems also include the voices and experiences of the migrants "in their original languages". The volume draws attention to the central role language plays in the experience of crossing different kinds of borders: geographical, physical, mental, and cultural. As Katie Donovan noted in her comments on Bolger's collection, the survival of migratory journeys often depends on "nuance, insider slang, an accurate translation, or knowing when to stay silent" (Salmon Poetry 2022).

Kristeva (1991, 15) argued that "between two languages, your realm is silence". The silences and the challenges associated with life in-between become creative potential for Bolger. This "productive porosity of cultural and linguistic boundaries" (Averis, Littler, and Weiss-Sussex 2023, 1) is best shown in the plurilingual collaborative workshops for/with migrants and asylum seekers that she facilitates and co-facilitates. The workshops welcome "all and any level of English", while also inviting the many European and non-European languages of the migrants/new writers to become part of their creative work (Cosgrove and Bolger 2023, 15). The first anthology of plurilingual poetry – *Dubylon. A Tower of Verse*, published in 2023 – created by the migrant writers and co-facilitated by Fíona Bolger and Polina Cosgrove, a Russia-born Irish writer, has been described as a "translational, national, lingual project" rooted in the languages and poetry of Dublin "while reaching across the waters and world to bring fresh phrases to the project" (Cosgrave and Bolger 2023). Such a description expands the conceptions of Irish poetry as being connected to one place with English as its dominant language. By focusing not only on the poetry but also on Bolger's facilitation work, this article responds to recent scholarship, such as *Activist Academic: Engaged Scholarship for Resistance, Hope and Social Change* (2020) that calls for academic research to pay greater attention to issues of social justice, and to the intersections of academic topics with various forms of activism, which imply decolonizing the traditional methodologies that tend to discredit the voices and perspectives of marginal groups or individuals.

This article, the first known piece of scholarship on Fíona Bolger's work,¹ looks to capture the development of her plurilingual poetics through an exploration of the key moments in her biography that helped to shape the features of her craft. The readings of the poems here show how she works towards an empathetic identification with those living between languages and borders, and how her use of plurilingualism aids this project. The article introduces other migrant poets, namely Divya Victor, Vahni Capildeo, and Fatimah Asghar, who inspired what

¹ I would like to thank Fíona Bolger for sharing her private archive and unpublished material, without which this article would not be possible. I would also like to thank Andrew Pringle for reading the drafts of this article and providing essential comments.

Bolger refers to as her “trauma informed” and “anti-racist” creative practice (Fiona Bolger Poetry). As migration, trauma and racism are closely intertwined (Le Grange 2023), the exploration of these influences allows Bolger’s work to be located within a broader context. It also provides a lens through which to examine her work as a facilitator, for instance, in the 2024 project Dubelonging,² as solidarities along the lines of anti-racism, anti-violence, and a culture of welcome are to the fore in both her poetic aesthetics and activism, and provide a valuable model for arts-based participation in other contexts.

In writing this paper, I worked to decolonize my own language as much as possible by carefully considering the normative or contested meanings of terms such as “migrant”, which betray existing geographical and racial hierarchies.³ Uncritical use of such terms exposes biases formed by specific scholarly and epistemological traditions, and furthermore helps to sustain these hierarchies.

2 “Chennai Had Made Me a Poet”: Emigration and the Birth of Plurilingual Poetic Practice

“Stranger is neither a race nor a nation. We are our own strangers – we are divided selves”, wrote Kristeva (1991, 32). Commonly, the idea of a stranger or foreigner is pinned to a notion of geographical borders enclosing and separating “distinct” cultures defined by a dominant ethnicity and language. Kristeva subverts this notion by arguing that the stranger is within ourselves, and once we “acknowledge ourselves as foreigners”, embracing the different and the uncomfortable, the term becomes invalidated. This process is facilitated by encounters with other cultures, through travel or exile, or by discovering different cultures within dominant ones. Indeed, a growing body of scholarship explores different cultures “within” Irish society, such as Irish Travellers, “a long-ostracised cultural minority within Ireland”, and the continued colonial legacy of silencing and othering Travellers within Irish literature (Ó Haodha 2011, 43).⁴ The contestation of essentializing, ethno-nationalist narratives of “Irishness” within the Irish literary tradition had already been taken up by different writers in the past, most notably James Joyce, who imagined “a world without a foreigner”, a world possible when everyone acknowledges the “fictive natures of all nationalism” and the stranger in the self (Kiberd 2005, 313–14). Interestingly, Kiberd noted that much of Irish literature, from the work of Yeats and Edna O’Brien to literature written in Irish in the seventeenth century, was composed outside Ireland, in the cities of continental Europe. He concluded “It is almost as if Irish writers found that they had to go out into the world in order to discover who exactly they were” (Kiberd 2005, 2).

² The Dubelonging workshop was advertised as “open to all language and literacy levels with ‘professional’ to new writers joining with those new to English and/or new to writing” (Dubelonging 2024.)

³ For an interesting discussion on the word “expat” vs. “immigrant/migrant”, which concludes that people from “inferior races” are never considered “expats”, even when they meet the requirements of the definition, see: Koutonin 2015.

⁴ *KIN. An Anthology of Poetry, Story and Art by Women from Romani, Traveller and Nomadic Communities*, published in Ireland in 2024 by Salmon Poetry, is a first such collection gathering voices of writers and artists from Europe and beyond.

Bolger's experience of living outside of Ireland and exposure to languages, such as Tamil, Hindi or Polish, are at the heart of her poetic aesthetics and decolonial practice. In her first book of poems and artwork, *The Geometry of Love Between the Elements* (2013), translations into Tamil, Polish, and Irish – all languages that were suppressed in certain periods – appear alongside English poems, which, as Bolger commented, “were responses to various moments in [her] life and the lives of people around [her]”. She spent nearly ten years in Tamil Nadu, a year in the Polish city of Sandomierz, and her childhood and youth in Ireland (Boyce 2013). The volume was published after Bolger's return to Ireland from India, which she described as “slightly less than voluntary”, hinting at the potentially traumatic nature of the move. The Indian period resulted in her looking at the different linguistic aspects of her poetic voice, particularly the issue of mixing languages, and the role of poetry itself in a new way. As Bolger concluded, “in many ways Chennai had made me a poet” (Belliappa 2018).

One of the stanzas in Bolger's thirteen-stanza poem “Telling Secrets” (2023, unpublished work),⁵ inspired by her stay in Sandomierz, traces the etymology of the word “maidan”, which becomes an opportunity to show the connected nature of distinct places and cultures, the past and present, meeting in one word that since 2014 has come to signify the Ukrainian revolution:

Lublin

Maidan, a word well travelled from central Asia
south into India and north to the heart of Europe.

A word carried in the mouths of many, speakers
of Polish and Russian and Yiddish and Ukrainian
and German, worshippers in synagogues and churches
and mosques, under rulers from Vienna and Istanbul
in a region named for the Celts, Galicia.

I meet it in Majdanek, monument of human ash [...]

The poem speaks to the author's vision of words as transmitters of national/transnational cultures and histories, but they also become testimonies of places where buildings still have the “Hebrew script” on them and a neighbour still owns “the Torah”, and locations that different minorities used to call home, like “Lehrmans, now forgotten”. Moreover, the last few lines of the stanza encapsulate the centuries of violence in the region: the colonial conquests, partitions – borders and territories in constant flux – and the Holocaust that significantly altered the fabric of societies in Central and Eastern Europe.

The difficult experience of homecoming, which problematizes the notion of “native land”, is powerfully captured in the poem “A foreigner is someone who makes us feel we belong”. With a title inspired by an Indian writer, Amitava Kumar, it appears in Bolger's collection, *A Compound of Words* (2019), and weaves her experiences of living in Dublin, Chennai and

⁵ The poem was read on the 31st of May 2023 at Wednesday's poetry readings (Sunflower Sessions) in the Lord Edward Pub in Dublin.

Allahabad. Echoing both Kristeva and Joyce, the theme of returning to the birthplace, “my native place”, to find oneself “different”, “fitting but fractured”, “without roots”, makes the poem personal and evocative of conceptions of home, loss of home and the conflicting notions belonging has for migrating persons. The poem remains sensitive to the language around migration itself, which reflects society’s acceptable inclusions and exclusions, where mere prefixes have the power to change perceptions and emotional responses. The last, slightly ironic, stanza of the poem articulates this most profoundly: “desi or pardesi / immigrant or emigrant / indigenous or disingenuous / pretending or blending / deceiving or conceiving / another way, elsewhere / anywhere, but here” (Bolger 2019, 82). The Hindi word *desi* is used to describe a person who comes from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh when they are living in another country, while *pardesi* is a Hindi word for a foreigner, used mostly within the Indian subcontinent, and sometimes used with a slightly pejorative undertone.⁶ The last line, “anywhere, but here”, suggests a struggle to settle back in Ireland, whereas the Tamil words signify the deep ties with the language of the previous home, while also accentuating the nuanced ways in which meaning is negotiated in different languages and contexts.

The 2017 anthology, *All the Worlds Between. A Collaborative Project Between India & Ireland*, edited by Srilata K. and Bolger, can be seen as a precursor to Bolger’s commitment to a plurilingual aesthetics. The anthology gathers bi-, multi- and plurilingual poets based in India and Ireland, who all responded creatively to “questions of home, belonging, identity, exclusion and homogenisation”, often considering the different associations evoked by everyday objects, like shoes, in their languages (2017, xiv). The publication recognizes that “Poets are influenced not only by the languages in which they are fluent, but also by those dialects and languages to which they have been exposed and which have somehow been absorbed into their creative consciousness”, a description that captures the essence of plurilingualism (xvii). After her return to Ireland, drawing on the languages she learned in India became a means for Bolger to channel her new identity now enriched by the scenes, flavours, sounds and other elements of Indian culture, such as Indian writing. This prompted not only an interest in, but also an empathetic understanding of, the experiences of those who, similarly to her, live between places and languages, and in the interplay between words and their meaning (Bellippa 2018).

The existing scholarship on plurilingualism has considered the concept primarily in relation to language acquisition pedagogy, as can be seen in recent publications like *The Routledge Handbook of Plurilingual Language Education* (2022). Discussions in the field of poetry have more keenly focused on translingualism, a practice of writing in a language other than one’s first language, (a notable Irish example of this being Samuel Beckett, who chose to create his works in French), or language switching, which requires a confident level of fluency in more than one language, which can also be defined as multilingualism (Loda and Viselli 2022, 20). Bolger defines plurilingualism as coming from a “deep affection” for languages that shaped one’s experiences, rather than fluency in a language (Bellippa 2018). This is consistent with the scholarly definition of plurilingualism as the ability to learn and use one’s knowledge of other languages and cultures, while stressing the “interconnected nature of the language

⁶ Many thanks to Priyanka Borpujari for her insights on the Hindi words used in the poem.

resources of the individual” and the fact that languages are themselves social constructs. Most importantly, “plurilingualism encourages seeing the *connections* between languages, which are after all just assemblies of varieties, sociolects, registers, and borrowings that become complex, open, flexible, dynamic, composite ‘polysystems’” (Piccardo, Germain-Rutherford, and Lawrence 2022, 1; original emphasis). Plurilingualism and plurilingual poetic practice celebrates and embraces work that connects languages, and the serendipity involved in this process, thus creating a sense of inclusivity that is hard to match in other -lingualisms.

The topic of migration runs “beneath many poems” in *All the Worlds Between*, and the collection solidifies a vision of work that is engaged with the subject and a poetics that goes beyond national and linguistic borders. As Srilata K. and Bolger write in their editor’s note to the volume, “At a time when the world is said to be small but borders are being raised higher and higher, words which can float over no-man’s-land and not only touch down, but take root in a handful of soil, are precious” (2017, xix). These acts are not purely linguistic but are a form of resistance that speaks to power relations that, in addition to physical borders, produce “invisible borders” between people. Overcoming these requires a “democratic imagination and ethical collaboration that allow every voice to be heard and valued” (O’Neill et al. 2018). In his acute assessment of the “ordeal of the world”, the dehumanization of migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups, Mbembe (2019) argued that too little work is being done on “inclusions” and producing “bond-intensifying” narratives, as public discourse predominantly seeks to divide, with stories of “us” and “them” imparted in ever new contexts.

Language is vital to creating connections between places and cultures. A plurilingual poet, Nadia Niaz, who describes herself as “from Melbourne, and still a little bit from lots of other places”, observed the following about the role of language mixing in poetry:

[its aim] is not to teach general readers and listeners new languages, but rather to indulge the multilingual poet’s desire to mix languages in a way that is natural to them – to us. In doing this we expose the general reader to sounds that, while unfamiliar, can still contain glimmers of access and can potentially help them make connections across languages. (Niaz 2019)

Niaz stresses the potential that lies in the discomfort experienced when encountering “unfamiliar” words. Indeed, this seems to be a point of departure for Bolger, whose love of “foreign” words represents a love for the “foreigner”, to use Kristeva’s term, where the potential discomfort felt by the reader mirrors the discomfort of the displaced persons.

3 Plurilingualism and Identification with Migrant Experiences

In the poetry collection *Love in the Original Language* (2022), Bolger’s handling of the topic of migration articulates the decolonial practices discussed by Phipps (2019) that can help towards an identification with migrant experiences. This is shown in her use of citations, which acknowledge various experiences of migration by employing the voices of the migrants and/or through references to other migrant poets and poems “found in the cracks between borders”, and the use of plurilingualism. The twelve parts of the poem “The End of October” (12–31)

record refugee experiences across different times and spaces, and uses images of sea journeys, bodies on the sand, and lives lived under various forms of terror. Most of the voices appear in the form of direct quotes. As explained in the accompanying notes to the poem these are, for example, an anonymous rescuer on Lesbos, a comment on why Jews stayed in the Krakow ghetto during the Second World War, or the voice, in part iv, of a Syrian person caught between borders, “facing the damp hungry cold / between borders we wish / we could go home”.

Irish experiences of dangerous journeys are recalled in the stanza that speaks of “Coffin ships / Diseased Irish / Ellis Island”, and these images are juxtaposed with the Irish proverb, *níl aon tinteán / mar do thinteán féin* (“there is no hearth like your own hearth”, a variation of “there is no place like home”). This Irish language phrase becomes prominent in the poem, foregrounding how the experience of seeking refuge has been central to Irish history and identity. Confronting voices that speak of unsettling, often deadly, journeys that have become daily news across Europe, with the image of the safety of home – the ultimate motive for, and objective of, these journeys – humanizes and universalizes different kinds of refugee experiences, reminding the reader that “no matter how small or how / distant a person is a person wherever they are” (13).

“The End of October” begins with a quote from a Syrian poet, Nizar Qabbani, whose “Footnotes to the Book of the Setback” was a response to the Six-Day War that was instantly banned in Arabic countries, and so is “one of the few genuine samizdat poems in modern Arab poetry” (Qabbani, N., & Adonis, 1981, 71). “The End of October” cites Qabbani’s lines, “My grieved country / In a flash / You changed me from a poet who wrote love poems / To a poet who writes with a knife” (Bolger 2022, 13). The choice to include these lines as well as framing “The End of October” with a reference to Qabbani as a spirit of the poem, signals a new, bolder poetic necessitated by the normalization of violence towards refugees and their deaths (“These are the days of the dead”) and the growing indifference for the living: as the poem poignantly concludes, “the living are silenced / by the deafening emptiness” (Bolger 2022, 13). Bolger’s poems have been described as “often angry”, her words “sharp” (Carragher), with “heart-breaking” stanzas (Narang 2020) that provoke emotional responses. Similarly, Qabbani’s poem is said to have unleashed “a flood of pent-up frustration and anger”, a powerful creative force that initiated a new current in Arabic literature (Qabbani and Adonis 1981, 71).

Poems can work as testimonies, bearing witness to sites of violence, and as attempts to represent human suffering and memorialize the victims (Sur 2021). The titles of some poems in Bolger’s *Love in the Original Language*, such as “Stranded at Sea”, “Translated from a Libyan Life in Ireland” and “No Child is Born to Flicker in the Shadows”, are in themselves testimonies to life-threatening border crossings, living with post-traumatic stress disorder, and questions of citizenship and belonging. Striking dedications of the poems, such as, “in memory of Yussef Mohamed (died aged 11, Aleppo)” in the poem “Numbers”, or to Javad, who disappeared in 1991, in the poem “Ghazal for Parveena and her son, Javaid”, express a deeply humane consideration for the suffering of people in conflict-torn countries and an effort to preserve the memory of the victims, so that they do not become just numbers. Capitalizing on other people’s tragedies could be seen as exploitative, and to forestall this the

poet acknowledges her position and the subjectivity that amplifies the often underrepresented or muted voices. Bolger's use of citations and references to real events in her notes to poems like "Ghazal for Parveena", based on Mughal Mase's kidnapping by the Indian armed forces in Kashmir in 1991, in addition to using words and phrases uttered by the people who populate her work, signals her recognition of the ethical concerns about the appropriation and commodification of those voices (Bolger 2022, 83).

The poem "Translated from a Libyan Life in Ireland" (Bolger 2022, 20)⁷ strives to create an empathetic representation of a traumatized individual making a life in Ireland. Arabic words are introduced to accentuate the experiences of the poem's persona, an Arabic speaker, who lost family members in a conflict. They spend time in iconic Dublin locations, Bewley's Café during the day and Whelan's bar at night – all, as it turns out, serve as distractions from the terror of the night when, as they admit, "I'm woken by the distant past / [...] I had heard others die / a blow-by-blow account / but when my sister died / there was no transmission / not a whisper did I hear of her". The Arabic words, as explained in the notes to the poem, such as, *mojewdia*, "to be, to exist, existentialism"; *waheed*, "alone"; or *al Ummah*, "the worldwide community of Muslims" (Bolger 2022, 83), accentuate the different layers of experience of a traumatized individual making a life in a new country. The unexpected words take readers out of their comfort zone and thus, to a certain degree, mirror the obstacles of adapting to a new place and language. The sense of alienation, trauma and of not fitting in represents the challenges faced by refugees and migrants from the Middle East, many of them Arabic speakers, across the European continent.

The volume *A Compound of Words* reflects on, amongst other things, the hybrid and in-between position of Ireland, a country colonized by Britain but also "its accessory to empire in India". Here, the language of "European and Asian etymology" invites the reader to "break their linguistic shackles", as characterized by Bilal (2020). In the poems that are testimonies of different sites of violence the presence of words in different languages invokes specific sites of trauma. They also alter the experience of reading, and, in the words of Divya Victor, "make the reader extremely alert to the work of reading", an effort that mimics the effort of navigating life as a migrant (Sur 2021).

Bureaucracy – waiting for documents, approvals and appointments – "comes to play a dominant and colonizing role" in migrants' and refugees' lives (Tesseur 2019, 441). In Bolger's view, the Arabic, Tamil, Polish or Irish words interspersed with English work to build bridges and foster empathetic connections between people of different backgrounds. As she puts it:

It is my belief that if I hold your words in my mouth, and I speak them, I cannot ever not see your humanity. I cannot kill you and I cannot hate you. Because I have held your words in my mouth. In a way, it is the most intimate kind of connection that we can have with a stranger: for me to take your word, and put it in my mouth, and speak it with love, and for you to take my words and speak them back to me with

⁷ In terms of the ethics of representation, Bolger informed me that the poem appeared in the collection after the person whose experiences inspired it had read it and consented to its publication (email correspondence).

love. There is also a risk of embarrassment associated with that and getting the word wrong. However, for an outsider, in a new country, every moment is a risk. And so for somebody who's in comfort in that place, to put themselves in a position where they may fail, or where they may fall in the gaps, I think is a brave thing to do. *But the act of migration itself is the bravest.* Perhaps that's exactly what Homi Bhabha's idea of third space is about as well, that moving out of our comfort, the moving edge of the comfort zone. I suppose the beauty of that space, where we all put our words in the middle, is that it's nobody's comfort zone anymore. Or maybe it's everyone's comfort zone. (Transcript of a recorded conversation, April 26, 2024; emphasis added by the author)

It is also important to underline how the performative aspects of poetry readings become enactments of the interventions embodied in these works in the public space. In this context, the spoken word, which amplifies the messages emotively and somatically, can be a potent source of learning and perhaps even assuage trauma, as it also enables a level of identification with migrant experiences.

4 Anti-Racism and Trauma Informed Poetic Practice

Bolger places her creative practice, including the facilitation of writing workshops with migrant/refugee writers, within a trauma informed and anti-racist landscape (Fiona Bolger Poetry). Trauma, migration, and racism are closely linked as many exiles happen due to traumatic events like war – sites of racial and/or religious conflict – natural disasters, or poverty. Migrating persons endure different forms of violence on their journeys, with hostilities continuing after arrival at their destinations. As Barnsley, Bower and Teifouri (2022, 1) point out: “post-arrival life for migrants is not a linear, forward-moving process but a kind of re-dwelling in lost homes and landscapes, the beginning of a micro-bordering which continues for years”. Other ways in which racism and trauma overlap are discussed by Resmaa Menakem (2021, 4), who in *My Grandmother's Hands* explores the racialized trauma of Black Americans caused by the “white-body supremacy”, a system that continues to privilege white people as a group, while demeaning and destroying Black bodies. Menakem argues that trauma of a different kind also lives in the bodies of white Americans, which lies under the cycle of trauma produced by witnessing ongoing everyday acts of racial discrimination and harassment. This view is amplified by Edith Shiro (2024), who expands this notion by stating that many societies currently face a “collective trauma” due to witnessing (in most media) the suffering of migrants and refugees. The collective trauma in her words occurs because “a community, a group of people, or a whole culture experiences chronic, ongoing injustice and suffering with no resources to navigate it”.

As Le Grange (2023, 14) notes “racism is inextricably bound up with coloniality and therefore anti-racism with decoloniality.” An anti-racist stance involves acknowledging the traumatic experiences present in these everyday oppressions, but also decolonizing “the knowledge produced by universities and the creative industries by examining how collaboration, a commitment to multilingualism and ‘poetic activism’ can work together in a way which affirms the way individual persons create meaning of their worlds” (Barnsley, Bower and Teifouri 2022, 3). Wade Compton (2024, 7–8) articulated this in his apt observation that to

produce an anti-racist literature, white creators must, first of all, acknowledge that they are producing an ethnic literature that belongs to a specific tradition by which the value of each literary work is measured. Rather than rejecting those traditions, Compton invites writers to interrogate them, and foregrounds “the role of writers in recovering long suppressed or devalued traditions” over what is simply understood as innovation. In practice, this involves a critical examination of one’s own subjectivity, followed by a careful selection of texts and resources that inform one’s practice, inviting perspectives that enable diverse subjects to relate to the experiences portrayed in one’s texts.

In Bolger’s lecture, tellingly titled “Writing from the Inside Out and the Outside In” (2021), which explores the role of the major influences in her work, she demonstrates an awareness of the importance to talk about her subjectivity. She opens the lecture by positioning herself, geographically, linguistically, and culturally, stressing the role of her poetry as “practice”, an act of wondering at “the imagination and the insight” of other poets, and as a way of thinking carefully about the questions raised by poetry in a kind of dialogue with other poets and texts. Phipps (2019, 8) argues that this is a crucial element of decolonial creative practice: “[i]t’s vital that privilege and position are part of our ongoing reflection on where we speak from and on behalf of whom”. The rejection of colonial epistemic violence involves acknowledgment of other, mainly marginalized and suppressed, voices, and critically evaluating the status of one’s own epistemologies.

Unsurprisingly, the main inspirations in Bolger’s work are migrant poets, for whom moving between places is a part of their poetics and who engage with plurilingualism as a way of inviting non-dominant, marginalized languages into their creative works. The most notable influences are Divya Victor, a Tamil American poet born in India, Vahni Capildeo, a Scottish Trinidadian writer, and other diasporic authors such as Fatimah Asghar, Bhanu Kapil, Moniza Alvi, and Imtiaz Dharker. These poets debate the language around migration, interrogating the contested terms of exile, refugee, diaspora, and homeland, looking for their etymological roots (the origins of words found in “strange” lands). “Language is my home”, insists Capildeo, referring to language as an idea rather than a particular language. Bolger has been drawn to Capildeo’s concept of “plurilocalism”, a concept that might be seen as a twin of plurilingualism, and which denotes “the state in which whatever place one happens to be in is referred to and through other *specific* places, whether known personally or known only as lost” (Capildeo 2021). While plurilingualism is about “being between” languages, plurilocalism is about being between places, imagined or real, “a heritage place, a place fled by parents to escape from war, your parents’ native place” or the one not yet explored (Bolger, “Writing” 2021). This approach is echoed in Bolger’s vision of writing itself:

Writing is a form of communication. Diaspora and migration are about separation from a place of origin. These [aforementioned] writers present us with interesting ways in which writers are connected with and yet separated from the place of origin. And even this notion of origin. It’s complicated. It’s contested. We have to acknowledge all of that. Poetry itself is about making. It comes from the Greek word to make. So it’s not cerebral. It’s not logical. It doesn’t have to be narrative based, but it can be about making. And I’d like to think of poems as offering new ways of thinking. (Bolger, “Writing” 2021)

The word “migrant” itself is charged with abundant negative connotations. In Divya Victor’s *Curb* (2022), a book with images and poems scattered across the pages (sometimes literally), she writes that “a migrant is a disputed / territory over which there / is *our* a disagreement / this is an *my* attempt / at resemblance *my* / a body reaching a mine / an agreement with his”. She highlights the conflict around ownership of the experiences of the migrant, who, by virtue of no longer living in their “native” place, or places, becomes a space to be claimed; at the same time, Victor attempts to disrupt this idea by introducing an awkward syntax and ungrammatical sentences. Her poetry explores a creative use of the language of bureaucracy and forms that are to be found in the strict immigration policies of “Trump’s America”. “Victor stretches form filling until it becomes a poetic form of its own. [...] She takes this tedious and painful process and uses it to build characters”, commented Bolger on this element of Victor’s aesthetics (Bolger, “Writing” 2021). The power of using forms to create poetry defies what Victor describes as the “kind of recurrent violence” that migrants must go through by constantly having to write themselves into forms. Her engagement with bureaucratic documents is “a way to rehabilitate [her] attachment to their language, and to tell a story in the midst of the bureaucratic subjectivation” (Sur 2021).

That the disruption and deconstruction of official documents brings with it an enormous creative potential is also shown in the poetry of Fatimah Asghar (2018), another influence in Bolger’s work, as can be seen in her writing workshops where she encourages participants to creatively deconstruct official government forms.⁸ Asghar uses forms as a poetic expression to capture the experiences of a “Pakistani Muslim woman in contemporary America”. Some examples include “Microaggression Bingo” (2018, 68), in the form of a bingo card; “Partition”, with a note dated August 15th, 1947 (2018, 65), a prose paragraph with spaces to be filled out; and a poem in the form of a floor plan titled “Script for Child Services: A Floor Plan” (2018, 59). Asghar’s work communicates how various aspects of identity, such as one’s gender, background, skin colour, and sexuality, intersect and add other layers to the experience of migration. Exile is always a disruption to one’s life and identity, and this is what Victor, Asghar and Bolger want to make the reader “feel” by disrupting the experience of reading, by the way, for instance, their poems appear on the page or are titled, which also finds expression in Bolger’s poem “By Halves” (2019, 62).

Victor’s poetic renditions of trauma are another important influence for Bolger, who worked with Victor in the professional development of her practice (email correspondence). In her workshops and facilitation work, often with traumatized individuals, Bolger employs some of the creative writing resources developed by Victor that are steeped in trauma writing. An example is “The Audre Lorde Questionnaire to Oneself” created by Victor for students in her Creative Writing courses at Nanyang Technological University in January 2016 (the questionnaire has since been reproduced across multiple Internet sites). The questions revolve around defying silencing, which signals trauma, one of the main themes in Audre Lorde’s

⁸ An example is a poem “Licence to Live” by an Iranian refugee poet who participated in a workshop co-facilitated by Bolger – the name is not disclosed as the author of this article did not obtain permission to share it – of which a copy was shared among the participants at the event, “In Between”, an evening of poetry reading by migrants and asylum seekers in Dublin’s Third Space on the 17th of April 2024.

essayistic writing where she confronts the marginalization and silencing of Black women in American culture and feminist writing. In “Transformation into Silence”, Lorde opens with a confession: “I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood” (Lorde 2007, 40). Victor’s questionnaire takes sentences directly from Lorde’s essay, such as, “What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?”. To which she adds instructions encouraging a conversation around painful experiences; in this instance: “[List as many as necessary today. Then write a new list tomorrow. And the day after.]” (The Audre Lorde Questionnaire To Oneself).

“The anti-racists workshop is a study of love. It advances humility and empathy over control and domination”, freeing educators to, broadly speaking, decolonize the classroom (Chavez 2021). Anti-racist and decolonial mindsets, as argued by Chavez (2021) and Phipps (2019), are not theoretical but are expressed through practice and interventions that focus on providing a platform for “those living behind the shutters, hidden away, waiting”. In the context of migration, they stress the importance of love, solidarity and embracing cultural difference as part of creating meaning and a sense of belonging, “desperately needed in the hostile environments created by some Northern countries that are designed to protect their own wealth” (Tesseur 441). Bolger has facilitated workshops with different communities of multilingual migrant writers as well as other underrepresented and underprivileged communities such as Traveller writers, and in collaboration with such institutions as the Irish Writers Centre in Dublin, Yoda Press in Delhi, Intercultural Language Centre, Ballybough and the Women 4 Women, a part of Furry Hill Community Centre, Dublin (Fiona Bolger Poetry n.d.). An Indian scholar in Ireland, Tapasya Narang (2020, 4–5), described being “comforted” by Bolger’s poetry on navigating life “between Ireland and India” that included words and cultural rituals familiar to her. She remarked on the inclusivity, welcoming atmosphere and “spirit of community” fostered by Bolger, which, as she noted in her review of the poet, was also mirrored in her works.

5 *Dubelonging: Agency and Community of New Writers in Creative Writing Workshops*

In *Material Stories of Migration: Reframing Home Through Poetry*, Barnsley, Bower and Teifouri (2022, 218) write that the dehumanizing and insensitive narratives that represent migrants in the media, and the anti-immigration discourses of politicians, “can split communities and divide nations”. Migrants are frequently deprived of a voice and the agency to create their own representations, and are fixed in othering and marginalizing narratives. Writing and performing poetry, “storying” migrant lived experiences, has the power to counter this by creating a safe space while also producing “cross-cultural meanings that resonate in ‘hostile environments’”. The anthology *Dubylon. A Tower of Verse* (2023) is an example of such an endeavour. Instead of a table of contents there are “Continents”, which points to the coming together of authors from diverse backgrounds and languages, such as Ukrainian, Arabic, Polish, Spanish, Hindi, Chichewa, Albanian, Russian, Portuguese, and Setswana. The poems are written in and on a location, Dublin, where these languages can be heard on the streets.

The list of contributors contains short biographies that include details of the places in which they have lived, languages they know, their favourite writers, and their dreams, and yet they convey so much more about the lives of the participants: “My dreams are freedom of speech and decent accommodation for every child”, “My dream is to see Palestine Free, justice, peace and quietness in the world”, “My dream... is to leave a beautiful impression on people after leaving” (65–66).

The names of favourite writers form a global literary map inviting readers to explore creators from far-away lands such as Nizar Qabbani, Mario Vargas Llosa, Desmond Dudwa Phiri, Divya Victor, Castro Alves, Sławomir Mrożek, Premchand, and Mahmoud Darwish, to name but a few. During the *Dubylon* project, the writers brought these influences and their memories of the other places they call home together to discuss poems about Dublin and, ultimately, to create their own “poetic map of Dublin streets and suburbs” (Bourke 2023, 10). The section “Poems to Dublin and other cities we have loved”, is a homage to the city and the emotions it evokes in its new habitants; at the same time, the sense of loss and nostalgia for the places left behind lingers in the poems also. The first line of the poem, “Dublin you are a seductive lover” by a Syrian writer, Nasouh Hossari, which compares Dublin to Damascus, is “I don’t want to be a traitor”, which expresses a sense of betrayal for loving Dublin, a new home, and what it means for the “first love”, Damascus, which lives in the “ribs” and “blood” of the poem’s speaker. Metaphors of seduction and betrayal capture well the everyday negotiations of a life between two, or more places, and languages. Hossari’s poem exemplifies Capildeo’s idea of plurilocality, being in one place through a connection to other places. “Dublin was never really an ‘Irish’ city”, but a port city, a “place of comings and goings of all races” that provided access to Ireland, Europe and other parts of the world, writes Peter Sheekey in his letter included in *Dubylon* (2023, 12). The collection embodies this idea of hybridity, which is reflected in the music it creates from the many words from different languages now taking root in the Irish soil.

Dubylon oozes with invitations to speak, to participate in casual interactions. A reference to James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, an otherwise linguistically challenging experimental novel, frames the anthology with an encouragement to the creators to loosen their tongues, to share stories: “O / tell me all about / Anna Livia! I want to hear all / about Anna Livia. Well, you know Anna Livia? Yes, of course, we all know Anna Livia. Tell me all. Tell me now. You’ll die / when you hear [...]” (2023, 8). The untitled poem beginning “Dublin you gotta tell me” by Fíona Bolger invites different tongues to tell their tales; more importantly, though, the poem’s persona is also ready to listen, which is expressed in the Polish form *stucham*⁹ and the Irish *éistim*, and these are placed alongside other languages to be heard in the streets of Dublin, such as the Jordanian expression, *Shufi mafi*, “what’s up?”, “what’s new?”:

Dublin you gotta tell me -
in all your tongues -
don’t stop keep talking

⁹ As of the Irish Census 2022, the Polish diaspora stands at 93,680, which makes it the largest minority in the country.

keep telling I'm listening
 słucham
 I'm listening to you
 tell me, tell me all
 I drink in your words
 drain your babble
 I thirst for your news
 your newness,
 as you bubble and burble
 you tell me you tell...
 you city you specificity
 you fluidity you flow-er
 you flower, you aul petal
 speak and sing-on
 I listen słucham éistim
 I learn shufi, mafi
 we are all here
 heard and unheard
 I listen

The poems are written in English but woven through them are words from the languages meaningful to the writers. For many, the workshops are an opportunity to improve their English language proficiency, while for others they are a chance to learn a few words from other languages and socialize. However, the issue of language does not present the greatest barrier that these migrants and asylum seekers face. The real obstacle is the precarity of the lives of those in the International Protection System, including accommodation issues, that “made regular attendance a challenge” (Bolger and Cosgrove 2023, 15)

How does one write in a language with limited proficiency? The conversations at the workshops revolve around accessible topics, like “Greetings”, one of the sections in the *Dubylon* collection, or animals, stimulating discussions around the words for animals in different languages and their cultural symbolism.¹⁰ The writers then “bring” their animals to Dublin; some are native to Ireland like swans, while others are familiar to the writers’ previous homes, such as in Twanda Thomas’s poem “Elephants” (2023, 57), which compares Dublin’s characteristics to that of an elephant: “a herd of elephants grey like the buildings of Dublin City”. At times in these workshops the participants lack the words to name animals in English and the meanings they express, and thus resort to finding pictures on their phones,

¹⁰ The author of this article participated in one of the Dubelonging workshops, on the 23rd May 2024, dedicated to animals. The exchanges about animals led to broader discussions about differences and similarities between different cultures.

which when shown around the room provoke surprise, inspiration or simply laughter. It is in moments such as these, with everyone interacting, exchanging, and building understanding, that a safe, supportive environment is fostered that allows for the creation of new literature, and a place one may call home.

6 Conclusion

At the 2024 International Literature Festival in Dublin, the poet Natalie Diaz argued that telling stories about a body, a family or a migrant, even if they are painful, is an expression of love since “we are close to the things we write” (Diaz). Holding someone in the words of a poem, in the language of those who are described, is an act of love. This article has argued that this approach informs the plurilingual poetry and creative practice of Fíona Bolger, whose work defies the borders of “national” literature by embracing different languages, cultures, and literatures. The inclusive writing workshops she facilitates, alongside other creators, provide a safe environment where creativity flourishes, and serve to replace alienation, loss of homeland and everyday hostilities with a sense of home and belonging, and so work towards the creation of a community of writers. Bolger’s poetry and her practice embody the inclusivity inherent in the decolonial mindset, and are part of a larger movement calling for the decolonization of the curriculum and creative practice.

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Musical Form as a Framing Device: Absolute Music and *Desiderius a Dó* [The Second Desiderius] by Pádraig Ó Cíobháin

ABSTRACT

This paper undertakes a close reading of European classical music forms used as a framing device in the Irish language novel *Desiderius a Dó* (1995) by Pádraig Ó Cíobháin. Considered one of the seminal novels of modern Irish, Ó Cíobháin's work contains what the scholar Irina Rajewsky describes as "intramedial references to visual arts, music, cinema, literature and architecture". Classical music occupies a central place in the novel, and is essential for an understanding of its plot, characterization, narrative and its thematic concern with ideas of binaries and performance. The paper examines absolute music forms characteristic of the classical period in the novel, explores how Ó Cíobháin uses liturgical music and chant, and concludes that the overall effect of the writer's approach is a reimagination of the Irish language novel within a European frame that is remarkable for the depth and scope it gives the characters and the narrative.

Keywords: intermediality, Irish language fiction, framing device, classical music, absolute music, Pádraig Ó Cíobháin, contemporary Irish fiction, Irish language, arts

Glasbena oblika kot pripovedni okvir: absolutna glasba in *Desiderius a Dó* [Drugi Desiderius] Pádraiga Ó Cíobháina

IZVLEČEK

Avtorica v prispevku raziše vlogo klasičnih evropskih glasbenih oblik kot pripovednega okvira v irskem romanu *Desiderius a Dó* (1995) avtorja Pádraiga Ó Cíobháina. Roman velja za enega najpomembnejših romanov v sodobni irščini in po mnenju Irine Rajewsky vključuje »intramedialne reference na vizualne umetnosti, glasbo, kinematografijo, književnost in arhitekturo«. Klasična glasba zavzema osrednje mesto v romanu in je ključna za razumevanje zapleta, karakterizacije ter same pripovedi in njenega tematskega osredotočanja na binarizme ter glasbo kot uprizoritev. Pričujoče besedilo preučuje klasične oblike absolutne glasbe v omenjenem romanu, opredeli načine, kako Ó Cíobháin uporablja liturgično glasbo in napeve, ter v zaključku ugotavlja, da je splošni učinek avtorjevega pristopa ponovna umestitev irskega romana znotraj evropskega okvira na način, ki izstopa zaradi globine in širine, ki jo daje likom in pripovedi.

Ključne besede: intermedialnost, leposlovje v irskem jeziku, pripovedni okvir, klasična glasba, absolutna glasba, Pádraig Ó Cíobháin, sodobno irsko leposlovje, irski jezik, umetnosti

1 Introduction

This essay examines an aspect of Irish language literature that remains largely unexplored, namely, the use of musical form as a framing device in modern Irish language fiction. It focuses on the *Corca Dhuibhne* writer Pádraig Ó Cíobháin (b. 1951), and examines how he uses absolute music to structure narrative, plot and character development in his seminal work *Desiderius a Dó* (1995), which is considered a novel of major importance in modern Irish fiction.¹ The analysis uses the author's claims regarding the significance of musical form in the novel's structure as a starting point, and illustrates how Ó Cíobháin uses a variety of musical forms as chapter titles to structure the work. The novel's title translates into English as 'The Second Desiderius', and reflecting this sense of the double, what will also be shown here is how different types of binaries operate in the individual chapters. The paper will first discuss the importance of musical allusion in the novel, suggesting that the transition to absolute music, or "pure music", to use Joyce's description of *Finnegans Wake* (1939), is an effort on the part of the author to use music as a central tenet of his fiction (Ellman 1982, 702). Following a summary of the plot of the novel and an exploration of the literary and historical background that inspired the work, the article provides an outline of the dimensions of absolute music and looks at how this functions as a lens through which to explore *Desiderius a Dó*. What is underlined is how the novel is not just part of a substantial group of works by Ó Cíobháin that employ musical forms, but also part of a wider body of such texts in Irish language fiction. While the use of absolute music in the works of English language modernist writers has received critical attention, analyses of musical forms as framing devices in Irish language fiction are overdue. This is done here through a close reading of the framing devices of overture, movement, liturgical chant and cadenza in the novel, showing how anticipation, contrast, tension and resolution are built up, and how character, plot and theme mirror the musical forms. Finally, it is posited that the sequence of the musical forms employed in the novel means that the overall effect of *Desiderius a Dó* is that of a musical performance, or following Rajewsky, "the musicalization of literature" (Rajewsky 2005, 52).

2 The Intertextual Roots of *Desiderius a Dó*

Alternating in setting between Ireland, England and France, the novel tells the story of Peadar and his girlfriend Súsán, and their relationship. The timeframe that the novel spans is not outlined at any stage in the narrative, yet the reader can deduct that years, indeed decades, must have passed from the beginning of Peadar and Súsán's story to the conclusion of the novel. In this way, one of the paradoxes of *Desiderius a Dó* is that while it is structured according to musical forms that entail *tempi* or different speeds, the depiction of time is not inherent to its plot. The novel begins with Peadar's memories of his early childhood, and is divided into three sections: this division reflects the structure of the text on which *Desiderius a Dó* is based, namely the 1616 text *Desiderius* by Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire. Ó Cíobháin's work begins with a short nine-page opening section, "L'Ouverture" (Overture), and then moves into a 154-page central section, "Gluaiseachtaí" (Movements), which comprises 63 sections. It then concludes

¹ *Desiderius a Dó* is one of the novels included in the collection *Úrscéalta na Gaeilge*, which celebrates what critics and readers consider amongst the best modern Irish language works of literature. See Denvir (2017).

with a 13-page “An Chaidéinse” (Cadenza). Peadar and Súsan’s contrasting and fluctuating perspectives on their relationship are narrated as a stream of consciousness. This flows from the descriptions of the early days of their love affair to the middle sections of the novel that explore their private thoughts on living apart, to the conclusion of the novel when they are living their lives in a community of friends. As a result, the protagonists’ changing points of view on their relationship has a reflective, interior quality, an aspect of Ó Cíobháin’s work that Máirín Nic Eoin (2006) has described as “philosophical”.²

Ó Cíobháin has expressed a wish that his novel might be read with diligence so that it could be learned from, in particular when it came to learning about the “suáilcí” (the virtues).³ This is perhaps a reflection of its intertextual origins. In Ó Cíobháin’s words (1998, 23), *Desiderius a Dó* was written “in onóir théacs Fhlaithrí Uí Mhaolchonaire” (in honour of the text by Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire). Ó Maolchonaire (c.1560–1629), also known as Florence Conry, the author of the catechetical Early Modern Irish text, *Desiderius*, was a Franciscan, the Archbishop of Tuam and founder of the Irish pastoral College of St. Anthony in Leuven, Belgium. The 1616 text was published “from the Irish Franciscan printing press” in Leuven,⁴ and was based in turn, as Mac Gearailt notes (2012, 64), on parts i–iii of the Spanish version, *El Deseuso*, of a devotional Catalan text, *El Desseuso*, published in 1529. One of the primary concerns of Ó Maolchonaire’s *Desiderius*, according to Mac Craith and Hazard (2024), was to observe the distinction between “spiritual and temporal authority” and to “encourag[e] Irish catholics to hold firm in the face of persecution”. Ó Súilleabháin discusses the possibility that there were three distinct sources for *Desiderius*: a Catalan version, a version written in another language, and an Italian version.⁵

Ó Conchubhair and O’Leary (2015) succinctly describe how Ó Cíobháin’s novel is “plotless, almost characterless”.⁶ The argument here is that, rather than character, Ó Cíobháin

² See Nic Eoin (2006, 285): “His work is notable for its preoccupation with language and meaning, its attention to details of place and character and its dramatic exploration of themes of identity and belonging [...] He has developed a highly literary prose style – eschewing the conversational styles of Gaeltacht speech in favour of a scholarly etymological approach to language – which is in tune with the philosophical musings of his central characters.”

³ Ó Cíobháin’s claim is that “go léifi é go dúthrachtach agus go bhfoghlaimeofaí na suáilcí as” [in the hope that it would be read diligently and that one might learn about the virtues from the text]. See Ó Cíobháin (1998, 23).

⁴ See Mac Craith and Hazard’s (2024) comments on *Desiderius*. <https://www.dib.ie/biography/conry-florence-a1975>.

⁵ See Patricia Lysaght’s (1992/1993, 343) review of Seán Ua Súilleabháin’s article on the sources of *Desiderius* in *Éigse* 24: “Seán Ua Súilleabháin considers the sources of Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire’s work *Desiderius*, otherwise called *Scáthán an Chrabhaidh* (Louvain 1616). *Desiderius* was first published in Catalan under the title *Spill de la vida religiosa* (Barcelona and Valencia, 1529), and thereafter it was translated into several other languages. Ua Súilleabháin is of the opinion that Ó Maolchonaire’s *Desiderius* is based on three sources, a six-section Castilian version (this is the version posited by T. F. O’Rahilly in his 1941 edition of *Desiderius*, as the one on which Ó Maolchonaire based his Irish translation), a three-section version in a language other than Castilian, and an Italian translation based on the Catalan work.”

⁶ See Ó Conchubhair and O’Leary (2015): “Structured musically with an Overture and a *Caidéinse*, it is a plotless, almost characterless novel that recounts the meeting of Peadar and Súsan as freshmen in University College Cork in 1969.”

develops the narrative by employing a set of binaries that find expression through various intellectual, psychological and physical movements, and contrasting points of view. In the novel, movement happens between places, life choices and lifestyles that are depicted as being diametrically opposed: between France and Ireland, between Cork and London, between the attractions of modern life in London for Súsán and the seclusion of the monastery for Peadar, an allusion to Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's Franciscan background.

3 Absolute Music

Turning our attention to the forms of absolute music that the author uses as his framing device, it is noteworthy that there are as many different approaches to defining absolute music as there are definitions. Latham (2011), for example, describes absolute music as “Instrumental music that exists, and is to be appreciated, simply as such, in contradistinction to programme music.” Kennedy, Rutherford-Johnson and Kennedy (2013) describe absolute music as “Instrumental music which exists simply as such, i.e. not in any way illustrative (e.g. programme music) or of practical purpose (e.g. dance music).” Concepts of programme music, according to Kregor and Schreiber (2021),

are broadly construed and vary throughout history in correlation with various aesthetic and philosophical perspectives – narrowly defined, programmatic compositions include an extra-musical program describing the musical expression, while a broader definition considers evocative titles, allusive musical material, and conventional musical significations as vehicles of extra-musical meaning.⁷

In contrast, in his 2014 tome on absolute music Bonds (2014, 6) suggests that absolute music is best treated not as a “constitutive concept, a quality or set of qualities that are (or are not) inherent within music” but as a “regulative concept”. It is worth noting that although Ó Cíobháin (2001, 66) does not use the term *absolute music*, the novel's indebtedness to musical form is clear to him:

Is cóir a lua go bhfuil an saothar roinnte i dtrí chuid...*Na Gluaiseachtaí* (mar a bheadh i bpíosa ceoil, caibidlí a thabharfaí de ghnáth orthu) agus *An Caidéinse*.

(It is correct to say that the work is divided into three parts...the movements (as in a piece of music, which would normally be called chapters) and the Cadenza.)

The argument here is that Ó Cíobháin's use of absolute music in *Desiderius a Dó* is most closely aligned with Kennedy, Rutherford-Johnson and Kennedy's broad definition of the term. The author's use of a number of consecutive musical forms in the novel – “overture”, “gluaiseachtaí” (movements) and “caidéinse” (cadenza) – indicate that his overall aim was to represent a sense of performance. That emphasis on performance, and Ó Cíobháin's use of absolute music, have parallels with James Joyce's discussion in his letters on the use of chamber music in his work, outlining his reasons for using the title *Chamber Music* for his collection of poetry.⁸ In her discussion of absolute music in the work of Joyce, Michelle Witen describes

⁷ See the same source for a detailed description of programme music.

⁸ In a letter to George Molyneux Palmer, Joyce outlined the structure of *Chamber Music* in some detail:

absolute music as “non-referential music”, as a form comprising “instrumental music as pure structure” (2018, 2–3). Citing Dahlhaus, she sees it as something that “represents itself”, so that structure is “inseparable” from content (cf. Dahlhaus 1989, 7). She (2018, 3) outlines the development of the use of music in Joyce’s works in a manner that points to commonalities with Ó Cíobháin’s approach:

the emphasis on instrumentation in the early works; in his use of the fugue in “Sirens”; in his recycling of the fugal elements of “Sirens” in “Circe”; and in his emphasis on the fusion of sound and sense, the visible and the audible in *Finnegans Wake*.

The influence of Joyce is evident in Ó Cíobháin’s works.⁹ For instance, Ó Cíobháin’s comment on his use of absolute music, cited above, can be seen to echo Joyce’s description of how the fugue structured the “Sirens” episode of *Ulysses* (1922).¹⁰ And although *Desiderius a Dó* makes reference to musical forms that are common to programme music, such as the *idée fixée*, “d[h]uancheol siansach Lizst” (a symphonic poem of Lizst) (1995, 13) and the symphony, what is central to Ó Cíobháin’s use of musical form is that he employs programme music metaphorically, whereas he uses absolute music as a framing device.

Ó Cíobháin does not confine himself to any one musical tradition. Given that he comes from an area of West Kerry steeped in traditional Irish music and song, it should come as no surprise that he draws on a variety of musical traditions in *Desiderius a Dó*, and in his other works. Musical performance, musical allusion, and intertextual references to songs occupy a central place in Ó Cíobháin’s short fiction and novels, going back to his earliest writing. One of the main characteristics of the author’s work dating back to his first work, *Le Gealaigh* (1991), is the sheer variety of musical references, with numerous allusions to classical, traditional Irish and popular music.¹¹ Performance is at the heart of many of these allusions, and a central facet of his work is how character development frequently takes place through exposure to music. Musical and literary allusion abound in the early short fiction in particular, for example, the title of his 1999 short story collection and of a story within it, “Tá Solas ná hÉagann Choíche”, is a translation of a song title by the rock band, The Smiths, “There is a Light that Never Goes Out”. In later works such as in *Novella Eile* [Another

“I hope you may set all of Chamber Music in time. This was indeed partly my idea in writing it. The book is in fact a suite of songs [. . .] The central song is XIV after which the movement is all downwards until XXXIV which is vitally the end of the book. XXXV and XXXVI are tailpieces just as I and III are preludes” (Gilbert 1957, 67).

⁹ See de Brún (2012, 231): “Ó Cíobháin is a great admirer of Joyce and claims that he modelled the manner in which he portrayed himself in the novel on Joyce’s *Stephen Hero*.” The novel in question is *An Gealas I Lár na Léithe* (1992), which Ó Cíobháin asserts is a semi-autobiographical work.

¹⁰ In a letter to Harriet Weaver regarding the structure of “Sirens”, Joyce comments: “Dear Miss Weaver: [...] Perhaps I ought not to say any more on the subject of the Sirens but the passages you allude to were not intended by me as recitative. There is in the episode only one example of recitative on page 12 in preface to the song. They are all the eight regular parts of a *fuga per canonem*: and I did not know in what other way to describe the seductions of music beyond which *Ulysses* travels” (Gilbert 1957, 129).

¹¹ While this essay focuses on Western music, it should be noted that the term *classical* music also refers to non-European traditions. See <https://www.britannica.com/art/Hindustani-music>. Michael Church’s (2015) edited collection includes essays on classical music traditions from around the world.

Novella] (2014), Ó Cíobháin's portrayal of the *sean-nós* (traditional singing) competition in the closing pages of the work depicts the individuality of each singer's rendition of "Carraig Aonair" [Solitary Rock].¹² Performance here, the novella suggests, is as much about social knowledge and community as about individual ability.

Before turning our attention to *Desiderius a Dó*, it is worth commenting on the long-established connection between music and words in the Irish-language literary tradition. While examples of musical allusion are very common in Ó Cíobháin's work, this is not without precedent in Irish language fiction.¹³ Perhaps one of the most salient examples of the historical relationship between text and music is that of the Irish language love songs, or "amhráin ghrá na Gaeilge", the majority of which Ó Tuama claims do not date back further than the period between 1150 and 1200.¹⁴ As noted by Ó Tuama, these songs are rooted in the French Provençal tradition of *amour courtois*, or courtly love (see Ó Cíobháin 2006, 65). More recently, in contemporary and twentieth century Irish fiction, programme music characteristic of the Romantic era is given a unique, experimental, treatment by the author, "Robert Schumann", in his novel, *Kinderszenen*, which is also the title of a set of piano pieces for children by Robert Schumann (1810–1856). The novel uses these piano pieces as the basis for its structure ("Schumann" 1987). Gabhán Ó Fachtna's *An Domhan* [The World] refers to colonial French settings and uses music to explore concepts of the linguistic and cultural outsider (Ó Fachtna 2013). In his 2023 novel, *Béal na Péiste* [The Mouth of the Beast], Fionntán de Brún appears to employ programme music as a framing device, and the novel's plot and characterization mirror the words and music of the fiery overture and cantata, *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht* [The First Walpurgis Night] by the Romantic-era composer Felix Mendelssohn. An interesting example of the use of traditional music in a contemporary Irish language novel is *Lámh, Lámh Eile* [A Hand, Another Hand] (2018) by Alan Titley, each chapter of which begins with a title drawn from the corpus of traditional Irish songs. Bearing Gearóid Denvir's (2017, 1) observation in mind that *Desiderius a Dó* is based around a "f[h]ráma ceoleolaíoch" (musicological framework), we now turn our attention to the individual sections of the novel that use absolute music as a framing device. Although the novel can be a "dúshlán" (challenge) for readers – a characteristic often ascribed to the author's work – what will be shown here is how some of those challenges can be mitigated by an exploration of the use of musical form in the narrative (see Ó Cróinín 2021, 309–10).

4 "L'Ouverture" (Overture)

Desiderius a Dó begins with a chapter appropriately entitled "L'Ouverture", which recounts the experience of the main male character in his youth. Towards the start of the chapter the musical form of the overture is used metaphorically by Ó Cíobháin to describe Peadar's early

¹² See de Brún (2012, 230): "Music and literature are often of equally major significance in the burgeoning development of the life of the young hero in Ó Cíobháin's stories."

¹³ See for example Máirtín Ó Cadhain's short story "An Bhliain 1912" (*An Braon* Broghach, 1948). For a detailed and interesting discussion of Ó Cadhain's use of traditional Irish song in this short story, see Ní Chualáin (2015).

¹⁴ See Ó Tuama (1960, 1): "Ach is soiléir, dar liom, nach bhféadfadh go mbeinfadh formhór na gcineálacha amhrán grá atá againn le tréimhse níos sia siar ná 1150–1200." (But it is clear, in my opinion, that the majority of the types of love songs we have could not be dated further back than between 1150–1200.)

years as an overture to the rest of his life, “réamhcheol le mo mhaireachtaint” (the musical overture to my existence) (1995, 8). As such, the *ouverture* sets the stage for the narration of later events in the novel. In choosing the French version of the musical form in the chapter’s title, Ó Cíobháin alludes to the French overture that Lully had developed in France by 1684. This is significant as it foreshadows Peadar’s trip to the French monastery later in the novel. Grout and Palisca (1988, 414) describe the *ouverture* as music used at the beginning of operas and oratorios while the audience take their seats.¹⁵ The first part of the French *ouverture* was conceived as quick, while the second part was slow and stately. As with the musical overture, this section of the novel comprises different blocks of time. Some passages compress years of Peadar’s early life into a single paragraph and these stand in contrast to the languid, slow-moving passages of prose that dwell on his innermost thoughts. Moreover, Peadar compares himself to a conductor, which indicates the symbolic importance that performance will play in his life. The symphony here is the form through which Peadar directs his thoughts: “Chóirínn na smaointe seo i mo leaba luí shuain dom, ar chuma an chumadóra ag cur cóiriú ar a shiansa”. (I would arrange these thoughts in my quiet peaceful bed, like the composer arranging his symphony) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 14).

Ó Cíobháin juxtaposes sound and silence in this section, and contrasts the experience of listening to music with the state of sleep. “L’Ouverture” begins with the description of the music of the “mileoidean” (melodeon) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 8), and goes on to describe how Peadar visualizes this music as a brightness that the musician casts on the darkness of silence: “an gealas a bhronann an ceoltóir séimh ar dhoircheacht an chiúnais” (the brightness that the gentle musician bestows on the darkness of silence). Serving perhaps as a parody of Beckett’s observation in 1970 that language constitutes a “stain on silence and nothingness” (Gruen 1970, 108), musical experience and the aural landscape are described visually by Ó Cíobháin. Although the narrator and the reader are prevented from experiencing the musical event due to a “cuirtín druidte” (shut curtain), the seductive power of the sound of the music pulls the protagonist into a dreamlike state, preparing him for what is to follow when he will fall “i mbun suain” (into a deep sleep) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 9). However, there is also a sense that the curtain, the physical divide between Peadar and the melodeon player, gestures to Peadar’s ambitions to move away from the domestic setting of Irish music to a more intellectual and spiritual engagement with music – something he does later in the novel when he leaves for the monastery in France.

Another binary in this chapter is created through forms of mirroring, an idea that is to be heard in the second half of the title of Ó Maolchonaire’s text, *Sgathán an Chrábhaidh* [The Mirror of Piety]. In both this chapter and in the conclusion of the novel, Súsán reflects on the sound of shoes tapping, “g[h]lór briosc a mbróg” (the brisk sound of their footfall), signalling a return to her lover Peadar’s observations of the same sound in the “L’Ouverture” (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 185). Similarly, the bird, which Súsán observes in later passages as a “éinín cantaineach” (a singing bird), mirrors the first description of the same sound in “L’Ouverture”:

¹⁵ By contrast, in Mendelssohn’s time the overture had developed into an orchestral overture that was a centrepiece of musical performances.

Chloisinn glór traenach i bhfad sa chian. Thaibhsíodh sí cóngarach dom agus ansan i gcéin. I gcéin agus ansin i gcógar, an glór á tharraingt amach ar nós an mhileoidin úd ó chianaibh, sa tslí is go léiríodh macalla na fuaime peirspictíocht na dúthaí bruachbhaile trína raibh an traen ag dul, sa daille dom. Scréacadh sí ar nós scalladh-nóta éin i mbarr crainn choille.

(I would hear the sound of a train far away in the distance. It would appear to be close to me, then far off. Far off, and then close again, the same sound being drawn from it like that melodeon just now, so that in my un-seeing, the echo of the sound opened up a vista from which I would watch the suburbs through which it travelled. That train – she would screech her scalded note like a bird in the wood perched atop a tree.) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 9)

Peadar returns to those same memories of childhood and reflects at a later point in the chapter that he has “fillte ar a bhaile arís” (returned home again) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 10). By emphasizing the act of coming home, Ó Cíobháin links Peadar’s return with the musical recapitulation of the overture, a revisiting of the home territory by the protagonist, and a renewed sensibility through the use of musical sounds. Thus, it is sound and the senses that evoke youth and that consistently call the characters back in *Desiderius a Dó*. Fundamentally, it is through this extra-literary device that Ó Cíobháin develops the structured sense of beginnings, developments, and returns. As in the classical concert, having treated his readers to the overture of Peadar’s life, and after tracing his early years, Ó Cíobháin’s next section, “Gluaiseachtaí”, moves to the early adulthood of Peadar and Súsan and their contrasting perspectives, expressed both silently and to each other, on the direction, or movement, of their relationship.

5 “Gluaiseachtaí” (Movements)

The middle section of the novel develops the concept of movement in several ways, including through the use of binaries: firstly, the narrative depicts everyday physical movement; secondly, Ó Cíobháin contrasts both Peadar and Súsan’s overt expressions, emotions and performance of their desires, with their private thoughts; thirdly, as the chapter progresses, the focus is increasingly on the two central settings in the novel, France and Ireland. The characters’ adventures, individually and as a couple, are narrated through sixty-three small “movements”. Although the total number of movements in the chapter amounts to more than twenty times the number of movements than is usual in either the symphony or the sonata, the individual movements in the novel are approximately equal in length, thereby giving an overall sense of unity and balance to the chapter, an effect which conjures up a sonata or a symphony.

“Gluaiseachtaí” portrays Peadar and Súsan’s points of view in the novel as two subjectivities, and this idea is reflected in the musical form that gives the chapter its title. Calvin S. Brown describes how the “opposite” themes that comprise, for example, a sonata movement are a “fusion into a unified whole of two contrasting themes”: “If the first subject was strongly rhythmical, the second is likely to be primarily melodic [...] one might paraphrase Coleridge by saying that sonata form is devoted to the reconciliation of opposite or discordant themes” (Brown 1948, 162). Brown’s emphasis on the discordant themes central to a movement are further elucidated by Hurd’s (1968, 73) description of binary form:

Binary form [...] embraces two balancing sections of music: the first moving to the dominant (or relative minor) key, and the second making the return journey to the tonic [...] Moreover, not all binary structures made the return to the tonic a precise mirror of the opening section. Some allowed a considerable progression before the return was made, often passing through different keys. In this we may recognize a [...] development section.

In the same way that Brown and Hurd describe a movement in binary form comprising contrasting and discordant themes, Denvir (2017, 250) notes that Peadar and Súsán are two sides of the same coin. However, the early pages of “Gluaiseachtaí” (Movements) begin with descriptions of physical movement – a feature of Ó Cíobháin’s novel that pays homage to Ó Maolchonaire’s *Desiderius*. In his 1975 introduction to *Desiderius. Otherwise called Sgathán an Chrábhaidh*, Tomás O’Rahilly points out that Ó Maolchonaire’s text places a particular emphasis on *tempi* (O’Rahilly 1975, 39). Likewise, Denvir (2017, 251) notes how Ó Maolchonaire’s work refers to “gluasacht” (*gluaiseacht* in modern Irish, meaning movement). In his novel, Ó Cíobháin describes different forms of physical movements such as travelling, jogging and walking: “Pandarálann Peadar” (Peadar trots along); and “Ach tá sé ag jagáil sa treo mícheart” (But he is jogging in the wrong direction) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 17). Denvir (2017, 257) refers to these descriptions of movement as “radharcanna taistil” (travel scenes), but it can be argued that the emphasis on physical movement is both a homage to Ó Maolchonaire’s text as well as a way of introducing different speeds – as in a musical movement – into the work.

In a commensurate manner, this chapter’s movements are characteristic of the sonata and symphony, while also generating binaries through the juxtaposition of Peadar and Súsán’s emotions and perspectives. The increasing tensions between Peadar and Súsán are portrayed as a growing emotional distance. However, another binary in this chapter is to be found in Peadar’s own inner tensions, between his desire for self-expression and his search for discipline. Indeed, it is while engaged in physical movement that Peadar expresses his inner struggle between the physical senses – a life that he wishes to “greim a bhaint as” (take a bite out of) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 29) – and a life of contemplation and introspection in the monastery of Notre Dame Des Neiges. The binaries invoked in this passage include: masculine and feminine, two countries, the soul and the body – the “corpartha” (corporeal) and “anama” (the soul) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 112) – and the tension between discipline and desire that Peadar grapples with for much of the novel.

Anthony Storr (1997, 82) notes how recapitulation, or return to the tonic, or home key, is central to the sonata form, which,

celebrates a journey toward a new union between elements which were originally contrasted. The end of the piece is usually indicated by a return “home” to the tonic; most commonly to the major triad, less commonly to the minor.

The latter part of the “Gluaiseachtaí” section consistently emphasizes the desire to return home, and thoughts of home proliferate in Peadar’s mind – an effect that mirrors the return to the tonic key in the sonata form. The sense of movement in the text changes and appears

to be an allegory for an emotional movement from joy to pain; and Peadar and Súsán are presented throughout “Gluaiseachtaí” as binary opposites. However, there is a sense of disruption in the narrative when Peadar travels to France to spend time in contemplation at the monastery. Perhaps in homage to Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, the sense of return in *Desiderius a Dó* is forestalled, and the next stage of the novel employs another musical form that reflects the contemplative period in Peadar’s life: liturgical chant.

6 Liturgical Chant

“The history of Western art music properly begins with the music of the Christian Church”, as Grout and Palisca point out (1988, 2). Peadar describes himself at various stages in the novel as a “mhisnéir” (missioner) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 29) and “cumadóir” (composer) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 43). However, reflecting the importance of the music of the Christian Church, it is Peadar’s singing of the liturgy during the monastic hours and offices of the Vigil and the Sext that comprise the defining moments of the novel, and this is portrayed as being transformative for him. Although there is no chapter entitled “cantaireacht eaglasta” (liturgical chant), the importance of that musical form occupies a central place in the “Gluaiseachtaí” section of the novel, especially in relation to setting and character development. This section also signals a retreat from polyphony to monophony and, despite Ó Cíobháin’s comment on the importance of polyphony in his fiction, it is through monophony that he most fully develops Peadar’s character and portrays his experiences and his inner thoughts. Once again, this is also structured in terms of binaries. Firstly, Peadar’s experience of chant in the monastery of Notre Dame des Neiges is portrayed as a contrast between the expression of emotion in music and the discipline of singing with others (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 125–26, 134). Secondly, Ó Cíobháin uses liturgical chant as a device with which to develop the contrast between the voice of the one and the voice of the many.

Peadar’s singing of the liturgy functions as an instrument for catharsis – and, as Pesic (2017, 8) notes, the link between singing and catharsis dates back to the time of Aristotle. Peadar’s participation in singing plays a central role in this section of the novel and provides him with an opportunity and a vehicle for self-expression; but also affords him the time to reflect on the universal questions of love and belonging. Ó Cíobháin portrays the act of singing with the Brothers in the monastery as a sublimating mechanism for his temporarily suppressed emotional life: Peadar’s psychological turmoil is explored as a journey within himself through liturgical chant. That solitary journey to a place of contemplation takes place during the act of singing, and is exemplified in the text by the use of the wilderness as a metaphor for solitude, “amhrán an fhásaigh” (song of the wilderness) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 134). Furthermore, Peadar’s musical experience highlights the importance of the balance between emotion and discipline that is central to the narrative (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 125–26, 134). The contrast between spirituality and temporality, which Mac Craith and Hazard (2024) claim is central to Ó Maolchonaire’s 1616 text, is mirrored and developed in this section of the novel in which Peadar appears in a spiritual capacity, having left behind the fast-moving life he led in Ireland and in London. Monophony and the church setting not only gesture to the chanting of voices, but also to Peadar finding his own voice. Indeed, it is during the offices of the Vigil and the Sext that Peadar understands for the first time that he can be both alone and yet in

the company of other people, having become reconciled with the many different versions of himself and his own voice that he has come to perceive through the act of singing. Portrayed as both masculine and feminine and, as noted by Denvir, as two sides of the one individual, Peadar is seen as both a monk and a layman. Ultimately, Peadar returns to Súsán in a grand act of recapitulation: “Fan. Fillte. Feicthe? Tá.” (Wait. Returned. Seen? Yes.) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 147).

Peadar’s thoughts and emotions change and fluctuate, determined by the limitations of time. This aspect of the novel reminds us of Brown’s (1948, 11) claim, noted earlier, that music and narrative depend largely on an understanding of the temporal – on what precedes events, and what follows. As has been highlighted throughout this essay, tensions and contrasts such as these are fundamental to Ó Cíobháin’s novel. Ultimately, by placing an Irish language chant in a French setting, Ó Cíobháin’s novel re-imagines Ó Maolchonaire’s life in Leuven. The novel also points to the history between the Irish language, liturgical chant and French-speaking places of learning, such as those Ó Maolchonaire inhabited. In addition, by introducing this sense of historical intertextuality into the narrative, Ó Cíobháin’s novel foregrounds, in the words of Buckley (2017, xxvi), “the international, the regional and the local” context of liturgical Irish music.

7 “An Chaidéinse” (Cadenza)

Up until the “An Chaidéinse” chapter of the novel, Peadar and Súsán are shown as contrasting personalities; through the use of the musical form of the cadenza in the final chapter, Ó Cíobháin gradually brings their binary natures closer together in a unifying and dramatic finish. Ó Cíobháin (1995, 182) uses the metaphor of the “choirm cheoil” (concert) to describe Peadar and Súsán’s growing closeness and unity, and this form also emphasizes the joy of their shared existence.

Fanny Waterman (1993, 15) outlines how the cadenza is an opportunity for individual musicians to show their virtuosity at the closing of a performance, as it is,

A passage, usually of a virtuoso nature, inserted into the closing stages of a piece of music, such as the first movement of a concerto. Originally, the performer was expected to improvise such passages which could last as long as he or she liked. Mozart and Beethoven wrote some, but not all, of their own cadenzas: from Schumann onwards, composers almost always wrote their own.

As with the musical cadenza, the beautifully written concluding chapter of *Desiderius a Dó* is, fittingly, one of the best examples of Ó Cíobháin’s virtuosity.

The “Caidéinse” is narrated primarily from Súsán’s point of view. Her perspective emphasizes her independence and subjectivity, and she expresses the joy with which she experiences life and her surroundings almost wholly in aural terms. Not for the first time, ordinary everyday sounds of the natural world are portrayed as music in the novel. For example, the singing of a bird, the “caislín cloch” (stonechat), is depicted as a symbol of both creativity and performance (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 182). In addition, the friends that gather in the penultimate

passages of the novel listen in wonder to the singing of birds, and to one individual bird in particular. Their eager listening is depicted as if the listeners were present at a formal concert (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 182):

Pointeálann sé agus breithnimid uainn ar an éinín cantaineach, a caolán á chur amach aici ar ár son i ndeirge an tráthnóna, an ghrian ar ár gcúlaihb ag ruachtaint na mara.

(He points and we look towards a singing bird, singing her heart out in the rosy hue of the afternoon, the setting sun behind us reddening the ocean.)

The novel builds up a sense of excitement and Ó Cíobháin emphasizes this metaphorically by describing the sound of the wind as an aural experience akin to listening to a cadenza, “c[h] aidéinse na gaoithe” (the cadenza of the wind) (1995, 182). Thus, the everyday sound of the wind loses its ordinariness and becomes a musical performance in the ears of the listeners. In addition, the portrayal of the sounds of nature and the natural world are as important in this regard as the sounds made by human voices and hands. A focus on the image of running water functions similarly as an image related to movement, but it also portrays the passing of time. The idea that the river’s spirit has abandoned it is a further testimony to the pathos of imminent, dramatic, yet natural, endings.¹⁶ Just as the plants and flowers that surround Súsán and Peadar are sustained by their mutual dependence, it is in a moment of symbiosis, “[t] simbeois [e]”, that Súsán understands that she and Peadar will live in each other’s shadow, a reference to the Irish proverb *faoi scáth a chéile* (in each other’s shadow). She understands, too, that the imagined, perfect tomorrow never comes but, once again emphasizing movement, they can nevertheless attempt to move towards it, even if “ná tagann lá breá an lae amáraigh go deo” (the beautiful tomorrow never comes) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 172). A final confirmation of the unification of the binary aspects of Peadar and Súsán’s selves is heard when Súsán refers to a feeling of “iomláine an iontais choiteann” (completeness of shared wonder) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 182). Ó Cíobháin’s connotations of beginnings and endings as the cadenza moves towards its conclusion represent the culmination of the techniques employed in the novel. Laden with pathos, and sometimes with sentimentality, the cadenza is used in a plethora of ways to indicate the fragility of life, the performativity of living beings, and the transience of beauty. In this cadenza, the characters experience their greatest insights into their existences just as the sun is setting on their world and on the novel.

Although the novel does not finish with any hint of Súsán and Peadar’s demise as a couple, an ending of sorts is evident in the very musical form that Ó Cíobháin has employed. Yet the ending of the novel also suggests the beginning of something new. A common motif in this work is that of night and, at the end of the cadenza, there is a description of Súsán returning home with a group of friends, and with the feeling of being newly born: they feel at one in a darkness that appears to reflect their own emotional landscape, “nua-bheirthe, nua-shaolta” (newly born; newly alive) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 180). In the context of this passage, night appears to be a metaphor for shelter and a euphemism for cover. The image is an echo of passages in the early stages of the novel, which also referenced shelter: from “an cuirtín

¹⁶ The Irish *imithe le sruth*, literally “gone with the stream”, is a figurative expression for the passing of something for ever, or vanishing. See <https://www.teaglann.ie/en/eid/vanished>.

druidte” (the shut curtain) in the drama of Peadar’s youth (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 8), to the “cuilt na maireachtana” (quilt of existence) (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 9). These repetitions appear to suggest that while darkness may fall, their sounds and voices will outlast their words and continue to echo. Light and day, dark and night, will come and go, but the sounds linger on, resonating in the characters as symphonic poems of their own making and as music of the everyday. More so than any other musical form used in the novel, the cadenza chapter is concerned with the return to a metaphorical tonic: despite travelling through related keys, the narrative attempts to recreate that same sense of the wanderer returning home.

In his discussion of Schubert’s *lieder*, Ian Bostridge (2015, 488) notes how the search for balance between humility and discipline, and between text and music, is a constant in the life of the musician dealing with text and word:

The idea of humility – of serving the music, of serving the composer – is a crucial part of the balancing act in classical performance. The discipline of classic music – the score and its demands – creates an objective space in which the dangers of self-indulgence can be held at bay. At the same time, this can only be achieved, paradoxically, through utter immersion in the work and a merging between the composer’s work and the performer’s personality. Erasure in the music and the projection of subjectivity through it. Sublimation.

In *Desiderius a Dó* the balance between the contrasting aspects of Peadar and Súsán’s relationship is finally achieved through humility – an acceptance that the perfect tomorrow will never come, and that they will live with their differences. The final passages of the novel reveal to the reader that they have both finally found a peace of sorts, and with each other.

8 Conclusion

In his analysis of *Ulysses*, Stricker (2016) notes how Robert Boyle and Don Noel Smith are sceptical regarding the effectiveness of applying the sonata form as a tool with which to examine Joyce’s masterpiece. Stricker (2016, 239) claims that Boyle doubted whether there was a “necessity to reduce the complexity of the novel to some kind of manageable order”. Yet, as Witen shows in her astute analysis of absolute music in the structure of Joyce’s works, if an author declares that there is a musicological basis to a literary text, as both Joyce and Ó Cíobháin have done, it is important to explore that claim. Highlighting the use of absolute musical forms, it has been argued here that, despite the plethora of musical allusions in earlier and indeed later works by Ó Cíobháin, there is a move in this 1995 novel away from music as allusion and metaphor, to using music as a framing device within which he develops ideas that find expression through binaries, ideas of return, and performance. Not only does each chapter use a musical form for its title and attempt to recreate what is essential to each form, but, when considered as a whole, the novel in its totality mirrors a performance.

Discussing Ó Cíobháin’s work, critics have pointed out characteristics such as his penchant for intertextuality (Nic Eoin 2008, 136),¹⁷ a thematic concern with masculinities (de Brún 2016),

¹⁷ Denvir and Ní Dhonnchadha (2001, 16) comment on the same aspect of Ó Cíobháin’s body of work.

the influence of Greek and Roman mythology on his portrayal of heroes and anti-heroes (de Brún 2012), and notions of male freedom (Weakliam 2023). In an overview of Ó Cíobháin's work, Ó Cróinín claims that it is the variety and multi-faceted dimension of his fiction that define this body of work, “gurb í ilghnéitheacht shaothar Uí Chíobháin an rud a mheánn sa deireadh” (it is the variety of Ó Cíobháin's work that gives his work such weight) (Ó Cróinín 2021, 317). Perhaps the ultimate paradox of *Desiderius a Dó* is that it is within the relatively strictly defined parameters of absolute music that character development happens more freely and creatively. The balance between structural constraint and artistic and creative freedom is something that gives rise to the narrative ingenuity of *Desiderius a Dó* and contributes to its ongoing sense of momentum (cf. Bonds 2014). In introducing absolute music forms into Irish fiction, and through reimagining liturgical Irish chant in Europe, this novel undermines any assumptions that envisage the Irish language and its culture as “a hermetically sealed Gaelic cultural entity” (Buckley 2017, xviii). The author has created, in the words of Peadar at the outset of his journey in *Desiderius a Dó*, a “symphonic poem” (Ó Cíobháin 1995, 13) in Irish language contemporary fiction.

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Part III

Varia

“Vsaj En Stavek Povej Normally”: Anglicisms and Code-Switching in Slovene Youth Slang

ABSTRACT

The influence of the English language can be observed, to a greater or lesser extent, in virtually every world language, and is recognizable in language contact phenomena like borrowing and code-switching. To date, there has been limited research on the widespread use of English in the language of young speakers of Slovene, who encounter English on a daily basis both through education and entertainment. The present study aims to address this research gap by examining the linguistic behaviour of young adult native speakers of Slovene in their everyday informal communication. Drawing on methods of discourse analysis, we quantitatively and qualitatively analyse corpus data obtained through covert audio recording, exploring how the Slovene-English language contact manifests itself in everyday communication among young speakers of Slovene, with close attention paid to code-switching and anglicisms. The results of the study raise the question of language change and the future of languages like Slovene, whose speakers are in close contact with English every day, and suggest further research possibilities in the field of Slovene-English language contact.

Keywords: English, Slovene, code-switching, anglicism, language contact

»Vsaj en stavek povej normally«: anglizmi in kodno preklapljanje v slovenskem mladostniškem slengu

IZVLEČEK

Vpliv angleškega jezika je v večji ali manjši meri viden v praktično vseh svetovnih jezikih in se kot posledica jezikovnega stika kaže v jezikovnih pojavih, kot sta sposojanje in kodno preklapljanje. Razširjenost rabe angleškega jezika pri mlajših govornikih in govorkah slovenščine, ki so z angleščino v stiku vsak dan bodisi v šoli bodisi v prostem času, pa je do danes razmeroma neraziskana. V članku naslavljamo prav to raziskovalno vrzel in preučujemo vsakodnevno jezikovno izražanje slovenskih mladostnikov. Metodološko se razprava opira na kvalitativno in kvantitativno analizo diskurza na podlagi korpusa, osnovanega na zbranih zvočnih posnetkih pogovorov. Natančneje raziskuje odraz slovensko-angleškega jezikovnega stika v vsakdanji komunikaciji med mladimi govorniki in govorkami slovenščine, osredotoča pa se na kodno preklapljanje in anglizme. Rezultati korpusne analize odpirajo vprašanje jezikovnih sprememb in prihodnosti jezikov, kot je slovenščina, katere govorniki so vsak dan v tesnem stiku z angleščino, in kažejo na nadaljnje možnosti raziskovanja na področju slovensko-angleškega jezikovnega stika.

Ključne besede: angleščina, slovenščina, kodno preklapljanje, anglizem, jezikovni stik

1 Introduction¹

The influence of English as a *lingua franca* is undeniable: many speech communities across the globe are now no longer acquiring English as a foreign, but rather a second language as a result of globalization (Gottlieb 2012, 169). English has become the dominant language of internet communication (Šabec 2009, 32–33), and it is being increasingly used in professional and educational environments, thereby coming to enjoy a considerable amount of language prestige internationally (Crystal 2003, 126).

This seems to be the case in Slovenia, too: according to a survey conducted in 2011, 65% of adult Slovene citizens between 18 and 69 years of age spoke English as a second language at the time (SURS, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2015). As of today, this number might well be even higher among young adults who are in contact with English on a daily basis not only through formal education (English is taught as a compulsory subject from the second year of elementary school onwards and throughout high school), but first and foremost through different media outlets, predominantly television and the internet, mostly for entertainment purposes. Kavalir and Poteko (2022, 38) point to the ubiquity of English in everyday life as a result of entertainment options not being made accessible in Slovene, as dubbed film and video content is only available for young children, while other content in English is subtitled, or sometimes not at all, as is the case with the American streaming service Netflix.

The present-day impact of English on Slovene is indisputable, with many studies pointing to a substantial use of English in both formal and informal contexts (see Sekotová 2011; Šabec 2012; Čepon 2017; Reher and Fišer 2018; Šabec 2022), and even in contemporary literature (see Curk 2015). To date, however, the ubiquity of English elements in the speech of young speakers of Slovene has been under-researched. To address this gap, the present study attempts a quantitative and qualitative analysis of linguistic behaviour of four Slovene young adults in their everyday communication. More specifically, it explores the outcome of Slovene-English language contact in young adult native speakers of Slovene, with close attention paid to code-switching and anglicisms. The study first outlines the historical trajectory of Slovene-English language contact up to the present day. It then defines the language contact phenomena of anglicisms and code-switching, and contextualizes the borrowing/code-switching debate within the present framework of Slovene-English language contact. Central to this research is a quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis of the transcribed spoken discourse of four young adult native speakers of Slovene. The recordings of their informal conversations were obtained by covert recording, and provide authentic and spontaneous linguistic material of spoken Slovene youth slang. Drawing on corpus data, the study seeks to elucidate the presence, patterns, and functions of code-switching and anglicisms among young native speakers of Slovene, and explores the implications of the Slovene-English language contact.

¹ This research paper could not have been completed without the invaluable guidance of Prof. Eva Sicherl, PhD.

2 Slovene-English Language Contact

Slovene, spoken in an environment at the junction of many European languages since its infancy, has always been receptive to lexical, grammatical, and semantic input from other languages, and it seems that it has not hesitated to take on linguistic contributions from English, either.

Slovene-English language contact dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries, although with German as the intermediary language the extent of this contact was almost negligible compared to today. It was only in the second half of the 20th century that English started notably exerting its influence on Slovene. The influx of (mostly lexical) English elements was twofold: first to make up for the lack of technical vocabulary and to accommodate the need for naming modern inventions, and – with an increased cultural influence of the Anglo-American sphere – also to fill the lexical gaps in the semantic fields of popular culture, sports, music, and entertainment. With the popularization of the internet in the 1990s, a new, digital dimension was added to the list of potential media for language exchange, which resulted in the intensity of the language contact between English and Slovene gaining significant momentum. The extent of language contact in the digital dimension has only been increasing in the decades since, and has resulted not only in singular lexical borrowings, but also in borrowing longer units, the emergence of calques, and even the formation of pseudo-anglicisms (Šabec 2012, 275–76). Moreover, Sicerl (2018, 144–46) points to the influence that English has had on Slovene word formation. The coinage of lexical blends (for instance *kočerja* and *ričota*), formerly a non-existent linguistic phenomenon in the Slovene language system, has become an established practice in modern colloquial Slovene which can be traced back to the 20th century as an import from English. English has thus had an influence on Slovene beyond the purely practical function of filling lexical gaps and introducing new shades of meaning. Its omnipresence has sparked concern in the academic as well as public spheres, and initiated change in the Slovene language policy (Sicerl 1999, 11–12).

Intense language contact like that between English and Slovene thus manifests itself in different ways, and can, in the case of English, be observed across European languages (see Solano and Segundo 2021). Foreign elements from the donor language are introduced into the recipient language along a continuum of language mixing (Grimstad 2017, 3), with borrowing at one end of the cline and code-switching the other (Manfredi, Simeone-Senelle, and Tosco 2015, 284). There is consensus in the field that code-switching can, down the line, lead to borrowing, but exactly at which point this occurs remains much disputed (Sankoff 2002, 649). The defining criterion of distinguishing between code-switches and borrowings (also termed *loanwords*, or, in the specific case of elements from English, *anglicisms*) is the degree to which the foreign element has been integrated into the recipient language (Onysko 2007, 36), with borrowings representing a “completed contact-induced change” (Alvanoudi 2017, 5), and code-switches representing “contact-induced speech behaviour” (qtd. in Alvanoudi 2017, 5), or what Weinreich in his seminal work *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* terms *nonce borrowings* (Sankoff 2002, 642). Yet this criterion is not always sufficient to establish whether one is dealing with a case of code-switching or borrowing, as discussed later in the corpus analysis.

3 Anglicisms

The term *anglicism* is generally used to denote “the occurrence of English language elements in other languages” (Onysko 2007, 10). Gottlieb (2012, 169) broadly defines the term as “all language features adopted from English, adapted from English or inspired by English, used in intralingual communication in another language”. Sicherl (1999, 12) proposes a more precise definition after Filipović: “a word borrowed from the English language which is adapted with respect to the linguistic system of the receptor language and integrated into it”, but suggests a broad understanding of the term in that it encompasses not only items of Anglo-Saxon etymological origin, but also those borrowed into English from other languages and integrated into English. The present study thus treats *ful* (<Eng. *full*), which most probably entered the Slovene lexicon in the 1990s via Croatian (Pulvirenti 2016) or possibly German, as an anglicism. Problems arise with English items whose non-English origin is still evident today: it remains disputable whether an item like *pyjamas*, originally borrowed into English from Persian, and then from English into Slovene as *pižama/pidžama*, should be considered an anglicism (Sicherl 1999, 12–13). The present study adopts a broad definition of an *anglicism*, but excludes borderline cases like the one above, should they come up.

A precise typology of anglicisms is yet to be agreed upon, and authors distinguish between different types which often depend on the receptor language (see Núñez Nogueroles 2018; Solano and Segundo 2021). It also remains disputed whether the direct borrowing of syntactic and morphological elements is possible at all (Weinreich 1968, 29; Sankoff 2002, 650), and whether there exist certain limits to “borrowability” (Sankoff 2002, 655). The present study relies on the most basic division between lexical and syntactic anglicisms (Núñez Nogueroles 2018, 213), with the latter most frequently observed as instances of syntactic calques.

Speakers are not only constantly making lexical and syntactic choices, but also navigating the task of choosing the most appropriate language variety or code to accommodate the addressee and the social situation. A necessary condition for the emergence of switching between two or more distinct *languages* is that the speakers be at least to some extent fluent in the other language, while the use of borrowings is observed with monolinguals as well (Manfredi, Simeone-Senelle, and Tosco 2015, 286–87).

4 Code-Switching

The sociolinguistic term for code variation is *code-switching* (henceforth CS; sometimes used synonymously with *code-mixing*) – a phenomenon which has been extensively researched, yet somewhat inconsistently defined. The first linguist to have used the term in his research was Hans Vogt in 1954, his work inspired by Uriel Weinreich’s research on language contact in *Languages in Contact*. Vogt defines code-switching as a psychological rather than a linguistic phenomenon that is common in speakers of every language, and a logical consequence of language contact, which is already a departure from Weinreich’s more critical take on code-switching and his view of the ideal bilingual (Nilep 2006, 4–5).

It was only in the mid-1960s that the research on CS gained momentum (Gardner-Chloros 2009, 9). One of the most influential and fundamental studies on CS was conducted by Blom

and Gumperz in 1963. They examined the verbal behaviour of a small community in Norway and found that their choice between the standard and local variety of Norwegian was decided first and foremost by the social event, which is defined by its participants, the setting, and the topic of conversation. What now constitutes one of the cornerstones of research on CS is their distinction between separate language *codes* one can choose to switch between, rather than just distinct languages, as well as the differentiation between *situational* and *metaphorical switching* (Nilep 2006, 7–9). The former occurs as a consequence of a shift in the social setting, and the latter denotes code-switching within one social setting, signalling not a change in the setting, but in social relationship, e.g., intimacy or formality (Nilep 2006, 8; Hall and Nilep 2015, 601). Further, Blom and Gumperz postulated that CS is not only dictated by the social context, but also produces the social context by itself (Hall and Nilep 2015, 600).

In more recent decades, CS has gained attention within sociolinguistics, pragmatics, conversation analysis and grammar. For the present at least, and because of the various approaches to the matter, a definition of CS is yet to be agreed upon, and the non-uniformity of the terminology on both *code* and *switching* has caused considerable confusion (Gardner-Chloros 2009, 9–11). Heller (1988, 1), for example, succinctly defines CS as “the use of more than one language in a single communicative episode”, and Gardner-Chloros (2009, 4) refers to it as “the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by bilingual people”. While the former definition fails to take into account the possibility of switching between varieties within one language, the latter would require, for the same reason, a redefinition of the term *bilingual*. Muysken, in turn, employs the term *code-mixing* as the umbrella term for “all cases where lexical and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence”, and the term CS as its subclass denoting “the rapid succession of several languages in a single speech event” (2000, 1).

The present study examines the phenomenon of CS from its grammatical perspective and draws on the positional categorization of CS as its theoretical basis. Poplack (1980, 602) distinguishes between *intra-sentential* and *inter-sentential switching* (also *extra-sentential code-switching*), with intra-sentential switching generally pertaining to switches within sentence boundaries, and inter-sentential switching to switches at sentence boundaries (Holmes 2013, 44–45). Further, Poplack introduces *tag code-switching* as a subset of inter-sentential CS, which involves tags, fillers, interjections, quotations, fixed phrases, simple noun phrases, single nouns, and the like (Poplack 1980, 602; Savić 1996, 55). Some researchers treat tag switching as separate from inter-sentential CS, but for the purposes of this study the distinction was not taken into consideration, and thus tags, fillers, short phrases and other similar instances at sentence boundaries were treated as cases of intra-sentential CS.

5 The Borrowing/Code-Switching Debate

The division between a case of CS and an anglicism, both of which are a result of language contact and a form of language mixing, is not always clear-cut. Onysko (2007, 36) states that “borrowings are paradigmatically incorporated and follow the syntagmatic relations of the [receptor language] whereas codeswitches retain the paradigmatic markings and the syntagmatic relationship from their original language”. Another important aspect that

helps separate a borrowing from nonce instances of CS is that a borrowing tends to be used repeatedly by an individual and is in use across the speech community (Poplack 2004, 590). It is thus integration into the recipient language and community-wide usage that tentatively help distinguish between borrowing and CS (Sankoff 2002, 649).

In spite of the seemingly straightforward division, albeit with some ambiguous items in the corpus (e.g., *kjut*, *omajgad*, *najs*), it was hard to ascertain whether they were cases or ordinary borrowings or nonce instances of CS. According to the criteria of phonetic, orthographic, and syntactic integration into the recipient language, the above examples tick all of the boxes, and might well already be considered borrowings. The second criterion, that they be repeatedly used in the language community, partially speaks in favour of treating them as borrowings as well. Yet it generally goes against a Slovene speaker's linguistic instinct to see them as part of the Slovene lexicon, as it is a relatively niche group of speakers that would regularly use the two items, namely young speakers (in my estimation, up to approximately 30 years of age), and their use is limited to informal social situations. Poplack et al. (2015, 176) point to the fact that "the status of mixed items cannot be determined in isolation", but always requires contextualization, which is a criterion that was also taken into consideration in the corpus analysis, and according to which the above examples are treated as instances of CS, not borrowing. It is also worth noting that integration can also be partial (e.g., phonological but not orthographic) and is not a sufficient test to determine where exactly an item can be positioned on the CS-borrowing cline (Sankoff 2002, 649). With other ambiguous English elements in the corpus, the distinction between the two phenomena was thus made on a case-by-case basis, and mostly depended on hits in *Gos*, a corpus of spoken Slovene, *Kres*, a corpus of contemporary written Slovene, *Razvezani jezik*, a user-generated online dictionary of spoken Slovene language, and, lastly, my own linguistic instinct.

While these criteria are helpful when it comes to discerning lexical borrowings from CS, the waters are murkier with syntactic borrowings from English, which appear mostly in the form of syntactic calques. Because they contain Slovene elements, but retain the foreign syntactic structure, the latter often goes unnoticed, and perhaps makes it even easier for the calque to become integrated into the lexicon. Everyday examples of syntactic anglicisms in modern Slovene include *lep dan*, *imaš to* (Rašl 2023a), *vzel sem vlak* (Rašl 2023b), and *zmagati tekmo*. In the present study, most examples of syntactic anglicisms in the corpus did not meet the criterion of community-wide use. A few interesting examples of *ad hoc* syntactic calques are discussed in Section 8.

6 Research Methodology

The corpus of this case study consists of five hours and four minutes of transcribed spoken discourse among four participants, obtained by covert recording. Upon consenting to take part in the case study, the participants were asked to record snippets of their naturally occurring everyday conversations in different social settings over the span of four months, and to restrain from telling one another when they were recording. The utterances of the participant who was recording the conversation were then excluded from the corpus analysis. Not all four speakers were present in every conversation. To avoid the observer's paradox, I was

never present when the recordings were made. The gathered linguistic material is therefore authentic, spontaneous, and not influenced by the presence of a researcher or knowing one is being recorded. Although the recordings were all made on smartphones using the audio recording function, their quality was largely sufficient for accurate linguistic data extraction.

In the transcription of the recorded linguistic material that followed, the revised GAT 2 system for transcribing talk-in-interaction (*Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem*), first introduced by a group of German linguists in 1998 (Selting et al. 2011, 1), was used as the basis, and further simplified to fit the needs of the study. The exact transcription conventions can be found in Appendix.

A rudimentary statistical analysis of the transcribed data was then conducted in order to examine just how prevalent the use of English in everyday speech of Slovene young adults is. After the corpus analysis, a short interview was conducted with the four participants to gather information about their personal, educational and socio-economic backgrounds, their language attitudes, and their outlook on their linguistic behaviour.

7 The Participants

Four young adults aged 21 with a similar socio-economic and educational background participated in the study, all of whom identify as female and are undergraduate students at the University of Ljubljana. They have been close friends since high school and form a friend group that meets and interacts on a regular basis. For most of their lives, all of them lived in Novo mesto, Slovenia, which is where they attended elementary school and high school, and then they moved to Ljubljana to pursue their university studies. All four participants are fluent speakers of Slovene and have Slovene as their mother tongue. They remember acquiring English early on in their childhood, and growing up with English as the language of television and later, when they were given their first smartphones, the language of social media. All participants received their formal education in Slovenia, and formal English lessons from the third grade of elementary school onwards and throughout high school. Upon successfully completing the final *matura* exam, a prerequisite for receiving university education in Slovenia, all participants were confirmed to have at least a B2 level of English competence according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Apart from English, they also acquired German to a greater or lesser extent, as they had chosen it as an elective course throughout elementary school, high school, or both, and they also report having rudimentary, predominantly comprehension abilities in Croatian. The participants thus display a degree of coordinate multilingualism. They report presently being in contact with English on a daily basis through various media outlets, most notably television and the internet, always when travelling, but less often at university or at their student jobs.

In the short interview conducted after the completion of the corpus analysis, the participants were also asked about their language attitudes. They all ascribed English a substantial degree of language prestige, and considered English competence a prerequisite for a successful career, travelling, other international experiences, and even daily entertainment. They all agreed that the English-speaking world has a great deal of influence on them both linguistically and culturally. Their attitude towards CS and anglicisms was also positive, and they see using

English as an efficient way to get their message across faster and more accurately. “Včasih pač ne morš povedat v slovenščini”, Speaker 2 concluded (*Sometimes, you just can't say it in Slovene*).

8 Data Analysis and Findings

The final corpus consisted of five hours and four minutes of linguistic audio material, which in its transcribed form and upon excluding the speaker who was recording, amounted to 2,470 sentences. The data was first catalogued as to the date of recording, duration, and the social situation, all of which is indicated at the beginning of each transcription segment. Minimal transcription was sufficient for data analysis. Pauses were marked in single brackets, while important non-linguistic and performative elements of the conversation were included in double brackets. Dialectal features and grammatical mistakes were included in the transcription and left unmarked, whereas parts of conversations pertaining to personal matters and sensitive topics were excluded from the analysis. One-word or one-phrase sentences and sentences left unfinished were also included in the total sentence count. Below are excerpts of transcribed conversations. English elements are marked in bold.

- [1] Speaker 4: (--) *Ta je pa moj **favourite song**.*
Always the sad one.
[This is my favourite song.
Always the sad one.]
- Speaker 2: *Ne, ta je **sadder**.*
[No, this one is sadder.]
- Speaker 4: *Ne, ta je **empowering!***
[No, this one is empowering!]
- [2] Speaker 1: (-) *Čak, oba sta šla zdej narazen s svojimi **significant others**?*
[Wait, so now both of them have broken up with their significant other?]
- Speaker 2: *Ja, sam on ne vem, če je mel tko neko resno punco.*
[Yes, but I don't know whether he's ever had a serious girlfriend.]
- Speaker 1: *Mhm.*
(-) *Zakaj je šla pa ona z njim narazn?*
[Mhm.
So why did she break up with him?]
- Speaker 2: *On jo je pustu.*
[He broke up with her.]
- Speaker 1: *Aha, zakaj?*
[Aha, why?]
- Speaker 2: *Ne vem, kao, da ne **worka out**.*
(-) *Misl'm, **that it's not working out**, ne da ona ne **worka out**.* ((laughs))
[I don't know, like, not working out.
I mean, that it's not working out, not that she's not working out.]
- Speaker 1: ((laughs)) ***Gym girls be like.***
[Gym girls be like.]

- [3] Speaker 2: *Kaj bote danes delale?*
[What will you be doing today?]
- Speaker 3: *Služba.*
[Work.]
- Speaker 1: *Učila se bom.*
Kaj pa boš ti?
(.) *Gledala v luft.*
[I'll study.
And you?
Loaf about.]
- Speaker 2: (-) *Ja* (.) *Ne, morm neki delat.*
[Yes. No, I have to do something.]
- Speaker 3: ***Sounds like the day to (speaker 2's first name).***
[Sounds like the day to (speaker 2's first name).]
- Speaker 2: *Ne, sej rabm tko.*
[No, but I need it.]
- Speaker 1: *Rabš a reset day.*
[You need a reset day.]
- Speaker 2: *Ja.* ((laughs))
[Yes.]
- Speaker 1: ***Like, you've been working so fucking hard.***
[Like, you've been working so fucking hard.]
- [4] Speaker 1: *Dans sm vidla en **video** o Tokiu in teh železnicah.*
*Oni vsake dva tedna tku **deep cleanajo** te vlake in tku več, med te-*
[Today I saw a video about Tokyo and these railways.
Every two weeks they, like, deep clean these trains, and, like, you know,
between th-]
- Speaker 2: ***Cracks.***
[Cracks.]
- Speaker 1: *Reže, k so, tku vzamejo **toothpick** pa tku spucajo.*
Js sm tku, like, Slovenia could never.
[Cracks, that are there, they, like, take a toothpick and, like, clean them.
I'm just like, like, Slovenia could never.]
- Speaker 4: () *Koreja je ena izmed najbolj čistih **mest**, sicer zrak zelo onesnažen, **whatever.***
((laughs))
Ampak, stari, javna stranišča-
[Korea is one of the cleanest places, although the air is very polluted,
whatever.
But dude, the public toilets-]

Code-switching occurred in 694 out of 2,470 sentences, with 561 cases of intra-sentential and 133 cases of inter-sentential CS. The total number of anglicisms, both lexical and syntactic, was 244.

TABLE 1. Occurrences of code-switching and anglicisms.

Total number of sentences: 2,470		
Code-switching , of which		694
	intra-sentential	561
	inter-sentential	133
Anglicisms		244

As illustrated in the table below, 2,337 (94.6%) of the 2470 sentences were in Slovene. The remaining 5.4% of all uttered sentences were cases of inter-sentential CS and were uttered only in English. Just over a third (33.6%) of all sentences contained at least one English element, be it in the form of CS or a lexical or syntactic anglicism. Around a quarter (25.8%) of sentences contained at least one example of CS.

TABLE 2. Total number of sentences in Slovene and/or English.

Total number of sentences: 2,470		
	n	%
Sentences in Slovene	2,337	94.6%
Sentences containing English	830	33.6%
Sentences in English	133	5.4%

Inter-sentential code-switching seems to have been connected with the use of proverbs, ready-made phrases, and filler sentences that the participants had at hand in their linguistic repertoire: [5] *I'm spending like there's no tomorrow*. [6] *Good job, (Speaker 2's first name)!* [7] *Who would have thought*. [8] *It will take a miracle*. [9] *Pull yourself together, (first name)!* [10] *If looks could kill, for real*. [11] *I guess*. Yet again, the pattern does not always hold, as is apparent from the following examples of inter-sentential CS in which English seems to have been used instead of Slovene indiscriminately, with no discernible pattern behind it: [12] *Om- They look so good!* [13] *It's the same*. [14] *Wow, he's so lucky*. [15] *Oh my god, I love you so much*. [16] *It's a competition*. One-word or one-phrase inter-sentential CS also included English interjections and exclamations: [17] *Wow!* [18] *Yummy!* [19] *Girl!* [20] *What?!* and [21] *Ew!*

Similarly, intra-sentential CS also frequently occurred with ready-made, fixed English phrases and collocations (to list a few: *the calm after the storm*, *the apple of my eye*, *spoiled for choice*, *might as well*, *think before you talk*, *socially awkward*, *significant other*, *handling fee*, *recovery time*, *acquired taste*, *perfect analogy*), interjections, and filler words, with by far the most frequent one being *like*. *Like* fulfils a plethora of functions in English: it serves as a discourse marker of hesitation, approximation, lexical importance, lexical indecision in search of a suitable expression, or self-correction, and can even introduce an example of an explanation (Gabrys 2017, 23–26). Most of these uses are typically associated with young native speakers of English (Gabrys 2017, 27). However, *like* was the single most frequent intra-sentential CS appearing throughout the corpus, which suggests that Slovene has no equivalent discourse marker serving all of the mentioned functions. The speakers most often seem to have used *like* for emphasis and lexical indecision.

- [22] Speaker 3: *Tè **teniske** gledaš že **faking** trideset let.*
[You've been looking at these sneakers for thirty fucking years.]
- Speaker 2: *Pač ti, te, **like**, Converse, gledaš vsako leto.*
[You, those, like, Converse, you look at them every year.]
- Speaker 3: *Pač, da ona kej kup, prsežm.*
[Getting her to buy something, I swear.]
- Speaker 2: ***Like**, tu se že eno leto odloča za te čevle. Pa k jih ne morš sam kupt?*
[Like, she's been deciding on these shoes for a year now. Can't you just buy them?]
- [23] Speaker 2: *(.) **Like**, s čim se folk vse ukvarja, neke **conspiracy theories** dela o **celebrities**, **like**, kva te boli* ((curses)).
[Like, the things people get into, making some conspiracy theories about celebrities, like, who cares.]
- Speaker 1: *Ja, to je res čudn.*
[Yes, that's really weird.]
- Speaker 2: *Pač to je tko brez zveze.*
[That's so pointless.]
- Speaker 1: *Ja, je ja.* ((chuckles)) ***It's so much fun though.***
[Yes, it is, yes. It's so much fun though.]

Further, *like* is frequently used in the pseudo-quotative structure *be + like*, with which speakers signal an approximate citation of someone else's words, and which is a fairly recent grammatical construction in English (Romaine and Lange 1991, 227; see also Blyth, Recktenwald and Wang 1990). This structure appeared in the corpus in the form of a syntactic calque; however, in contrast to the above examples, *like* had been replaced by the Slovene *tko* (*tako*).

- [24] Speaker 2: *(.) (Speaker 1's first name) je zanj neki pela, **in je bla tko**: poznaš pesem?*
[(Speaker 1's first name) was singing something the other day, and she was like: do you know the song?]
- Speaker 1: ((laughs))
- Speaker 2: *In js **sm bla sam tko**: ne.*
[And I was just like: no.]
- [25] Speaker 1: *Aja (.) **Ona je bla tko**: nimamo več.*
[Oh. She was like: we don't have that anymore.]

The insertion of an English word or phrase mid-sentence was not always done with the purpose of filling a lexical or semantic gap in Slovene, as with the following examples that have perfectly adequate and frequent equivalents in Slovene, yet the participants opted for English counterparts instead: *food*, *funny*, *favourite song*, *tragic*, *crazy*, and *pizza box*.

- [26] Speaker 1: *Men vse počas dela.*
[Everything is working slowly for me.]

Speaker 1: (.) *Js k **updejtam** svoj **mail**, da vidm, če je moj paket bil **shipped**, in mi **ful** počas dela.*

[Me when I'm updating my email to see if my package has been shipped, and it's working super slowly.]

[27] Speaker 1: *Čak k so oni- Ker **prime view** majo oni!*

[Wait, are they- What a prime view they've got!]

Speaker 2: *Ja pa če so **royal family**.*

[Yes, because they're the royal family.]

Speaker 1: ((repeats)) ***Family, family**.*

[Family, family.]

Interestingly, the same lexical item was sometimes indiscriminately used in Slovene in one sentence and English in the following one, or vice versa, as illustrated with the following example with *lunch* and *kosilo*:

[28] Speaker 4: *Dej, pičimo nazaj v Nico na kosilo.*

[Come on, let's head back to Nice for lunch.]

[...]

Speaker 4: *Zdle gremo še tu, (speaker 1's first name) bo zdle še (), pol mamó še pu ure nazaj, pa tku, **like**, na **lunch** mormo it, a veš.*

[We're doing this now, (speaker 1's first name) will now (), and then we've got another half an hour back, and, like, we need to go for lunch, you know.]

Very curious was the alternation between how verbs were adapted to fit the Slovene conjugation system: in most cases, the inflectional morpheme was added to the verb (*deep cleanajo*, *tunam out*, *worka out*, *breakat ta ice*), in some instances of phrasal verbs to the particle (*stressouta*), or the verb was not inflected at all (*run bigger*):

[29] <choosing the right shoe size>

Speaker 2: *Visoke, ja.*

[The high ones, yes.]

Speaker 3: *Men niso lepe.*

[I don't like them.]

Speaker 2: *Ampak črne so lepš.*

[But the black ones are nicer.]

Speaker 3: *Pa kaj morš eno nižje- mislm, **size down?***

[Do you have to go one down- I mean, size down?]

Speaker 2: *Baje, ja, to vsi pišejo.*

[Apparently, yes, everyone says that.]

Speaker 3: *Zakaj?*

[Why?]

Speaker 1: *K **run bigger**.*

[Because run bigger.]

- Speaker 2: **Run bigger.**
[Run bigger.]
- Speaker 1: *Ampak bom- fora je, devetintrideset ni več.*
Tko da osemintrideset it is.
[But I'll- the thing is, they're out of thirty-nine.
So, thirty-eight it is.]
- Speaker 2: **It's a sign.**
[It's a sign.]
- Speaker 1: **It's a sign, ja.**
[It's a sign, yes.]

With inter-sentential CS and intra-sentential switches with a distinct English pronunciation, the difference between English and Slovene was relatively clear-cut. However, many items fell right in the middle of the borrowing/CS continuum. Especially ambiguous were items like *sori* (<Eng. *sorry*), *plis* (<Eng. *please*), *najs* (<Eng. *nice*), *kjut* (<Eng. *cute*), *friend* (<Eng. *friend*), *filing* (<Eng. *feeling*), *bed* (<Eng. *bad*), *izi* (<Eng. *easy*), *mejkap* (<Eng. *make-up*), and *komp* (<Eng. *computer*), which have been fully integrated into Slovene phonologically, orthographically, and morphologically, appear frequently in the corpus, and are in widespread use among young speakers of Slovene in general, but not the entire Slovene-speaking community. Such items were thus treated as CS. Notably frequent, and likewise difficult to categorize, was the use of English emphatic markers like *omajgad* (<Eng. *Oh my god*), sometimes also abbreviated as *omg*, and profanities like *fak* (< Eng. *fuck*), *šit* (< Eng. *shit*), *watafak* (< Eng. *what the fuck*), *dafak* (< Eng. *the fuck*), and *faking* (< Eng. *fucking*). With these items, the criterion of widespread Slovene-speaking community usage yet again remains unmet, which speaks in favour of treating them as instances of CS rather than lexical borrowing. Regardless of the categorization, the phenomenon of using English expletives instead of Slovene ones is interesting from a cognitive perspective, as it points to the difference in the perception of emotion-laden words in L1 and L2 (see Gawinkowska, Paradowski, and Bilewicz 2013; Pavlenko 2008).

Only words and phrases that did meet the criteria of being paradigmatically and syntagmatically integrated into the recipient language and used across the recipient-language speech community were treated as anglicisms. The frequency of anglicisms (244 occurrences in total) was, however, lower than that of intra-sentential CS (561 occurrences). This observation points to the fact that the participants had drawn from two linguistic repertoires at once, rather than just the Slovene lexicon, and that their use of English was largely produced *ad hoc*.

Frequent examples of lexical anglicisms include *vikend* (<Eng. *weekend*), *video* (<Eng. *video*), *film* (<Eng. *film*), *pullover* (<Eng. *pullover*), *šport* (<Eng. *sport*), *tenis* (<Eng. *tennis*), *teniske* (<Eng. *tennis shoes*), *WC* (<Eng. *WC*), *čips* (<Eng. *chips*), *trenirati* (<Eng. *train*), *športnika* (<Eng. *sportsman*), and *turist* (<Eng. *tourist*). While these items no longer sound foreign to the Slovene ear and were borrowed into Slovene at some point in the past in order to fill a lexical gap, examples like *mail* (<Eng. *e-mail*), *set* (<Eng. *set*) and *avt* (<Eng. *out*), although fully lexicalized, do retain some degree of foreignness, and often have Slovene equivalents.

Among the most prevailing lexical anglicisms were *ful* (<Eng. *full*), most likely borrowed from English through Croatian (Pulvirenti 2016), *okej* (<Eng. *okay*), *fajn* (< Eng. *fine*), and *kul* (<Eng. *cool*). While these examples yet again spark the borrowing/CS debate, their ubiquity in the corpus as well as the internet corpora *Gos* and *Kres*, and perhaps most importantly their inclusion in the SSKJ² (Dictionary of the Standard Slovenian Language, second edition, 2014), speak in favour of treating them as anglicisms.

The item *ful* appeared 175 times and modified adjectives, adverbs, verbs, as well as nouns. In most use cases, *ful* can be replaced by *zelo* (*very* or *really*) or *veliko* (*many*), and has the function of an intensifier or a quantifier. For example:

- [30] *Ful je dobr.*
[It's really good.]
- [31] *Pač ful sta strmela.*
[They were really staring.]
- [32] *Drgač ful se mi zdi, da tku v teh krajih tku ful ni velik za vidt.*
[I really think that there's not much to see around here.]
- [33] *Ja sej je ful barvne stvari nosu, veš, pa take extra. Pa baje je bil ful lep.*
[Yeah, he wore a lot of really colourful stuff, you know, extra stuff. Apparently, he was also very handsome.]
- [34] *Ful bi mela tako majčko.*
[I'd really like to have such a T-shirt.]
- [35] *Ful programov je kupil pravice za Wimbledon prenos.*
[Many programmes bought the Wimbledon broadcasting rights.]

Sometimes, *ful* even takes inflections:

- [36] *Drgač men fulkrat, k pridem domov, je tku tazadna stvar, k hočm jest, je domača hrana.*
[For me, a lot of times when I get home, the last thing I want to eat is homemade food.]

As for syntactic anglicisms, hardly any that have attained widespread use among Slovene speakers appeared in the corpus. *Ad hoc* syntactic calques were more common (48 instances in total) and immediately struck one as foreign-sounding grammatical constructions. Most prominent was the *be + like* construction as a marker of pseudo-reported speech, as discussed earlier. Other curious examples include:

- [37] Speaker 1: **Kako je bil tvoj dan?**
[How was your day?]
- [38] Speaker 2: *Kako so oni mislni, da bom js okej s tem?*
[How did they think that I'd be okay with that?]

- [39] Speaker 1: *Al sm sam js?*
[Or is it just me?]
- [40] Speaker 4: *Ja, to je pa definitivno opcija.*
[Yes, it's definitely an option.]

9 Discussion

Language contact can clearly produce well-versed code-switchers that do not hesitate to exploit their linguistic repertoire. The fact that 33.6% of the examined utterances in the corpus contained at least one English element, and 25.8% contained at least one example of CS, is an indication that English is extensively used by the young participants. The alternating use of Slovene and English seems to be conditioned by an interplay of factors: the participants, the topic of conversation, as well as the social setting. In this particular case, the participants formed an in-group of close friends, and the analysed conversations took place in relaxed, informal social settings. As such their manner of speaking might be, at least to some degree, of an idiosyncratic nature. The results of the corpus analysis point to Poplack's hypotheses that "[i]n-group membership favours intra-sentential code-switching" (1980, 589–90), and that "speakers with the greatest degree of bilingual ability ('true' bilinguals) most favour intra-sentential code-switching" (1980, 613).

Yet there are external factors, such as globalization and language prestige, by which the participants' use of English is further expedited. A noticeable transformation in the role of English is underway with young speakers of Slovene in general: rather than being acquired as a foreign language, English is transitioning to a second language, and is no longer an additional skill, but a necessary tool for communication, education, and entertainment in an increasingly globalized world. Naturally, the results of the present study are not to be generalized to the entire population of young adults in Slovenia, but studies in the field of Slovene-English language contact do corroborate the observed trend of pervasive use of English in informal contexts (see Reher and Fišer, 2018; Sekotová, 2011; Šabec, 2012). A more accurate analysis would require a larger corpus and more interlocutors of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The influence of English on present-day Slovene extends beyond merely filling lexical gaps, as used to be the case in the previous century. Intense language contact between English and Slovene affects the syntactic, pragmatic, and even word-formational domains, penetrating deeply into the tissue of the Slovene language. A common response to frequent borrowing and CS is an apprehensive stance towards all foreign linguistic material. However, it is important to note that contact-induced change is inevitable, and that not all foreign elements are intruders which contaminate the Slovene linguistic landscape – throughout history, the abundance of foreign linguistic material Slovene was receptive to was precisely what enriched the language and shaped it into what it is today. At the same time, the course of globalization is unforeseeable, and the fate of small languages like Slovene rests in the hands of their own speakers – their language policies on a societal level, and on a micro level their conscious efforts, metalinguistic awareness, and care for their mother tongue.

10 Conclusion

By exploring the language contact phenomena of borrowing and CS in informal communication among young speakers of Slovene, the article hoped to elucidate the extent to which English has permeated their linguistic landscape. The analysis has shown that over a third of all utterances contained at least one English element, be it a borrowing or an instance of CS. Considering the fact that young adults face increasing exposure to English on a daily basis, and that English enjoys a significant amount of language prestige, the percentages are rather unsurprising. Whether they are a cause for concern for the Slovene language in general, or merely a generational phenomenon or even a case of in-group idiosyncrasy, remains up for debate, and would require a larger corpus for a more accurate analysis. A study with more speakers of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds would yield more representative results that could be generalized to the Slovene-speaking community.

The intention behind this study extends beyond a mere preservationist stance. Members of a language community are adaptive and creative speakers, and languages are ever-changing entities – as such, contact-induced change is inevitable. Making use of all the linguistic resources one has at hand serves communicative and affective purposes, and is a common occurrence with bi- or multilingual speakers. With young adult speakers of Slovene in particular, English language skills are becoming the norm rather than an exception, and the status of English among the young generation is shifting from a foreign to a second language. The challenge ahead lies in seeing to it that intense contact with English enriches rather than impoverishes Slovene, and in conscious efforts and policies that prioritize linguistic diversity and vitality.

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

font: 10 pt

line spacing: 1.0

(.) micro pause

(-) short est. pause

(--) intermediate est. pause

(---) longer pause

non-linguistic events: ((laughs)) ((coughs)) ((scoffs))

setting descriptions and non-verbal events: <at lunch>

unintelligible passages: ()

hesitation markers, laughter and tokens: am, uh, er, mhm, aaa, aha, ah, mh, haha



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- the text should be divided into introduction; body of the paper (possibly subdivided); and conclusion.

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