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Cé leis an dán aistrithe?

Dorothy Ní Uigín

Réamhrá

Níos minice ná a mhalairt is leaganacha dátheangacha d'fhillíocht na Gaeilge a fhaighimid nuair a fhoilsítear cnuasaigh filíochta nó dánta aonair sa lá atá inniu ann. Rinneadh roinnt mhaith plé ar cheist seo an aistriúcháin ar an bhfilíocht Ghaeilge le blianta beaga anuas, agus san alt seo, déanfar scagadh ar a bhfuil ráite ag filí agus ag aistritheoirí iad féin faoi na dúshlán agus na buntáistí a bhaineann leis an aistriúchán liteartha, agus faoina thionchar ar fhilí agus ar an bhfilíocht Ghaeilge go sonrach. Breathnófar ar fhilí comhaimseartha na Gaeilge a théann i ngleic leis an dúshlán seo agus iad i mbun a gceirde, agus tugtar faoin gceist 'Cé leis an dán aistrithe?' a fhreagairt.

Cúlra

Tá scéal na filíochta Gaeilge agus an t-aistriúchán athraithe go mór le tríocha bliain anuas: tá aistriúchán á dhéanamh ar shaothar filí comhaimseartha, agus tá cnuasaigh dhátheangacha filíochta á bhfoilsíú go rialta. Tamall de bhlianta roimhe sin, áfach, sa bhliain 1975, scríobh an file Michael Hartnett an dán 'A Farewell to English', ina ndúirt sé: *I have made my choice / and leave with little weeping: / I have come with meager voice / to court the language of my people'* agus is ag saothrú na Gaeilge a bhí sé go ceann deich mbliana ina dhiaidh sin. Deirtear ina iontráil beathaisnéise ar ainm.ie (ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=1705), áfach, gur

Toradh ar thréimhse na Gaeilge is ea na haistriúcháin a rinne sé ar fhilí móra an 17ú haois: Ó Bruadair: *Selected Poems of Dáibhí Ó Bruadair*, 1985; *Haicéad*, 1993; Ó Rathaille: *The Poems of Aodhagán Ó Rathaille*, 1999. Aistriúchán ar dhán Ungáirise le Ferenc Juhász is ea *An Damh-Mhac*, 1987... Saothair aistriúcháin níos deireanaí is ea: *Dánta Naomh Eoin na Croise*,

1991; *The Poems of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill*, 1986. Bailiúchán dátheangach is ea: *A Necklace of Wrens: selected poems in Irish with English translations by the author*, 1987.

Is riléir mar sin, gur dheacair an claonadh chun aistriúcháin a sheachaint i measc na bhfilí Gaeilge, fiú ag duine a d'fhógair go neamhbhalbh gur ag tabhairt cúl leis an mBéarla a bhí sé.

Rianaíonn Michael Cronin fréamhacha an nóis chomhaimseartha seo aistriúchán a dhéanamh ar an bhfilíocht Ghaeilge siar go dtí foilsíú an leabhair *Máirtín Ó Direáin: Selected Poems / Tacar Dánta* sa bhliain 1984; Tomás Mac Síomóin agus Douglas Sealy a roghnaigh agus a d'aistrigh na dánta sa chnuasach, agus deir Cronin (169–70) an méid a leanas faoina thábhacht:

The novelty of Tacar Dánta was, firstly, that it contained English translations of work by a contemporary as opposed to a long-dead Irish-language writer and secondly, that the publication was assisted by the Arts Council as part of a new policy to encourage bilingualism in five areas of its work: the writer; literary organisations; publishers; literary magazines; and participation. The policy was explicitly formulated in a 1985 Arts Council publication, Services to Literature: Seirbhísí don Litríocht... The second title that illustrated the Arts Council's new translation policy was The Bright Wave: An Tonn Gheal, edited by Dermot Bolger and published by Raven Arts Press in 1986. The Bright Wave contained poems by many leading Irish-language poets accompanied by translations produced by writers in the English language. Raven Arts Press also published in that same year Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's Rogha Dánta: Selected Poems, English translations of Ní Dhomhnaill's Irish-language poetry by the poet herself and Michael Hartnett. The translation initiative was a commercial success...

Deir sé freisin (175):

Translation was the exit visa from the ghetto of linguistic isolationism and would bring the level of achievement of contemporary Irish-language writers to the attention of the English-speaking world. The fact that so many Irish-language poets allowed their work to be translated does indeed point to the desire for a form of recognition in the wider literary community... Translation meant feedback, response, the acknowledgement of another literary tradition and culture. For other writers, however, translation was a form of dispossession that threatened the integrity of writing in Irish...

Bhain gné eile le polasaí seo na Comhairle Ealaíon a luadh thuas i.e. aistriúchán ar shaothar Gaeilge go teangacha iasachta, agus sa bhliain 1990, foilsíodh tuarascáil a d'ullmhaigh Michael Cronin, Liam Mac Cóil agus Jürgen Schneider: *Litríocht gan Teorainn: An tAistriú Liteartha Éireannach i gComhthéacs na hEorpa*. Is as seo a d'eascair The Ireland Literature Exchange / Idirmhálartán Litríocht Éireann sa bhliain 1994, ar athraíodh a ainm go Literature Ireland /

Litríocht Éireann in 2016, agus is ag cur chun cinn aistriú litríochta na hÉireann – i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla – go teangacha iasachta eile, agus a mhalairt, a bhíonn Litríocht Éireann. Is coitianta i bhfad, áfach, an t-aistriúchán go Béarla ar fhilíocht na Gaeilge, rud atá bearránach i gcomhthéacs an choilínithe. Deir Gearóid Denvir (1997: 66) faoin gceist:

It is difficult not to agree with David Lloyd... when he asserts that translation embodies the fatal double bind of cultural nationalism: disseminating the message through English destroys the very language you wish to preserve. The aim of translation can, and often is, the decolonizing of the mind through introducing those who have no Irish to the Gaelic literary tradition...

Agus luann Ó Séaghdha: ‘Subconsciously, with no element of calculation, the degree of future translatability and the values of the English language audience may become factors that penetrate and weaken the original impulse’. In ainneoin na deacrachta seo, áfach, maíonn Sinéad Mac Aodha (2013), stiúrthóir reatha Litríocht Éireann, go mbaineann tábhacht leis an aistriúchán liteartha mar:

No single literature has a monopoly on excellence... Put simply, literature in translation enables the reader to have access to other worlds. It also strengthens writers in their own creative practice, as by reading translated works they have access to other literary practices and ideas.

The best literary translators are bi-cultural... As Anthony Burgess famously said, ‘Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture’.

Baineann castacht bhreise le hargóint seo an chultúir i gcás mionteanga, áfach, áit a mbíonn an cultúr féin faoi bhrú ag cultúr na mórtheanga. I gcás na Gaeilge agus na hÉireann, ní éasca i gcónaí an dá chultúr a scaradh óna chéile ach oiread – go háirithe i gcás scríbhneoirí an lae inniu, agus ina gcás siúd a shaothraíonn an litríocht i dteanga nach í a gcéad teanga í, agus a bhfuil a líon ag fás. Is ag láidriú i gcónaí atá tionchar an Bhéarla ar an nGaeilge; go deimhin, chomh fada siar le foilsiú *Eireaball Spideoige* Sheáin Ó Riordáin in 1945, cháin Máire Mhac an tSaoi Gaeilge an Ríordánaigh ag maíomh go mbeadh eolas ar an mBéarla ag teastáil chun a chuid filíochta Gaeilge a thuiscint. ‘Is láthair chruthanta don gcoimhlint idirchultúrtha é gort an aistriúcháin’, dar le Louis de Paor (2018: 178), ‘coimhlint mhíchothrom go minic idir an lag agus an láidir’, agus is ag streachailt leis na castachtaí seo atá go leor d’fhilí comhaimseartha na Gaeilge.

Tuairimí na bhFilí Comhaimseartha

Ag caint dó faoi Chomhdháil de hÍde in 2008, a raibh an t-aistriúchán mar théama aici, dúirt Cathal Mac Coille (2008: 22):

Tá an dá abairt seo a leanas fírinneach, ainneoin iad a bheith ag teacht salach ar a chéile.

1. Níor éirigh le duine ar bith ariamh dán, ná scéal, ná ráiteas polaiteora, ná fiú gnáthchaint, a aistriú i gceart.
2. Is dlúthchuid dár saol é an t-aistriúchán agus, dá dhonacht cúrsaí an domhain uaireanta, bheadh an saol míle uair níos achrannaí dá uireasa.

Léiríonn Tomás Mac Síomóin an tuairim chéanna faoina dheacra is atá an t-aistriúchán – ar an bhfilíocht go sonrach – in agallamh a rinne sé leis an údar in 2010, ach ina ainneoin sin, is beag file Gaeilge comhaimseartha nach bhfuil tar éis dul i muinín an aistriúcháin.

Ar dhuine de mhórfhílí na Gaeilge a ghlac leis agus a chuir fáilte roimh an aistriúchán – go háirithe go teangacha seachas an Béarla – tá Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill. Cuireann sé leis an lucht éisteachta, dar léi, agus cinntíonn sé aiseolas. I measc na ndaoine a rinne aistriúchán ar a cuid filíochta siúd tá Ciaran Carson, Michael Coady, Peter Fallon, Michael Hartnett, Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Medbh McGuckian, Tom McIntyre, Derek Mahon, Paul Muldoon agus Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin. Molann an file Aifric Mac Aodha (2011) comhpháirtíocht Ní Dhomhnaill agus Paul Muldoon i dtionscadal an aistriúcháin liteartha go sonrach. Deir sí:

Some poets have addressed the problem of the translation creatively and have formed active artistic partnerships with their translators. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's work with Paul Muldoon... have forged a very fruitful poetic team (sic). Their joint work, poem and translation in friendly apposition rather than jostling for position on the page, may be seen as an artistic collaboration between two highly accomplished poets. The poetry resides not simply in the original poem, nor can it be located in the translation. It exists between them in a kind of dynamic tension between the source poem and its English version, in the gaps, historical and linguistic, between the Irish way of expressing an idea conceived in Irish and in that idea's translated equivalent. Ní Dhomhnaill and Muldoon have made a virtue out of an artistic necessity and a new poetry out of an old problem.

Léiríonn an sliocht thuas an deacracht ‘úinéireachta’ a bhaineann leis an aistriúchán liteartha (más deacracht é) – cé leis an dán aistrithe? Dar le Mac Aodha nach maireann an fhilíocht sa bhundán a thuilleadh ná sa leagan aistrithe ach oiread ach i liombó idir eatarthu. Ar nós an duine gan stát, tá an fhilíocht gan baile cinnte. Cá bhfágann sé seo na filí féin, agus na haistritheoirí, go deimhin? Is suntasach an bhéim a chuireann Mac Aodha ar chumas na beirte, Ní Dhomhnaill agus Muldoon, mar fhilí, agus mar is léir ón liosta thuas, is filí is minice a d’aistrigh agus a aistríonn filíocht Ní Dhomhnaill. Tá an nós seo thar a bheith coitianta

in aistriú na filíochta Gaeilge go Béarla sa lá atá inniu ann. Bíonn filí ag aistriú a chéile agus cuireann an mianach cruthaitheach agus an mian cumadóireachta a thagann leis seo cor eile i scéal na húinéireachta. Is cineál léirmheastóireachta a bhíonn ar bun ag an aistritheoir, ach leis an léirmheastóireacht agus leis an aistriúchán i measc na bhfilí, tagann an chumadóireacht agus an chruthaitheacht.

Deir Aifric Mac Aodha (2011) san alt céanna a luadh thuas:

Writing poetry in Irish forces you to think about translation, for practical reasons as well as artistic ones. For one thing, because I write in a minority language my poems are more often published with a translation than not. The majority of readers, who do not have Irish, will only ever read the translation. Even those who do read Irish will usually read the translation and compare it to the original.

...Everything is translation, from thought to word, from image to phrase, from one linguistic register to another and from tradition to modernity. If I can act as a translator for the language of my forebears into a vibrant living version of their Irish then I will have served them, and my own poetic concerns.

...What is at stake is the language itself, which is something most people do not care about. It is, in spite of heroic and ongoing attempts to revive it, a dead language. But it is also, as Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill famously put it in an article for the New York Times Book Review 'the corpse that sits up and talks back.'

Pléann Gearóid Mac Lochlainn ceist an aistriúcháin go minic ina chuid filíochta féin agus i dtráchtairacht an chnuasaigh dhátheangaigh *Sruth teangacha / Stream of tongues* (an tríú leabhar filíochta uaidh agus bailiúchán a bhuaigh Duais Michael Hartnett), cuireann sé an t-aistriúchán ar an bhfilíocht i gcomparáid leis an iliomad leaganacha de phíosa snagcheoil a bhíonn ar fáil go minic. 'Perhaps we should view it as a jam session proper between Irish and English,' a deir sé, le 'duelling banjos'. Admhaíonn sé, áfach, agus é ag tagairt do réamhrá Frank Sewell ar an aistriúchán a rinne sé ar fhilíocht Chathail Uí Shearcaigh (*Out in the Open*), '...the ideal reader (audience) must be bilingual or multi-instrumental perhaps, to keep with the anthology' (191).

Pléann Louis de Paor, file a bhfuil aistriúchán déanta aige féin ar an bhfilíocht (*Freacnairc mhearcair: rogha dánta/The oomph of quicksilver: selected poems*, rogha de shaothar Michael Davitt, mar shampla), agus ar aistríodh a chuid filíochta siúd freisin (*Ag Greadadh Bás sa Reilig/*

Clapping in the Cemetery. ‘Translations from the Irish by the author, with Bidy Jenkinson, Mary O’Donoghue and Kevin Anderson etc.’) ceist an aistriúcháin in agallamh ar *The Cork Examiner*, le Alan O’Riordan (2014). Tosaíonn O’Riordan leis an gceist:

Can a poem ever really be translated? RS Thomas likens poetic translation to kissing through a handkerchief, while for minority languages — such as Irish — there is the problem of translation subsuming the original, damaging the very linguistic diversity that a poem in Irish implicitly celebrates.

Rinneadh an t-agallamh seo agus cnuasach filíochta aistrithe leis an bPaorach á fhoilsiú – *The Brindled Cat and The Nightingale’s Tongue* – agus molann de Paor comhréiteach i gcás aistriú na litríochta agus na filíochta go sonrach; molann sé gur cheart an t-aistriúchán a chur siar, a chur ar athló:

He writes that he prefers his poems to have a life in Irish before they are translated. ‘The more Irish language readers read in Irish, without the life support of English, the more they are attuned to the possibilities of the language,’ he says.

...The reader is invited to brave the Irish versions, while leaning on the English versions, which tack close to their originals, but are beautiful in their own right — capturing de Paor’s knack for plain speaking that is never merely banal...

Ba mhaith leis an bPaorach go meallfadh a chuid filíochta na léitheoirí Béarla le filladh ar an nGaeilge agus le scagadh a dhéanamh ar an mbundán, mar gheall ar a thábhachtaí is atá tuiscint ar stair na teanga agus an chultúir chun tuiscint a bheith againn ar Éirinn an lae inniu agus ar litríocht chomhaimseartha na hÉireann; áitíonn sé:

Ninety per cent or more of our lived historical experience has been through the Irish language... English has no direct access to that experience. It can only translate it. I think part of our unease with Irish is that it makes us feel foreign in our first language, and nobody likes to feel foreign at home. But we are at least partly estranged, remote from a significant part of ourselves, if we insist on being confined to English. Pre-Famine Irish-speaking Ireland and post-Famine English-speaking Ireland are two different worlds. I can’t go back there, but as someone who has learned Irish, I can at least try to get closer to that past without which we are disconnected, disinherited of what is legitimately and uniquely ours.

Tá Bidy Jenkinson ar dhuine de bheagán filí Gaeilge nach maith leo go n-aistreofaí a gcuid filíochta go Béarla in Éirinn. Dar léi go ndéanann an t-aistriúchán dochar don fhilíocht Ghaeilge; deir sí (1991: 34):

I prefer not to be translated into English in Ireland. It is a small rude gesture to those who think that everything can be harvested and stored without loss in an English-speaking Ireland.

If I were a corncrake I would feel no obligation to have my skin cured, my tarsi injected with formalin so that I could fill a museum shelf in a world that saw no need for my kind. There are others with more generous souls and I take a certain malicious pleasure in seeing some of them sweep in to take centre stage often enough in places where they were being offered a token spot in the wings.

But that is that. Generosity, poetry and song being the three things that cannot be learned according to the triad: ‘Trí nithe nach féidir a fhoghlaim – guth, féile agus filíocht’.

Mar sin féin, áitíonn Breandán Ó Doibhlin (2000: 9):

...that a language as reduced, both demographically and socially, as Irish Gaelic has long been, needs all the help it can get if it is to survive... And if it is to survive, it must be made ready to express the intellect and the imagination of the end of the twentieth century. It is in this spirit that I translate: to develop the language and to provide new experience for those who read it in particular, experience from beyond the anglophone world, to which our bilingualism gives us a ready, and perhaps overwhelming, access.

Nuair a fhiafraítear de Louis de Paor (O’Riordan: 2014) cén fáth ar úsáid sé aistritheoirí eile nuair a bhí sé líofa i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla:

‘Well,’ de Paor answers, ‘although I am a native speaker of English, I don’t write creatively in English and the translators were able to see possibilities that didn’t occur to me.’

De Paor also admits that he gives in to the temptation to rewrite, rather than translate a poem, a proprietorial indulgence that his translators are loath to take. ‘They chastised me actually,’ he says, ‘for taking such unconscionable liberties with myself. For me, the difference between the poetry traditions in Irish and English is that Irish allows certain things to be said plainly without losing intensity. Whereas in English, it can seem very flat to be clear and direct, so there is a temptation to tart it up a bit in English. The translators were able to remind that that’s not always the case and that it should be possible to achieve the same effect in English without misrepresenting the Irish.’

Tagann an méid seo leis an bplé thuas faoin gcruithaitheacht agus faoin gcumadóireacht a bhaineann leis an aistriúchán liteartha go minic, go háirithe nuair a bhíonn filí ag aistriú filí eile. Is casta i bhfad, mar a léiríonn de Paor thuas, an scéal má thugann file faoi aistriú a c(h)uid filíochta féin.

Ag breathnú lasmuigh de chanóin na Gaeilge, faighimid an tuairim seo ó Patrick Modiano (luaite in Paul Hond, 2021–2022) faoin ómós ar cheart a thabhairt don aistriúchán agus don aistritheoir liteartha:

When you read a translation it doesn't mean it's a secondary experience. It doesn't mean you're not reading the author. It means you are reading the product of two authors: the original author and the translator, who has to read the text, interpret it, and regenerate it in terms that make linguistic sense.

Luann Hond an sprioctheanga freisin agus a thábhachtaí is atá cumas an aistritheora inti, agus níos tábhachtaí fós, cumas agus mianach an scríbhneora a bheith san aistritheoir. Cuireann Hond fainic orainn, áfach: *'This high degree of subjectivity, together with the fluidity of language and culture, casts doubt on the notion that any single translation of a work can be definitive'*, agus, dar leis, *'putting a translator's name on the front cover isn't a concession — it's an accurate reflection of the collaborative nature of the work'*. Ritheann línte deiridh an dáin 'Among Schoolchildren' le WB Yeats linn nuair a dhéantar scagadh ar an gceist choigilteach seo: *'O body swayed to music, O brightening glance / How can we know the dancer from the dance?'* Ní féidir an damhsóir a scaradh ón damhsa, agus is baolach nach féidir an t-aistritheoir a scaradh ón aistriúchán ar dhán; is cuid den phróiseas cruthaitheach é an t-aistritheoir agus iarracht ar bun dán d'ardchaighdeán, a mbaineann luach litríochta leis, a chur ar fáil sa sprioctheanga. Agus, ar ndóigh, mura bhfuil aon aistriúchán deifnídeach ar an litríocht ar fáil, níl aon léirmhíniú deifnídeach amháin ann ach oiread i measc an lucht léitheoireachta / éisteachta – i ndeireadh na dála, nach leis na léitheoirí nó na héisteoirí an dán aistrithe lena gcuid féin a dhéanamh de agus nach amhlaidh atá i gcás saothar cruthaitheach ar bith? Cé go mb'fhéidir gur freagra míshásúil é seo ar an gceist a cuireadh i dteideal an ailt seo, is baolach nach bhfuil freagra sásúil ar fáil. Is cuid den saol é an t-aistriúchán; is gné an-tábhachtach de shaol na litríochta é, agus i ndeireadh na dála seans gur cheart déanamh mar a dhéanann Gearóid Mac Lochlainn – glacadh go fonnmhar leis na leaganacha uile 'snagcheoil' agus taitneamh a bhaint astu.

Críochnóimis le dán eile ina bpléitear ceist na teanga agus ceist an athrú teanga – ‘A Grafted Tongue’ le John Montague; in aistriúchán cumasach – ‘Teanga-theascadh’ – air seo, léiríonn Feargal Ó Béarra a dheacra agus a thruamhéalaí is a bhí an t-athrú teanga in Éirinn (2007: 86–9):

Siúd anois, faoi bhailbhe is faoi chró, ar a thachtadh,
 Ceann gan chabhail – iarracht sin an dara teanga a chló,
 Gábh gugallach sin do dhamhna féin;
 Siúd anois i dteach an léinn,
 Gol an ghasúir – Glúin eile Gael
 Ag aithris a dhíol Béarla féin...

Sa lá atá inniu ann, is féidir, go hiondúil, leis an gcainteoir nó leis an scríbhneoir Gaeilge dul go héasca idir an Ghaeilge agus an Béarla; an mbeadh sé cuí glacadh le siombóis seo an aistriúcháin a pléadh san alt seo, agus ligean don té a léann an bundán nó toradh an aistriúcháin ar an mbundáin – nó go deimhin, an dá leagan den dán – úineireacht a ghlacadh ar thoradh na cruthaitheachta seo?

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