This reading of Frank McGuinness' *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme* shows how the imperative in the play's title is not to be understood as a pietistic advocation of nationalist remembrance, but rather as the occasion of the play's own negotiation of how 'imperativity' is constituted and how this may enable another form of nationalism. In a parallel reading of the play's first scene and of Jacques Derrida's works of and on mourning, I show how the interrelated Derridean notions of 'invention,' 'translation,' and 'mourning'—*as* staged by McGuinness' play—help to illuminate how the play redefines the stage as a site of address.

Ulster's Observance, Adam's Curse: McGuinness' Derridean Mourning & the Translation of Nationalism

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There is nothing particularly original about discussing the work of the Irish playwright Frank McGuinness in terms of death, mourning, and loss. Especially in his first plays, these issues are explicitly thematized: *Innocence* (1986) is even more emphatically about the death than about the life of the Italian painter Caravaggio, *Carthaginians* (1988) remembers Bloody Sunday in a graveyard, *Baglady* (1985) derives much of its tension from the lingering absence of Baglady's dead baby, and *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme* (1985), a play about the 1916 massacre that has come to figure prominently in Ulster nationalist discourse, has a relation to death called history. According to James Hurt, "McGuinness' protagonists live in a kind of afterlife, scarred by traumatic encounters with the death of friends" (285), and *Observe*'s protagonist Pyper has been elected as a paradigmatic "living corpse" (Backus 52). For Margot Gayle Backus, the dominance of these characters classifies McGuinness' theatrical space as "liminal,"

"no longer imbued with the present nor properly in contact with the stabilizing past" (Backus 50). This fascination with McGuinness' ghostly middles seems to have spilled over in the analyses of the other critical favorite in his oeuvre, the homosexuality of many of his protagonists, founding a space that has been described as "an aesthetic intermediate realm" (Lojek, "Difference" 62). My reading of McGuinness, then, might be described as an impossible topography of this ghostly middle.

Nor is there anything particularly original about situating Derrida within the context of these issues, least of all because he explicitly did so himself,[1] an effort that has been monumentalized in *The Work of Mourning*, a volume which collects several acts of Derrida "witness[ing] to the singularity of a friendship" (Derrida, *Work* 2). That this monumentalization appropriately first appeared in English translation may alert us to the connection between translation and monumentalization, as articulated by Carol Maier, when she defines the loss involved in translation as "the fact that the translator's rendering must be offered as absolute" (21).[2] And as translation thus always suffers the loss of monumentalization, it is always itself an act of mourning; in "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?," Derrida describes translation as "a travail of mourning," "a faithful and mournful memory" (199). In other words, by dint of its overtly translated status, the volume points us to a negotiation of this relation between translation and the mourning it both collects and enacts. Both translation and mourning seem to be governed by what Derrida calls an "economy of in-betweenness" ("What is" 179), which suggest the appropriateness of Derrida's development of these terms in plotting McGuinness' ghostly middles.

This connection of McGuinness and Derrida has been attempted at least once before—by Edward Allen Cave—and as such, is also hardly original, but after Derrida, this burden of belatedness can now be converted into a critique of the notion of originality itself. For Derrida, the fictional origin is as ghostly as are McGuinness' middles, and "as the pre-anterior time of the pre-origonary language does not exist, it must be invented" (*Monolinguisme* 122). This notion of invention also involves translation "from a language which does not yet exist, and which will never have existed, to a language at the given arrival" (*Monolinguisme* 123). Heeding this implicit imperative, my simultaneous reading of Derrida's and McGuinness' mourning must refrain from according priority to the former, from simply reading McGuinness *through* the allegedly original language of Derrida, but must rather observe the translation between both as

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[1] "So far I haven't made my peace with the inevitability of death, and I doubt if I ever will, and this awareness permeates everything I think" (Derrida in McKenna).

[2] The French version was published in October 2003 as *Chaque Fois Unique, la Fin du Monde* by Galilée.

already translations of "this *wholly other* pre-anterior language" (Derrida, *Monolinguisme* 123). It must thus always delay this origin in a move partaking of what Derrida, in *Adieu*, calls "a messianicity we would call structural or *a priori... proper to a historicity without particular and empirically determinable incarnation*" (121), which must allow us to heed Maier's warning by keeping the deadening monumentalization of an alleged "absolute rendering" always outside. My reading will then bear on two contingent translations of an always absent original: McGuinness' *Observe the Sons of Ulster* on the one hand and an explicitly non-entombed corpus of texts by Derrida on the other. This seems warranted because, as Derrida has it, if the death of the other leaves the self forever altered (*Mémoires* 52-3), and his awareness of death "permeates" everything he thinks (McKenna, see note 1), then traces of this mourning must be readable in the whole of Derrida's work at least since his first public work of mourning, on the death of Roland Barthes in 1980. And if the tendency to posit "the critic as host" may be hard to avoid, Derrida, again in *Adieu*, points to a more hospitable way of configuring this relation of hospitality, in a passage that appropriately also demonstrates the inextricable implication of the question of translation:

> The host (*hôte*) who receives, who welcomes the invited or received guest (*hôte*), the receiving host who believes to be the owner of the place, is in fact a guest received in his own house. He receives the hospitality he offers *in* his own house—which he in fact does not own. The host as host (*hôte*) is a guest (*hôte*). (79)

I now want to read how *Observe the Sons of Ulster* configures the stage as the place of this hospitality between Derrida and McGuinness, between the living and the dead. I will especially focus on the beginning of the play in which its scarred protagonist, Pyper, is visited by the ghosts of his companions who died at the Somme, and by his younger self. This younger Pyper had joined the army "with a death-wish, having failed as a sculptor" (Grene 247) to fight in the "Ulster Division" in British service, which suffered massive losses in the Battle of the Somme, of which his older self is the unwilling survivor. The Somme-massacre has become foundational for Ulster Protestant Loyalism through its collective interpretation as the ultimate instance of Ulster loyalty and English betrayal, whereas in the post-1922 Free State Irish consciousness, because of its uncomfortable political charge, it fell victim to "a policy of intentional amnesia" (qtd. in Grene 243). The play, situated in Ulster but first performed at the Dublin Peacock Theatre, offers itself as a place for the translation of these two nationalisms, one unflinchingly faithful to the memory of the Somme, the other willfully forgetting it.

I read the play's configuration of the relations of hospitality between its protagonists and its audience as the key to its critique of both these nationalisms. As Nicholas Grene, in his *The Politics of Irish Drama*, reminds us, "there is more to the politics of Irish drama than merely a theatrical mimesis of the national narrative" (1), as the words of the theater text always "reach out towards theatrical embodiment. They are signs in search of an audience" (3). This focus on the stage's discursive configuration, of the way it addresses its audience, finds support in the Irish tradition, which has repeatedly been marked by uncertainties about its relation to its audience: the most famous examples are probably the riots following the performance of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, and W.B. Yeats' belated denial of the nationalist design of his *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. The latter play, in Nicholas' Grene's words, embodied "the imagination of a pristine Ireland of the past which might be realized again in the future" (71), thus still centering its nationalism on "social and cultural sameness" (242). This sounds much the same as Ulster's adherence to its memory of the unadulterated heroism at the Somme.

Remarkably enough, Grene, in spite of his insight in a politics beyond mimetic representation, fails to see the Elder Pyper as anything more complex than a representation of a similar "rigid, fossilized and backward-looking politics" (258). I now propose to turn to the encounter of Pyper and his ghosts via the encounter of McGuinness and Derrida in order to find there a mode of address that points to a perspective beyond this rigid monumentalization of the memory of the Somme, a perspective that offers a translation of these nationalisms centered in "social and cultural sameness."

Already at the very beginning of *Observe*, the issue of address is foregrounded: Pyper, alone on the stage, disconcertingly addresses a shapeless "you" in "darkness" which "insist[s] on remembrance" and "demands" continuation—a "you" that, in a theatrical context, is also the audience:

> Again. As always, again. Why does this persist? What more have we to tell each other? I remember nothing today. Absolutely nothing.
> *Silence.*
> I do not understand your insistence on my remembrance. I'm being too mild. I am angry at your demand that I continue to probe. Were you not there in all your dark glory? Have you no conception of the horror?... There is nothing to tell you... Invention gives that slaughter shape. That

scale of horror has no shape, as you in your darkness have no shape. (97)

But of course, through its connections to the "horror" and the "ghosts," the "you" that is being addressed is also, obviously, the reappearing dead sons of Ulster (97). Far from stabilizing the latter address as a straightforward intra-performative discursive interaction, the play compounds the complexity of this equivocal shifting between ambiguous and ambivalent addresses by repeated lapses into reports *about* rather than invocational addresses *to* the absent dead, which drives home the factual impossibility of addressing the dead—as Derrida has it in one of his acts of mourning, this fact is "this wound we can not even measure anymore" "of being from now on forced to speak *about* Paul de Man instead of (*au lieu de*) *to* him" (*Mémoires* 15). Thus this *lieu*, the stage as the traditional site of dialogue—a dialogue that is then, in the classical scheme, the message addressed to the audience—is here redefined as precisely the ghostly site that poses the problem of the very possibility of address—an (im)possibility that Pyper's subsequent non-monologue will be shown to dramatize. Importantly, this dramatization cannot but concern the audience-position as well, since it is inextricably implicated in the distribution of addressee-instances, as it has, in the "darkness" of the theater, been addressed by Pyper, and as such been denied its spectral impartiality.

Though both addressee-instances "insist on [Pyper's] remembrance" (97), the insistence is emphatically on two different, and indeed mutually exclusive forms of remembrance. Whereas the audience, by the blunt fact of it being there expecting to see a play, insists on "shaping" the events, on their embodiment on the stage, which Pyper dismisses as an irresponsible "free invention," a fiction, the dead demand a resistance to this free invention, to this free shaping; the former demand solicits from Pyper what Derrida calls an act of "interiorizing memory," "an interiorizing idealization [that] ideally *and* quasi-literally devours the body and the voice of the other, his face and his being"— "a mimetic interiorization" that is, moreover, not so much fictional as it is "the origin of fiction" (*Mémoires* 54).[3] It is this kind of interiorization on which the traditional discursive

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[3] Derrida has himself articulated the psycho-analytical distinction between incorporation and introjection in "*Fors*" (1976). Whereas in "so-called normal mourning," we find the "process of introjection," when "[f]aced with the impotence of the process of introjection (gradual, slow, laborious, mediated, effective), incorporation is the only choice: fantasmatic, unmediated, magical, sometimes hallucinatory" (xvi-ii). Thus, "the cryptic incorporation always marks an effect of impossible or refused mourning" (xxi). In *Mémoires*, the term "interiorization" equals neither incorporation nor introjection, but rather names the danger of the former relapsing into the "so-called normal mourning"—which would amount to a return to the Freudian fiction of a "frei und ungehemmt" subject (Freud 199) characteristic of the latter. This danger indexes the insufficiency of incorporation: "the process of incorporation into the Self provides an *economic* answer," it is "an inclusion intended

division of theatre-space, as embodying and voicing action, insists. Pyper's very first phrases ("What more have we to tell each other? I remember nothing today. Absolutely nothing") already register his awareness of the infidelity inherent in this interiorization, in the contrast between the absoluteness of the absolute "nothing" which does not allow for embodiment and the quantifying "what more"—the memory of the dead is, in Derrida's words, "beyond quantitative comparison" (*Mémoires* 56).

The first lines of the play register Pyper's anxiety about the memory gaining currency in a merely "economic answer" (Derrida, "*Fors*" xvi), about this embodiment quantifying his unrepayable memorial debt, about, in Helen Lojek's words, "a private debt" becoming through embodiment merely "a public policy" ("Difference" 59). Against this violent interiorization demanded by the audience,[4] Pyper appears to insist on the second mode of memory Derrida distinguished in the wake of de Man: "the mechanical faculty of memorization" (*Mémoires* 64), a voluntary—because resistant to the interiorizing, narcissistic urge—fidelity to the lost body of the letter, to the bodies of the dead, which forbids their embodiment on the stage and rather remains "*bildlos*" (without image) (65). This insistence on preservation, this resistance to creation or invention is later in the play reiterated to account for Pyper's failure as a sculptor, and it is explained by the "interference" of the "ancestors," a qualification of his initial refusal to invent to which we will return (163).

Read in the light of McGuinness' conception of drama, which he considers to be driven by an "erotic impulse" in which the "actors put flesh on feelings" (McGuinness, *Plays 1* x), this resistance to symbolical incarnation,[5] to embodiment on the stage, is profoundly anti-theatrical (see Derrida, *Mémoires* 55). The relation between interiorizing memory and resistant memorization, the latter of which, if strictly adhered to, disallows the separation of body and sense, and thus forbids re-embodiment, can, then, not be dialectically overcome but rather remains a relation of "rupture, heterogeneity,

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as a *compromise*" ("*Fors*" xvi, italics mine), which "blurs the line between introjection and incorporation" (xvii). It is this uncertainty that necessitates a new opposition between interiorization and a less compromising category, which is dramatized and overcome in this play.

[4] "There is always in mourning the danger of narcissism, for instance, the 'egotistical' and no doubt 'irrepressible' tendency to bemoan the friend's death in order to take pity upon oneself..." (Brault and Naas in Derrida, *Work of Mourning* 7). The need to think a form of mourning beyond narcissism is another reason (see also note 3) for reading *Mémoires* as a revision of "*Fors*." Cp. "the narcissistic structure is too paradoxical and too elusive for it to give us the last word" (*Mémoires* 52).

[5] In its etymological sense. Importantly, this carnality can be read as a precondition for ethics: for instance, in Simon Critchley's words, "the original language of proximity whereby the self is related to the Other is achieved in non-verbal sensibility... it is the nudity and aphonia of the skin... the ambiguity of ethical selfhood is that it is only as an animal... that I can be for the other" (180-1). Derrida also quotes Levinas on "the 'vulnerability of a presented skin'... Hospitality would be that vulnerability" (*Adieu* 100n1).

disjunction" (*Mémoires* 69), a failure that Pyper initially seals as a verdict of non-transitivity: "There is nothing to tell you," the audience (97). But, as this sentence is also spoken in the literalizing mode of memorization, it insists on a reading of its letter, and a resistance to its common sense, and given the equivocality of address established before, thus also at least requires the complementary reading, the grammatically fully available inversion of direct and indirect object: there is nothing, no addressee, to tell you, dead sons of Ulster, out of absence to—which again underscores the incompatibility of the two demands.

But, what the theatrical setting and its concomitant generic imperative of embodiment also force us to read in these sentences is the blunt observation that "there is," and remains, a "nothing to tell," showing how a melancholic impasse in the fictional space before the play suggested by the play's opening line "Again. As always, again"[6] is resisted and overcome by the performative imperative brought on by the theatrical setting itself, which insists, which demands, that "there is telling": the theatre forces Pyper, in other words, to address the "rupture, heterogeneity, disjunction," to resolve the melancholic impasse into a productive work of mourning. The imperative to interiorize and to overcome the impasse of absolute fidelity is generically categorical, and is then, combined with the ethical imperative of fidelity to the absent dead translated as the imperative to enact "an impossible mourning" (Derrida, *Mémoires* 29). The mournful task of resisting traditional tragic embodiment then brings on, as James Hurt has shown (277), the imperative of a Trauerspiel,[7] in the Benjaminite rather than the Freudian sense (see note 3), which the play later underscores in qualifying the Scarva-performance, traditionally a display of nationalist fervor, as "something sad" (181); it turns it into not a "historical" play, but rather a play "saturated with memories of the past" (Schneider 91), a "memory play" (Gleitman 96), a dramatization which "leaves the other his alterity, respects its infinite distance, refuses or finds itself incapable of taking it inside itself" (Derrida, *Mémoires* 29), thus enacting a successful failure, an attempted interiorization of

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[6] Cp. "the cryptic safe can only maintain in a state of repetition the mortal conflict it is impotent to resolve" (Derrida, "*Fors*" xvi).

[7] Ideally, this exercise would have been a three-way translation between McGuinness, Derrida, and Walter Benjamin. Not only does Derrida draws extensively on Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" in his "Des Tours de Babel," and not only has James Hurt qualified McGuinness' plays as allegories and *Trauerspiele* in Benjamin's sense, Derrida also elaborates on de Man's obviously very Benjaminite notion of allegory in his second essay in *Mémoires*, "L'Art des Mémoires." Moreover, the "Adam's Curse" in my title refers to a theme in Benjamin, which is, as Max Pensky's excellent study shows, crucially related to Benjamin's notions of mourning, allegory, and translation—a relation that is also hinted at in Derrida's claim that he discusses "The Task of the Translator" rather than "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," which deals with precisely these Adamic issues, only for pragmatic reasons ("What is" 175). I will return to this subtext in a later note.

"the other as other," as, precisely, "that which can no longer be interiorized" (56). This rearticulation of memory as "a lack," as "apparent negativity," as the site of "discontinuity" and "distance" could then be read positively as "a power, the very opening of difference" (70). The "nothings" to tell you could then, perhaps, also be, not so much re-embodied, but at least re-articulated as sites of address.

After this localization of the interrelated issues of theatricality and remembrance, I now want to read how the play's distribution of discursive instances between Pyper, the audience and the dead creates such a site of difference in which this impossible mourning can take place. Pyper himself glosses the first steps in this redistribution:

> They taught me, by the very depth of their belief, to believe. To believe in you. What sense could you make of their sacrifice? I at least continued their work in this province. The freedom of faith they fought and died for would be maintained. (98)

If we start to unpack this passage, the initial relation appears to be one of "teaching," which Pyper apparently mimetically continues in this province. The act of teaching is, moreover, read as itself an act of adequate mimesis: belief is taught by, precisely, belief. It is, however, immediately qualified as not an act of ideal and quasi-literal "mimetic interiorization" (Derrida, *Mémoires* 54)—instead, Pyper indexes the impossibility of a mimetic transfer in adding the "in you," which is also the audience, to the transferred belief, thus already inscribing his own substitution of the teaching-relation "in this province" of the theatre, of Ulster, of Ireland, *in* the original act. In words borrowed from Derrida's discussion of this substitution-relation, "this *thought* of substitution draws us to a hardly thinkable, almost unsayable logic, the logic of the possible-impossible, the iterability and the replaceability of the unique in the very experience of unicity as such" (*Adieu* 128).[8] The subsequent sealing of the initial belief as "freedom of faith" displays the initial transfer as already a site of liberating difference, especially in an Irish context, and reveals how the discontinuity and distance (Derrida, *Mémoires* 170) already inhere in the first impossible mimesis, which has thus already called for Pyper's grafting of his continuation on this initial "sacrifice." This sacrifice is now shown to be the sacrifice of the letter of the original mimesis in the impossible mimesis, which is retroactively qualified as a "making sense," as a leaving behind of the original letter in order for a

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[8] Also, in "The Deaths of Roland Barthes": "But *in (the) place of* this event, place is given over, for the same wound, to substitution, which repeats itself there, retaining of the irreplaceable only a past desire" (*Work of Mourning* 67).

mournful re-embodiment of sense to be staged.[9] By thus already situating the performative imperative, the imperative to infidelity to the original letter, in the dead sons' original address, the rupture between the oppositional demands of the dead and the audience seems to be reconciled in an imperative of impossible mourning. To return to Derrida: "this mournful memory... shows the other... in the open but nocturnal space, in the more-than-light of the *agora*; it speaks him and makes him, the other, speak, but in order to let him speak, because the other will have spoken first" (*Mémoires* 56). The performative imperative can be heeded, it is suggested, in the acceptance that "one has to *start by answering*. There would thus not be, at the beginning, a first word" (Derrida, *Adieu* 53), an impossibility which the first word of the play successfully fails to name as "[a]gain."

This response can then afford to risk "giving flesh" to the sense that is addressed from the dead body, "leaving the other body intact but not without *causing* the other to appear" (Derrida, "What is" 175)—to appear, in this case, on stage. This "causing to appear" then follows Derrida's concept of translation, in which "the element of translation" is understood as "a law that presides over translation while commanding absolute respect, without any transaction, for the word given in its original letter" (185). For Derrida, in an articulation that demonstrates the connection of translation to the work of mourning, "this relation... of the body of literalness to the ideal interiority of sense is also the site of the passage of translation" (184): it is translation as "a travail of mourning" which guarantees survival of the sense "by losing the flesh" (199), a disembodied sense that must, in the theatre, by necessity be "given flesh" in a body other than the other's, a body that, however, must exhibit "the stigmata of suffering" (177) caused by the violence and infidelity of translation.

This staging of the crucial connection between the theatrical imperative and the work of mourning may then serve as a dramatization of the logic underlying the fact that, as Claire Gleitman has observed, "in a striking number of Ireland's recent drama, performance serves as a strategy for coping with the experience of marginalization and loss" (98). In this play, the negotiation of the possibility of impossible mourning from the very beginning governs the action itself—as McGuinness has remarked about Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*: "the violent action occurs offstage, reported by a messenger. But here the messenger is the man of action, the man of suffering himself" ("Faith Healer" 63). *Here* is, emphatically, the stage, which necessitates translation into action, into a message.

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[9] Again, in "The Deaths of Roland Barthes": "a certain mimetism is at once a duty... and the worst of temptations, the most indecent and most murderous" (38).

Having now established in what mode the play can be allowed to continue—i.e., as a translation, as a reply—the question of what precisely must be translated remains unanswered. If "[t]here would thus not be, at the beginning, a first word" (Derrida, *Adieu* 53), what then would instigate the initial translation? How, precisely, does one teach "by the very depth of [one's] belief?" Predictably, if in the beginning there was not the (first) word, then the deed, the original dead letter, and the sentence preceding the ones quoted before situates death as the instigator of the translation—thus again driving home its connection to mourning: "Those with me were heroes because they died without complaint for what they believed in" (98). The stamp of "the very depth of their belief" is thus placed on the act of dying. But in spite of the apparently seamless conjunction in the phrase "those with me," the problematic outlined before obviously insists on the disjunctive qualities of this "with," which complicates the suggestion of proximity which qualifies Pyper as the legitimate first addressee ("those with me") by pointing to the impossibility of having been there to read the letter of death. The only ones to legitimately determine the status of this death as, possibly, a sign for their depth of faith are of course the dead themselves, but they are said to have "died without complaint," and are thus denied a voice, annihilating every possibility of a mimetically adequate reading. Thus the reading of this deed as a symbol of belief is revealed as also merely a belated imposition of meaning—as is shown in its later rereading as a symbol of "hate for one's self" (100). More problematically, the burden of translating this death cannot take the shapeless shape of Pyper's mimetic repetition of it—i.e., his death on the stage—not only because such an adequate mimesis would suggest the possibility of an easy appropriation typical of the nationalism the play translates (see Derrida, *Mémoires* 142), but also because such a disembodiment would necessarily give up on the performative imperative and relapse into the melancholic paralysis of death.[10] What can, however, be continued, be translated, is the self-annihilation into the emptiness of the senseless letter, which, in a fashion similar to the heroes' "sacrifice," opens itself to the imposition of sense, to the possibility of a new translation of sense, of a new work of mourning.

Following its performance of the ethical inescapability of this loss of self-identity, which is shown to be essential to a mournful translation, the play dramatizes what Derrida has named as a possible reaction to the loss of identification-possibilities for the ego, i.e., a relapse into "homogenous stereotypes," "another amnesia in the form of integration" (*Monolinguisme* 116), a relapse into integrative Ulster nationalist cant relying on mimesis and adequation, into the nationalism the play critiques. This relapse must here be read in the terms of translation and memory set out before, and more so because

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[10] As the ultimate consequence of mere memorization: "this excess of fidelity would end up saying and exchanging nothing. It returns to death" (Derrida, *Work of Mourning* 45).

the play explicitly does so itself: the suggestion of a too neatly adequate literal translation in "[they] will rise and lay their enemy low, *as* they did at the Boyne, *as* they did at the Somme, against *any* invader" (98, italics mine) underscores the murderous fatality of a merely literal translation which does not restrict itself to the specificity of "this province" but claims the generality of *any* context of *any* invader. The futility of this literal model is highlighted in a next instance of translation, "Sinn Fein? Ourselves alone," which in spite of its literal adequacy cannot escape transposition of its sense from its historically Catholic provenance to the province of "the Protestant people" (98). In other words, integrative Ulster nationalist discourse is here invalidated because it is a bad, all too literal translation.

This reduction to the letter is, in the movement of the play, not merely a critical aside, as it provides a possibility-condition for Pyper's self-reduction, when this emptying of any sense effects the "loss of faith in a an originary, integral, stable identity" (Harris 42), a "dismemberment" (Liddy 278) that crucially allows for an act of memory: "Must I remember? Yes, I remember. I remember details" (98). These "details" are later on in the play qualified as inventions (176),[11] thus inviting the connection of "memory" and an "invention" that is not merely the "free invention" dismissed at the very beginning of the play. It is through the destruction of a stable nationalist self that memory, and the stage, can become, in Derrida's words, "the place of this strange dative" (*Mémoires* 52), in which Pyper, now moving within a "liminal" sphere (Backus 50, 56) after his symbolical death (Hurt 280, 285), has put his identity at bay in order to allow the other to give "the shock" that will never leave his "system entirely" (97), that thus will leave the self altered—again in Derrida's words: "the 'I' and 'we' of which we speak then arise and are delimited in the way they are only through this experience of the other, and of the other as other who can die" (*Mémoires* 52-3). "[W]e are only ever *ourselves* from the place within us where the other, the mortal other, resonates" (Derrida, *Work of Mourning* 117). Therefore, Pyper welcomes his own speech as a "parting gift" (99)[12]—qualifying his speech as always already a response, which is sealed by the "welcome" (99), and which validates this reply as a Derridean rather than as the decried "free" invention, invention now as "'knowing how' to say 'come' and to respond to the 'come' of the other" (*Psyché* 53-4). For Derrida,

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[11] After Roulston, one of the characters, says that "He invented quite a few details of his own. The best ones," his companion McIlwaine replies with "To hell with the truth as long as it rhymes" (176), in which the rhyme is the repetition with a difference that governs the common logic that has been shown to underlie both translation and mourning, and in which hell is the realm of non-incarnation after the death of the body of the original letter to which truth (as adequation), as only allowing for a repetition without a difference, must be relegated.

[12] "This silence [of death] is then also the silence of a given speech. It gives speech, it is the gift of speech" (Derrida, *Adieu* 201).

this is "the aleatory coming of the wholly other… that is the 'true invention,' which is no longer the invention of truth and can only come to a finite being" (*Psyché* 59n1). This Derridean invention is then contrasted to Ulster nationalism, which "discourage[s] visitors" (99), a condemnation which can now, via the concept of invention, be related to the insistence on preservation as against creation, on the all too strict adherence to the dead letter which prevents interiorizing memory, which prevents translation; integrative nationalism is not only a bad translation, it also turns out to be a bad invention.

And, it is also a bad invention *as* a bad translation. Pyper, at the end of the first scene, addresses his appearing ghostly "younger self" "invitingly" (101), and addresses it as "Myself. My soul" and urges it to "dance," but importantly refrains both from addressing this self as "my body" and from corporally participating in the dance. He thus acknowledges the separation between his older self and the younger theatrical "flesh" that incarnates its "soul," thus saying "come" to the other in an act of invention, and qualifying himself as the translation of the "flesh" (McGuinness, *Plays 1* x) of his younger body, as the translating body displaying "the stigmata of suffering" (Derrida, ""What is" 177).[13] In contrast, the discredited Ulster nationalism is qualified as "[h]ate for oneself," a wish for the selves to die "to satisfy our blood lust. That lust we inherited" (100). In the play's passage on Pyper's failed artistic career, this inheritance is glossed as the "contaminat[ing]" "interference" of the "ancestors" and "the gods" which prevented creation: "I could not create. I could only preserve. Preserve my flesh and blood" (163). This insistence on the preservation of flesh and blood is named in the first act as "[the] true curse of Adam," which in this context cannot but remind us of Yeats' poem "Adam's Curse." In the play, this curse names the burden of a nostalgia for a prelapsarian origin and an Adamic language fusing letter and sense,[14] integrating body and soul, and thus disabling translation, disabling invention,[15] disabling, in the first scene, a "[d]ance unto death." It rather remains, if we swerve back to Ulster, "Carson's dance," which, in this play, is also invoked on the side of preservation (163).

At the end of the first scene, the thematization of the dance extends the condemnation of nationalism beyond its Ulster variant and also targets a Yeatsian ascendancy Irishness, which is not only a bad translation, a bad invention, but also a

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[13] Compare again McGuinness comment on *Faith Healer*: "But here the messenger is the man of action, the man of suffering himself" ("Faith Healer" 63).

[14] Here the name of Walter Benjamin, introduced in footnote 7, again becomes relevant. In Max Pensky's words, "The Adamic *Ursprache* thus constitutes an originary cognitive-linguistic deed that expresses the initial unity of thing and name, in which knowledge is immediate, absolute, eternal" (50).

[15] On these terms, Yeats' poem "Adam's Curse" can of course be read as a lament for the loss of this integration, this immediacy, in love as well as in poetry. For an account of the poem's failure, in terms of a fall "back on the use of the transcendent symbol of the moon," with obvious relevance to our discussion, see Ward, especially pages 41 and 47.

bad dance. It is not a dance in which the body frees itself "unto death" and allows its soul to be translated, in which the body, to quote the last stanze of Yeats' "Among School Children" *is* emphatically "bruised to pleasure soul," and in which we must know the dancer from the dance. Instead, the integrative dance of nationalism is the dance of Yeats' "bodies swayed to music,"[16] where we cannot, or are not allowed to, know the dancer from the dance. McGuinness' dance, then, is to be read as dancing against what Helen Lojek calls the traditional, Yeatsian Irish image of the dance as "a total integration of being and movement into a unified pattern" ("Myth" 46-7).

The play thus sets out to renegotiate Adam's curse, figured immediately in the apple (100), which, as Pyper's principle means of seducing David, one of his companions, metonymically qualifies Pyper's homosexuality as recasting "lust" from a murderous bloodlust to a subversion of the Adamic curse. Rather than an adherence to an Adamic merging of body and soul, the older Pyper has "cut [him]self peeling an apple" (100), thus continuing the trope of the translated body displaying "the stigmata of suffering" (Derrida, "What is" 177). If we continue McGuinness' reading of the last stanza of "Among Schoolchildren," this separation of body and soul no longer invokes a "brightening glance"[17] but is rather enacted in what the play calls the "darkness" of "the deserted temple of the Lord," which, after the example of the dead, serves as again a deserted signifier that can function as the foundation of an inventive translation when "the Protestant gods," who earlier prevented creation (163), "die," leaving their insignificant dead signifiers in a darkness that must, in keeping with the theatrical imperative investigated before, be brought to light. Discarding the possibility of nationalist integration, the task now becomes "being able to *invent* without model and without assured addressee" (Derrida, *Monolinguisme* 96). As such, "an invention would have to produce a provision of derangement, to open a place of perturbation or of turbulence" (Derrida, *Psyché* 33), exemplified here by the dance, unruly rather than swayed to music. Importantly, in the sequence of the titles of the dramatic sequences of the play—"Remembrance," "Inititation," "Pairing," "Bonding"—a progression towards a new "us" is named, a progression that must, however, start in the preliminal space of memory. I will now, in conclusion, link this progression to the politics of the play.

At the end of the play, at the apparent climax of this move of reintegration in the devout

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[16] The proximity of "Adam's Curse" and "Among School Children" has been observed before McGuinness. L.M. Dawson, for instance, writes "the basic concerns of 'Among School Children' come from this earlier poem. Actually, 'Among School Children' is essentially a re-examination of the problems raised in 'Adam's Curse'" (290). Raised and, we must conclude with McGuinness, all too easily resolved.

[17] Which suggests, according to L.M. Dawson, "a powerful sense of temporal immediacy" (293).

invocation of God and in a reiteration of the Ulster nationalist cant discredited at the beginning of the play, the conscientious naming of places culminating in the declaration of love to "Ulster" makes way for a dispassionate repetition until also this signifier is deserted of meaning, and thus can serve as the "deserted temple of the Lord" in which the inventive dance can take place (196-7):

> Lord, look down on us. Spare us. I love –. Observe the sons of Ulster marching towards the Somme. I love their lives. I love my own life. I love my home. I love my Ulster. Ulster. Ulster. Ulster. Ulster. Ulster. Ulster. Ulster. Ulster. (196)

Importantly, before the play as a whole, in this "dismembering" move (Liddy 278), repeats the emptying out of the sense of the dead letter it has staged in its first scene, it repeats its title, which, for Derrida, serves as the "proper name" of the play (*Psyché* 18),[18] a proper name which thus shares in the dispropriation, the semantic purging of the syntagm "Observe the sons of Ulster marching towards the Somme." This allows us to read the play as itself performing an emptying out of the sense of its own name, as an opening up for an imposition of meaning by its receiver. Moreover, as a proper name, the title also functions as untranslatable in principle, thus again underscoring the necessity of fidelity to its original letter. It is the elder Pyper's adherence to this deadening repetition of Ulster that enables him to resist joining the younger Pyper in his ultimate reaching for a traditional integrative nationalism, which is only interrupted by a "reaching towards" (197)—importantly, not an embrace—a rapprochement which, in a way similar to my earlier reading of the conjunctive "with," drives home the inevitable discontinuity and distance between the two Pypers. This has been read as a foundational differentiality, as foundational for the subsequent imperative to "[d]ance in this deserted temple of the lord" (101), which is echoed back to the audience by the Elder Pyper (197). And, if there were any doubts left as to the referent of "*this* deserted temple," the stage-directions transpose the darkness which has been associated with the temple of the lord to the theatre (100), thus addressing the imperative to the audience. Although the "observe" in the title has, through the purging of its sense, arguably lost the imperative force it possessed by dint of its grammatical form, the play has allowed a new imperative to appear, by, first, its final self-allegorization in the title's repetition of the emptying of the dead letter it had portrayed in the development of its protagonist, and by, second,

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[18] Cp. Liddy's remark on McGuinness: "The playwright is both undertaker and priest who buries and then baptizes" (278).

passing on this message in its imperative to "dance" in its last word. It has translated the deadeningly monumentalized memory of a pristine Ireland and a heroic Ulster into an imperative of inventive translation, into a faithful mourning of a national past that must fail to be successfully re-embodied. It is this failure that remains to be observed.

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