

AIO

Maria Ficara

**An Italian annotated translation
of W.B. Yeats's *Deirdre***





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Table of Contents

- 7 *Introduction*
- 35 *Bibliography*
- 39 *Deirdre* di W.B. Yeats
Traduzione di Maria Ficara
- 105 *Deirdre* by W.B. Yeats
Testo originale

Introduction

The *structure* of the present book reflects the combination of the two languages concerned by the translation into Italian of W.B. Yeats's *Deirdre*. Its aim is to provide readers with several readings: the Italian text as an autonomous play; its footnotes, that give an insight into the translator's choices, indicating and motivating the necessary *changes* taking place in the transfer from one language to the other, and Yeats's original play, which is included at the end of the volume.

The present introduction in English aims to illustrate the multi-layered dimension of translation, analysing several features that deal with what lies *in* and *around* an act of translation, which prompts discussion of several important features ranging from language and topic to the complex nature of the text, and invites reflections on the relation with the surrounding literary system.

A play written for the stage in 1906, considered to be the first true attempt by Yeats to produce a verse-drama, a story that evokes figures from Irish mythology, with a literary style that is poetic while employing elements of a regional variety, presents the translator with several challenges.

In order to illustrate the translation strategies adopted, this introduction will proceed from an analysis of the text at word-level to some reflections on the overall play. I believe that although a translation cannot be discussed only in terms of linguistic choices, it is at this level that complex concepts such as "equivalence" and "style" are grounded, and can be identified through key translation studies approaches. This double perspective of a closer look and a more general view is not the only two-fold requirement accompanying translation, which finds its natural environment in the tension be-

tween a Source Language and a Target Language and their respective cultures, between a product that holds a *mimetic* relation with the source and aspires to be an original work, where the translator is more or less invisible. *Deirdre* in particular emphasises the importance of “polarized” debates such as that between readability and performability, poetic and prose translation, and several others.

“I have a story right, my wanderers” is the opening line of the play, spoken by one of the characters. This annotated translation provides an insight of the challenges posed to a translator by even such a simple sentence, which becomes from the beginning a “place” where a decision is made and, as often with words in a text that has cohesion and coherence, so need to be choices. If we isolate the word “story” from the Musician’s line, it can be useful to introduce the topic, so exemplary of Irish literary history and culture, that helps mentioning the specific cultural and linguistic context in which the text is embedded. This context is not at all simple or linear, so much so that if the opening line is taken as a statement, its validity can be greatly questioned. Although these are aspects that do not affect translation proper, they are worth mentioning in an introductory essay, as they help “locate” the source text in a cultural tradition at a specific historical time.

The story of *Deirdre*, the famous Irish tale from *The Book of Leinster*, was read by Yeats in several sources,¹ including Lady Gregory’s *Cuchulain of Murtheimne*. It conveys a whole dimension that refers to a Celtic pre-Christian past that fitted well with Yeats’s artistic ideals of a theatre based on Irish themes, and served the purposes of the Celtic Revival he contributed to promote. Retelling the old Irish tales in a language accessible to people was Lady Gregory’s aim, and in

1. Together with “two versions of the Deirdre tale in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society in Dublin*” by Theophilus O’Flanagan (Dublin, John Barlow, 1808), “of the literary treatments of the Deirdre story that Yeats wrote about before he began to work on his own”, Virginia Rohan indicates “those of Samuel Ferguson, R.D. Joyce, and AE (George Russell)”. V. Rohan, “Yeats and Deirdre: from Story to Fable”, in *Yeats Annual* n. 6, ed. by Warwick Gould, London, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 39–40. All further references to this essay will be cited as “Rohan”.

her “Dedication to the people of Kiltartan”, she writes: “I am sure you will like to have the history of the heroes of Ireland told in the language of Ireland”.² This simple dedication shows the cultural and linguistic situation of the country by March 1902. Yeats spoke no Irish, so he was indebted to the other writers of the Celtic Renaissance for making Irish literature available through their work. As he writes in his Preface to the same volume, “I knew of no language to write about Ireland in but raw modern English; but now Lady Gregory has discovered a speech [...]” that he goes on describing as “beautiful” and “living” as it is “the speech of those who think in Irish”.³ However, the language in Yeats’s *Deirdre* is very different from that of his sources or from Synge’s *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, and the few “traces” of Hiberno-English in Yeats’s text will be discussed later. Ancient literature, made readable to non-Irish speakers like Yeats, gave the artist the chance to “recall the time when people were in love with a story”.⁴ The old tales inspired Yeats also on the aesthetic level, as he found that, thanks to the literature these *translations* handed down, “one comes to accept without reserve an art that is half epical, half lyrical [...]”.⁵ Together with the topic, therefore, sources also inspire Yeats to combine blank verse and rhymed parts, whereas, as far as the plot is concerned, he “cuts the intrigue to the bone”.⁶ Analysing the manuscripts of the several versions of *Deirdre* before 1906, Virginia Rohan writes that these show that “Yeats is in the process of plucking from history the essential outlines of a fable, developing a

2. Lady Augusta Gregory, W.B. Yeats (foreword), *Lady Gregory’s Complete Irish Mythologies*, London, Bounty Books (Chancellor Press), 2006 (first published 1994), p. 330. This edition contains *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904) and *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902), originally published in separate volumes by John Murray Publishers, London. Further references to this volume will be cited as “Lady Gregory”.

3. Lady Gregory, p. 332.

4. *Ibidem*.

5. *Ibidem*.

6. P. Ure, *Yeats the Playwright. A Commentary on Character and Design in the Major Plays*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, p. 48. All further references to this book will be cited as “Ure”.

pattern that he will use again in later plays”.⁷ The extensive dialogues of the three acts by Synge, or the original “elegies” of Deirdre leaving Scotland that are still published separately in English collections of Celtic material,⁸ in Yeats’s hands give life to a one-act play that he will consider a turning point in his theatre *oeuvre*.

The same opening line of the play can be challenged, if not overturned, if we consider its adjective and read the statement “I have a story right” against the background of Irish cultural history. Anne Markey writes: “while opinions vary on the authenticity of both Gregory’s Kiltartanese and her young associates [...], their work highlights the way in which translation provided a bridge between traditional Gaelic culture and the emergence of a distinctively Irish literature in English”.⁹ Tymoczko defines Lady Gregory’s position “emblematic”, as

she grossly manipulates the early texts in *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902) for example, turning them into a consistent narrative cycle, altering the plots, suppressing and obliterating stories that challenge her representations of the Irish as heroic and noble. She radically shifts the form, from oral heroic narrative where prose alternates with verse and there is a mixture of linguistic registers, to a narrative structure similar to folktales in the Kiltartan dialect.¹⁰

Lady Gregory and Yeats are among the champions of cultural Irishness who also share the controversial position of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy in Ireland, representing the unresolved duality of

7. Rohan, p. 43. Rohan’s contention is that Yeats was “deliberately modeling his heroic drama after the great continental romances” and, in so doing, “has re-formed the traditional tale, giving it a meaning new in the Celtic context but venerable in the annals of European literature”. (p. 54).

8. For example, in K.H. Jackson, ed., *A Celtic Miscellany, Translations from the Celtic Literature*, London, Penguin Books, 1971.

9. A. Markey, “The rights and wrongs of translating Patrick Pearse” in *Translation Right or Wrong*, S.B. Belenguer, E. Ní Chuilleánáin, C. Ó Cuilleánáin, eds., Four Court Press, 2013, p. 196.

10. M. Tymoczko, “Censorship and self-censorship in translation: ethics and ideology, resistance and collusion”, in E. Ní Chuilleánáin, C. Ó Cuilleánáin, and D. Parris, eds., *Translation and Censorship, Patterns of Communication and Interference*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2009, p. 34.

being exponents of the social classes ruling on the island while favouring the circulation of early Irish literature inspiring nationalist claims. Tymoczko clarifies the implications of translation whereby ideology and politics always play a part, and even those who have suffered from the way their culture has been depicted in the past by the colonizers, while reacting to it, end up endorsing the colonizers' standards. In the scholar's words, Lady Gregory

carefully controls the representation of culture, adapting local practices to English standards [...]. At the same time it is obvious that she is using translation as an ideological weapon, building an image of Irish culture as noble and heroic, attempting to empower the Irish and to give them pride in themselves, building alliances across class and sectarian boundaries, and helping to establish a cultural basis for an independence movement.¹¹

Woven into the fabric of the story of Deirdre, its language, are all these representations of Irishness. For a translator into another language, the dramatization of an ancient Irish legend means that the whole setting of the story, the concepts referring to the social structure, all geographical names undergo several degrees of translation. Between the two poles of "domestication" and "foreignization", in the natural tension mentioned above, lie all individual choices. These choices in my case respect the names of people and places (giving a translation only in case of appellatives such as "Red-stripe" that accompanies the Irish name "Lugaidh"), and give the direct Italian translation of the environmental elements, including animals, thus contributing to the atmosphere of remoteness of time and place. The social status of the characters is translated through acceptable equivalents: such is the case, for example, of "high-king", that reflects the specific Irish social structure in ancient times. *Deirdre* is also pervaded by items that constitute a "semantic gap" that needs to be filled through specific strategies and choices, since the linguistic object "does not have a corresponding expression within

11. *Ibidem*.

the meta-linguistic experience of the 'TL'.¹² It is not only the case of abstract concepts such as beliefs (the whole fairy world as opposed to the human world), and superstitions (the magic power attributed to legendary dragons, stones and rites), but also common objects, such as "rattle", which need a "semiotic-conscious translation" because the sign is "culture-specific".¹³

The transformation that takes place in the translation from English to Italian, in a paradoxical double allegiance to the several layers of meaning of the ST and the fluency of the TT, can be explained through the key notion of "shift of expression". In Popovič's words,

the fact that the process of translation involves shifts in the semantic properties of the text does not mean that the translator wishes to underemphasize the semantic appeal of the original. The very opposite is true. He strives to preserve 'the norm' of the original. He resorts to shifts precisely because he is endeavouring to convey the semantic substance of the original in spite of the differences separating the system of the original from that of the translation, in spite of the difference between the two languages.¹⁴

12. J.P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet, "A Methodology for Translation" in L. Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 131. All further references to this chapter will be cited as "Vinay and Darbelnet", whereas the volume will be indicated as "Venuti, *Reader*".

13. Vinay and Darbelnet give account of the necessary steps of "identification, information, explication and transformation" that inform the process of translation in the case of semantic gap. For example, at the identification of the noun "rattle", a suitable denotational equivalent would be "make-up", the explication concerns its cultural specificity and finally, the transformation in my translation goes toward a similar item, "*belletto*", equally no longer in use in Italian culture but equally recognisable. Very different is my choice for "dragons", a word that ends up "inheriting" the role of signalling an ancient legendary world, through my use of an archaic Italian "*dragone*", rather than "*drago*", as the latter would instead lead to a fairy-tale world that needs to be avoided. Precisely, the Italian word "*favola*" is only mentioned in the opening speech, where the noun is used to translate the English adjective "fabulous". The footnotes will give account of the different connotation such an adjective has in Italian, if compared to the noun, but here it is useful to mention the fact that in the English verse the adjective "fabulous" follows the noun "fable", that in Italian is translated as "*leggenda*", for the same reasons.

14. A. Popovič, "The concept 'Shift of Expression' in Translation Analysis", in James S. Holmes (ed.), *The Nature of Translation*, Mouton, The Hague, Paris, 1970, p. 79.

The passage from English to Italian implies a shift into a flexible word order, made possible thanks to subject–inflected, tense–inflected verb forms, where the position of a subject, verb or object in the sentence can be decided to optimize sound, style, and clarity. This flexibility is often discussed in my annotations to show the several degrees of emphasis/ meaning that the choice implies.¹⁵

One of the immediate choices that the translation of this play, full of dialogues, requires, is about the rendering of all forms of address (and all corresponding verb–endings) in Italian.¹⁶ My choice in *Deirdre* is to highlight, through the use of the “familiar form”, a well–established social hierarchy that sees characters such as Fergus, Conchubar, Deirdre and Naoise, sharing a social status: the two protagonists address each other as “*tu*” because they have an intimate relationship, while the attitude of all these “royal exponents” toward the Musicians, the servants and the soldiers is that of a higher social class addressing inferiors/ subordinate members. Amongst the latter the register is colloquial, because they also share a (lower) social ranking. The way the characters address each other reflects the overall “cultural script”. In Lefevere’s words, “cultural scripts could be defined as the accepted pattern of behaviour expected of people who fill certain roles in a certain cultures”.¹⁷ Together with behaviour, I would like to stress the fact that the royal status depicted in the play also influences my choice in translation when elements, objects, locations are described, in order to be consistent with the selected “script”.¹⁸

15. Even adjectives and articles have differentiated forms that have to be “disambiguated” in Italian, whilst the contrary happens with the gender of possessive articles/pronouns. All these changes belong to the shift from one language to the other, as “coherence, once it has been retrieved from the ST, can easily be re–established in the TT (by using recurrence or co–reference), but not by the same pronominal means”, B. Hatim, I. Mason, *Discourse and the Translator*, Longman, 1990, p. 197. All further references to this book will be cited as “Hatim and Mason”.

16. The English “you” corresponds to differentiated forms in Italian, with a main distinction between “polite” forms (“*Lei*”, “*Loro*”) and “familiar” forms (“*Tu*”, “*Voi*”).

17. A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 89. All further references to this book will be cited as “Lefevere *Rewriting*”.

18. I chose for example to render “*reggia*”, “*vesti*”, “*vassoi d’oro*” instead of “*casa*”, “*vestiti*”, “*piatti*”. The first choice, that of referring to Conchubar’s house as “*reggia*” is forced by the need

As far as verb tenses are concerned, I have distinguished between the use of the past simple, only employed when related to the “history” of the meeting between Deirdre and Naoise (“*Re Conchubar trovò*”; “*perse la pace*”, etc.), referred to by several characters, and a closer level of temporal proximity, the present perfect, that introduces actions just before the “staged time” (“*sono stata nella reggia*” “*quegli uomini...sono stati attorno alla casa tutto il giorno*”, etc.). The use of past tenses reflects a semantic difference between English and Italian, and my choices tend to a limited use of past simple, to mark the differences of the several “time dimensions” related in the play.¹⁹ As for present and future tenses, progressive forms are often translated with the indicative and vice-versa, for purposes of immediacy and emphasis, whereas the recurring “will” has a different treatment, often related to the choice of emphasizing the “voluntary” aspect that belongs to this form.

Many other features in the translation are due to the natural “asymmetry” of the two languages. These shifts can involve a different use of syntactic structure,²⁰ or the change of word class.²¹ Among the many translation scholars who have attempted to classify the semantic changes at work in translation at a grammatical level, Vinay and

to distinguish the guest-house where the action takes place, equally referred to as “house” in the English text.

19. At present, the indiscriminate use of present perfect is widespread in spoken Italian. The correct use of past simple today signals a literary use, if not an archaism. This is one of the features of the only published Italian translation of Yeats’s *Deirdre*, that I will mention later in the introduction.

20. For example, when the English address is changed into a question or vice-versa (“what is it but a king and a queen at chess?” = “*è per un re e una regina che giocano a scacchi*”; “he has refused” = “*rifiuta, il mio re?*”)

21. Where the sense is maintained, but the translation employs the change of one part of speech for another, for example from verb to noun (“till the King comes” = “*fino all’arrivo del re*”; “you have a woman’s wile that can do much” = “*la tua astuzia femminile può fare molto*”). The latter example also illustrates the shift in thematic structure that takes place from the verbal style (“you have”) to the nominalized theme (“*la tua astuzia*”). The different thematic position also occurs when, given the inflected forms of verbs in Italian, there is no need to make the subject explicit at the beginning of the sentence: “You (theme) have taken it (rheme)”: “*l’hai* (theme) *preso tu* (rheme)”.

Darbelnet define these changes as “transposition”, a kind of “oblique translation” to which also “modulation” and “amplification devices” belong.²² These shifts that simplify the syntax in Italian illustrate “a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view. This change can be justified when, although a literal, or even transposed, translation results in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL”.²³

Other strategies belonging to “modulation”, and therefore contributing to a greater fluency of the target text, are those that govern the exchange of parts for the whole or vice-versa, a kind of metonymy built in the transfer from one language to the other. The translation of *Deirdre* is full of these examples: “I hear the hoofs a-clatter” = “*seno lo scalpito dei cavalli*”.²⁴ Cases such as this also show how a specific archaic expression with no direct referent in Italian can only be *compensated* by “signalling an equivalent value but at a different juncture of the text”.²⁵ For instance, the lost archaic connotation of “shake all your cockscombs, children, these are lovers” creates the need to compensate for the same archaic tone of an idiomatic expression with the choice of an archaic demonstrative pronoun: “*metteteci animo, fanciulle, costoro sono due innamorati*” (my emphasis). The compensation can also take place further in the text: precisely, “it matters less where exactly the impression is conveyed

22. Vinay and Darbelnet, pp. 132–137. The “amplification devices” in transposition can consist of the adding of an extra verb (“you’ll grant me this: that I go look upon him” = “*mi concederai questo: lascerai che io guardi ancora colui*”), or the change of the verb for another that adds information (“marking among the ashes with a stick” = “*e con un bastoncino interrogano la cenere*”). “Modulation” is instead what I often used when changing sentences or expressions in a negative form to a positive form or vice-versa: “I never have met any of your kind but that I gave them money, food and fire” = “*ho sempre dato denaro, cibo e riparo a tutti quelli come te*”; “And there is no one that will not praise you if you pardon us” = “*e sarai lodato da tutti se ci darai il tuo perdono*”.

23. Vinay and Darbelnet, p. 133. To this category even the simple change between a not + noun = noun is to be ascribed (ex: “not foolish” = “*saggio*”).

24. Also: “your colour has all gone” = “*il tuo viso è pallido*”; “and made my soul its mistress” = “*e avete fatto di me la sua padrona*”; “that shakes my limbs be mockery?” = “*che scuote tutta me stessa è scherno*”.

25. Hatim and Mason, p. 202.

than that it is conveyed to an equivalent extent".²⁶ This is the case, among others, of the recurring verb "weigh with" in Yeats's play: if its direct Italian translation has no trace of the "weigh" connotation, the word "*peso*", as a noun, compensates for this loss.

There are expressions in which it is the particularity of the syntactic structure of the original to produce a loss in translation. Some of these examples, such as "We will to the horses and ..."; or "Let's out and die", lead the discussion to features of Hiberno-English, and in general, to what scholars refer to as "dialect".

The definition of the linguistic variety spoken in Ireland has been problematic until recently, as testified to by P.L. Henry, who, in the first Symposium on Hiberno-English, in 1985, stated:

My argument is as follows: the introduction of Hiberno-English as a global term for the language is unnecessary since Anglo-Irish has hitherto served unambiguously for the language and for the literature. The term Anglo-Irish points to the creation in modern rural Ireland of a new language based upon Irish or Gaelic and absorbing linguistic resources chiefly lexical from outlying forms of English.²⁷

Acknowledging the combination of two cultures, two linguistic systems and two civilisations giving rise to a "third language" in the course of the 19th century, Henry argues that "Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory and the others found here a ready vehicle for a literature which in correspondence with the language has an essentially Irish character though modified and eked out by English".²⁸

More recently T.P. Dolan, author of the seminal *Dictionary of Hiberno-English*, while emphasizing that this is "the national standard language of Ireland, the majority language", as "in vocabulary, construction, idiom and pronunciation" the speech of Irish people is "identifiable and

26. *Ibidem*.

27. J. Harris, D. Little, D. Singleton, *Perspectives on the English Language in Ireland. Proceedings of the First Symposium on Hiberno-English held at Trinity College, Dublin, 15–17 Sept. 1985*, Centre for Language and Communication Studies, TCD, p. 12.

28. *Ibidem*.

marked”,²⁹ reminds us that “there is a continual interplay between Irish and English” due to a variety of factors ranging from class to religion, from ethnicity to geographical location, from superstition to rural/urban divide.³⁰ Dolan thus concludes that, even today, in spite of contemporary linguistic changes in the Irish use of English, “the unchanging component is the irrepressible gift possessed by Irish people for creative, expressive, and reckless manipulation of the English language”.³¹

Dolan’s following description is useful as a starting point to provide a few examples from the play: “Hiberno–English is characterised by two main features — the use of English vocabulary which is obsolete, obsolescent or dialectal, and influence from the Irish language in its lexicon, syntax, idiom and verbal system”.³² The most fitting example of Hiberno–English grammar in the play are the last two verses in the following dialogue, when Fergus refers to the King:

[...] He is my friend;
 I have his oath, and I am well content.
 I have known his mind as if it were my own
 These many years, *and there is none alive*
Shall buzz against him, and I there to stop it. (my emphasis)

These verses exemplify a few items in Hiberno–English, starting from the “cleft” sentence lacking the pronoun, as “the omission of the relative pronoun has long been a feature of English syntax, from the Old English period [...] in which relative pronouns were slowly developed”,³³ as Dolan claims. “Shall buzz” is an example of the “emphatic

29. T.P. Dolan, Compiler and editor, *A Dictionary of Hiberno–English, The Irish Use of English*, third edition, Gill and Macmillan, 2013, p. xx (introduction to the first edition). All further references to this volume will be cited as “Dolan, *Dictionary*”.

30. T. Dolan, “Translating Irelands: the English language in the Irish context”, in M. Cronin, C. Ó Cuilleánáin, eds., *The Languages of Ireland*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2003, p. 78. All further references to this essay will be cited as “Dolan, ‘Translating Ireland’”.

31. Dolan, *Dictionary* (introduction to the third edition), p. xvii.

32. Dolan, “Translating Ireland”, p. 79.

33. Dolan, *Dictionary*, p. xxiv. Examples of “contact clauses”, sentences lacking relative pronouns, are also “who is it sent you here?” and “But it may be the wood will thin again”.

future”, as, according to Dolan, “the strict rules that once governed the use of ‘will’ and ‘shall’ in Standard English have never been observed in Hiberno–English”.³⁴

Lastly, Fergus’s words give an example of “a greater range of uses for the conjunction ‘*agus*’ than the ‘and’ of the English. This permits non–standard usages in the formations of subordinate adverbial clauses [...] in which the ‘and’ could be equivalent to ‘when’, ‘while’, or ‘although’”.³⁵

Although at a different level, Deirdre’s question “And I the bride?” is one of the many examples of the extensive use of “and” in this play. The footnotes to my translation offer an account of their different presence and “function” in Italian, mainly for purposes of rhythm, whereby the frequent use of the coordinating conjunction produces in Italian the fairy–tale flavour of a story which is being told, strengthening the “diegetic” dialogues, particularly at the beginning of the play, when telling and tales set up the atmosphere. The several “and” introducing sentences in the original, instead, tend to disappear in Italian, replaced by suprasegmental features such as punctuation, or by means of syntactic changes when utterances become more “mimetic”, being close to, or accompanying, moments of action in the play, if not the climax.

Peculiar uses of the verb “to be” range from its presence in the place of the verb “to have”, as in “They are alighted now”, to “We are come, by chance...”. Dolan highlights the substitution “for the English perfect and pluperfect” where also the verb “to be” features instead of “to have”,³⁶ whereas other peculiar uses of “to be”, if not strictly related to Hiberno–English, cannot be maintained in Italian, as in the line “And if it be he thinks I shall stay living...”.³⁷

34. *Ibidem*. Also, “And you shall speak the welcome and the joy”.

35. Dolan, *Dictionary*, p. xxv.

36. Dolan, *Dictionary*, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

37. also: “The tale were well enough”; “Then I will say what it were best to carry to the grave”; “What were one knife among a hundred?”; “But it were best forgot”; “As it were bed-time”; “I was to have found a message in this house”.

Most of these peculiarities in the play, whether expressing classical, poetic English, or the original “interference” between Irish and English, are featured at syntactical level. The fact that they leave no trace in the Italian translation shows that this language variety is “an extremely difficult medium to convert into other languages, in which the peculiarities of Hiberno–English invariably resist even close approximations”.³⁸

Furthermore, the language of the play includes many elements of temporal variation consisting of archaic expressions such as “Thither”, “’tis”, reflecting “language change through time. The fact that these elements concur in the language leads the analysis to a further level: that of “the uniqueness of an individual speech [...]; in fact, idiolectal variation subsumes features from all the other aspects of variety discussed above: temporal, geographical, social, etc”..³⁹

The notion of idiolect is particularly useful to express the multi-layered *texture* of Yeats’s language and his style: precisely, “‘dialect’ is the kind of variety which is found between idiolects, and ‘style’ is the kind of variety found within idiolects”.⁴⁰ I have shown in my footnotes how much of this “regional colour” is hard to maintain in translation, and this is why most of my choices reflect the overall style of a standard, classical language, which in some points “compensates” for some archaic connotation, but does not adhere to any specific Italian regional variety.

Some translation choices deserve to be mentioned here because they significantly alter the original text. The first is the way I chose to treat recurring words, as I have sometimes changed the second, third mention of a word by means of a synonym. As Hatim and Mason rightly claim, “translators have to learn how to cope with the more passive forms of intertextuality. For example, reiteration of text items is always motivated. This form of passive intertextuality has to be

38. Dolan, “Translating Ireland”, p. 90.

39. Hatim and Mason, p. 44.

40. *Ibidem*.

considered by the translator in terms of its overall function within the text. Opting for a synonym or a paraphrase when what is required is verbatim reiteration can mar the communicative effect intended".⁴¹

This is the case with words that are at the heart of the artistic product, namely: "story", "fable", but also "praise" and "gather". It is not surprising that these words are those "charged with" the reference to a hypertext, as discussed at the beginning of this introduction, but also with a metatheatrical role: "praise", when used as an invitation to the Musicians, is never translated with "*lodare*", but rather with verbs such as "*raccontare*", "*cantare*", avoiding the danger of rhetorical speech by referring to the mimetic presence of Musicians, who have musical instruments on stage and as characters are there to perform (for instance, when they are thematically invited to do so by Deirdre: "Now strike the wire, and sing to it a while"), while also formally representing the "chorus" commenting on the staged events.

There is a different motivation in the choice not to translate the reiterated terms "dark", "Lybian", that in the original text are often redundantly associated with the noun "servant", "messenger", and "soldiers". This is another choice to downplay the degrading and discriminatory connotation that these adjectives would bear nowadays if translated literally. The very fact that the colour element is always repeated but with the only purpose to identify characters who can be identified without the explicit reference to their skin colour/origin, allowed me to opt for a more politically correct rendering. All these choices show that, in Hatim and Mason's words, "it is motivation which will be the deciding factor in the conflict between, on the one hand, the desire to improve the cohesion of the target text in conformity with TL norms and, on the other, the duty to reflect the 'style' of the source text".⁴²

Another significant choice that deserves discussion concerns the translation of the many metaphors present in the play. Metaphor is so pervasive a stylistic feature in *Deirdre* as to constitute a whole

41. Hatim and Mason, p. 124.

42. Hatim and Mason, p. 208.