Changing the Terms
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Having some time at my disposal when in London, I had visited the British Museum, and made search among the books and maps of the library regarding Transylvania; it had struck me that some foreknowledge of the country could hardly fail to have some importance in dealing with a noble of that country. I find that the district he named is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe. I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Castle Dracula, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps...

(Stoker 1993, 1-2)

The above is an extract from Jonathan Harker’s journal dated May 3. Jonathan Harker, a hapless solicitor and diligent child of the Empire, is one of the central characters in Dracula, a novel by Irish novelist Bram Stoker, that appeared over 100 years ago.

Translation and the Imperial Archive

Jonathan Harker’s enquiries take as two initial points of reference the British Museum and the Ordnance Survey, the essential constituents of what Thomas Richards calls the “Imperial Archive.” The British Empire in the
nineteenth century covered a vast geographical area. Since it was clearly impossible to control this empire by force, information became the dominant means of control. The Baconian equation of knowledge with power gradually became the guiding dictate of imperial policy. Knowledge in this sense did not supplement power, knowledge was power. As such, the Ordnance Survey was at the heart of the imperial project of territorial expansion, surveillance and control. Colonel Thomas Holdich, Superintendent of Frontier Surveys in India (1892-1898), stated quite explicitly that “geographical surveys are functions of both civil and military operations” (Richards 1993, 14): the India Survey proceeded “square mile by square mile, gradually taking cadastral possession of the entire country, stopping just at its borders” (14). Ireland, as for many imperial experiments, was used as the laboratory for the geographical mapping of Empire when the British Army, in the 1830s, carried out there the first comprehensive Ordnance Survey outside of England.¹ This Survey is the subject of Brian Friel’s play *Translations*, where the impact of the survey on the language and culture of the people of Baile Beag/Ballybeg is explored by the playwright. The Survey involves the Anglicization of the locality through language—English transliterations of the Irish names reflecting the wider translation of a people from one language and culture to another. Crucial to the operation of this enterprise is the use of local knowledge, and a striking feature of British imperial policy was its ability to co-opt local, dominated knowledge(s) in a strategy for retaining power. The fact that able scholars such as George Petrie and John O’Donovan, who were deeply sympathetic to the Irish language and culture, were employed on the Survey enhanced rather than diminished its effectiveness as an archival tool.²

In Friel’s play, Owen is employed by the Army to act as translator and interpreter, due to his knowledge of Irish. After translating for Captain Lancey, who describes the purposes of the Survey, Owen is taken to task by his brother Manus:

MANUS: What sort of a translation was that, Owen?
OWEN: Did I make a mess of it?
MANUS: You weren’t saying what Lancey was saying!
OWEN: “Uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry”—who said that?
MANUS: There was nothing uncertain about what Lancey said: it’s a bloody military operation, Owen! and what’s Yolland’s function? What’s “incorrect” about the place-names we have here?
OWEN: Nothing at all. They’re just going to be standardised.
MANUS: You mean changed into English.
Manus’s main accusation is that Owen, in his translation, is falsifying the original as part of a covert operation by the Survey to expropriate the local Irish-speaking community of their sense of place. The notion of falsification of the original can be linked to a more general concern with origins in the nineteenth century that helps to explain both the fascination of Bram Stoker’s novel and its significance for translation studies.

A strategic shift occurred in nineteenth-century morphology from the Linnaean concept of *forma formatas* or fixed form, to the Darwinian notion of *forma formans*, the diachronic notion of changing form. This evolutionary preoccupation with dynamic lineage had widespread disciplinary impact. In the area of language, philology took on a major importance because the desire to study living languages led to a preoccupation with dead languages: the forms of the dead could be perceived in the forms of the living, and vice versa. In a similar way, the desire to study living matter led to an obsession with fossil records. In both instances, the scholar-scientist traces the morphological evolution of form through time. Forms do not exist in a static, timeless space, but are rather infinitely susceptible to change. Underlying the Darwinian system is the notion of consonance: that missing links will restore continuity where there is discontinuity. What is truly monstrous about Dracula’s vampires is that they lie outside the purview of Darwinian morphology. They are mutants who can change form at an alarming rate. They have no past, no lineage, no progenitors. They are a species without origin—or whose origin is obscure—located in the liminal zone of Dracula’s castle. This castle, Harker tells us, is “just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina.” Monsters have, of course, long been an European figure representing external (Empire) and internal (female) alterity, and the figure of the vampire can be seen as a recasting of alterity in a post-Darwinian mould. The vampires, which threaten the Empire from the East, are a fictional creation of an Irishman, the threat from the West.

**Uncertain Origins**

The status of the original has, of course, been a vexed issue for translation through the centuries and what I wish to suggest here is that the threat of translation in colonial and postcolonial contexts is bound up with the question of origin. Translation is frequently presented in colonial contexts as either a predatory, exploitative activity or as the True Path to reconciliation, understanding and the withering away of prejudice. Less account has been taken of translation as resistance—the ways in which originals can be manipulated, invented or substituted, or the status of the original subverted in order to frustrate the intelligence-gathering activities of the Imperial Agent. This perspective is unpopular, as it frustrates the unspoken desire in
Translation Studies for consonant wholeness, a notion that saturates the metaphorical language of bridge-building that is frequently employed in the discipline. It is therefore instructive to look at the status of the original in colonial situations, and see what implications this status has for translation practice and reception.

Nineteenth-century Irish-verse translation is replete with examples of lost or missing originals. Not one single original copy survives of Charles Henry Wilson’s *Poems Translated from the Irish Language into the English*, the first volume of translations of Irish verse into English, which appeared in 1782. No Irish originals can be found for the influential English translations of J.J. Callanan, of which “Outlaw of Loch Lene” was a huge success. No original has been established for “Bumpers, Squire Jones,” which first appeared in Joseph Cooper Walker’s *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* (1786), translated by the “facetious Baron Arthur Dawson” (Welch 1988, 32). In other instances, translators have translated from a language that they scarcely knew. James Clarence Mangan, whose translations left an indelible mark on Irish translation activity in the nineteenth century and beyond, had little or no knowledge of Irish and therefore had no direct access to the originals. He was totally reliant on cribs from Eugene O’Curry and John O’Donovan, both of whom worked for the Ordnance Survey. The translations of J.J. Callanan and others became, in a sense, the originators of their own species, and led the way for countless imitations or, more properly, as no one translation is ever wholly like any other, countless mutations. This mutability has a political dimension in that both Callanan and Mangan were sympathetic to Irish nationalism. Indeed, Mangan claimed, “When I translate from the Irish my heart has no pulse except for the wrongs and sorrows of my native land” (qtd. in Welch 1988, 110). Mangan’s most successful political translation, “My Dark Rosaleen,” is based on his poetic reworking of Samuel Ferguson’s earlier prose-translation of the same poem, which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1834. Mangan’s translation appeared in the newspaper *The Nation* on May 30, 1846, at the height of the Great Famine, and had a lasting impact as an iconic poem of Irish opposition to imperial rule. The peripheral threat to the centre comes then not from unmediated access to the original but from obliquity, indirectness, a complicated relationship with origin. This is perhaps particularly the case when target audiences do not have access to the original texts or language. When origins are unknown, uncertain, translations have the potential, in a sense, to become truly terrifying. This observation counters essentialist assumptions that only direct, unobstructed contact with origins can produce the shock of otherness. But the danger, on the contrary, is that such a conception of origin leads to a cult of purity, a purity that is always, of course, imperilled by others, who must be eliminated in order to restore the fantasmatic original state.
Double Agents

One of the longest, if least dramatic, scenes in Neil Jordan’s recent film *Michael Collins*, about a leading figure in the Irish War of Independence, is set in a room containing box upon box of dusty files. Through the services of a detective sympathetic to the nationalist cause, Collins gains access to all the files on nationalist activists, in Dublin Castle. There, he is in the Irish heart of the Imperial Archive. After spending an entire night looking through the files, Collins comes to realize that the empire is a construct of information, and that a strategy of opposition must be based not on the heroic stasis of the shelled building, but on the mobile control of information. Lord Deputy Sidney, a veteran of Tudor military campaigns in Ireland, had understood this centuries earlier, in 1580, when while in retirement he wrote to his successor, Grey de Wilton:

And since it is marciallie that you must proceede, and considering your experience and judgemente, I seasse to treate any more of that, lest, as I wright in the beginning of my lettre, I might power more follie out of myself then put wisdome into you; only this, that you spare for no coste to gette spies. (qtd. in Egerton 1847, 71)

Sixteenth-century Ireland was overwhelmingly Irish-speaking, so that spies also had to be translators. Criostóir Nuinseann, also known as Christopher Nugent, is one such example. Later to become Lord Delvin, Nugent is primarily known for an Irish primer he was asked to prepare for Queen Elizabeth I (see Williams 1986, 10-11). Irish-born of English origins, Nugent sent the following report that explicitly links espionage and translation to Lord Deputy Mountjoy, in 1600:

The intelligencer, with whom I formerly acquainted your Lordship is returned with a packet containing thirteen letters written in Irish from Tyrone, all directed to the Munster and Leinster rebels, saving one to the Earl of Ormonde, the copy whereof, and of Desmond and Onie Mac Rory his letters translated verbatim, I send your Lorship. The other ten, containing the general news, and persuasions to guard down the Earl of Ormonde, I could not translate verbatim by reason of the messenger’s haste, and fear to be discovered but have sent your Lordship a brief of their differences and to whom they were directed. (qtd. in Jackson 1973, 27)

Nugent was a Crown supporter, an Irish landowner and fully bilingual in both Irish and English. He was in all respects in the classic position of the *entre-deux*.

In Sidney’s letter to Wilton in 1580, the spies referred to—Thomas Masterson, Robert Pipho and Robert Harpole—were Englishmen who had
married local Irish-speaking women, and who had no qualms using their partners' linguistic competence for their intelligence-gathering activities. These spies/translators were, in a sense, living double lives. And indeed, it is the necessary doubleness/duplicity of translation in this colonial context that points to the inherent entropy of the system—the disorder that threatens order not from outside, as Matthew Arnold thought, but from the inside, as Ruskin (1884) more correctly observed. Captain Thomas Lee, an English soldier who dreamed of establishing a "principality" for himself during the Elizabethan period on the borders of Kildare and Wicklow, married an Irish-speaking Irishwoman. He also employed his wife as translator/interpreter in a plot to eliminate one of his most dangerous native-Irish rivals. Her political sympathies were, however, with the Irish rebels to whom she betrayed Lee's military plans (see Jackson 1973, 24).

The invisibility of the translator in colonial contexts is more often than not a pious fiction that is structurally programmed to implode. The relationship between local knowledge, information and control is crucial here. Effective agents of empire and state must operate as part of a community, but proximity can of course shade into complicity. State nomadology draws its strength from decentred instability, but this process of decentring also exposes the vulnerability of the State. It is noticeable that of the five major texts discussed by Richards in The Imperial Archive, two are by Irishmen—Bram Stoker's Dracula and Erskine Childers's The Riddle of the Sands—and one, Rudyard Kipling's Kim, features an Irishman as a main character. While it is not mentioned anywhere in Richards's book, it can be argued that it was precisely the doubleness of the Irish in the imperial context that made them such valuable allies of Empire in an archival consolidation of territory. Yet, this duality prefigures the disintegration of Empire. Richards does, however, make much of the use of local knowledge as part of the reworking of imperial information strategies in Childers's The Riddle of the Sands; Childers would use this local knowledge in 1914 to supply arms to Irish nationalists and to contribute to the incipient breakup of Empire.

When James Clerk Maxwell, a contemporary of Darwin, presented his unified field theory in 1854, he addressed not only Newtonian preoccupations with the movement of bodies, but also the thermal and electromagnetic conditions separating them. Maxwell's field theory was above all an exploration of the phenomena impeding the unmediated movement of bodies through space (see Harman 1982, esp. 72-119). Translation is one of these phenomena that potentially impedes the movement of imperial bodies through the colonial space, despite the Newtonian rhetoric of unmediated universality. If one were to map a "subversive" theory of translation, what then might it look like? What are the different forms of "translation resist-
ance," or a dissident relationship to origin? Two forms that merit mention here are resistance at the level of positionality and resistance at the level of text.

**Resistance at the Level of Positionality**

Translators working from the perspective of positionality are defined by their class, race, gender—their general position in networks of power and influence. However, depending on the configurations of power, translators can shift allegiances. They are, therefore, not to be trusted. Their inferior status is traditionally explained by ignorance or a lack of wider understanding of the difficulties of the translation process. But the subjection can equally plausibly be the fear of the divided (often female) translation subject. This divided subject haunts imperial exchanges. William Jones, in the preface to his *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1777), claims, “It was found dangerous to employ natives as interpreters upon whose fidelity they [the British] could not depend” (qtd. in Niranjana 1992, 16). The linguistic and cultural instability that results in the effectiveness of the translator as imperial subject (informer/informant) also maximizes the potential for entropy. It is for this reason that the study of the lives of individual translators is so important, as the complex inversions and reversions that characterize the actions of translators in situations of conflict can often be lost sight of in more systematic or programmatic approaches to translation history. Indeed, Edwin Gentzler, in a recent essay, uses the work of Michel de Certeau to point up the shortcomings of these approaches. He claims that “most systemic or structuralist methodologies fail at the task of linking human agency to historical change” (1996, 122) and that de Certeau’s emphasis on the creative, inventive subversion of the everyday allows translation theorists to “explore the poiesis on the part of the user/translator, that which is often hidden, silent, invisible, but according to de Certeau, insinuated everywhere” (123). Linking this poiesis to positionality enables us to explore strategies of resistance to, and complicity in, cultural subjection in situations of colonial conflict.

**Resistance at the Level of Text**

While there are many forms of textual resistance, I wish to mention two forms here. The first is what might be termed “macaronic subversion.” An example taken from Irish literary history is the tradition of political macaronic verse in eighteenth-century Ireland, where the lines of the poem in English appeared blameless or conciliatory, while the lines in Irish carry a very
different political message—a message that was considerably more hostile to the authorities. The political effectiveness of the macaronic poetry lay in the opaqueness of the Irish to an English-speaking audience. The macaronic verse was doubly subversive of translation in that the alternate lines suggested the interlinear. The unsuspecting English speaker might think that the Irish was a literal translation of the English or vice versa, so that what one had, in effect, was a form that imitated the practice of translation, but subverted its alleged purpose.

The second form of textual resistance could be termed "attributive subversion." In this case, translation is a form of insubordination that exploits the deferred responsibility of translation. Je est un autre so I cannot be held accountable for the sentiments expressed. An example of attributive subversion can be found in the February 1799 issue of Dublin Magazine and Irish Monthly Register, which published a satirical anti-Union poem entitled "Sheelagh Bull." The poem appeared in the extremely fraught political context after the bloody suppression of the 1798 rebellion. However, it was presented as being "translated from German of the celebrated Bürger, author of Leonora" (O'Neill 1976, 129). Ironically, Bürger is the author quoted by one of Jonathan Harker's coach companions in the first chapter of Dracula: "Denn die Todten reiten schnell" (For the dead travel fast) (10).

Attributive subversion is related to the larger question of translation and forgery. Is there a sense in which the activity of translation is intrinsically fraudulent? Examples of fictitious translations abound in the history of translation. Macpherson’s eighteenth-century Ossianic translations are certainly the most famous examples, but there are many others. James Clarence Mangan, the Irish poet mentioned earlier, produced translations of two German poets—"Selber" and "Drechsler"—who did not exist, who were entirely of his invention (see Mangan 1836). Anikó Sohár (1998) has looked at the widespread practice of fictitious translation in contemporary Hungary, where translations of English-language science-fiction novels that never existed are published. In fact, one could argue that translators are akin to master forgers.

A common enough definition of translation is that it saves us from having to read the original (Ladmiral 1995, 418). Students of pragmatic translation or translators working in localization companies are told that the end-users of technical documentation must not know that they are reading a translation. The text must read like an original. In other words, it must be a successful forgery. The ethical opprobrium attached to forgery may make translators reluctant to acknowledge the affinity, but both activities involve considerable ingenuity; poor translations resemble nothing more than sloppy reproductions. The question I have asked elsewhere (see Cronin 1997-1998)
is whether it is possible to make a distinction between "translation as reproduction" and "translation as transformation." The polyglot narrator in Héctor Biancotti's Sans la miséricorde du Christ (1985) makes explicit the proximity of translation and falsehood:

Moi, qui n’ai plus de langue, mais que tourmentent plusieurs ou qui, parfois bénéficié de plusieurs, j’ai des sentiments qui varient selon les mots que j’emploie. Il m’arrive d’être désespéré dans une langue et à peine triste dans une autre. Chaque langue nous fait mentir, exclut une partie des faits, de nous-mêmes; mais dans le mensonge, il y a une affirmation, et c’est une façon d’être à un moment donné; plusieurs langues à la fois nous désavouent, nous morcellent, nous éparpillent en nous-mêmes. (8)

In the context of colonialism—and it is interesting that Macpherson, Mangan and the Hungarians are all translating from a periphery—political truths can be articulated through translation falsehoods, as in the "Sheelagh Bull" example, or, perhaps more correctly, the duplicitous nature of translation can be a strategy that both obstructs and promotes communication. The political circumstances of translation affect the strategy adopted, as is clear from the obstructionist strategy adopted in Jacobite macaronic verse in eighteenth-century Ireland.

The Translator-Nomad

In Franz Kafka’s short story “Ein altes Blatt” (An old manuscript), Chinese functionaries await destruction at the hands of nomadic tribes who have breached their defences. One of the functionaries claims despairingly, “Sprechen kann man mit den Nomaden nicht. Unsere Sprache kennen sie nicht, ja sie haben kaum eine eigene” (It is impossible to speak to the nomads. They do not know our language; indeed, they hardly have a language of their own) (130). In fact, Kafka’s nomads refuse to be translated; they play a deadly zero-sum game of non-equivalence with their Chinese enemies. While all nomads may not be translators, all translators might be defined as nomads. Indeed, the translator-nomad is a recurring figure in translation history. In the preface to his Latin translation of St. John Chrysostom’s Homilies on the Gospel of John, the great twelfth-century translator Burgundio of Pisa declared:

I, Burgundio, in fear that, if I wrote in my own idiom when translating this holy father’s commentary, I would be changing the meaning of one or more propositions of these two very wise men, and would be incurring the risk of altering so great an original (for these are
words of faith) through my own error, I resolved to take a more difficult journey and preserve in my translation not only words with the same meaning as in the original Greek but also the same style and order of words. (1997, 41)

Translation as a difficult journey had been anticipated by St. Jerome’s remarks in his famous letter to Pammachius in AD 395, where the translator of the Vulgate quotes from the preface to his translation of Eusebius of Caesarea’s Chronicle: “Possibly, I have no equivalent by which to express some word, and if I then must go out of my way to reach the goal, miles are spent to cover what is in reality a short distance” (1997, 26).

As Hardy suggests in The Return of the Native, travellers arriving in a foreign country are often objects of suspicion, but so also are travellers returning to their native country. As we saw earlier in the case of translators-as-informers, they are both remote (politically) from their compatriots and near (linguistically, culturally). For the German thinker Georg Simmel, the tension between distance and proximity is most dramatically evident in the case of the “stranger.” In his 1908 essay “Der Fremde,” Simmel describes the stranger not as the wanderer who comes today and is gone tomorrow, but rather the person who comes today and stays tomorrow—“the potential wanderer so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going” (1971, 143). And this is frequently the position of the translator. He or she eventually settles down, but never gets over the freedom of coming and going. This is even more evident with the shift from translation of classical languages to that of vernacular languages as the main form of translation, and the consequent need to remain in contact with changes in living languages. Simmel points out that in economic activity, the stranger is omnipresent as trader. As long as people produce goods for their own needs or goods are circulated within a small group, there is no need for a middleman:

A trader is required only for goods produced outside the group. Unless there are people who wander out into foreign lands to buy these necessities, in which case they are themselves “strange” merchants in this other region, the trader must be a stranger; there is no opportunity for anyone else to make a living at it. (144)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in an 1828 article on Thomas Carlyle’s German Romances draws an explicit parallel between the trader and translator. He claims that anyone who studies German finds himself in the marketplace where all nations peddle their wares:

And that is how we should see the translator, as one who strives to be a mediator in this universal, intellectual trade, and makes it his business to promote exchange. For whatever one may say about the
shortcomings of translations, they are and will remain most important and worthy undertakings in world communication. (1997, 225)

Mobility is central to Simmel’s notion of the trader. The trader is a stranger on the move. When we look at translation theory, we tend to find the following division: translation theory and history deal with literature and religion; translation pedagogy and practice deal with economic, technical and scientific translation. Commercial translation is seen as the vocational application of translation principles. However, commercial translation can also be seen as a nomadic practice that has long involved translators—strangers trading not only in goods, but also in words. A significant motive for translation in the colonial and postcolonial period has been trade in one form or the other. If we conceive of commerce in Simmel’s conception of the stranger, then it becomes possible to link commerce and translation as nomadic practices and to argue that translation history in the postcolonial period must not confine itself to the sacred texts of religious and profane literature, but must examine in detail the whole practice of commercial translation and how the translation relationships expressed in this practice are related to the question of power. This, in turn, means that “pragmatic” translation (i.e., technical, scientific, commercial translation) must not become the sole domain of CAT (computer-assisted translation) experts and translation pedagogues. Pragmatic translation is as much in need of a “cultural turn,” a political reading, as the high-culture forms of translation practice that have, up until now, monopolized our attention. No full understanding of the impact of translation on colonial and postcolonial societies can be arrived at if we do not investigate, for example, how the relationship between commerce and translation evolved in different colonial situations. Who were translators? Colonizers, traders or both? Were translators and traders separate categories or were traders also translators (interpreters) and vice versa? What impact does translation have on the economic dependency—or otherwise—of postcolonial states in globalized relations of trade? These and many other questions point to the significant research potential of pragmatic translation in the context of debates on language, colonization and power.

Goethe was eager to point out that the translator/trader can play “the role of interpreter while enriching himself” (225). The connection between money and translation is not a fortuitous one, and the link has been established by many commentators over the centuries. The French aesthetician Charles Batteux, for example, brings money, trade and translation together in his *Principes de littérature* (1747-1748). He recommends the use of what we would now call “transposition” in translation practice:

Let him [the translator] take the scales, weigh the expressions on either side, poise them every way, he will be allowed alterations,
provided he preserve to the thought the same substance and the same life. He will act only like a traveller, who, for his convenience, exchanges sometimes one piece of gold for several of silver, sometimes several pieces of silver for one of gold.

And the psychology of money is the topic of Georg Simmel's essay "Zur Psychologie des Geldes." He notes that many oppressed and marginalized groups throughout history have sought refuge in activities connected with money. The unspecific character of money meant that its channels ran in many different directions and thus offered possibilities of influence where direct access to power was denied: "Those classes, to whom many goals of personal aspiration were denied from the very outset on the grounds of their civic position, turned to the acquisition of money with particular success" (1997, 241).

The classes or groups referred to by Simmel were the freed slaves of Ancient Rome, the Huguenots and the Jewish community in different cultures. He might also have included the Catholics in eighteenth-century Ireland, who, because of the penal laws that prevented them from entering the professions and owning large amounts of land, turned to trade and money as alternative outlets for economic survival and social mobility. It is striking that the Huguenots in eighteenth-century England and Ireland, the Jewish community throughout history and the Catholic Irish from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century were also extensively involved in translation activity.

As George Steiner argues in an essay on comparative literature in the collection No Passion Spent: Essays, 1978-1996, Jewish scholars or scholars of Jewish origin have played a preponderant role in the development of comparative literature as a critical pursuit.

Endowed, it would appear, with an unusual facility for languages, compelled to be a frontalier (the grim Swiss word for those who, materially and psychologically, dwell near or astride borders), the twentieth-century Jew would be drawn naturally to a comparative view of the secular literatures which he treasured but in none of which he was natively or "by right of natural inheritance" altogether at home. (1996, 148)

Steiner might have made a similar case for the enormous contribution Jewish scholars have made to translation studies in the twentieth century—from Walter Benjamin to Steiner himself, to contemporary figures like Gideon Toury. Goethe's contention that he "who studies German finds himself in the marketplace where all nations offer their wares" (1997, 225) has a truth that he himself may not have anticipated. Many of those offering their wares may indeed have no other choice, just as the sole source of
patronage for Irish-language translators in the eighteenth century was a new colonial class, a minority of whose members had antiquarian interests. Therefore, the relationship between the marginalized and translation is not a supplemental afterthought to translation history, prompted by twentieth-century soul-searching, but is increasingly emerging as a central feature of translation practice down through the centuries. In the same way that minority languages have far more exposure to the fact of translation than majority languages, marginalized groups, often as a result of nomadic displacement or territorial dispossession, are generally much more implicated in the practice of translation than dominant, settled communities. However, it is precisely these minority languages and marginalized groups that are largely absent as a focus of inquiry from translation theories and histories.

In *Entre-Deux: L'origine en partage*, Daniel Sibony describes the situation of the “entre-deux-langues,” a space frequently occupied by translators in their endless journeying between one language/culture and another:

> Comme franchissement, il consiste à inhiber dans une langue son collage à l'origine, sa prétention à être La langue-origin. Il s’agit de se dégager de ce qui, dans la langue où l’on baigne, fait qu’elle se pose comme l'Origine du langage; et de pouvoir donc la traduire, la trahir dans d’autres langues qui la “déforment.” Alors on peut passer à d’autres langues; d’autres langues ... deviennent vivables et sont appelées à “vivre.” L'origine comme parlante éclate alors dans l’entre-deux-langues qu’elle nourrit sans l’envahir. Faute de cela, le sujet ne peut parler et inventer dans d’autres langues; la première lui tient lieu de toute l’origine. (1991, 166)

[As a crossing over, it consists of preventing a language from clinging to its origin, to its claim to be The language-origin. It involves freeing ourselves from that which makes the language in which we are immersed set itself up as the Origin of language. Therefore, we must be able to translate it, betray it to other languages that “distort” it. Only then can we move on to other languages; other languages become viable and are called upon to “live.” The speaking origin erupts then in the space between-two-languages which it nourishes without invading. Failing this, the subject cannot speak or invent in other languages; the first language is the only origin that exists for her.]

Sibony describes his work as beginning with the “entre-deux-langues” and finishing with travel. Travel allows one to reconstruct oneself, to produce something that is other than the self, but where the self can be recognized,
and where the self acquires a certain consistency. The inability to travel brings us once again back to the question of origins:

... l'impuissance à voyager, c'est-à-dire à intégrer de nouveaux “lieux” non reconnus, à intégrer l’inconnu, voire l’inconnaissable, est la même que l'impuissance à faire alliance et partage, ou à supporter l’origine multiple. Il ne s’agit pas d’aller vers l’origine mais de voyager avec l’idée de l’origine, de faire voyager l’origine. (315, his emphasis)

[... the inability to travel, that is to say, to integrate new, unrecognizable “places,” to integrate the unknown, the unknowable even, is also the inability to form alliances and to share, or to tolerate a multiple origin. It is not a question of going toward the origin but of travelling with the idea of origin, of making the origin travel.]9

The issue of origin, as we saw earlier, exercised the imperial mind and explained the particular potency of the Transylvanian vampires with their unstable, multiple origins. In recent debates on postmodernism, postcolonialism and feminism, much attention has been focussed on the notion of the nomadic subject, in particular in the work of two feminist scholars, Rosi Braidotti and Caren Kaplan. Braidotti defines the polyglot as being “nomad in between languages”:

The nomadic polyglot practices an aesthetic style based on compassion for the incongruities, the repetitions, the arbitrariness of the languages s/he deals with. Writing is for the polyglot, a process of undoing the illusory stability of fixed identities, bursting open the bubble of ontological security that comes from familiarity with one linguistic site. The polyglot exposes this false security. (1994, 15)

Globalization, mass tourism, expanded federal systems, internal and external migration, all foreground the nomadic, and Braidotti offers a euphoric, liberatory vision of the translator-nomad at the end of this millennium. Elements of this nomadic aesthetics certainly point to the potential of translation as an instrument of emancipation in colonial and postcolonial contexts: the emphasis on challenging fixed identities, the sensitivity to arbitrariness, the interrogation of ontological securities that we have already seen with respect to the status of the original in translation. But to invoke Maxwell’s field theory once more, movement is not unmediated. There are real obstacles to the triumphant progression of the postcolonial translator. Bruce Chatwin, another theoretician of the nomadic, claimed in his essay “Nomad Invasions”:

Nomads never roam aimlessly from place to place, as one dictionary would have it. A nomadic migration is a guided tour of animals around a predictable sequence of pastures. It has the same inflexible charac-
ter as the migrations of wild game, since the same ecological factors determine it. (1990, 219)

In our contemporary cultural ecosystem, then, what factors determine the nomadic migration of postcolonial translation? Three factors might be mentioned: lack of historical awareness, infrastructural dependency and high-risk translation environment.

*Lack of Historical Awareness*

It is of paramount importance that the work of postcolonial translators be situated in both their own history and the history of others who find themselves in similar political, linguistic and historical predicaments. Anthropologist M. Crick, in an article on the representations of international tourism in the social sciences, noted the absence of the "local voice" in the description of the effects of international tourism. He went on to argue that "without close attention to the local voice, our social scientific work risks being descriptively poor and ethnocentric" (1989, 314). Local voices are increasingly being heard in translation studies, but the number of published monographs on translation history by "local" scholars from postcolonial countries is still pitifully small.

There is an added danger for postcolonial scholars, however, in that specificity of origin should not be allowed to overdetermine their contribution to wider debates. What I mean by this is that, whereas scholars from powerful ex-colonial nations can write about whatever they like, the tendency can be to only invite postcolonial scholars to write about their own specific cultural, linguistic or political experience. But nationality is not destiny, and all areas of translation theory, not just translation history, need to be informed by the theoretical perspectives of translators working in postcolonial contexts.

*Infrastructural Dependency*

This relates primarily to the production and distribution of translations. There are two levels of dependency that correspond more or less to the shift from a colonial to a postcolonial situation. The first level involves importing or reprinting translations that are produced by the imperial centre: for example, separate editions of fifteen of August von Kotzebue's plays were published in Dublin in 1799, but only one of these translations was by an Irish translator. The production of one's own translations is indeed often seen as a primary mark of cultural independence—hence, the indigenous publishing boom that often accompanies movements of national emancipation. The second level of dependency is more complex and relates to the market
restriction of translation possibilities for postcolonial translators and to their linguistic position. In postcolonial cultures where one of the languages of translation is a dominant world-language, translators can produce inward translations of lesser-known authors working in commercially less-successful genres, but much more rarely do they find themselves producing inward translations of major world figures. The result is that the bookshops of Dublin (and Montreal) are stocked with titles translated by British, American and French translators for British, American and French publishers. In Ireland, indigenous English-language translation in the last two decades has been almost exclusively dominated by poetic translation with small print runs and inadequate remuneration. This infrastructural dependency is not necessarily a negative development as it is possible to argue that the periphery can afford to be more aesthetically adventurous than the centre in its choice of authors and texts to be translated.\(^{10}\) However, even if such experiment is possible, publishers from postcolonial states often find themselves victims of international distribution and marketing arrangements that favour large publishers from powerful nations, so that it is difficult to get these translations to other markets.

**High-Risk Translation Environment**

Postcolonial peoples who have been translated (linguistically) or who translate themselves (both physically and linguistically) are acutely sensitive to the affective cost of displacement.\(^{11}\) The experience of estrangement, loss, disorientation is involved in these translations. For this reason, translation must not become invisible once again, this time as an emotional and cognitive transaction cost in the elaboration of a nomadic aesthetics. This is not to claim that translation is a secondary distortion that blights the Eden of monoglot cultures. Such a position is absurd in that cultures are, at some level, always already translated. On the other hand, cultural hybridity is often invoked by critics of postcolonial readings of translation less to champion historical scrupulousness than to discredit the whole postcolonial enterprise by dire reference to the twin evils of nativism and essentialism. Translation does have a profound effect on culture, and the associated traumas are complex in their effects.\(^{12}\) The traumas exist and cannot be wished away in a glorious celebration of cultural and linguistic plurality, however edifying the celebration. Making the origin travel, sharing, fragmenting and multiplying the space of origin is continually shadowed by the lingering guilt of duplicity, treason and betrayal.

In an essay entitled “Looking at Obstacles,” British psychoanalyst Adam Phillips argues that children find out what an object is by constructing obstacles to its access or availability. He claims:
The search for obstacles—the need to impose them in their familiar guise of time and space—is part of the endless, baffled inquiry into the nature of the object. I know what something or someone is by finding out what comes between us. (1993, 96)

In my view, exploring the historical and contemporary obstacles to translation in colonial and postcolonial contexts can help us to find out what this object called "translation" is. In one sense, Walter Benjamin’s notion of translation as überleben may indeed be the unsettling, protean state of the Undead.

Notes

1. For a detailed history of the Ordnance Survey in Ireland, see Andrews (1975).
2. For an account of the life and scholarship of O’Donovan, one of the most active members of the topographical department of the Ordnance Survey, see Boyne (1987). The limits to local knowledge in subverting an imperial project are graphically illustrated by the fate of the topographical department of the Ordnance Survey. One of the primary activities of the department was to draw up Memoirs that would include a systematic description of the social, economic and cultural aspects of life in each Irish county. The Memoirs project embodied the epistemic ambition of Empire in its desire to produce a total knowledge of the lives of its subjects. However, only one of the Memoirs was produced—Memoir of the County of Londonderry (1837). There was increasing hostility to the project on the grounds of cost and, more importantly, political unsafeness. Boyne writes, “In some quarters it was stated that the historical and social sections of the memoirs would revive political animosities, provoke intense patriotic feeling, and make much more bitter the deep divisions between members of different religions, between the governing classes and those governed, between former and present holders of land,” 22. She adds in a footnote that this was believed to be the main reason for the suppression of the Memoirs project. A formal Order was sent on July 1, 1840 by the Master of Ordnance in England to the Survey in Ireland instructing members of the Survey to revert to strictly cartographical functions for the purposes of valuation. Despite the recommendation by the Commission of Inquiry established in June 1843 by Sir Robert Peel that the Memoirs continue to be published, the project was abandoned.
3. For a discussion of the cultural implications of the notion of the “missing link,” see Beer (1996).
4. For an interesting discussion of the notion of the “monstrous,” particularly in relation to representations of women, see Braidotti (1994), ch. 3.
5. For examples of such verse, see Breandan Ó Buachalla (1996).
6. The relationship between translation, forgery and cultural resonance is also discussed in Welch (1997).
7. I have attempted to examine this question in the context of Ireland and the software localization industry in Cronin, “‘The Broadest Way Immarginable’” (forthcoming).

9. Ibid.

10. I am grateful to Ubaldo Stecconi for his observations on this point.

11. For a discussion of some of the issues involved, see the essays in King, Connell and White (1995).

12. For a psychoanalytic perspective on the nature of trauma in language and cultural transfer, see Amati Mehler, Argentieri and Canestri (1994).

Works Cited


