Travelling Languages? Land, Languaging and Translation

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The ash tree cold to look at.

(Seamus Heaney, 'Exposure' in *North)*

Prologue: The Angel of the North

I think I stand outside the mainstream discourses certainly of postmodernism, which would see some of the premises I work form as very problematic, such as the proposition that bodily experience (and indeed the way the body expresses itself) is a language before language. They would say that there are no dialogues, real or internal, that are not culturally given; and I would say that that's just not true. When you dive into the sea or eat your breakfast or whatever, these are very straight forward, direct, first hand-hand experiences which are not culturally conditioned. And they're the ones that I'm interested in.

Anthony Gormley in *Third Way:* March 2005 p. 17

Introduction

What does translation become if we uncouple language from culture and link language to perception and experience of the land? Would happen to translation if the culture concept was not the starting point for theorising? In order to answer this question I examine the contributions of Eagleton, Keesing, Cronin and, most particularly, of the anthropologist Tim Ingold and his important work *The Perception of the Environment*. From this I then proceed to examine pertinent extracts of the works of two celtic authors; Brian Friel's *Translations* and Margaret Elphinstone's *A Sparrow's Flight* in order to develop a relationally grounded view of translation. This view privileges both the land and the work of *languaging* as key aspects of translation, inhabiting positions *in the world*, rather than constructing and mediating views *of the world*. I

therefore come to see translation as a mode of perception, a sensory even empathic mode, a *languaging* response to phenomena, its primary relationship, not with culture and genealogy but as positionality – *in and with the land* and to develop towards a geopoetics of the *taskscape* of the translator.

Beyond Culture?

Recent work in anthropology and in cultural studies has cast doubt on the continued privileging of the concept of culture as a useful explanatory device or starting point for analysis. The skeptics of the culture concept have not come to their position lightly but have laboured with it and with increasing frustration as they have used the term repeatedly and come to feel its brokenness. Culture is a concept which now struggles to bear the weight of the load we impose upon it. Terry Eagleton, in *The Idea of Culture* and in *After Theory,* tackles way the culture concept has been used and, as he sees it, abused in the culture wars that have raged across the humanities in recent decades:

> Those radicals for whom high culture is *ipso facto* reactionary forget that much of it is well to the left of the World Bank [...] What matters is not the works themselves but the way they are collectively construed, ways which the works could hardly have anticipated [...] It is not Shakespeare who is worthless, just some of the social uses to which his work has been put.
> (Eagleton 2000) (52).

Culture is a problematic term. It is ideology ridden. It starts culture wars, it atomises and it shifts politics from human suffering to questions of cultural identity. The logical end of the argument reached by Eagleton is that the term needs to be put firmly in its place, for it has become too overweening, too woolly, too imprecise. In Eagleton's view Culture is no longer a helpful

discursive construct. It creates more problems than it solves. In Gillian Rose's terms, it serves the diremption between law and ethics, seeking to 'mend' what she terms 'the broken middle' with identity politics or vague notions of 'community'.

In anthropology, the field that was founded on ideas of cultural difference, there have been similar rumblings of discontent with the term. Roger Keesing, for instance is troubled by both the concept of culture and its attendant translation baggage:

> It has been anthropology's role to provide the exotic alternative culturally constructed universes that are the counters to Western ones [...] 'if Radical Alterity did not exist, it would be anthropology's task to create it'. We have been professional dealers in exotica, going to romantic and distant places and coming back to recount all manner of strange beliefs and practices as if they were unremarkable. We have done our job well, it would seem, in conveying to our colleagues in other disciplines the idea of extreme cultural differences. We have succeeded in introducing our once-peculiar concept of 'culture' into popular thought and lay usage; the once jarring idea that moving from one culture to another entails radical translation is now commonplace.'
>
> (Keesing 1994) (3)

Ingold, coming at the problems from the anthropology of perception and cognition also struggles with the term.

> It could be said, I suppose, that through the deployment of the concept of culture anthropology has created the problem of translation rather than solved it. Having divided the world, through an operation of inversion, we are now left with the pieces that have to be connected together again through translation. Would it not be preferable to move in the opposite direction, to recover the foundational continuity, and from that basis to

challenge the hegemony of an alienating discourse? If so, then the concept of culture, as a key term of that discourse, will have to go. (Ingold 1993)(230)

In order to rethink the world as continuous, dwelt in and translatable, rather than exotically, even fetishistically divided up, *constructed* and where translation is a problem Ingold turns to theories of perception in anthropology in order to develop: 'A conception of the human being not as a composite entity made up of separable but complementary parts, such as body, mind and culture, but rather as a singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships.' (Ingold: 2000) (4-5)

His contribution is, I believe, of some considerable importance to our understanding of translation.

In his attempts to wrestle with the legacies of the mind: body dualisms in the anthropology of perception and cognition Ingold demonstrates the powerful hold of conceptions of the mind as a discrete powerful computer processing sensory data from the world out there. Against this grounded in a considerable literature that moves from viewing the mind as somehow stopping at the skin (Ingold 2000) (3) his emergent proposition is for us to learn to see the person as the organism, not just as a culturally constructed subject. The theoretical mainstream, in anthropology and else where, persists, Ingold argues, in seeing the biological life of the organism as separate from the cultural life of the mind in society. Culture is repeatedly imposed - as verb or noun or even adjective - upon the environment rather than seeing this relationship as reciprocal and as not ending at the ends of the body.

In order to move out side of the captivities of models of culture Ingold proposes a notion of relational thinking:

I had assumed that my task was not to challenge accepted biological wisdom but to reconcile it with what contemporary anthropology has to teach us about the constitution of human beings as persons. This is that the identities and characteristics of persons are not bestowed upon them in advance of their involvement with others but are condensations of histories of growth and maturation within fields of social relationships. Thus every person emerges as a locus of development within such a field, which in turn is carried forward and transformed by their actions. (Ingold 2000) (3)

How does this relational, ecological view of relations among humans as encompassing more than just the socio-cultural domains traditionally ascribed to them, impact on our understanding of translation? Translation, under Ingold's theory of perception, becomes a sensory mode of perception. It moves from being a genealogical concept to being a relational concept. Echoing Deleuze and Guattari he too has 'tired of trees' – those symbols of genealogical kinship - and prefers the rhizome – the dense tangled cluster of interlaced threads or filaments any point in which can be connected to any other. (Ingold 2000) (140). This is the earthy model Ireland's foremost translation scholar and cultural critic Michael Cronin privileges in his article *'Thou shalt be one with the Birds': Translation, connexity and the New Global Order* in *Language and Intercultural Communication* (2:2: 94) where he draws an analogy between the work of the earth worms and the work of translators. 'Moving from the natural ecosystem to the cultural ecosystem,' he says ' it is time cultural critics turned their eyes to what lies beneath the ground of cultures, the soil which nourishes their continued vitality.'

If we shift from only examining translation culturally, as constructing cultures (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998); as 'gendered' as 'postcolonial' as 'technocratic' and as implicated in all manner of problematic, ethically dubious or politically desirable cultural possibilities, to also examining translation as a mode of sensory relationship, then we are enabled to move beyond cultural, and genealogical 'tree-like' theorizing to relational possibilities which are, yes, intercultural, but which,

again to use Ingold's terms, are also *interagentic.* In other words, we are brought, in our thinking about translation, into relationships with the *exosomatic* phenomenological dimensions of our human existence (Cronin 2002b). We come to notice the agency asserted by *techne*, by other objects, the air, the soil, the rise and fall of the land, the city – as the place of cultural concentration and growing (in Europe at least) around the housing of those 'translated' saints bones, around what are now material objects not human agents.

Cronin maintains that: 'the technical environment of human beings is consubstantial with our ability as speaking subjects to conceive of ourselves as human beings or beings of a particular kind the biosphere.' (Cronin 2002b)(2). He sees this as having profound implications for the work of translation which means that:

> [...] concentration on translation objects alone, whether they be texts or tools, will not tell us a great deal about the role of translation [...] In a properly integrated approach to translation, it is necessary to consider not only the general symbolic system (human language), the specific code (the language(s) translated), the physical support (stone, papyrus, CD-ROM), the means of transmission (manuscript, printing, digital communication) but also how translations are carried through societies over time by particular groups [what I would term, following Brueggemann, the 'traditioning process'].
> (Cronin 2002b)(3)

What Ingold, coming at translation from anthropology, and Cronin, from the heart of translation studies both argue, then, is that by seeing culture as somehow discrete and separate from ecological relations, from relations with the non-human world and from our interpretation and use of material life, we have created the problem of translation, or, perhaps to be more precise we have created translation to be a problem. The long list of negative metaphors and

characterizations of translators as tricksters, fraudsters, and women certainly points to this as does the agonising over invisibility by some translation scholars (Venuti 1995).

If translation, far from being a troubling place for transmitting or constructing culture across a gaping chasm, becomes a sensory, what I together with Mike Gonzalez (2004) would terms a *languaging* response to the phenomena that present themselves in the world, then the category of translation as a cultural category, predicated upon mind: body dualisms, breaks open. Far from only being linked culturally or biologically to radical Others, whose languages we have to master and whose words and representations of life we have to translate, translation becomes a form of *interagentic* listening and speaking, of object –relations, sensory perception, the touching of meaning and a sysnaesthesia of communication. As Heaney puts it; *The Ash tree is cold to look at.* Or in Rilke's words from his final Sonnett an Orpheus; *Zu der stillen Erde sag ich rinne, zu dem raschen Wasser sprich ich bin.*

Such a move is not an easy one to make given the lexical fixation of theorizing in the arts, humanities and social sciences over the last thirty years. Representation has been our bread and butter, without the politics of identity we are left with few familiar causes, without radical cultural difference anthropology could be in some trouble. We have been working hard, as Rose says- if I am understanding her at all correctly - to mend the middle, to take the spirits out of bodies, the land out of culture, the material life out of technology, to make a problem or a virtue out of translation: all is fixed as different, diverse, and power is only dangerous.

> *We are both equally enraged and invested,* and to fix our relation in domination or dependence is unstable and reversible, to fix it as 'the world' is to attempt to avoid these reverses. All dualistic relations to 'the other', to 'the world' are attempts to quieten and deny the broken middle, the third term which arises out of misrecognition of desire, of work, of my and your self-relation mediated by the self-relation of the other.

(Rose 1996) (75)

James Clifford describes translation for anthropologists as an activity that is not centred and rooted but is part of the dynamics of 'being between'. In other words it is about being the broken middle, about feeling the full, messy, liminal flow of meaning through living, translating, sensing human beings.

And this is where, for me, it gets exciting. At the crossroads of linguistic and cultural translation and the intersections with the biosphere we find translation – particularly in the recent work of Michael Cronin and Tim Ingold – as a sensory activity, that orders language alongside other sensory experiences and that touches, tastes, sees and smells meaning, as well as speaking it: Here we find a view of translation that develops, phenomenologically, out of living experiences of direct perception - that is, out of the full synasthesia of 'being present' to the throbbing disorienting dimensions of a new, strange environment. Baudelaire returns: 'La Nature est un temple oú de vivants piliers/ Laissent parfois sortir de confuse paroles; / L'homme y passé à travers de forêts de symboles / Qui l'oberverent avec des regards familiars. (Correspondances). The blood and bone of the translator extending themselves into language and earth, air, fire, water and grasping after meaning. 'Il est de parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants, / doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies /– Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants, / Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies, / Comme l'arbre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens / Qui chantent les transports de L'esprit et des sens. (Ibid.)

This is where Gormley's description of the process of sculpture begins, that we encounter at the outset; 'When you dive into the sea or eat your breakfast or whatever, these are very straight forward, direct, first hand-hand experiences which are not cultural conditioned. And they're the ones that I'm interested in. ' (p.17)

And these are the very elements out of which Brian Friel, Ireland's foremost living playwright, creates a relationship between two people that tentatively grasps after meaning in translation:

Yolland: Yes-yes? Go-on – say anything at all – I love the sound of your speech

Marie: - et es in castris quae –quae –quae sunt in agro – (the futility of it) – O my God

Yolland smiles, he moves towards her. Now for her English words.

George – water.

Yolland: 'Water'? Water! Oh yes – water – water very good – water – good – good.

Marie: Fire.

Yolland: Fire – indeed – wonderful – fire, fire, fire – splendid –splendid!

Marie: Ah...ah...

Yolland: Yes> go on.

Marie: Earth.

Yolland: 'Earth'?

Marie: Earth. Earth.

Yolland still does not understand. Marie stoops down and picks up a handful of clay. Holding it out.

Earth.

Yolland: Earth. Of course. – earth! Earth. Earth. Good Lord Marie, your English is perfect.

(Translations pp63-64)

It is to Friel's *Translations* and to the work of one of Scotland's foremost contemporary novelists, Margaret Elphinstone, in her book *A Sparrow's Flight* that I now wish turn in order to insantiate the possibilities of the sensory and relational possibilities of translation. I present these wors as 'naming' phenomenon, aware of the distanciation that is inevitable when the immediate Scots-Irish-Norse context is but partially know to the audience, but as part of the deliberate

methodology of this work and as a way of speaking in, of and with languages. For some this may be profoundly evocative, for others, these Norse, Viking, Gaelic remnants will be strange.

Land: From Genealogy to Relationship

'The names of the mountains,' said Thomas, standing up. 'They were made by shepherds like myself many centuries before the land was abused, and before the world was changed. The names were remembered in al the years of exile, and so I know them now.'

'And I am a stranger. You're willing to tell me?'

'Come here,' said Thomas.

She went over to him, and he took her by the shoulders and turned her round, so she had her back to him, facing east. 'These are the names of the mountains as they were named by my people, and have been remembered ever since, through all the generations of exile, and as I inherited them.'

'To the east,' – he pointed over her shoulder, so she could follow the direction of his arm – 'in the far distance: *High Street, Doup Crag, Red Screes,* and in front of them, *High Raise,* beyond it, *Pavey Ark,* and the two outcrops, *Harrison Stickle, Pike o' Stickle.*'

He turned her slowly southwards. *'Wetherlam, Pike o' Blisco, Swirl How, Old Man of Coniston, Grey Friar, Crinkle Crags, Bow Fell, Esk Pike, Alan's Crag, Ill Crag, Great End.'* The bulk of their own summit was in front of them now, a long plateau stretching from south to west. *'Ling Mell,'* recited Thomas, turning her to face the west, *'Middle Fell, Yowe's Barrow*, the one below it, *Seat Alan, Grey Gavel, Red Pike, Green Gavel, Scoat Fell, Pillar, Brandeth, High Crags, High Stile, Blake's Fell, Clarling Knott, Mellbreak, Fleetwith Pike, Low Pike, Low Fell.'* They were turning now from west to north. *'Grass Moor, Wandope, Eel Crag, Sail, Grisedale Pike, Lord's Seat, Maiden Moor, Cat Bells.* And the line in front of those: *Robinson's Fell, Dale Head, High Spy.'*

Thomas let out a long breath, and faced her due north. *'Long Side, Carl Side, Skiddaw, Skiddaw's Little Man, Lonscale Fell, High Pike, Blencathra, Souther Fell, Clough Head, Great Dodd,*

Ingold maintains, under his relational, sensory model, that; 'Moving together along a trail, or encamped at a particular place, companions draw each other's attention, through speech or gesture, to silent features of their shared environment.' (Ingold 2000) (146). Eagleton suggests that 'Languages open on to the world from the inside. To be inside a language is to be pitched into the world, not to be quarantined from it.' (Eagleton 2003)(62)

The land evokes feelings, memories it is like the Proustian Madeleine or Benjamin's collections of books which take him all over the world as he unpacks:

> Now I am on the last half-emptied case and it is way past midnight. Other thoughts fill me than the ones I am talking about – not thoughts but images, memories. Memories of the cities in which I found so many things: Riga, Naples, Danzig, Moscow, Florence, Basel, Paris: memories of Rosenthal's sumptuous rooms in Munich [...] memories of the rooms where these books have been housed, of my student's den in Munich, of my room in Bern, of the solitude of Iseltwald. (Benjamin 1973)

Being in the land, inhabiting the land, moving through it with varied - others – leads, Ingold argues, not so much to the generation of representations to be imposed on the world as to the embodiment of *feelings of sensation.* So when Marie's first words of English uttered in love are those of water, fire and earth, - the words which lead her to draw the words of the air from her lover's body in a kiss, - they come not from a cultural dimension of their social being, not from the political and military and cartographical work that is the backdrop to this drama, but from the *feeling,* the touch, of the elements of life. The flesh is made word, rather than the word being made flesh.

And when Thomas stands on the hills, with his traveling companion, their names, and their careful holding as a promised land, flow from his tongue. Naomi has accompanied him for fourteen days but it is only here, on the summit of *Glaramara*, with her at his side that the naming can make any sense, that she can stand with him and empathise with the words and the land as they resonate with memory, ritual, history to come together into a flood of embodied feeling and the land can be adequately translated.

Language does not need to be passed on genealogically, it does not only equate to kinship or trees, it can be given in other ways, through eros – in Friel's example – through friendship – agape- in Elphinstone's. But it does need a position, it needs the land, material life and its imagination. In both places where translations are taught, worked out, shared, developed, we see companions on the same trail, for a time, working together on the task of translation because this is the work of relation, with each other and with the land. It is not just *cultural work.* It offers us a glimpse of the exosomatic, and of other ways of relating to place, and to words.

But it does more than this, for in both scenes our characters do the physical work with words for us. 'Glaramara', says Naomi....testing the words on her tongue, feeling the dialect as odd, strange, heavy, related to this very place and time of languaging. She is not fluent, like Thomas, for her, this is not a ready connection, not yet, but she is working her way into the relations with the land and with its speakers who might take her into fluency, where fluency might mean:

Overcoming awkwardness, halting pauses, breaks, not a simple matter of endlessly revisiting sound patterns, but of coming to recognize why and in what circumstances a thing is said, where and by whom. Fluency is the bedding of rehearsals - <u>practices</u> - into the body and material life. It is an accumulation of stories, connection, memory, material, history, routine and ritual, work and reflection. And that is learned, developed in the context of languaging as opposed to mere language acquisition.

(Phipps & Gonzalez 2004)

And neither Yolland nor Marie are fluent, in Friel's *Translations*. Let's listen:

Languaging: Translation as embodiment of Feeling

Marie: Shhh. (she holds her hand up for silence – she is trying to remember her one line of English. Now she remembers it and she delivers the line as if English were her language – easily, fluidly, conversationally.) George, in Nolfolk we besport ourselves around the maypoll.

Yolland: Good God, do you? That's where my mother comes from – Norfolk, Norwich actually. Not exactly Norwich town but a small village called Little Walsingham close beside it. But in our own village of Winfarthing we have a maypole too and every year on the first of May –

He stops abruptly, only now realizing. He stares at her. She in turn misunderstands his excitement.

Marie (to herself) Mother of God, my Aunt Mary wouldn't have taught me something dirty, would she?

Pause.

Yolland extends his hand to Marie. She turns away from him and moves slowly across the stage.

Yolland: Marie

She still moves away

Marie Chatach

She still moves away

Bun na hAbhann? *(He says the name softly, almost privately, tentatively, as if he were searching for a sound she might respond to. He tries again)* Druim Dubh?

Marie stops. She is listening. Yolland is encouraged.

Poll na gCaorach. Lis Moal.

Marie turns towards him.

Lis na nGall.

Marie: Lis na nGradh

They are now facing each other and begin moving, almost imperceptibly – towards one another

Carraig an Phoill

Yolland: Carraig na Ri, Lach n nEan

Marie: Loch an Iubhair. Machaire Buidhe.

Yolland: Mcahire Mor. Cnoc na Mona

Marie: Cnoc na nGabhar

Yolland: Mullach

Marie: Port

Yolland: Tor

Marie: Lag

She holds our her hands to Yolland. He takes them.

(Brian Friel *Translations* 65-66)

In Friel's *Translations* the love scene is a scene where the varied feelings of love are embodied in the speaking of names that find translation not word to word but sense to sense, phonetic touch to phonetic touch. The speaking of the names of places becomes a *languaging* response to phenomena, a way of living in translated worlds, the worlds that meet in relations and that come to make sense through these relations.

The term 'languaging' is one that I have developed together with my colleague Mike Gonzalez. It has been used before in different contexts and at different times in history. It emerged for us out of the process of struggling to find a way of articulating the full, embodied and engaged interaction with the world that comes when we put the languages we are learning into action. We make a distinction between the effort of using languages that one is learning in the classroom contexts with the effort of being a person in that language in the social and material world of everyday interactions. 'Languagers', for us, are those people, we may even term them 'agents' or 'language activitsts', who engage with the world-in-action, who move in the world in a way that allows the risk of stepping out of one's habitual ways of speaking and attempt to develop different, more relational ways of interacting with the people and phenomena that one encounters in everyday life. 'Languagers' use the ways in which they perceive the world to develop new dispositions for poetic action in another language and they are engaged in developing these dispositions so that they become habitual, durable.

Yolland is not so much learning a language as *languaging.* He has felt the resonance of the Irish names for the land where his love resides. He is in Ireland, in Baille Beag/ Bally Beg, to undo the Irish language and produce a map which replaces the Irish with English names. The work tears in to him and tears him in two, for the land speaks to him in a different tongue. His relation with this land is such that when he listens he hears Irish not English from his position within it.

And for me too, when I walk the hills of Scotland I find myself drawn into this move. The maps are strange, covered in enduring Gaelic names. They may translate or even be translated in the guidebooks and on the tourist maps, but the military maps, - unlike those produced for colonized Ireland in the nineteenth century – interestingly retain the Gaelic: Buachaille Etive Mor, Buachaille Etive Beag – the Big Shepherd Etive, the little Shepherd of Etive – Carn Dearg – the red hill, Beinn Vrackie – the speckled hill. And so for Scottish walkers, who learn to know this land and its maps, the relationship to the land is learned, worked and *walked* through Gaelic, its words and phrases, and, through this *languaging* the land rests from technocratic translation.

> For as long is it is supposed that the language, and the traditions encoded therein, can be passed along like a relay baton from generation to generation, it appears to make no difference *where* the people are. (On these grounds, administrations have often seen no principled objection to moving their' indigenous' peoples off the land, or greatly restricting their access, whether in the interests of industrial development or wildlife conservation. It did not occur to them that such displacement might rupture the continuity of tradition or cut the people off from their pasts.)
>
> Ingold (2000: 147)

Translation – the struggle to twist tongues around strange words, the real time grappling for and with words - *is* visceral. When it is not simply a technocratic move it is a languaging response to the world and our relationship with it. It turns our characters inside out and it turns them on to each other and to the land and to other ways of speaking and listening. It is sensuous, erotic, deeply relational, it requires desire to *entertain* other worlds, other ways of being and working, to be united with them, and to feel the powerful textures of their lives.

'To live in the world is also to inhabit it' says Ingold. 'Thus a way of speaking is also a way of living in the land.' And so we move back to where we began with the problematics of culture and

the attempt, here, at seeing what translation might look like, or how it might be practiced, when it begins from the middle, as Williams (WIlliams 2000), puts it, from the midst of our living in translated worlds. When the genealogies of cultural transmission are prized open and allowed to breathe, when the breeze sweeps away the dust, we might find a broader set of possibilities for conceiving of language and translation than those afforded by our common theorizing on language and culture:

> Far from serving as a common currency for the exchange of otherwise private, mental representations, language celebrates an embodied knowledge of the world that is already shared thanks to people's mutual involvement in the task of habitation. It is not, then, language *per se* that ensures the continuity of tradition. Rather it is the tradition of living in the land that ensures the continuity of language.
> (Ingold 2000) (147)

Translation is implicated in this process of traditioning (Brueggemann 2003). For Thomas, in *A Sparrow's Flight*, memory and imagination keep alive the knowledge of the names of the hills so that when his people return from their long, exile the names are fresh and fit like a glove. The words lingered in exile, and then came back to explode into life.

Taskscape of the Translator: The Geopoetics of a Speckled-Scape
'The relational model, in short, renders difference not as diversity but as positionality.
In the relational model 'kinship is geography'.' (Ingold 2000)(149). And such a relational, positioned view of land, languaging and translation does not make for clean and easily negotiable places. It is not language as tidy, it does not seek to mend the broken middle or translate in such a way as to render it holy, transcendental. It builds in the middle of the world, not from the margins, or from the centre, just from its position, from the inhabited place. The *taskscape* that emerges is speckled, patchy, variegated.

> *Taím ag taisteal trén taisteal trén bhfearann breac*
>
> *is tá dhá ainm ar gach aon bhaile ann.*
>
> *(I am travelling through the speckled land*
>
> *and every town there has two names.* Mic Oinin)

Under the relational mode translation becomes a source of knowledge and the task of the translator (Benjamin 1973) is to make sense of the encounters on our path and create what Ingold terms a *taskscape* that grows out of the feelings of relation, the sensory perception of human and non-human phenomena. To dwell or to move along trails, with others, in the taskscape of translation requires what de Certeau (de Certeau 1984) terms 'tactics' – ' a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus' as opposed to 'strategies', which he views as Cartesian in attitude; 'an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible power of the Other.'

> [...] a tactic boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language of a place and to strike the hearer.
> (de Certeau 1984) (37-38)

This taskscape of translation, this position in the middle of land and life from which languaging begins, placed firmly and squarely in the midst of things yet not requiring or even possessing a locus of power has been the focus of translation theory from Ireland in particular. Rather than seeing the taskscape of translation as one in which the translator is rendered invisible (Venuti 1995) Irish theorists of translation view the land is a speckled land, the people, a speckled people (mic Oinin). This idea goes back to much earlier translation antecedents such as the Leabhar Bhreac – the Speckled book and the illicit translations by Collum Cille – Columba, which led,

indirectly to the founding of the Abbey on Iona and to the spread of Christianity through Scotland and the North of England.

The taskscape, then becomes a *speckled scape*. It is not devoid of the effects and instruments of varieties of power, of history and other agencies. Nor does it use its linguistic and other technologies to strive for uniformity. It is pocked, marked, freckled, and speckled. In times of technocratic translation and what is termed variously, and emotively as both linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992) and linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) it is affords a place for tactical translation actions and for languaging, for a kind of poetic activism of relation. 'Glaramara' says Naomi...... 'Earth' says Marie ..... 'Machiare Bhuide' says Yolland....Beinn Vrackie – say I.

Neither necessarily foreignising nor domesticating, neither 'mouse nor rat', neither constructing nor colonising - though also all of these have their place, but a sensory mode of speckled being, responding and learning to language, inhabiting and building in a world where the locus of power may be elsewhere, but where tactics are suggested by a relationship to the taskscape, to the land and to language. Tactics do not try – indeed cannot aspire to erase or to celebrate the differences, or to build and inhabit something that is other than speckled. They will always be partial, provisional and broken, and even beautiful. When we build in and inhabit the world we do so provisionally- our institutions are imperfect but (Rose 1992) this does not mean that we do not try. There are clear notes her of Gerald Manley Hopkin's poem *Pied Beauty*: 'Glory be to God for dappled things [...] Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow and plough;'

The taskscape – the hills laid out in front of a friend who is seeing them for the first time – prompts the task, the hard common task of translation as action in the world, and as languaging action. The idea of the taskscape of the translator enables us to see this scape as growing out of feeling and its embodiments, its vitality, its connexity (Cronin 2002a) and to see the translator as one positioned in the geopoetics of the environment out of which she translates.

[...] our human cities remain shockingly alive in their plurality of sight and speech. It is Thursday in November and the city of Stockholm is drenched in brightness. Water and bridges and the faded ochres of Venice on wood and stone. There is Swedish on the streets and in the shops. Two of my companions speak Dutch, the third is a Norwegian translator. The variousness of the world seems inexhaustible on a morning like this and Babel a miracle of particulars. Kenneth White speaks of the geopoetic adventure, the discovery of an elsewhere within and without. Here in the blanched sunlight, on the flagstones of a city fading to loveliness, languages and memory mingle in the sustained, enduring wonderwork of human geopoetics.

(Cronin 2000) (157)

The task of the translator is the complex task of relating. It is a geopoetic task, as emboding feeling. It has to find ways of working, of languaging not accurately but empathically, poetically, interagentically. It does not need to render one culture in the terms of another or one language in terms of another, it has to work synaesthetically so that a colour may sound and a sound may taste, because 'the ash tree is cold to look at' (Heaney).

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