

Performability in *The Cripple of Inishmaan*:

How to Translate Irish English and Humour

Student name: Lisa Willemijn Horenberg
Student number: 5518059

Supervisor: Lette Vos
Second reader: Dr. Roselinde Supheert

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Utrecht University - English Language and Culture

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Abstract:

This thesis presents three guidelines that together form a translation strategy for translating Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* into Dutch. The research question is: what aspects of the play influence the performability of the translation and how does this affect the translation process? This question is answered after exploring the topics of performability and Irish English individually. The way these elements are intertwined with humour and performability forms the basis for the three guidelines.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Well if we’ve agreed on the bigness of me news . . . ‘Bigness’ isn’t a word, I know, but I can’t be bothered to think of a better one for the likes of ye” (McDonagh 8). This quote from *The Cripple of Inishmaan* represents the inventive way its author Martin McDonagh plays with language. McDonagh has received many positive comments on his work, especially for the way he has “invest[ed] his characters with authentic voices and distinct personalities” and how the play’s main character Cripple Billy is “the mirror to the local community that reflects their best, as well as worst” (Walker). *The Cripple of Inishmaan* is a dark comedy that was first performed in 1996 and is set in 1934 on Inishmaan, a remote island in Ireland where Irish Gaelic is still the first language. Instead of writing it in Irish or pure Irish English, McDonagh remembered “the language [his] uncles spoke back in Galway” (McDonagh qtd. in Lonergan 327) and made it his own. McDonagh’s language use is likely to have contributed to why he is considered one of “Britain’s most proclaimed playwrights” (Interview). This reinforces his increasing relevance within the theatrical world and for this reason I expect it is only a matter of time until his texts will be translated, performed and published in other languages besides Dutch. In the Netherlands, translations of the play were performed in 2008 and 2009, but neither text was published for the audience to read. I will therefore translate the play with the intention to have it performed and published by Toneelgroep Amsterdam: their average audience will be the target audience for my translation.

Part of the topic of drama translation is the debate about performability. Whereas Susan Bassnett has repeatedly argued against the existence of performability, others continue to use it as a criterion to comment on the quality of a

translation. Yet, much like a set of criteria for performability has never been established, the field of translation is still in need of a concrete translation strategy that leads to performable translations.

Although pedagogical methods have been developed that focus on teaching students how to produce performable translations (Marco 64-6), concrete elements that should be taken into account have not been named or described. This may be related to Bassnett's idea that if performability exists and consists of certain criteria, these criteria would have to be specific to one text in particular (102). Bassnett does not attribute any relevance to exploring performability in such specific cases. However, researching the elements of performability in specific cases may inspire further research, which could lead to a set of criteria for performability. For this reason I will explore performability in the case of a Dutch translation of *The Cripple of Inishmaan* in order to formulate a strategy that helps the translator create a performable translation.

This leads to the following research question: what aspects of the play influence the performability of the translation and how does this affect the translation process? The thesis statement that I will explore reads as follows: the translation strategy that guides the translator to produce a performable Dutch translation of *The Cripple of Inishmaan* mainly relies on McDonagh's distinguishing language use and the play's humorous genre. To research this, I will firstly explore the individual topics of performability and McDonagh's use of Irish English. I will then attempt to formulate a translation strategy specific to this play that focuses on performability, before putting it to use in my translation of a two thousand-word excerpt. The research will be evaluated in the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

2.1: Translating Theatre

Susan Bassnett's sceptical attitude towards performability, which is inevitable in her article 'The Case Against Performability', seems to have developed from her struggle with the idea of universality within theatre (1991, 102). She believes *Gestus*, "a gesture, a word, an action, a tableau by which, separately or in series, the social attitudes encoded in the playtext become visible to the spectator" (Diamond 89), is often explained by using the term performability to "describe the indescribable" (1991, 102) and that it cannot be universally "encoded into the written" (99). By stating that there is no such thing as a universal set of criteria for performability, Bassnett ultimately disregards all cases of performability. She thereby disregards all attempts to establish more specific criteria or strategies for any drama translation, to which Josep Marco responds: "what we need is not rejection of the concept, but attempts to define it through research" (61).

When researching the scholarly discourse on performability, some articles allow for interpretations that would function as broad guidelines for performability. Herman van Looy's article is an example of this: he discusses the term 'speelbaarheid', which literally translates to playability and can be used synonymously with performability. Although he attempts to set certain criteria for performability, his ideas are very broad. Van Looy argues that performability is the benefit that comes with a fluent translation, in which "verse after verse, the translator delivers proof that [the actors] do not have to use artifices in order to establish a

performable text”¹ (my translation, 281). This entails that, in Van Looy’s opinion, a translation that is a text in its own right ensures its performability. Bassnett contradicted this as she believes theatre texts to be incomplete, considering their “dialectal relationship with the performance of that same text” (1991, 99). However, published theatre texts can be read without the reader having seen the actual performance of the play, which means they are comprehensible and complete. I therefore choose to agree with Van Looy and to regard the text’s individuality as a feature in favour of performability, rather than against it.

Bassnett revised the idea of written texts being intertwined with their gestural subtexts and the problems this causes in translation, and argued that if something like a gestural subtext exists, it too can be translated after decoding it in the original language (2014, 98). Marco defines performability as the “matching of text to action” (59), which “includes the relationship between language and gestures, the role of deixis, what characters are doing while they speak, the rhythm of delivery, etc.” (59). Marco’s discussion of performability confirms the idea that although a lot has been written about the awareness of performability, the field of translation and translation research still needs a concrete definition of performability, hence the dismissive “etc.” at the end of his sentence. More interestingly, Marco categorises three theatrical characteristics the translator should take into account, namely: 1) the text must be “acceptable in the oral conventions of the target culture” (57), 2) the text and action should correspond and 3) the rhythm of delivery should match the text and action (57-8). He then explains the importance of taking the subtext into account and translating or adapting it to the new culture (60). Although these characteristics may broadly

¹ Original quote: “Een zeer groot voordeel van deze in soepel en modern Nederlands gestelde vertaling, is de speelbaarheid: de vertaler levert vers na vers het bewijs dat men niet naar allerlei zogez. kunstgrepen moet grijpen – vooral Arisophanes wordt de laatste jaren hierdoor geteisterd en gedennatureerd – om tot een speelbare tekst te komen.” (Van Looy 281)

indicate how performability works, in the case of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, they still leave the translator with many different solutions for translation problems in the text and do not steer towards specific solutions for these problems.

When translating theatre, more genre-specific elements are at play besides performability. *The Cripple of Inishmaan* also deals with dark humour, a genre that “makes fun of situations usually regarded as tragic, such as death, sickness, disability, and extreme violence, or of the people involved or subject to them” (Bucaria 218-9). Although the translation of the genre would otherwise be appointed to Nord’s translation categories (147), the way humour is linked to performability in this text is inevitable and requires more research. As Graeme Ritchie explains: humour in theatre is expressed through use of, among other things, “visual humour, jokes relying on gestures or sounds [and] aphorisms” (33). These elements nearly seamlessly coincide with what Bassnett stated about *gestus* and performability (1991, 102), and what Marco explained about matching text to action and the importance of rhythm (59). For this reason, the way humorous elements are translated, influences the performability of the text and vice versa. The way humour and language are linked will be explored further in the next segment and chapter.

2.2: Translating the Irish English Dialect

Translating *The Cripple of Inishmaan* does not only involve performability and humour, as McDonagh’s uses of Irish English dialect is very specific. This imposes linguistic issues upon the translator, as each individual deviation from a more or less settled grammatical system such as Irish English, forces the translator to rethink and re-evaluate the system itself.

The use of a dialect does not only influence the text linguistically, but also reveals social structures (Link 29). As Luigi Bonaffini argues, a “dialect, as opposed to the language of the ruling class, can bear witness to the injustices of history and give voice to the excluded and the oppressed” (279). This means that “translating into a standard language, [hinders] the translator [in capturing] the eccentricity of vernacular speech [and] its function as an alternative, a non-normative deviation from” (280). Franz H. Link argues that modern playwrights expect translators to maintain these elements by translating them to a dialect of the target language (29). He thereby explains that in order to realise the author’s intention to indicate social structures, which Cees Koster explains as a “sociolect, the language of the ingroup” (43), “the play must always be translated into the dialect which is recognized by the audience as being used by the corresponding social group in their part of the country” (Link 29). This raises the question if it is desirable to take the author’s intention into account when translating, rather than to focus on what the text itself entails.

Koster proposes a translation paradox that requires dialects *not* to be translated with dialects, as he discusses a Dutch translation of the novel *Trainspotting* (40). He states that if the dialect is insignificant to the play, the expressive loss will be minimal. This means that a text “that is *built* on a dialect would be untranslatable, as its loss would be unacceptable”² (my translation, 40). However, the translation of *Trainspotting* defied this norm since the rhythm of the source text was maintained, without translating it to a dialect (45). As previously discussed, the rhythm of sentences is related to performability and humour in the play, but above all, determined by the grammatical structure of the language.

² Original quote: “Speelt het dialect in een tekst een marginale rol, dan is het geen ramp als het door naturaliserend vertalen verdwijnt, het expressieve verlies wordt dan voor lief genomen. Een roman die *drijft* op dialect zou volgens deze norm echter onvertaalbaar zijn, omdat het verlies als onaanvaardbaar beschouwd wordt.” (Koster 40)

In the case of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, this structure comes from Irish English. Irish English is not the only language that influences the play's translation into Dutch, as it not only contains references to Irish history and culture (Billington), but the Irish linguistic inheritance ought to be considered too. This is of great relevance considering McDonagh decided to write the play in a form of Irish English, even though the people of the Aran Islands spoke Irish as a first language and still do. Patrick Lonergan discusses several works of McDonagh and describes how he incorporates "Irish slang words that don't have an exact English equivalent" (328) and how his uncommon use of grammar and syntax create a form of Irish English that is "not the way anyone actually speaks" (McDonagh qtd. in Lonergan 327). However, the fact that the language that McDonagh uses is based on genuine Western-Irish English (327), underlines the influence of both Irish and Irish English.

Considering McDonagh's use of Irish words or phrases, it would have been a sensible step for him to maintain Irish place names, but instead he chose to use their anglicised forms. These names, however, show clear similarities with their Irish form, e.g. Inishmoore respectively Inis Mór (Kallen 137). The play features a number of remarkable, more or less typical, names and epithets. For example, McDonagh uses words that do not necessarily have one-on-one equivalents such as "gosawer" (66) and "fecking" (66) or are completely out of place in Irish English, like as "avenue" (68). These deviations from the Irish English variety can be seen as inconsistencies in the text, which distinguish McDonagh's language use from more standardised forms of (Irish) English. The language does not consistently follow standard rules and therefore complicates the translation process. Although plenty has been written about the Irish English language, only very limited research has been done with regard to the geographical distribution of grammatical and syntactic structures, as James and

Lesley Milroy argue (142). This confines the current research to comparing McDonagh's language use to Irish English in general, rather than focussing on the specific dialect of the Galway area.

Milroy and Milroy provide examples of linguistic situations in which Irish English deviates from standard British English, but fail to differentiate between different parts of Ireland (177-80). However, they provide evidence that allows them to conclude that Irish English in general employs a rather simplistic grammatical system. I would like to briefly discuss some of their examples with regard to their occurrence in *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Whereas standard British English grammar would not be distinct between second person singular and plural pronouns, Irish English is one of several varieties that use the plural 'youse', 'yes' or 'yiz' (Milroy and Milroy 146). However, McDonagh deviates from this by either mostly abiding to the English rules or using an alternative spelling, for example: "Aunties, I think the doctor might be wanting a mug of tea, would ye's both go and get him one?" (McDonagh 68). Another example is subject-verb concord (Milroy and Milroy 154), which occurs in "a child seen them" (McDonagh 72) and whereby Irish English uses plural verbs with singular nouns and vice versa. Milroy and Milroy furthermore discuss the "familiar *be after doing* construction" which expresses "hot-news" (160). McDonagh does seem to use this construction in sentences such as "Is it getting rid of us you're after?" (McDonagh 68) and "the nuns must be after anybody if they let Jim Finnegan's daughter join them" (67). However, these phrases turn out to be more likely to include the English idiom that means 'to want something' rather than stating that somebody just did something, as is the case in Irish English (Milroy and Milroy 160-1).

The way language is put to use plays a significant role with regard to humour in the play, as Dirk Delabastita discusses (2010, 196-8). As humour can be expressed through “absurdity”, “wordplay”, “recurrent quirks and situations” and “visual gags” (196), many elements either fully depend on language or refer to matching text to action. Delabastita mostly focuses on humour and language contact, which does not directly occur in *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. However, the Irish influence on McDonagh’s use of Irish English (“fecking”, “gosawer” (66) and the way sentences are structured, influence the way humour can be expressed. Delabastita also discusses how it is often believed that wordplay, sound play and alliteration differ, but that they have proven “to be anything but watertight or unproblematic” as they are also influenced by “grammatical symmetry, metrical patterning and/or semantic contrast” (2016, 5) and therefore relate to each other.

Chapter 3: The Strategy

3.1 Establishing the Guidelines

As I previously explained, translating *The Cripple of Inishmaan* does not simply allow for an English-Dutch translation. The Irish elements that have been preserved in Irish English and/or the play, which have been discussed in the previous chapter, are of great use when determining how to translate them into Dutch. Considering Bassnett finds it foolish to distinguish between translations and adaptations (2014, 101) and Sirkku Aaltonen that “theatre translation actively rewrites, or adapts, many aspects of the source text, justifying this strategy with references to the ‘requirements of the stage’ and criteria such as ‘playability’ and ‘speakability’” (41), it is necessary to explain the method that I will use. I agree with Katja Krebs and Márta Minier that it is impossible to provide an unambiguous definition of either of the terms (2009, 74) and I will therefore not attempt to do so. Krebs later explains that adaptations imply a certain degree of creativity of the adaptor and translations are supposed to strive for similarity, which should result in two parallel works (2012, 2). However, “both [include] the phenomena of constructing cultures through acts of rewriting” (1), which I believe in theatre texts may be the most important factor. I thus speak of translation, but this most certainly includes adapting elements in ways that benefit the performability of the Dutch version.

Bassnett’s reluctance against the idea of performability as a criterion originates from her opinion that it is an “implicit, undefined and undefinable quality of a theatre text that so many translators latch on to as a justification for their various linguistic strategies” (2014, 101-2). I tend to agree with her that “time has come to set aside ‘performability’ as a criterion for translating . . . , and to focus more closely on

the linguistic structures of the text itself” (102). However, I find that these structures can be used to research performability, rather than seeing it as an entirely different thing.

For instance, linguistic elements such as grammar and syntax are of great influence on the rhythm of sentences, which is a crucial element in theatre texts as Marco mentions (59) and which I suppose is what Van Looy implies when talking about a fluent translation (281). As Koster explains, rhythm is a prominent but somewhat problematic element to translate (45). Much like performability, the rhythm of a sentence or text cannot be assessed based on criteria that determine if it is fluent or good. It is rather easy to explain the rhythmicity of a phrase by using poetic terms and talking of stressed and unstressed syllables, but a scale to determine the success of the rhythm does not exist and may not even be relevant. I would hereby like to propose that this is precisely what defines rhythm as successful: the fact that rhythm, along with stress, is multi-interpretable, which makes the text multi-interpretable and enables it to stand on its own (Van Looy 281). Although ambiguous sentences may be undesirable, Martin C. Emele and Michael Dorna argue in favour of so-called preservable ambiguity, whereby ambiguity in the source language can be maintained in equal measure in the target language (365). A text that gives the performer or reader the freedom of interpretation benefits the degree in which the rhythm matches the text and action, which Marco explained to be crucial (57). My first guideline therefore states that translator refrains from incorporating fixed stress patterns when translating sentences. This way, the translator maintains ambiguities that are embedded in the source text in order to allow both the reader and/or performer to interpret the text.

As previously discussed, the grammatical system of Irish English differs from that of standard British English and affects sentence structures, which excludes a more standard English-Dutch translation. Because of McDonagh's deviations from Irish English, it remains debatable whether or not it is best to translate to a standard form of Dutch. Considering I previously stated to only adapt in the benefit of performability and otherwise aim to translate, it may be an obvious choice to translate to a Dutch dialect. However, these structures appear to function predominantly to alienate the onstage world from the audience and to emphasise the remoteness of life on Inishmaan. In the Dutch translation of the play, names of places and characters also contribute to this alienation, where they merely function as setting in the source text. As Marco emphasises the relevance of an acceptable text that matches the oral conventions within the target culture (57), I propose to translate the play to standard Dutch and only deviate from this in order to create distinct voices for characters, which Walker explains is part of what makes the play. My second guideline therefore entails that the translator does not systematically deviate from Dutch grammar and that the translation matches the oral conventions of Algemeen Nederlands (translated: general Dutch). However, the translator ought to maintain (place) names and other alienating factors to estrange the target audience from the world they witness on stage.

My third guideline is derived from what Ritchie states about humorous aspects in theatre texts and how they rely on action, sounds and the combination of both (33). Because the genre of *The Cripple of Inishmaan* includes a very specific kind of humour, it is too bluntly put to simply state that comedic elements should be translated by matching them to the target culture following Christiane Nord's translation categories (147). Bassnett states that "[treating] a text that is part of a

larger complex of sign systems . . . as if it were a literary text created for the page and read it as such” (1991, 100) is impossible. Marco however supports the idea that “when translating plays, one has to direct them in the mind as one translates” (Pulvers qtd. in Marco 58). He thereby points out the relevance of translators having sufficient experience with theatre, which I prefer above translators who rely on taking the author’s intention into account as Link proposes. When translating the dark humour that the play hosts, the translator should envision the actors on the stage, translate the humour according to the target culture and also match the text to the action.

However, the humorous aspects in this case do not consist of individual sentences, but are often built on McDonagh’s recurring words or phrases throughout conversations, scenes and the play itself. Whereas some reoccurring sentences or topics mainly benefit the plot, like the topic of Jack Ellery and Patty Brennan’s cat and goose or Bartley’s obsession with telescopes, others are humorous in the way and by whom they are repeated, like Delabastita indicates (2010, 196). For example, in the first scene, aunt Kate mentions three times: “I do worry awful about Billy” (McDonagh 1) which annoys aunt Eileen. In scene nine, Kate expresses her concern again, to which Eileen finally replies: “I do worry awful about Billy when he’s away from us too, but I try not to let stones enter into it.” (80). Another example is the idea that “Ireland mustn’t be such a bad place if . . . ” (8), which is repeated and connected to different conditions throughout the play, for example: “. . . the Yanks want to come to Ireland to do their filming.” (8); “. . . coloured fellas want to come to Ireland” (25) and most absurdly the final; “. . . sharks want to come to Ireland” (55). Therefore, as a third guideline, the translator should not only bear in mind the ways the play might be performed, but also analyse word by word how they function within the play, without being tricked into searching for the author’s intention.

3.2 Using the Strategy

These guidelines for the translation strategy will be put to use in the next chapter, which consists of an annotated translation of a two-thousand word excerpt from the play. I chose this fragment of the text as it is a turning point in the play: Billy's lie about having tuberculosis comes true and determines his destiny. It contains the most prominent characters in the play and clearly shows social relationships and behaviour. Johnny, for example, lies to the doctor and speaks ill of him behind his back and Billy is fed up with his aunts and is rude to them before the doctor convinces him that he should have been nicer to them. Part of these social structures can be seen in the language-pair specific translation (Nord 147) problem that Dutch faces with any variety of English: whether to translate 'you' to 'jij', 'jullie' or 'u'. In my translation the doctor, for example, is always addressed with 'u', Billy always 'jij', Billy addresses his aunts with 'u', but Johnny deviates from these rules and is polite ('u') or not ('jij') depending on his intentions.

Other translation problems occur throughout the text and are solved according to the translation guidelines established above: throughout the text, I have avoided indicating stress following my first guideline. This allows the reader to intone and interpret the text individually, like it is possible when reading the source text. I have maintained emphasis in lines where McDonagh used it, but used Dutch conventions to do so by accentuating vowels rather than italicising the entire word. The translation of "fecking" (McDonagh 66), as mentioned in chapter 2.2., is an example of my second guideline. P. J. Mathews explains that 'feck' is often used in Ireland as a less offensive version of 'fuck' (111). By following my second criteria, I translated "fecking" (66) and "feck" (71) to "verdomme" and "kloot" respectively, the Dutch conventions of the 1930s are abided. Also, the Irish diminutive '-een' is

systematically translated by corresponding a Dutch diminutive except for the name of Johnypateen as explained in footnote 8. The repetitions that McDonagh uses are translated according to the third guideline, as they are generally maintained and translated by evaluating their role in the play as a whole.

Chapter 4: Annotated Translation

De manke van Inishmaan

*Ze gaat weer af. Pauze. **Billy** kijkt naar het laken/scherm en trekt het weer in zijn originele afmetingen. Diep in gedachten blijft hij staan, staart hij ernaar en streelt het zachtjes. **Bobby** komt rechts stilletjes op, even later merkt **Billy** hem op.*

Billy Babbybobby. We kunnen wel zeggen dat ik je een uitleg verschuldigd ben.

Bobby Je hoeft het niet uit te leggen, Billy.

Billy Ik wil het uitleggen, Bobby. Zie je, ik had nooit gedacht dat de dag zou komen waarop ik het zou moeten uitleggen. Ik had gehoopt dat ik voor altijd zou verdwijnen naar Amerika. En als ze me daar hadden willen hebben, had ik het gedaan ook. Als ze me hadden willen hebben voor de film. Maar ze wilden me niet. In plaats van mij hebben ze ‘n blonde knul uit Fort Lauderdale aangenomen. Hij was niet eens mank, maar die Amerikaan zei: ‘Ach, ‘t is beter om een normale vent te nemen die kan acteren dat ‘ie mank is dan een manke te nemen die verdomme helemaal niet kan acteren.’ Alleen zei hij het onbeschofter. (*Pauze.*) Ik dacht dat ik het aardig had gedaan, dat acteren. Ik heb daar uren in m’n hotel geoefend. En allemaal voor niets. (*Pauze.*) Ik heb het tenminste geprobeerd. Ik moest het proberen. Ik moest hier weg, Babbybobby, koste wat kost. Net zoals mijn pa en ma hier weg moesten. (*Pauze.*) Toen ik hier was dacht ik er vaak aan om mezelf te verdrinken, gewoon om . . . gewoon om te zorgen dat er een eind kwam aan het uitlachen, het bekritisieren, het leven dat uit weinig meer bestond dan naar de dokter schuifelen en weer terug, mezelf

vastklampen³ aan dezelfde oude boeken en om steeds weer nieuwe manieren te vinden om nog een dag te verkloten. Nog een dag dat gegniffel of dat getik op m'n hoofd alsof ik een knul⁴ ben die niet goed snik is. De dorpswees. De dorpsmanke, en niets anders. Nou, er lopen er hier genoeg die net zo mank zijn als ik, alleen kun je het niet zien aan de buitenkant. (*Pauze.*) Maar het punt is, jij bent niet zo, Bobbybobby, en nooit geweest ook. Jij hebt een goeie inborst⁵. Ik denk dat het daarom zo makkelijk was om je voor de gek te houden met die tbc-brief, maar dat is waarom ik het toen zo erg vond om je voor de gek te houden en waarom ik het nu nog steeds zo erg vind. Vooral omdat ik je voor de gek hield met hetzelfde als waaraan je vrouw is overleden. Ik dacht gewoon dat het effectiever zou zijn. Maar ik dacht, of hoopte, dat als je op de lange termijn de keuze had tussen een tijdje voor de gek gehouden worden of dat ik mezelf van kant zou maken, dat je, wanneer je zou zijn bijgedraaid, er toch altijd voor zou kiezen om voor de gek gehouden te worden. Had ik het mis, Bobbybobby? Zat ik fout?

Bobby *loopt langzaam op Billy af, blijft vlak voor hem staan en laat een lange loden pijp uit zijn mouw in zijn hand glijden.*

Bobby Ja.

Bobby *tilt de pijp omhoog . . .*

³ “Pawing over the same owl books” (McDonagh 66) refers to Billy’s handicap and the way his poor coordination affects the way he holds books. As Dutch equivalents of ‘pawing’ change the image of the phrase, I have maintained the image by opting for the more specific ‘vastklampen’.

⁴ “Gosawer” (McDonagh 66) is a word that shows the text’s Irish inheritance since it comes from “gasúr” (Mathew 111) and means “lad or boy” (11). ‘Knul’ here matches the patronizing implication that the source text features.

⁵ “You’ve a kind heart on you” (McDonagh 66) has Dutch equivalents that would convey a similar message. This timely-specific solution benefits the setting of the play the most.

Billy Nee, Bobby, nee . . . !

Billy zoekt dekking terwijl de pijp naar beneden zwaait. *Blackout, met het geluid van Billy's gepijnigde geschreeuw en de keer op keer naar beneden zwaaiende pijp.*

Scene negen

Winkel, 's avonds laat. De Dokter verzorgt Billy's gekneusde en bebloede gezicht.

Kate staat achter de toonbank. **Eileen** staat bij de deur en kijkt naar buiten.

Eileen Johnnypateenmike⁶ rent zowat over het eiland om het nieuws te vertellen dat Billy terug is bij ons.

Kate Hij heeft veel nieuws vandaag.

Eileen Hij heeft onder beide armen een lamsbout⁷ en een brood in z'n hand.

Kate Billy is teruggekomen, Babbybobby is gearresteerd en Jim Finnegan z'n dochter is bij het klooster gegaan. Dat laatste was nog wel de grootste verrassing.

Eileen Als ze Jim Finnegan's dochter binnenlaten is het de nonnen vast om het even wie erbij komt.

Kate De nonnen nemen hun normen vast niet zo nauw.

Billy Waarom zou Jim Finnegan's dochter geen non kunnen worden? Het is alleen maar puur geroddel dat Jim Finnegan's dochter een slet is.

Dokter Nee. Jim Finnegan's dochter is een slet.

⁶ Irish diminutives '-een' are translated accordingly (guideline 2). However, instead of translating "Johnnypateen" (McDonagh 69) to either Johnnypatty or Johnnypatje, which may have benefitted the humorous element that Johnny is in his mid-sixties, I maintained it in order maintain the alienating effect.

⁷ "Neath each armeen" (McDonagh 67) is an exception to guideline 2, as 'armpje' would have hinted towards a more childish appearance than accurately describes Johnny.

Billy O ja?⁸

Dokter Ja.

Billy En hoe weet u dat?

Dokter Geloof me maar op mijn woord.

Eileen Hij is toch de dokter?

Billy (*pauze*) Ik houd er gewoon niet van als mensen over andere mensen roddelen, dat is alles. Heb ik daar zelf niet al genoeg van gehad voor m'n hele leven?

Dokter Maar ben jij niet zelf al dat geroddel over jou begonnen toen je brieven van mij namaakte, waarvoor je je nog steeds dient te verantwoorden?

Billy Het spijt me van die brieven, dokter, maar vindt u ook niet dat het mijn enige uitweg⁹ was?

Eileen Hij zegt 'uitweg' nu, hoor je dat?

Kate 't Is ook altijd prietpraat wanneer ze terugkomen uit Amerika.

Eileen Uitweg. Ik weet 't niet.

Billy Tantes, volgens mij lust de dokter wel een kop thee. Zou u er samen een voor hem willen gaan halen?

Eileen Wil je soms van ons af? Als dat zo is, zeg het dan gewoon.

Billy Ik wil van u af.

Eileen *staart eventjes naar hem en de twee vertrekken slecht gehumeurd naar de achterkamer.*

⁸ "Is she?" (McDonagh 67) according to guideline 3 would have to be repeated in Dutch too, only such construction would not abide guideline 2. I therefore chose this Dutch way of questioning the doctor's statement.

⁹ "Avenue" (McDonagh 68) clearly deviates from Irish English terminology. By choosing a timely more forward word, I am maintaining the function of the word (guideline 3) and matching Dutch conventions (guideline 2).

Dokter Welnu, zo hoor je niet tegen hen te praten, Billy.

Billy Ach maar ze gaan maar door.

Dokter Dat weet ik, maar het zijn vrouwen.¹⁰

Billy Dat zal dan wel. (*Pauze.*) Wilt u me wat vertellen, dokter? Wat kunt u zich herinneren van mijn pa en ma? Wat voor mensen waren ze?

Dokter Waarom vraag je dat?

Billy Oh, gewoon. Toen ik daar in Amerika was dacht ik vaak aan ze, wat ze zouden hebben gedaan als ze daar waren gekomen. Dat was toch waar ze naar onderweg waren in de nacht dat ze verdronken?

Dokter Dat zeggen ze. (*Pauze.*) Voor zover ik het me kan herinneren, waren het niet de meest aardige mensen. Je vader was een oude dronkenlap. De taaie stopte zelden met kiffen.

Billy Ik heb gehoord dat m'n ma een prachtige vrouw was.

Dokter Nee, nee. Ze was afschuwelijk lelijk.

Billy Echt?

Dokter Oh, ze zou een varken laten schrikken, maar, ach, ze leek me een aangename vrouw, ondanks haar uiterlijk. Maar die adem van d'r, die deed je steil achterover slaan.

Billy Ze zeggen dat ik ben geworden zoals ik ben omdat vader ma sloeg, toen ze in verwachting van mij was.

Dokter Een ziekte heeft ervoor gezorgd dat je bent geworden zoals je bent, Billy, daar heeft geweld niets mee te maken. Niet de boel romantiseren.

Billy *hoest en piept zacht.*

¹⁰ “But they’re women” (McDonagh 68) is used as a reason why Billy’s aunts never stop talking. Although ‘het’ may appear somewhat disrespectful, it does abide Dutch conventions, and the alternative ‘zo’ would have been too general.

Dokter Ik hoor dat je piept.

Billy Ik piep nog steeds een beetje.

Dokter Dat gepiep doet er lang over om voorbij te gaan.

*Hij gebruikt een stethoscoop om naar **Billy's** borst te luisteren.*

Is het erger of beter geworden sinds je bent gaan reizen? Adem in.

Billy Misschien een beetje erger.

*De **Dokter** luistert naar **Billy's** rug.*

Dokter Maar je hebt geen bloed opgehoest, ach, nee¹¹.

Billy Ah, een beetje bloed. (*Pauze.*) Zo nu en dan.

Dokter Adem uit. Hoe vaak is zo nu en dan, Billy?

Billy (*pauze*) Wel vaak.¹² (*Pauze.*) Is het tbc¹³?

Dokter Ik zal meer onderzoeken moeten doen.

Billy Maar het lijkt op tbc?

Dokter Het lijkt op tbc.

Billy (*zachtjes*) Dat is me een toeval.

¹¹ “Ah, no” (McDonagh 69) contains ambiguity as it could mean the doctor does not expect Billy to have coughed up blood, or he notices something is wrong. I maintained this ambiguity as explained in guideline 1.

¹² “Most days” (McDonagh 69) does not have a Dutch equivalent besides ‘de meeste dagen’, which is an unconventional answer. Other options, like ‘bijna elke dag’, ‘meestentijds’ and ‘dagelijks’, do not convey the meaning or do not match Billy’s language use.

¹³ I have translated the English abbreviation “TB” (McDonagh 69) ‘tbc’ as this was the most common Dutch term in the 1930s besides ‘tb’ and ‘tering’.

Johnny *heeft bij de deur geluisterd en komt stilletjes binnen. Het brood in zijn hand en een lamspoot onder ieder arm, die hij overal met zich meedraagt.*

Johnny Het is dus toch tbc?

Dokter Oh Johnnypateen, zal je er ooit mee stoppen om bij deuren te staan luisteren?

Johnny Heer, red ons, want God, ik weet het zeker, heeft Manke Billy tbc gestuurd omdat hij beweerde dat ‘ie tbc had terwijl ‘ie helemaal geen tbc had en Johnnypateens nieuws onbetrouwbaar liet lijken.

Dokter God stuurt mensen geen tbc, Johnnypateen.

Johnny Hij stuurt mensen wél tbc.

Dokter Nee, dat doet hij niet.

Johnny Stuurde hij de Egyptenaren geen zweren en was dat niet net zo erg?

Dokter Zweren zijn anders dan tuberculose, Johnnypateen, en nee hij stuurde de Egyptenaren géén zweren.

Johnny In het Oude Egypte.¹⁴

Dokter Nee, dat deed hij niet.

Johnny Nou, hij stuurde iets naar die verdomde Egyptenaren!

Billy Hij vermoordde hun eerstgeboren zonen.

Johnny Hij vermoordde hun eerstgeborenen en gooidde kikkers op ze neer, ja. Dat is me een jongen die z’n heilige geschriften kent. Weten je tantes al dat je tbc hebt, Manke Billy?

Billy Nee, dat weten ze niet en het is niet aan jou om het ze te vertellen.

Johnny Natuurlijk is het mijn taak om het ze te vertellen!

¹⁴ “Egyptian times” (McDonagh 70) refers to ancient Egypt, but in Dutch has to be specified to ‘het Oude Egypte’ in order to match the target conventions.

Billy Het is helemaal niet jouw taak om het ze te vertellen. Heb je niet al genoeg nieuws voor een dag? Kun je me niet voor eens in je leven een plezier doen?

Johnny Eens in m'n leven, zei je? (*Zucht.*) Ach, ik zal het ze niet vertellen.

Billy Dank je, Johnnypateen.

Johnny Johnnypateen is een goedgehartige, Christelijke man.

Dokter Ik heb gehoord dat je je ma een kruikje gaf bij de filmvoorstelling vandaag, Johnnypateen.

Johnny Ik weet niet hoe ze aan dat kruikje kwam. Ze is een duivel, wist u dat?

Dokter Waar is je ma nu?

Johnny Thuis, is ze. (*Pauze.*) Ligt onderaan m'n trap.

Dokter Wat doet ze liggend onderaan je trap?

Johnny Niets. Gewoon liggen. Ach, ze lijkt behoorlijk tevreden. Ze heeft een pint bij d'r.

Dokter Hoe kwam ze onderaan je trap te liggen?

Johnny Door eraf te vallen! Hoe kom je normaal gesproken onderaan iemands trap te liggen?

Dokter En je hebt haar gewoon laten liggen?

Johnny Is het mijn taak om haar van de grond te plukken?

Dokter Dat is het!

Johnny Ik had zeker geen werk te doen, het nieuws rondvertellen? Ik heb betere dingen te doen dan moeders van de grond te plukken. Heb je deze twee lamspoten wel gezien die ik heb gekregen? En het broodje ook? Dit is een geweldige dag.

De Dokter ruimt zijn spullen op in zijn zwarte tas, verbijsterd, terwijl Johnny zijn vlees bewonderd.

Dokter Ik ga, Billy. Op naar Johnnypateens huis, om te zien of z'n ma nog leeft¹⁵.

Kom je morgen langs voor die verdere onderzoeken?

Billy Dat zal ik doen, Dokter.

De Dokter gaat af terwijl hij Johnny aanstaart. Johnny gaat naast Billy zitten.

Johnny Ma ligt helemaal niet onderaan m'n trap. Het is gewoon dat ik het niet kan uitstaan om in het gezelschap van die saaie kloot te zijn.

Billy Dat was niet aardig van je, Johnnypateen.

Johnny Maar jij bent geen wereldwijde autoriteit over wat wel of geen aardig ding is om te doen, of wel soms, Manke Billy?

Billy Dat ben ik niet, ben ik bang.

Johnny En wat kan het kwaad? Doe wat je wil en de rest kan de pot op, is Johnnypateenmichaelszoons¹⁶ motto.

Billy Heb je McSharry over m'n ma horen praten toen je aan de deur stond te luisteren?

Johnny Een beetje.

Billy Klopte het wat hij over haar zei?

Johnny *haalt zijn schouders op.*

Billy Oh het is ook altijd dit onderwerp dat je de mond snoert, maar ieder ander onderwerp, van vetes over ganzen tot oaien die door eenzame jongens worden verminkt, doet je lippen flapperen als een krop sla in de wind?¹⁷

¹⁵ "If his mammy's dead or alive" (McDonagh 71) cannot be literally translated to 'of z'n moeder levend of dood is', as it is unconventional in Dutch. 'Dead or alive' carries a certain degree of callousness, which I maintained in Dutch by omitting 'dead'.

¹⁶ I specified the meaning of "Johnnypateenmichael" (McDonagh 71), which is "Johnny the son of Pateen (little Pat) the son of mike" (Mathews 111), as it is mentioned as by adding the suffix '-szoon'.

Johnny Nu je erover begint, vetes over ganzen, heb je het al gehoord?

Billy *zucht.*

Johnny Nou, we dachten allemaal dat Jack Ellery en Patty Brennan elkaar af zouden maken om hun vermoorde kat en gans, maar wat dacht je? Een kind heeft ze vanmorgen nog gezien terwijl ze elkaar afleberden in een hooischuur. Ik kan er met m'n kop niet bij. Twee zoenende kerels en dan ook nog twee kerels die elkaar niet eens mogen.

Billy (*pauze*) Je bent van onderwerp veranderd, Johnnypateen.

Johnny Ik ben goed in het veranderen van onderwerpen. Wat was het onderwerp? Oh, je verzopen pa en ma.

Billy Waren ze achterlijk¹⁸ zoals McSharry zei?

Johnny Ze waren helemaal niet achterlijk.

Billy Nee? En toch lieten ze me achter toen ze wegroeiden¹⁹.

Eileen *komt terug met een kop thee.*

Eileen Ik heb de dokter z'n thee.

Billy De dokter is weg.

Eileen Zonder z'n thee?

Billy Klaarblijkelijk.

Eileen Gebruik niet weer zulke dure woorden tegen me, Billy Claven.

Johnny Ik drink de dokter z'n thee wel, als het een familie geschil voorkomt.

¹⁷ “Your lips go flapping like a cabbage in the breeze” (McDonagh 72) is a clear example of McDonagh’s inventive language use. He has created a new idiom. I therefore maintained the idiom and calqued it into Dutch.

¹⁸ “Gets” (McDonagh 72) is an Irish English term for “ignorant people with no manners; of low birth” (Mathews 113). Although the noun could have been translated by ‘idioten’, I opted for an adjective that better transfers the meaning.

¹⁹ “Sailed off” (McDonagh 72) is a rather general term for travelling on water, but literally translates to ‘wegzeilden’ in Dutch, which would be too specific and incorrect. Considering Billy’s parents did not use a sailing boat, but rowed (73), I used ‘wegroeien’ instead.

Ze geeft hem de thee.

Johnnypateen doet z'n best om mensen uit de brand te helpen. En heeft u daar ergens koekjes, mevrouw?

Billy Je verandert weer van onderwerp, is het niet?

Johnny Ik verander niet van onderwerp. Ik wil een koekje.

Eileen We hebben geen koekjes.

Johnny Ik durf te wedden dat je een zee aan koekjes hebt. Wat heb je daar op die planken achter de erwten?

Eileen Meer erwten.

Johnny Jullie bestellen teveel erwten. Een kerel kan geen erwten eten bij z'n thee.

Behalve als 'ie een rare kerel was. (*Schikt zijn lamsvlees.*) En je kunt

Johnnypateenmike met geen mogelijkheid een rare kerel noemen. Oh nee.

Billy Johnnypateen. M'n pa en ma. Ze gingen varen.

Eileen Oh dat is oud nieuws, Billy. Laat het toch . . .

Johnny Als de jongen het wil horen, laat het hem horen. Is hij niet oud en ervaren genoeg om het te horen?

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the case of a Dutch translation of Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, titled *De manke van Inishmaan*, I have established three guidelines that together form a translation strategy, which focuses on producing a performable translation in this specific case: 1) Sentences from the source text that are ambiguous in meaning and/or stress pattern and rhythm should be translated by maintaining this ambiguity. This allows for the reader or performer to interpret the text. 2) The translation abides both the grammatical rules and the oral conventions of general Dutch, except when deviating from either of the two benefits the alienating and remote setting of the play. 3) The subtle humorous elements in the text are translated as a whole, by visualising the performance and analysing the larger function of every word, without searching for the author's intention.

The first two guidelines clearly show the influence of language, where the third guideline focuses more on the humorous elements in the play. However, the influence of both language and humour has proven to be significant in the translation process, as they are both intertwined with performability. This should constantly be taken into account.

I am well aware that these guidelines are not exhaustive. However, they have proven to steer specific translation problems in a certain direction, which has resulted in a performable text. Although these guidelines are formulated in general terms, they do not directly apply to other texts.

Further research could focus more extensively on the mutual influence of language and performability, which hopefully shines new light onto the topic and perhaps finally leads to a set of criteria for performability.

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APPENDIX: Source Text (McDonagh 65-74)

She exits again. Pause. Billy looks at the sheet/screen, pulls it back across to its original dimensions and stands here staring at it, caressing it slightly, deep in thought. Bobby quietly enters right, Billy noticing him after a moment.

Billy Babbybobby. I daresay I owe you an explanation.

Bobby There's no need to explain, Billy.

Billy I want to, Bobby. See, I never thought at all this day would come when I'd have to explain. I'd hoped I'd disappear forever to America. And I would've too, if they'd wanted me there. If they'd wanted me for the filming. But they didn't want me. A blond lad from Fort Lauderdale they hired instead of me. He wasn't crippled at all, but the Yank said 'Ah, better to get a normal fella who can act crippled than a crippled fella who can't fecking act at all.' Except he said it ruder. (*Pause.*) I thought I'd done alright for meself with me acting. Hours I practiced in me hotel there. And all for nothing. (*Pause.*) I gave it a go anyways. I had to give it a go. I had to get away from this place, Babbybobby, be any means, just like me mammy and daddy had to get away from this place. (*Pause.*) Going drowning meself I'd often think of when I was here, just to . . . just to end the laughing at me, and the sniping at me, and the life of nothing but shuffling to the doctor's and shuffling back from the doctor's and pawing over the same owl books and finding any other way to piss another day away. Another day of sniggering, or the patting me on the head like a broken-brained gosawer. The village orphan. The village cripple, and nothing more. Well, there are plenty round here just as crippled as me, only it isn't on the outside it shows. (*Pause.*) But the thing is, you're not one of them, Babbybobby, nor never were. You've a kind heart on you. I suppose that's why it was so easy to cod you with the TB letter, but that's why I was so sorry for coddling you at the time and why I'm just as sorry now. Especially for coddling you with the same thing your Mrs passed from. Just I thought that would be more effective. But, in the long run, I thought, or I hoped, that if you had a choice between you being coddled a while and me doing away with meself, once your anger had died down anyways, you'd choose you being coddled every time. Was I wrong, Babbybobby? Was I?

Bobby *slowly walks over to Billy, stops just in front of him, and lets a length of lead piping slide down his sleeve into his hand.*

Bobby Aye.

Bobby *raises the pipe . . .*

Billy No, Bobby, no . . . !

Billy *covers up as the pipe scythes down. Blackout, with the sounds of Billy's pained screams and the pipe scything down again and again.*

Scene Nine

The shop, late evening. The Doctor tending to Billy's bruised and bloody face. Kate at the counter, Eileen at the door, looking out.

Eileen Johnnypateenmike's near enough running o'er the island with his news of Billy's return to us.

Kate This is a big day for news.

Eileen He has a loaf in one hand and a leg o' mutton neath each armeen.

Kate Billy's return and Babbybobby's arrest and Jim Finnegan's daughter joining the nunnery then. That was the biggest surprise.

Eileen The nuns must be after anybody if they let Jim Finnegan's daughter join them.

Kate The nuns' standards must have dropped.

Billy Sure why shouldn't Jim Finnegan's daughter become a nun? It's only pure gossip that Jim Finnegan's daughter is a slut.

Doctor No, Jim Finnegan's daughter *is* a slut.

Billy Is she?

Doctor Aye.

Billy How do you know?

Doctor Just take me word.

Eileen Isn't he a doctor?

Billy (*pause*) Just I don't like people gossiping about people is all. Haven't I had enough of that meself to last me a lifetime?

Doctor But aren't you the one who started half the gossiping about you, with your forging of letters from me you'll yet have to answer for?

Billy I'm sorry about the letter business, Doctor, but wasn't it the only avenue left open to me?

Eileen It's 'Avenues' now, do ya hear?

Kate It's always bit-talk when from America they return.

Eileen Avenues. I don't know.

Billy Aunties, I think the doctor might be wanting a mug of tea, would ye's both go and get him one?

Eileen Is it getting rid of us you're after? If it is, just say so.

Billy It's getting rid of ye I'm after.

Eileen *stares at him a moment then the two moodily exit to the back room.*

Doctor You shouldn't talk to them like that, now, Billy.

Billy Ah they keep going on and on.

Doctor I know they do but they're women.

Billy I suppose. *(Pause.)* Would you tell me something, Doctor? What do you remember of me mammy and daddy, the people they were?

Doctor Why do you ask?

Billy Oh, just when I was in America there I often thought of them, what they'd have done if they'd got there. Wasn't that where they were heading in the night they drowned?

Doctor They say it was. *(Pause.)* As far as I can remember, they weren't the nicest of people. Your daddy was an oul drunken tough, would rarely take a break from his fighting.

Billy I've heard me mammy was a beautiful woman.

Doctor No, no, she was awful ugly.

Billy Was she?

Doctor Oh she'd scare a pig. But, ah, she seemed a pleasant enough woman, despite her looks, although the breath on her, well it would knock you.

Billy They say it was that dad punched mammy while she was heavy with me was why I turned out the way I did.

Doctor Disease caused you to turn out the way you did, Billy. Not punching at all. Don't go romanticising it.

Billy *coughs/wheezes slightly.*

Doctor I see you have a wheeze.

Billy I still have a bit of me wheeze.

Doctor That wheeze is taking a long time to go.

He uses the stethoscope to check Billy's chest.

Has worse or better it got since your travelling? Breathe in.

Billy Maybe a biteen worse

The Doctor listens to Billy's back.

Doctor But blood you haven't been coughing up, ah no.

Billy Ah a biteen of blood. *(Pause.)* Now and again.

Doctor Breathe out. How often is now and again, Billy?

Billy *(pause)* Most days. *(Pause.)* The TB is it?

Doctor I'll have to be doing more tests.

Billy But the TB it looks like?

Doctor The TB it looks like.

Billy *(quietly)* There's a coincidence.

Johnny enters quietly, having been listening at the door, loaf in hand, a leg of lamb under each arm, which he carries throughout.

Johnny It's the TB after all?

Doctor Oh Johnnypateen, will you ever stop listening at doors?

Johnny Lord save us but from God I'm sure that TB was sent Cripple Billy, for claiming he had TB when he had no TB, and making Johnnypateen's news seem unreliable.

Doctor God doesn't send people TB, Johnnypateen.

Johnny He *does* send people TB.

Doctor He doesn't, now.

Johnny Well didn't he send the Egyptians boils is just as bad?

Doctor Well boils is different from tuberculosis, Johnnypateen, and *no* he *didn't* send the Egyptians boils.

Johnny In Egyptian times.

Doctor No, he didn't.

Johnny Well he did something to the fecking Egyptians!

Billy He killed their first-born sons.

Johnny He killed their first-born sons and dropped frogs on them, aye. There's a boy knows his scripture. Do your aunties no you have TB yet, Cripple Billy?

Billy No, they don't know, and you're not to tell them.

Johnny Sure it's me job to tell them!

Billy It isn't your job at all to tell them, and don't you have enough news for one day. Can't you do me a favour for once in your life?

Johnny For once in me life, is it? (*Sighing.*) Ah I won't tell them so.

Billy Thank you, Johnnypateen.

Johnny Johnnypateen's a kind-hearted, Christian man.

Doctor I heard you were feeding your mammy poteen at the showing of the film today, Johnnypateen.

Johnny I don't know where she got hold of that poteen. She's a devil, d'you know?

Doctor Where's your mammy now?

Johnny At home she is. (*Pause.*) Lying at the foot of me stairs.

Doctor What's she doing lying at the foot of your stairs?

Johnny Nothing. Just lying. Ah she seems happy enough. She has a pint with her.

Doctor How did she *get* lying at the foot of your stairs?

Johnny Be falling down them! How d'ya usually get lying at the foot of a fella's stairs?

Doctor And you just left her there?

Johnny Is it my job to go picking her up?

Doctor It is!

Johnny Sure, didn't I have work to do with me news-divulging? I have better things to do than picking mammies up. D'you see the two legs of lamb I got, and a loafeen too? This is a great day.

The Doctor packs up his black bag, stunned, as Johnny admires his meat.

Doctor I'm off now, Billy, to Johnnypateen's house, to see if his mammy's dead or alive. Will you come see me tomorrow, for those further tests?

Billy I will, Doctor.

The Doctor exits, staring at Johnny all the way. Johnny sits down beside Billy.

Johnny Me mammy isn't lying at the foot of me stairs at all. It's just I can't stand the company of that boring feck.

Billy That wasn't a nice thing to do, Johnnypateen.

Johnny Well you're hardly the world's authority on nice things to do, now, are you, Cripple Billy?

Billy I'm not at that, I suppose.

Johnny Ah what harm? Do what you want and feck everybody else is Johnnypateenmichael's motto.

Billy Did you hear McSharry talking about my mammy when you were listening at the door?

Johnny A bit of it.

Billy Was he accurate about her?

Johnny *shrugs.*

Billy Oh isn't it always on this subject you lips stay sealed, yet on every other subject from feuds o'er geese to ewe-maiming be lonely fellas, your lips go flapping like a cabbage in the breeze?

Johnny Now, on the subject of feuds over geese, have you heard the latest?

Billy *sighs.*

Johnny Well we all thought Jack Ellery and Patty Brennan were apt to go killing each other o'er the slaughter of their cat and their goose, but now d'you know what? A child seen them, just this morning there, kissing the faces off each other in a haybarn. I can't make it out for the life of me. Two fellas kissing, and two fellas who don't even like each other.

Billy *(pause)* You've changed the subject, Johnnypateen.

Johnny I'm great at changing subjects, me. What was the subject? Oh, your drowned mammy and daddy.

Billy Where they gets like McSharry says?

Johnny They weren't at all gets.

Billy No? And yet they still left me behind when they sailed off.

Eileen *returns with mug of tea.*

Eileen I've the Doctor's tea.

Billy The Doctor's gone.

Eileen Without having his tea?

Billy Evidently.

Eileen Don't you be big-wording me again, Billy Claven.

Johnny I'll have the doctor's tea so, if it'll save a family dispute.

She gives him the tea.

Johnnypateen goes out of his way to help people out, and do you have any biscuits there, Mrs?

Billy You're changing the subject again, aren't ya?

Johnny I'm not changing the subject. I want a biscuit.

Eileen We have no biscuits.

Johnny I'll bet you have a rake of biscuits. What do you have on the shelves behind them peas, there?

Eileen We have more peas.

Johnny You order too many peas. A fella can't go having peas with his tea. Unless he was an odd fella. (*Adjusting lamb.*) And there's no way you could describe Johnnypateenmike as an odd fella. Oh no.

Billy Johnnypateen. Me mammy and daddy. Their sailing.

Eileen Oh that's ancient news, Billy. Just leave it alone . . .

Johnny Sure if the boy wants to hear, let him hear. Isn't he grown up and travelled enough now to be hearing?