FINDING THE 'ELSEWHERE' NEXT DOOR: BORDER CROSSINGS IN ANNE ENRIGHT'S WRITING[1]

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At Gatwick airport – that "postmodern and global space" (Fogarty 146) – Veronica Hegarty in Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007) is hailed by departures boards. Place names – Palma, Barcelona, Mombasa, Split – "beckon" to her "like streetwalkers" (258), promising escape to spaces of an exotic elsewhere. Torn between the pull of the elsewhere and the realization that she will never abandon her much-loved daughters, she recognizes that she is "going nowhere, but home" (259). Although Enright has spoken of "the road to the airport as 'the most important road in the country'" (qtd. in Ewins 134), the road back from the airport evidently counts, too. That said, it is nevertheless the case that Enright's fiction does not primarily turn on the issue of national identity, an issue regarding which, as Heidi Hansson has suggested, Irish writers and critics of Irish writing sometimes find themselves on divergent tracks: "Although Irish writers may be looking beyond Irish subjects in their works, it seems that canonization processes" privilege "literature that can be connected to questions of cultural identity. As far as a national literature is a part of nation-building, identity matters are indeed crucial, but in an age of globalization, other questions should also receive attention" (Hansson, "Beyond Local Ireland" 53). To my mind, such other questions include global connectedness, translation, and the crossing of borders – issues at the centre of the following discussion.

Contemporary Irish writers then – driven perhaps by a "'globalist' impulse" (Villar-Argáiz 180) or, as Liam Harte puts it, by a need "to break free from the wearying binaries and mystifications of nationalism" (Harte 209) – increasingly focus on the interweaving of peoples and cultures, on what Michael Cronin has described as "our essential connectedness" in the current "era of mass transportation, global tourism, significant migration and the relentless time-space compression of economies driven by information technology" (Cronin, *Translation* 9). Among major Irish writers, Anne Enright seems exceptionally committed to the motion implicit in the new global connectedness. Interested as she has said she is in "work that keeps moving […] in things that are not static" (Bracken & Cahill 32), it is not surprising to find her fiction moving between the local and the global, the Irish and the Continentally European, and – as is a partial focus here – the Irish and the American.[2] In the process of such fictional motion, the characters figuring in the work by Enright explored here – the novel *What Are You Like?* (2000) and the short stories “The Bad Sex Weekend” and “Switzerland,” collected in *Yesterday’s Weather* (2008)[3] – cross metaphorical, geographical, and national borderlines and meet people of various nationalities. In the rich material that my slim sample provides, I have, primarily but not exclusively, zeroed in on meetings across Irish/American borderlines – a choice inspired by Salman Rushdie, as we shall see. This essay, then, glances at Enright glancing at Ireland and America and at the intersections at which they rub off on each other.

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[1] An earlier version of this essay was first presented at the 2010 IASIL conference held at NUI Maynooth.

[2] Her novels, notably, move between the Dublin of *The Wig My Father Wore* (1995), the Dublin-New York-London triangle of *What Are You Like?* (2000), far-away Paraguay of

Theoretically, my study stands on three legs, formed by Salman Rushdie’s ideas on border crossings, Susan Bassnett’s on translation, and Michael Cronin’s on cultural complexity and diversity. Cronin’s concept of “micro-cosmopolitanism” – described in *Translation and Identity* (14-17) – is relevant to what follows, and his suggestion that our investigation of the world is likely to reveal that the “elsewhere is next door, in one’s immediate environment” (17) has been a point of departure. Applying such ideas to the texts selected, I claim that in Enright’s work – laced as it is with arrivals and departures, border crossings, and exchanges between the local and the global, and exploring as it does states of dislocation as well as complex connectedness – the need for thoughtful negotiation of crossings undertaken comes to the fore. Moreover, the need for recognizing complexities in spaces of elsewhere and for responsible translation of the encountered Other – including the American Other – is highlighted. This essay will argue that, if the subject acts as an ethical translator, smooth crossings are facilitated and the elsewhere is allowed a space next door.

A Tripartite Theoretical Paradigm

Journeys, across whatever borders and for whatever purpose made, involve translation, and, as Susan Bassnett has stated, “linguistic activity” alone does not suffice for translation, but other processes as well as “extra-linguistic criteria” are needed (Bassnett 21). Granting that “part of the business of the translator is to understand what people actually say in a particular location and to bring this knowledge to another location” (Cronin, “Languages of Globalisation” 5), the translator is crucial to the enhancement of understanding in an ever more fragmented world. The translator is also, as Michael Cronin points out in *Across the Lines*, “a traveller” (Bassnett 1). The contemporary traveller, perceiving the world through proliferating global imagery,

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The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch (2002), and the Dublin-London pendulum of *The Gathering* (2007).

[3] In a useful comment on Anne Enright’s short fiction, Elke D’hoker finds that the thematic development in Enright’s stories “can be viewed in the light of Enright’s personal experiences” as well as “in the context of the changing face of international feminism, with the attack on patriarchy giving way to an attention to otherness and difference” (48). In my essay, it is the “attention to otherness and difference” that is of particular interest.

risks becoming distanced from lived experience "by abstracting and subtracting us from our local attachments and responsibilities" (Cronin, "Inside Out" 23). Although it goes without saying that it "is the capacity to look beyond the immediate interests of the clan or village or ethnic grouping" that clears the path for "broader definitions of belonging" (24), the extent to which local lives may be radically – perhaps disastrously – transformed by events taking place in a distant elsewhere should be recognised in a globalised world. Thus, according to Cronin, it is essential not to "substitute distance as a physical fact for distance as an economic reality" or to see the world as a smaller place because planes fly faster or computer messages are delivered at greater speed" (Cronin, "Languages of Globalisation" 7). If the traveller fails to translate – his or her gaze may fall unseeingly on the Other encountered at the border crossing – then no cultural knowledge is gained. Tempted to believe in the promise of "instant, limitless connectedness" offered by globalization or to give in to "the easy sweep of the comparative cartographic gaze" (6), the traveller fails to acquire a knowledge of complex local realities that is as essential to fluid border crossings as is an openness to the elsewhere. In order to fully see and translate the Other, it is necessary to recognise cultural complexity. According to Cronin, this can be achieved "by situating diversity, difference, exchange at the micro-levels of society" (Cronin, *Translation* 16) and by seeing that "no matter how infinitely small or infinitely large the scale of investigation" (17), cultural complexity "remains constant from the micro to the macro scale" (15). As Cronin points out, this is a modification of a line of thinking introduced in *Across the Lines* (see 16-21), which links micro-cosmopolitanism to what he has termed "fractal differentialism" – the idea that "the same degree of diversity is to be found at the level of entities judged to be small or insignificant as at the level of large entities" (*Translation* 15). An example is the "traces of foreignness, of other languages and cultures" existing in the "reduced spaces" of the Aran landscape, presumably most authentically Irish.[4] Thus, the local can be honoured when "informed by diversity and difference" (16) and the "elsewhere" can be found "next door, in one's immediate environment" (17).

In an exploration of the interconnectedness of peoples and cultures, rather than their separateness or the national demarcation lines between them, Salman Rushdie can sometimes be an insightful guide. His statements, in *Step Across this Line* (2002), that "we are frontier-crossing beings" (408) and that we "know this by the stories we tell ourselves; for we are story-telling animals, too" (408) have been a lodestar for what follows. A champion of frontierlessness, especially with regard to a nationalism that "seeks to close what cannot any longer be closed" and to "fence in what should be frontierless" (67), Rushdie nevertheless defines us by our border crossings: we become "the frontiers we cross" (410).

Moreover, pointing to the etymological origin of the word 'translation,' which is to be found in the Latin word for 'bearing across,' Salman Rushdie, in *Imaginary Home-*

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[4] Cronin is referring to Tim Robinson's *Stones of Aran*.

lands (1981), describes himself and others who have "been borne across the world" – presumably including transnationals who move "between cultures and differing allegiances" (Fogarty 147) – as "translated men" (*Imaginary Homelands* 17). According to Rushdie, such a state of translation need not be entirely negative: "It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained" (17). As another touchstone, I insert here an observation, made by Rushdie in the wake of the attack on the Manhattan Twin Towers in 2001, concerning Euro-American crossings. Although not generally hesitant to criticise the United States,[5] Rushdie seems taken aback by the vehement outburst of anti-Americanism he notes among Europeans after the 9/11 disaster. Writing in February 2002, Rushdie suggests that at that time non-American westerners seemed to assign extreme otherness to US citizens:

> Anybody who has visited Britain and Europe, or followed the public conversation there during the past five months, will have been struck, even shocked, by the depth of anti-American feeling among large segments of the population, as well as the news media. Western anti-Americanism is an altogether more petulant phenomenon than its Islamic counterpart, and, oddly, far more personalized. Muslim countries don't like America's power, its 'arrogance,' its success; in the non-American West, the main objection seems to be to American *people*. Night after night, I have found myself listening to Londoners' diatribes against the sheer weirdness of the American citizenry. The attacks on America are routinely discounted ('Americans only care about their own dead'). American patriotism, obesity, emotionality, self-centeredness: these are the crucial issues. (Rushdie, *Step Across the Line* 400)

The quotation illustrates the need to recognise the complexities of the Other and responsibly translate them, even if the latter represents or is claimed by a politically dominant state. This is despite the fact that, as Rushdie puts it, "great power and great wealth are perhaps never popular" (400). In the next section, I will turn to considerations of border crossings, responsible translation, and encounters with spaces of the elsewhere – including an American elsewhere – in Anne Enright's "The Bad Sex Weekend."

"The Bad Sex Weekend": We All Live in Dewey, Wisconsin

Accepting with Salman Rushdie that we are frontier-crossing beings, we might agree that early crossings made by most – in addition to the one made by being born, to which we will return with *What Are You Like?* – are across the threshold of a childhood home and across the town line of a home town. Another one is "crossing the frontier of [one's] land" (Rushdie, *Step Across* 408), granting, that is, the continued presence of nations trying to close the unclosable. Thus, before the young man of

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[5] One example is his lashing out at the US, in the essay "In God We Trust," for presenting a false picture of itself and for covering up the truth about its divergence "from its self-image as the guardian of freedom and decency" by turning to "cosy simplicities (God, patriotism), in order not to see itself too plainly" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, 392).

Anne Enright's "The Bad Sex Weekend" ever steps away from the good town of Sligo – his home town – he tugs at the elsewhere. He is shaped, perhaps, by his childhood home – "one of those houses that nobody likes; a big bungalow hacienda stuck out in the middle of a field" on "the bog out along the road to Strandhill" (*Yesterday's Weather* 117) – a house which in itself seems an undesirable effect of globalisation. The games he plays near this home take on a global dimension as he performs "Aztecs with pyramid stacks of turf, or staging the entire siege of Stalingrad all by himself, running through the trenches. Rat-a-tat-tat. Much slaughter" (117). As reflections of Mexican culture and warfare on the banks of the Volga inject fragments of the elsewhere into a local Sligo boyhood, the boy's games thus substantiate Cronin's observation that a place can "be shaped by influence from elsewhere, even if people do not move" (Cronin, "Languages of Globalisation" 6).

Crossing the frontiers of his land, the Sligo youth encounters, or pretends to encounter, spaces of the elsewhere: Bangkok, "where he had never been" (113), Tijuana (114), and New York. In Dublin, in the present time of the short story, he has a weekend affair with the young woman narrator, who also functions as narratee for his trail of travel tales. As Rushdie puts it, in *Step Across this Line* "stories are the tracks we leave" (419), and this young man is indeed a story-telling being. The girl, clear-eyed enough, sees a bleak prospect in him: "Chaos. That was what was on offer" (114). Nevertheless, she listens for a while, and in what follows, it is she who conveys his tale of America.

Having visited New York, which he translates as a rat-infested place, "sinking in a sea of cockroaches" (113), where the unwary risk having their organs stolen in their sleep, the young Sligo man goes west. He recounts how he drove "halfway across America [...] ran out of gas, ended up empty in a place called Dewey, Wisconsin," where, turning a blind eye on the complexities of this space of elsewhere, he "got out of the car and looked at the people on the sidewalk and he wondered what the hell they were doing here" (115). Finding work, however, in the local mine with "two old guys and a big Italian called Alfie" (115), he stays in what for him is the "middle of nowhere," and he begins to acquire local knowledge. Invited to a "potluck barbecue" one weekend, he knows enough to bring along "a mix of Jell-O and whipped cream" (116) and joins the people of Dewey on a front lawn, where family life goes on: "a bunch of guys" are "cracking open too many beers. The wives are there, the kids squealing and running, and there is a smell of ironed cotton off these people, even in the open air" (116). Recognizing difference here, he translates Dewey on the basis of concrete, extra-linguistic criteria – the fragrance of ironed cotton fabric. Straying from the lawn, however, he finds Alfie's wife in a car in the garage, lying seductively by herself and considers having sex with her: "He knows he could just drive her out of there […] across the summer lawn, down the kerb and away" (116). The kids would scatter and family life would be smashed. Having recognised diversity in Dewey, becoming favourably impressed perhaps "by the fact that All This could happen in Dewey, Wisconsin" (115), he decides not to make love to the wife of his Italian

Wisconsin friend, not to run away, and not to leave this next door for another elsewhere – at least not for the moment.

The decision to stay in Dewey seems prompted by an insight on the part of this Sligo man: this “garden, this potluck bloody barbecue” was “all there was” and, ultimately, “we all lived in Dewey” (117). One implication of this is that the degree of cultural complexity found in cities such as Bangkok and New York might be the same as that of small and allegedly insignificant entities such as Sligo and Dewey. Moreover, considering that, as Michael Cronin has stated, “concentration on one particular place” may become “an opening out rather than a closing down, a foregrounding of a complexity of connectedness rather than a paean of singular insularity” (Cronin, “Languages of Globalisation” 12), the young man of Enright’s story may be seen as opening up the town of Dewey for himself and connecting it back to Sligo again. In doing so, a fluid Irish-American border crossing has been established and the elsewhere can be brought next door.

“Switzerland”: “The whole world is about America, these days”

In Enright’s “Switzerland,” issues surface of what Michael Cronin calls “our essential connectedness as global producers and consumers” in an “era of mass transportation, global tourism, significant migration and the relentless time-space compression” of IT economies (Cronin, *Translation* 9). The central characters, a young Irish woman called Elaine and her friend Tim, “the American” (*Yesterday’s Weather* 91), step across national borderlines and embrace global tourism as they travel from Ireland to Italy and Central America. In Mexico, their intercultural explorations include meetings with Mexicans and visiting Europeans alike.[6] In their struggles to translate meetings with the Other – in spaces of the elsewhere as well as next door – Elaine and Tim are in themselves an Irish-American border crossing.

Living on the North Circular Road in Dublin, the Irish-American couple explore – physically and imaginatively – the spaces between their own cultural and individual identities. For them, the exploration began the moment Tim arrived in Dublin and seemed, to Elaine, to come not so much out of an American elsewhere as freshly made, as if born crossing the border: “He was so healthy and new, with his recent blond hair and his fresh white teeth. He might have been made in the airport. He might have materialized in the hum of a security door frame” (91). Possessing insufficient knowledge of Tim, Elaine struggles to translate him. She finds him “so full of himself. That was the way he arrived in her life, a cup that was brimful” (91). The ‘brimfulness’ that Elaine ascribes to Tim seems akin to the self-centeredness that

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[6] In Mexico, Elaine meets a Swiss group, working for FIFA, the international football organisation, who callously comment on the sight of Mexican workers “laboring uphill with sacks of coffee beans on their backs” (Enright, “Switzerland” 97-98). Although apparently competent in intra-linguistic translation, the Swiss, displaying cultural blindness, fail to translate responsibly the meeting with the Mexicans.

Salman Rushdie includes in his list of objectionable qualities that non-American Westerners associated with American citizens in the wake of the 9/11 disaster. Ascribing such a quality, without fully recognizing the specificity of the Other, Elaine is translating irresponsibly.

Apart from Tim's 'brimfulness,' Elaine also observes in him a pull to "Be An American – a man who looked at the movies and saw his own home up there on the screen" (97). Prone to performing the stereotypes of his nation, perhaps, Tim nevertheless wants Elaine to truly see it, or at least see the segment of America that is his. Apparently attempting responsible translation of his experience, he says: "You have no idea what my high school was like. Everyone had a car. Everyone crashed their car. It wasn't enough to score a girl, you had to score the girl's coked-up mother" (97). He also picks up on the stereotypical image of American football players as lacking in intellectual powers: "I went to school with guys so stupid, you look at them on the football field and you think, Why don't we just eat them? The whole herd of them. That might be more useful" (97). Unable to identify "the Otherness that resides at the heart of the known and intimate," to use Anne Fogarty's phrase (Fogarty 146), Tim, an American himself, seems blind to the individuals among these American football players of past high school days. Less than responsibly, then, he translates them as a "beefy" – perhaps borderline obese, to echo Rushdie's choice of words – unintelligent, humanoid collective.

If Tim is reluctant to idealise his American home town, he is more prone to do so with Ireland. He particularly idealises Irish women. Thus, he tells Elaine that what he likes about them is "the way they still call themselves 'girls'" and he continues, "and I like the weather in their hair. Which is romantic of me, but I am Irish too, you know" (93-94).[7] Moreover, he idealises Irish families: "So I like your big family; all those brothers and sisters bubbling up, like the froth on milk. And, I hate to say this, but I love your accent" (94). Exoticising Elaine's Irish accent, he simultaneously projects authenticity onto her. In the end, Elaine has had enough of all of this and, attempting to deflect his gaze to force him to recognise her specificity, she says: "The whole world is about America, these days. It's not a country, it's a fucking religion. And I don't mind. I am perfectly happy with you as you are. I am perfectly happy with you as an ethnic *product*. But can we, from now, for ever, forget the froth on the milk and the weather in my fucking hair?" (97). She acknowledges the global reach of his America and jokingly accepts him as a commodity, but she rejects the exoticizing gaze through which he constructs her.

Back in Ireland, the impact of the narrowly local, of what Elaine sees as everyday Irishness, descends on her. She feels oppressed and wants to help strip Tim of his idealised view of Ireland: "This fucking country, she said. You have no idea" (100). So she wants him to come down to Cork with her, to meet her family: “That will change your mind” (100). Her plan fails, however, because once Tim meets her family,

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[7] Tim claims Connemara ancestry. As in "The Bad Sex Weekend" it is, as Kristin Ewins has noted with regard to "Switzerland," not always clear "what parts" of tales told are "made up" (137).

> he loved them all, and they loved him. Her brothers bringing him down to the local for a pint and her father talking about tornadoes in America, and was he ever in one, at all? And it was all the Big Yank in the front parlour, and no one asked them about Italy, or Mexico, or the North Circular Road for that matter. No one asked anything, except would he like a cup of tea. (100)

Questions, it turns out, are impolite in Elaine’s home, and the layering of its specific history out-of-bounds. Without questions though, the family recognises Tim’s difference and accepts him as a manifestation of the elsewhere into their local lives. Moreover, Tim turns out to be “better at this game [of unasked questions] than any of them – not looking at the tablecloth or at the cup in his hand, or at any of their sad, accumulated objects” (100). Incorporating their micro-level experience in a macro-level one, he engages the family “in a vast discussion about all kinds of weather, from the ice on Lake Michigan to the storm in Bucharest that made your hair stand up with the static” (100). In the reduced space of the Cork home, the local is honoured – to paraphrase Michael Cronin here (Cronin, *Translation* 16) – but it is a version of the local that meets and incorporates difference. Also, Tim’s gaze may be sweeping, but it does not blind him to the specific reality of the family he encounters at this crossing. Acting as a responsible translator, Tim helps clear the path for fluid Irish-American crossings that allow for the elsewhere to be next door.

***What Are You Like?*: Is the Shoreline of Manhattan Next Door to the Coast of Ireland?**

In Enright’s *What Are You Like?,* modes of travelling, borders crossed, and spaces of elsewhere negotiated and translated, are different in kind from those of the two short stories. This section will analyse struggles with border crossings involving pregnancy, death, separation, being born and giving birth, and patterns of mental travelling that are triggered off by such crossings in Berts Delahunty and his daughter Maria.

In being born, an infant crosses a first momentous frontier – that between self and mother, the first Other. Pregnancy, too, is a border crossing that unsettles the mother-to-be. As Susan Cahill suggests in an analysis of Enright’s *The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch*, “pregnancy inherently destabilises any notion of a unified self as well as disturbing conventional distinctions between self and other, inner and outer” (Cahill, “Gender and History” 209).[8] Anne Enright, too, comments, in *Making Babies*, on the realignment inherent in giving birth: having “thought childbirth was a sort of journey that you could send dispatches home from,” she discovers, once a mother, that it isn’t – “it *is* home” and “everywhere else now, is ‘abroad’” (47).[9] Thus, in giving birth,

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[8] Cahill is referring to Iris Marion Young’s thinking on pregnant embodiment here.

[9] As Ewins has pointed out, the birth of Enright’s first child coincides with the publication of *What Are You Like?* (128).

Enright sees the uncharted elsewhere that was her unborn baby move across a borderline to settle next door to the maternal self.

In *What Are You Like?* – set in Dublin, New York, and London in the years 1965-1987 – Anna Delahunty's pregnancy is doubly destabilizing in that she is carrying twins while dying of cancer. Borderlines between maternal self and the selves of the unborn twins blur – the "outside shape[s]" of unborn babies are after all the "inside shape" of the mother (Cahill, "Gender and History" 209) – as a tumour of the brain transforms Anna's personality, making her unrecognisable to herself and to her husband. Moreover, borderlines between life and death dissolve through the nearly simultaneous crossings Anna makes from life to death and the twins from a prenatal state to a neonatal one. As neither Anna nor the twins are capable of translation, no fluidity can be achieved in these complex crossings – they are tragically untranslatable.

Berts Delahunty is devastated by his wife's death and frightened by the prospect of crossing into fatherhood. Unsettled by the encounter with the Other in his newborn children, he is blind to their specificity, fails to translate and rejects full responsibility: "Well, I can't take them both" (87). As identical twins, his children are a self-similar repetition of a pattern – so similar they appear as one to their father. Yet, he selects one infant and names her Maria, but turns from the other, leaving her to be sent across the Irish Sea to be raised by adoptive parents in England (93). Imperfectly recognised at birth, the adult twins – part of the Irish diaspora as they are (Ewins 128) – will cross frontiers to reconnect and reinvent themselves, but as infants they are thus brutally separated.[10]

In bereavement, Berts Delahunty struggles with the crossing of lines necessitated by the painful loss of his wife. Although physical escape from misery by plane or by train is not a viable alternative for Berts, as it might have been for Veronica Hegarty of *The Gathering,* escape somehow he must. So he travels by mind, every night, around the coast of Ireland: "I need to go away," he thinks, "imagining a journey where he travelled the coast all the way round and back to the house again" (10). His voyage of the imagination is made, as Susan Cahill states, in order to "make the absence of his wife fully absent" and he worries about the "potential accuracy of the cartographic process" (Cahill, "'Dreaming" 95) that will help him achieve this. His travels and his cartographic concerns seem intended to resist death – and perhaps insanity – by reaffirming the concrete outlines of *terra firma*. Issues of what Cronin has termed fractal differentialism seem to suggest themselves to Berts here. Transposing French mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot's famous question, "'How long is the coast of

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[10] Heidi Hansson has analyzed the twins within a postnationalist paradigm ("Anne Enright and Postnationalism" 223-229).

Britain?'" (Cronin, *Translation* 16),[11] to an Irish context, as it were, Delahunty seems to recognise the possibilities of infinite length in the finite space of his mental travels. He ponders the choice of paths:

> It would be important, he thought, to keep to the very rim of the land, his journey shorter when the tide came in, the sea hungering for him, then slipping away, over and over, from Wicklow Head to Valencia to Malin Head. The trip was so fresh and real in his mind it exhausted him. Night after night he scrambled over rocks and took paths along cliffs and down to the sand, seaweed cracking and slipping under the sole of his shoe. […] He worried about piers. Should he travel the length of them, going up the near side and coming back by the far? […] He would travel from Bray to Wexford then, a straight flat coast. A right turn for Cork; he would twist his way around the headlands of Kerry, then loop his way around Loop head, after he had jumped the River Shannon. (10)

Thus, the potential length of the distance travelled, around the finite coast of Delahunty's imagined Irish coast, is infinite. Regardless of the length of the journey, however, Berts ends up in his house, "the exact place he started out from – this bed, and this side of the bed" (11). His ultimate worry, however, is how to avoid one particular border crossing, that across "the space left by his wife" (11):

> Night after night, he set out in his mind, from one side of the bed to the other, edging around the inside walls of the house, with the room to his right or the room to his left. But he got mixed up going from the bedroom to the bathroom, or he crossed the line coming down the stairs. (12)

Following the death of his wife, Delahunty makes an extreme effort of the imagination to incorporate, into the confined specific space of his grief and his house, the diversity of the coastline of the island of Ireland. His mental travels resemble, according to Anne Fogarty, the "obsessive" trips that Veronica Hegarty makes "in her car at night" in *The Gathering* – trips that "allow her to move between and uncover the meaning of" painful sites of trauma connected to childhood abuse and the death of her brother Liam (Fogarty 145). Likewise, Berts' travels seem designed to uncover the meaning of his wife's death and the painful and disorienting separation it entails for him. In the light of the loss of foothold that this separation brings for Berts, a purpose of his travels is also to chart a territory, to trace but not cross the borders of a territory within which life may go on. As such, his travels aim to resist the threat of insanity, which appears concomitant with his loss.

Maria Delahunty, the twin raised by her father in a Dublin locality, leaves the Irish capital as a young adult. The year is 1985, and, crossing the Atlantic, Maria steps across Irish-American borderlines and heads for New York City. Making this journey, Maria exemplifies the pull of the elsewhere, that "desire to know" that "draws us to investigate the world around us and the people who inhabit it" (Cronin, *Translation*

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[11] According to Cronin, the shapes, or fractals, in Mandelbrot's new geometry allowed "infinite length to be contained in finite space" (Cronin, *Translation and Identity* 16). Incidentally, Mandelbrot died in October 2010 (Bojs 25).

135).[12] Once in Manhattan, though, she soon grapples with an elsewhere that is difficult to translate. As a result of a love relationship, which has led to separation and grief,[13] she is driven by a cartographic compulsion, similar to that of her father at the time of his loss, to trace geographical borderlines. Thus, she repeats in her New York location certain patterns of her father's earlier mental travelling around Ireland. Sleepless like he was, she travels by mind and by night, tracing the shoreline of Manhattan, but also attempting to cross and re-cross its frontiers:

> Nights, as she tried to sleep, Maria wove her way over and back across the bridges of New York, from Brooklyn Bridge to the Triborough Toll. The idea was to end up back on Manhattan itself, but she always lost her way up by Harlem […]. She shuttled across the nameless bridges of the north all the way round to the wide Hudson and the George Washington Toll. (*What Are You Like?* 111)

Having travelled the bridges, she goes on to make crossings, underground and on river surfaces: "Then she started over again, including the tunnels. Then she started over again and took the ferry rides" (111). Travelling by mind, then, Maria imaginatively incorporates the infinite variety of the Hudson and East River crossings into the reduced space of her Manhattan flat, to chart a territory the borderlines of which she needs to cross and crossings she needs to translate in order to make sense of separation and loss. Underlying Maria's recent loss of a lover are, we understand, the long-ago loss of a mother and separation from a twin sister, which aggravate her sense of disorientation and increase the need for translation.

The city of New York that "hums" (55) outside Maria's window in the daytime, is of course one of the great global metropolises that will likely gain importance in the future, "at the expense of nation states," as nodes of renewal and diversity and in which "different cultures, languages, identities" meet (Cronin, *Translation* 17). For Maria, the high degree of diversification in this city, which holds "every social class, every people, every language" (17), is concretely and, to some extent, alarmingly, manifested by the people she meets in the street. The New Yorkers Maria encounters, as she walks down steaming sidewalks at 6 a.m., "on new streets, full of different people" (*What Are You Like?* 57), strike her as being of a different kind than herself. Failing to recognise individuals, she sees them as homogenous despite their diversity, and although she does not actually think of them as "weird," she thinks they exude sheer physicality. Observing people hurrying to work, she notes "their faces heavy with the night before. They seemed so real and automatic […] all those brute human beings, with their muscle and lymph and bone. They walked down a street in Manhattan like a herd of bison, quiet and astonishing in the fact of themselves" (55). The foreignness she ascribes to them approaches that "sheer weirdness" (Rushdie,

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[12] She also exemplifies the connection that Ewins has noted between the "alienating psychological urge that divides children from their parents" and the "idea of the Irish diaspora" (Ewins 127).

[13] In a complex pattern of connectedness, the lost lover is later revealed to have been involved, at an earlier time, with Maria's twin in London.

Step Across 400) which, as we have seen, Rushdie thinks non-American Westerners attributed to US citizens after the Twin Tower disaster. Much as Tim in “Switzerland” does not see the individual among the players in the football fields back home, Maria, from a worm’s-eye view here, is blind to the individual “brute” human being. What she sees is a “herd of bison” – a humanoid collective. As they muscle into her solitary walk with all the force of their ‘brutish’ and – to her evidently specifically American – collective identity, Maria fails to translate them in an ethically responsible way.

In her closed, but diversified urban space, Maria moves on to encounter individuals who are excluded by that “herd” of presumably well-adjusted, hard-working, purposeful New Yorkers she encountered earlier: the social outcasts. As Maria’s perspective shifts to a bird’s-eye view of Manhattan, she observes – without taking the cartographer’s superior position, as it were – Americans of another kind:

> other people, stalled or stopped, who stood there and wanted the crowd to wash past them. A man endlessly studying doorbells under the swelling stone breast of a sphinx. A regulation drunk, sitting on the sidewalk, his face working in slow motion, as though every emotion was a puzzle to him, and the solution always a surprise. […] They were everywhere – a small man with a chair strapped to his back walking down Varick Street, a woman in the middle of Broadway, going through the contents of her handbag as the cars swerved past. It was a parallel world. It was just over the other side. Maria had always known it was there, but, now she was in it, she did not know how to get back out again. (57)

Here, Maria recognises the specificity of the Americans she meets and translates them responsibly. However, her meeting with these individuals seems to trigger a dangerous border crossing: Maria steps across a frontier into a zone – a social reality as well as a “parallel world” of her mind – which threatens her sanity and the difference of which she fears to recognise. In the end, the young Dubliner realises she must leave New York. Struggling with the crossing, she has difficulties extricating herself from that city. When she eventually manages to re-cross the Atlantic and return to Dublin, scars on her wrist are visible signs of a near-fatal crossing into a lethal zone.

Back in Dublin, Maria – having partially recovered, physically and psychologically, from her experience in a New York elsewhere – feels that she is still not “actually home” (63), but “half in the country and half out of it” (68). In an apparent attempt to straddle this borderline, she tries to find work at an airport. There, she hopes to be at home *and* not, simultaneously next door *and* elsewhere. As yet unaware of and thus unable to recognise the presence of that Other – her sister in diaspora – who, ghost-like, resides “at the heart of the known and intimate” space that is the grief-stricken remnant of the Delahunty family, Maria is unable at this point to step across the line that will allow her to bring her Manhattan elsewhere successfully into her Dublin next door. The mistranslations made at the time of the birth of the twins are not addressed until the twins are reunited. Thus, no fluid crossings are made and no ethical translations are possible.

Conclusion

In the processes of the fictional motion – between the local and the global, the Irish and the American – in which the characters of Anne Enright's short stories "The Bad Sex Weekend" and "Switzerland" and her novel *What Are You Like?* engage, borders are crossed and spaces of the elsewhere encountered. In "The Bad Sex Weekend," the young Sligo man whose travels take him to Dewey, Wisconsin, stumbles on the insight that in one sense, we all live in Dewey. The implication is that the degree of cultural complexity found in Dewey, or Sligo, might be the same as that found in the large cities of the world. Not always able to recognise complexities, Elaine and Tim in "Switzerland" struggle to 'translate' across the Irish-American borderline that they themselves constitute. In *What Are You Like?* border crossings involving pregnancy, death, separation, being born, and giving birth are prominent. The mental travels of Berts Delahunty, tracing the imaginary coast of Ireland, seem designed to uncover the meaning of death and separation and, finally, to resist the threat of insanity. In New York, Maria Delahunty repeats her father's patterns as she travels by mind and by night, tracing the shoreline of Manhattan. Her translation of New Yorkers are of two kinds: on the one hand she translates working New Yorkers as a brute bovine collective, failing to recognise their specificity; on the other, she responsibly translates the people from the "parallel world" of outcasts as individuals. This latter meeting, however, triggers a dangerous border crossing for Maria and on her return to Dublin scars on her wrist are visible signs of a near-fatal crossing into a lethal zone. No fluid border crossings are possible for Maria at this point in the novel. Thus, as the characters of the three texts struggle with border crossings, the degree to which they recognise the complexities of the Other and of the spaces of elsewhere encountered fluctuates. Moreover, their tendency to act as responsible translators varies and, with it, the extent to which fluid border crossings are facilitated and the elsewhere incorporated next door.

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