

## The Unco Tales of Robert Louis Stevenson in German Translation

Beatrix Hesse

Iain Galbraith begins an article on translating Scottish poetry into German by invoking Janus, who acts as the presiding deity of his paper.<sup>[1]</sup> A section of the article, entitled 'Paradox,' ponders the question of what could be 'Scottish' about a Scottish poem translated into the German language, noticing 'the strange duality [...] of the translation text itself', which is 'at one and the same time Scottish and German' and hence 'constitutionally two-faced'.<sup>[2]</sup> Galbraith then proceeds to relate the duality of the translation text to the – equally constitutional – duality of metaphor and poetic language in general. A section on 'Transaction' presents examples of how various German-language translators have managed to transfer individual Scottish poems into the cultural contexts of their own culture (e.g. by transforming the Scottish stag into the Austrian imperial eagle). In passing, Galbraith refers to Roderick Watson's model of the 'haunting' of all forms of Scots by English.<sup>[3]</sup> We may conclude, then, that a poetic text written in Scots and translated into German is two-faced in three different respects: as a poetic text (which employs metaphor and thus persistently merges two diverse meanings), as a text in Scots ('haunted' by English) and as a translated text which is both Scottish and German.

Poetry, however, is not the only literary genre characterised by constitutional duality. Galbraith's description of the translation process with his insistence on duality, on transformation and the liminal zone is even more strongly reminiscent of 'uncanny' literature in the sense of Freud's seminal article. Galbraith's use of language reinforces this impression: 'haunt(ing)' occurs four times in his paper, 'ghost(ly)' three times, 'occult' twice, 'uncannily', 'magic' and 'wonder and horror' once each.

In his article 'Das Unheimliche', usually translated into English as 'The Uncanny', Sigmund Freud famously defined the uncanny as something at the same time strange and familiar, noting how the meanings of the two opposites 'heimlich' and 'unheimlich' gradually become ambivalent until they finally merge.<sup>[4]</sup> The experience of something at the same time strange and familiar also

accompanies the reading process of a translated text. But what happens if the text to be translated is itself an 'uncanny' text? If the translator adheres too strictly to the source culture, the translation will be insufficiently familiar to the reader; if the transfer into the target culture succeeds too perfectly, the reader will miss the sense of the strange that is so essential to the uncanny. In the following, I will address these issues by examining two uncanny tales that Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in Scots. If Watson's observation is correct, and Scots is indeed a 'haunted' language, it would seem to be an extraordinarily appropriate medium for uncanny tales. (Recall MacDarmid's view that the untranslatable Scots of 'The Watergaw' lends his poem 'a distinctively Scottish *sinisterness*'.) Stevenson's main operative term, however, is not 'uncanny' but 'unco', as in the passage in *Catriona* leading up to 'Black Andie's Tale of Tod Lapraik'.

I can find no word for it in the English, but Andie had an expression for it in the Scots which he never varied. 'Ay,' he would say, 'it's an unco place, the Bass.' It is so I always think of it. It was an unco place by night, unco by day; and these were unco sounds, of the calling of the solans, and the plash of the sea and the rock echoes, that hung continually in our ears.<sup>[5]</sup>

As this passage insists, there is a special local variety of the uncanny that can only be adequately referred to by a term in Scots.<sup>[6]</sup>

Before 'Black Andie's Tale of Tod Lapraik' (Chapter 15 of *Catriona*), Stevenson had written another story of the uncanny in Scots, 'Thrawn Janet', first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in October 1881. Stevenson himself thought very highly of these two stories and remarked in a letter to Sidney Colvin: 'Tod Lapraik (ch. xv) is a piece of living Scots. If I had never writ anything but that and Thrawn Janet, still I'd have been a writer.'<sup>[7]</sup> Obviously he prides himself mainly on his proficiency in the Scottish idiom, which makes the problem of translation a particularly difficult one, since the 'living Scots' will probably be the first thing that gets lost in translation. In spite of the special difficulties involved in the translation process, 'Thrawn Janet' and *Catriona* have been consistently popular in Germany: *Catriona* was translated for instance by Marguerite Thesing (in *Gesammelte Werke*, München, 1924-27), Ruth Gerull-Kardas (Berlin, 1957) and Richard Mummendey (München, 1978) and published together with *Kidnapped* under the title of 'Die Abenteuer des David Balfour' in an abridged version translated by Eva Schumann (Potsdam, 1939).

Translations of 'Thrawn Janet' appeared in *Gesammelte Werke* (translated once again by Marguerite Thesing) and in other collections of Stevenson's short fiction, for instance in volumes entitled *Das rätselvolle Leben: Erzählungen* (Leipzig, 1953, translated by Ilse Hecht) and *Die Vorsehung und die Gitarre: Erzählungen* (München, 1982, translated by Richard Mummendey)

and in anthologies of horror stories, for example *15 Satan-Stories* (i.e. the collection *The Satanists*, compiled by Peter Haining, München, 1975, translator not identified.)<sup>[8]</sup> It will be noted that none of these collections presents 'Thrawn Janet' in a specifically Scottish context; the editors select the stories according to author or theme. It makes sense to discuss 'Thrawn Janet' (hereafter TJ) and 'Black Andie's Tale of Tod Lapraik' (TL) together in one article, because they share a number of characteristics, quite apart from the fact that they were both written in Scots. They are both set in the mid-eighteenth century but point back to an earlier period in Scottish history: the rebellion of the Covenanters in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>[9]</sup> Both TJ and TL revolve around a case of Satanic possession, and both stories set the possessed title character against an equally terrifying priest. As in his most famous tale *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stevenson presents the force necessary to suppress evil as equally violent as that evil itself. This device is particularly conspicuous in TL, which is not *one* story in the traditional sense but consists of four separate anecdotes, two of which revolve around the character of the prophet Alexander Peden, an historical 'outed' minister of the Covenant, while the remaining two concern the character of the warlock Tod Lapraik.

The most interesting feature that both stories share, however, is the fact that they are both framed: TL of course is framed by *Catriona*, and TJ has a preamble of about a page and a half in length, introducing the central character of the Reverend Murdoch Soulis. In both cases, the frame is written in standard English and set in the mid-18th century, representing the values of an Enlightenment scepticism, while the embedded narrative is told in Scots and reaffirms traditional folkloric superstitions. The following table illustrates these oppositions.

| <b>Frame</b>     | <b>Embedded Narrative</b>      |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| English          | Scots                          |
| Literacy         | Orality                        |
| Mid-18th Century | Late-17th / Early-18th Century |
| Enlightenment    | Folklore, Superstition         |

The final opposition between Enlightenment and folklore superstition is particularly relevant for effects of the uncanny in Freud's sense, because Freud argued that the return of primitive beliefs we thought we had overcome long ago serve as one of the main sources of the uncanny.

The English frame to the Scots-narrated story represents an important distancing device vis-avis the supernatural events described in the embedded narrative. Taking his cue from an idea in

Freud's 'Das Unheimliche', Tzvetan Todorov persuasively argued that the 'pure fantastic' requires that the reader be kept in permanent suspension between a supernatural explanation of the events depicted (the narrator is reliable; the ghosts are real) and a rational one (there are no ghosts; the narrator is mad).<sup>[10]</sup> To put it differently: a story of the 'pure fantastic' requires unreliable narration. In TJ and TL, the use of dialect in the embedded narrative persistently reminds the reader of the narrator's subjectivity and hence of his doubtful reliability. In the case of TL, Stevenson adds yet another marker of narrative unreliability: after Black Andie has finished his tale (purportedly featuring his father, Tam Dale, as a young man), a rival narrator steps up and contests the authenticity of the story: "She would ken that story afore," he said. "She was the story of Uistean More M'Gillie Phadrig and the Gavar Vore." "It is no sic a thing," cried Andie. "It is the story of my faither (now wi' God) and Tod Lapraik."<sup>[11]</sup>

In a retrospective comment on TJ, in his note for *The Merry Men* of 1887, Stevenson kept his judgment equally suspended, refusing to take sides either with the sceptical narrator of the frame or the narrator of the embedded story:

Thrawn Janet has two defects; it is true only historically, true for a hill parish in Scotland in old days, not true for mankind and the world. Poor Mr. Soulis's faults we may equally recognise as virtues; and feel that by his conversion<sup>[12]</sup> he was merely coarsened; and this, although the story carries me away every time I read it, leaves a painful feeling on the mind.<sup>[13]</sup>

Stevenson's remark stresses that TJ is not what we call 'Weltliteratur' in German, but a tale that cannot be divorced from its setting (and a translation into another tongue would therefore be a doubtful undertaking). Returning to the structural importance of the frame, particularly in stories of the supernatural (or, to return to the dominant term employed in this paper, stories of the *uncanny*), it is with regret that we note how frequently editors and translators remove the device, and spoil the effect. In spite of his awareness of the importance of the contrast between Scots and English in Stevenson's fiction, Kenneth Gelder reprints TL in his collection as an independent story, separated from its context.<sup>[14]</sup> Two of the German versions of *Catriona*, on the other hand – Berlin, 1957 and Potsdam, 1939 – omit the story of Tod Lapraik as unnecessary for the progress of the action. TJ suffers a similar fate in German translations: translators refrain from the use of dialect in the German version and hence even-out the contrast between the frame/preamble and the embedded narrative. In the German translations of TJ, a reader may easily miss the fact that there are two separate narrators – an extradiegetic and an intradiegetic one – and ascribe the whole of the story to a single narrative source. This is partly due to the use (or rather, absence) of typographical markers. While English editions put a double paragraph between induction and embedded narrative, three of the four German translations I have consulted place only a single

paragraph between the two main parts of the story. The fourth translation (by Marguerite Thesing) also employs the single paragraph but adds a quotation mark at the beginning of the embedded narrative as an additional typographical marker. Since the frame is not 'closed' – we do not return from the embedded narrative to the frame – Thesing does not place quotation marks at the end of the story.

The decision of all four translators of TJ to refrain from using any kind of German dialect in order to render the Scots of the original is far from uncommon in the translation of Scottish literature. In his survey of twentieth-century Scottish verse in translation, Paul Barnaby has found that anthologists tend to 'adopt an identical translation strategy. Verse in Scots, English, or Gaelic, multilingual, polyvocal, or synthetic, is rendered without distinction in the standard language of the target culture.'<sup>[15]</sup> In translations of Scots prose, 'the choice of an undifferentiated standard language as a translation strategy is even more prevalent than with verse.'<sup>[16]</sup> Barnaby observes in particular that the diversity of the languages and dialects occurring in the Scottish texts tend to get lost in translation, for in the 'rare contemporary examples of the translation of literary Scots into a dialect or minority language, the target idiom is, as far as possible, unmixed with a standard or majority language.'<sup>[17]</sup> As a result, the translations tend to be 'purer', more uniform, than the Scottish source texts, a quality that is obviously undesirable in tales of the uncanny that stylistically rely on 'impurity' and internal tension.

Although none of the six translations I have consulted uses a German dialect with any degree of consistency, this does not mean that the translators and editors are unaware of the loss this entails. In her commentary on Mummendey's translation of TJ, Vera Pagin praises the 'oddly harsh, yet picturesque dialect of the Scottish highlands', which distinguishes TJ among Stevenson's stories. Karl-Heinz Wirzberger comments in his afterword for *Das rätselvolle Leben*, which contains Ilse Hecht's translation of TJ:

Thus 'Thrawn Janet', which Stevenson wrote during a stay in the highlands, is strongly tuned in to the native atmosphere and impossible to imagine without the Scottish landscape and the people shaped by it with their Old Testament fear of God and their equally strong superstitions. This impression is enhanced in the original by the use of the – *albeit untranslatable* – Scots dialect. (456, my translation, my italics)

The translators' awareness of the inappropriateness of rendering a text in Scots in standard German is also evident in their occasional use of dialect terms. The translator of TJ in *15 Satan-Stories* (hereafter 15 S-S), for instance, renders 'sabbing' (TJ 417)<sup>[18]</sup> as 'sabelle', a German dialect term meaning both 'salivating' and 'meaningless chatter' (and hence closer to the source text in terms of phonology than semantics) and employs 'Deibel', a dialect term for the devil in

various German dialects. Hecht uses the dialect term 'bubberte' to translate 'whammed' (TJ 416) and Thesing, somewhat unfortunately, renders 'lassie' (in TL, *passim*) as 'Dirne', which – although it still exists as a term for 'girl' in various versions and dialects ('Deern' in some North German dialects; 'Dirndel' in Bavarian) – is acutely misleading, since it is also a somewhat archaic term for a prostitute, and Black Andie – while veiledly alluding to the girl's low repute – takes great pains to avoid any such direct accusation.

If the translators are uneasy about rendering Scots as standard German, why do they not use a German dialect in their translations? One reason may be an insufficient proficiency in any German dialect, since, particularly in North Germany, the local dialect has become almost obsolete. Galbraith points to yet another key problem of rendering Scots by any German dialect by presenting an overview of German language history and concluding that no German idiom will have exactly the same relation to standard German that Scots has to English. Besides, the use of a German dialect will also bring along its own cultural baggage; the use for instance of Swiss German will not serve to make the story appear any more Scottish – it will merely make it Swiss. However, in spite of Galbraith's warning that '[t]ranslation even of non-synthetic literary Scots into any single German dialect would [...] circumscribe the translated text in a new way', the choice of some German dialect for a satisfactory translation of TL and TJ seems unavoidable.<sup>[19]</sup> One reason for this is the strong sense of place evoked by the two stories – one main function of the Scots is to localize the stories firmly in a specific place and time.

The second reason is that a translation into standard German renders the target text far too accessible to a German reader. At present, an English reader will probably have far greater difficulties in understanding TJ and TL than a German one and will consequently experience the story as more 'strange'. The importance of this aspect of strangeness for the creation of uncanny effects has already been highlighted in this paper.

While the translators refrain from using dialect they are (to varying degrees) at pains to render the fictitious orality of the original stories faithfully. Markers of orality in the original – such as interjections or direct auditor address – are reproduced exactly. Besides, the translators occasionally use additional markers of orality, for instance non-standard grammar, colloquialisms and elision. It is hence by markers of orality rather than by the use of dialect that the translations ensure that the reader is constantly reminded of the subjectivity of the embedded narrative. TL permits the comparison between the two rather different strategies of translation employed by Thesing and Mummendey. Both in TL and TJ, Thesing is always extremely eager to retain the impression of oral communication created by the original, and she mainly does so by means of elision. Her translation of TL contains twelve instances of elision, far more than Mummendey's. Mummendey generally writes a more literary German, but he introduces some colloquial terms

and non-standard grammatical structures at the climax of the story, thereby suggesting that the narrator is getting carried away by his exciting story and allowing his self-control to lapse. This stylistic device, while interesting in itself, has no parallel in the source text.

Among the translators of TJ, Thesing once again has by far the greatest number of instances of elision and is most inventive in her use of archaic terms as markers of historical period. What is most interesting about her translation of TJ, however, is her use of non-standard grammatical structures as they may be found in dialect and/or colloquial language. Twice she uses the construction of 'tun' (to do) + infinitive for emphasis, twice she employs reduplication for emphasis (in one instance as an exact rendering of Stevenson's own 'lang, lang he lay ravin', TJ 418), and once she uses double negation for emphasis. Her most common device, however, is the insertion of the German 'so' for the vague '(some) kind of', which occurs no fewer than five times. As a result, Thesing's translations make more lively (albeit sometimes surprising) reading than Mummendey's. Thesing's translation does well to retain the flavour of the original, because Stevenson himself frequently employs deviations from a standard sentence structure, as for instance in TJ: 'But nae Janet could Mr. Soulis see' (TJ 416). By putting 'Janet' at the beginning of the sentence, three of the four translators, however, end up producing a perfectly grammatical sentence in standard German, approximately corresponding to 'But Janet was nowhere to be seen'. Only Mummendey uses a construction of negation + proper name, producing the approximate German equivalent of 'But Mr. Soulis saw no Janet'. Similarly, the expression of bafflement 'but the de'il a black man was there to see' (TJ 414) is transformed into standard German, with three of the four translators (at least) noticing and retaining the pun that alludes to the identity of the black man with the devil – 'aber zum Teufel noch mal, da war kein schwarzer Mann' (Hecht), 'aber zum Teufel, ein schwarzer Mann war nicht zu sehen' (Mummendey) and 'aber, Deibel, da war kein schwarzer Mann zu sehen' (15 S-S). Thesing alone misses the allusion and translates the phrase into the bland 'aber nirgends war da ein schwarzer Mann zu sehen' ('but a black man was nowhere to be seen').

In the source texts, we find that Stevenson occasionally uses parallel sentence structure and repetition of phrases in order to create a rising tension. One instance of this device occurs in TL, when Tam Dale is attacked by Tod Lapraik, who has assumed the shape of a solan goose:

*And it seemed the solan understood about signals. For nae sooner was the signal made than he let be the rope, spried his wings, squawked out loud, took a turn flying, and dashed straucht at Tam Dale's een. Tam had a knife, he gart the cauld steel glitter. And it seemed the solan understood about knives, for nae suner did the steel glint in the sun than he gied the ae squawk, but laigher, like a body disappointit, and flegged aff about the roundness of the craig, and Tam saw him nae mair. (TL 122, italics mine)*

Both Thesing and Mummendey ignore the use of repetition as a stylistic device in their German translations of this passage; possibly, because according to German standards, the repetition of words or phrases is in itself considered bad style. This suggests that for the translator, the stylistic norms of the target culture are more relevant than those of the source culture, since the quality of the translation will be judged according to the standards of the translator's own linguistic community.

It must also be noted that translators seem to have no ear for Stevenson's rhythmically structured prose. With phrases like 'low an' het an' heartless' (TJ 413), 'hap-step-an'lawp' (TJ 414) and 'skelloch upon skelloch' (TJ 417), translators invariably prefer semantic precision to the imitation of speech rhythms. Hence, none of the four translators of TJ comes up with an adequate rendition of 'she yam-yammered' (TJ 414), by which the citizens of Balweary cruelly mock the inhibited speech of the palsied woman. Translators evidently hesitate to adopt the derogatory language of the source text. The only exception to the translators' general reluctance to imitate Stevenson's speech rhythms occurs in the very obvious case of 'the dunt-dunt-duntin' o' his ain heart' (TJ 416), which translators render appropriately as 'das Poch-poch-poch seines eigenen Herzens' (Hecht, Thesing, 15 S-S) and 'das Tock-tock-tock seines eigenen Herzens' (Mummendey). In the case of 'fond of a lass and fond of a glass, and fond of a ran-dan' (TL 119), Thesing hits on a felicitous rendition of the rhyme 'lass-glass' as alliteration 'liebte den Wein und die Weiber und lustige Unterhaltung', which is particularly fortunate since 'Wein, Weib, Gesang' (wine, woman and song) is a proverbial combination in German. While German translators make little attempt to render the sound of the original with respect to rhythm, they are sometimes tempted to imitate the sound of individual words – thus, 'rummled' (TJ 413) is rendered as 'rumorte' by Thesing and Mummendey, and 'yowlin' (TJ 415) as 'jaulte' by Hecht and 15 S-S. Sometimes the excitement of having found a German term sounding very much like the original Scots word may tempt the translator to ignore semantic precision, as for instance in the example quoted above, in which 15 S-S renders 'sabbing' as 'sabbelte'.

So far my analysis has largely concentrated on questions of idiom and style. In the following, I focus on the transfer of geographical, historical and cultural knowledge that can be taken for granted in the source culture. Again, a translator has to maintain a delicate balance between making the text accessible and at the same time retaining its strangeness. The translation of place names and the treatment of historical references in a text may serve as an indicator of whether the translator's main objective is the faithful representation of the original or easy accessibility of the text in the target culture.

The 'Hanging Shaw' (TJ 409), for instance, remains the same in two of the translations (Thesing and Mummendey) and is translated as 'Hängendes Gebüsch' (Hecht) or 'Hängegebüsch' (15 S-

S) in the other two. Hence, Hecht and 15 S-S apparently do not expect their readers to tolerate even a small number of foreign terms in the German version. More interestingly, none of the four translators can resist rendering 'Deil's Hag' (TJ 411) as 'Teufelsmoor', a literal translation as well as a familiar place name in German. This translation, however, is problematic since it would seem to localize the action of TJ in a particular German region – the German Teufelsmoor is located in the North German county of Niedersachsen, in the vicinity of the village Worpswede. Since the historical references in the story locate it firmly in Scotland, a North German place name might simply confuse readers unnecessarily.

The religious controversy that provides the background to the events of TJ generally is insufficiently communicated to German readers. The reference to outed Presbyterian ministers ('their forbears of the persecution' TJ 411) remains uncommented on in Thesing, Hecht and 15 S-S, while Mummendey simply removes the entire phrase as too obscure. Hecht's editor Karl-Heinz Wirzberger at least provides an explanation for the term 'the moderates' (TJ 410), explaining that it refers to a Scottish religious party in the early-eighteenth century that is less rigidly dogmatic, and stresses the ethical message of the Bible.

Without any such glosses, the references to the historical and theological background will be lost to German readers. An insufficient knowledge of the religious background of TJ is revealed by translating 'to come forrit' (TJ 411, helpfully glossed by Stevenson himself as 'to offer oneself as a communicant') as 'zur Beichte gegangen' (Hecht, 15 S-S), replacing 'communion' by 'confession'. In a Roman Catholic target culture (as for instance in some German counties), confession would be considered a necessary prerequisite for taking communion, while Protestant cultures tend to dispense with individual auricular confession, since they emphasise salvation by faith alone. Hence, auricular confession was among the 'Papist' practices expressly condemned by the oath of the Covenanters.<sup>[20]</sup> Janet's failure to attend communion points to a lapsed religious practice, whereas a failure to attend confession might be interpreted as pointing to a hidden sin or crime.

The different attitudes of translators towards glossing historical references are also evident in translations of TL. While Thesing does not remark on passages such as 'the kirk has aye had an ill name since the days o' James the Saxt and the deevil's cantrips played therein when the Queen was on the seas' (TL 121), Mummendey considers an explanation necessary.<sup>[21]</sup> The sentence glossed by Mummendey is indeed significant, because it reveals a belief in witchcraft as a living reality. In stories of the uncanny such as TJ and TL, their background in folklore and superstition is clearly important and may also require translation. In this context, it is for instance fortunate for translators of TJ that the concept of the devil as a black man is also known in Germany, as evidenced by the children's game of 'Wer fürchtet sich vorm schwarzen Mann?' ('Who's afraid of the black man?') – and it is rather unfortunate for translators of TL that 'Tod

Lapraik' acquires an additional significance in German, since 'Tod' is also the German term for 'Death'.

In order to address the aspect of folk belief systematically, it may be helpful to consider whether there are any elements that are characteristic of a particularly Scottish uncanny. In his survey of Scottish fantasy literature, Colin Manlove has pointed to the rich folk and fairy-tale tradition of Scotland, particularly in the highlands, as evident in the four volumes of the orally collected *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, compiled by J. F. Campbell. In the literary works growing out of this rich repository of folk fantasy, Manlove isolates the following characteristics:

- a background scenery of a landscape recognizably Scottish;
- an 'imagery of absolute contrasts, particularly of light and dark';
- a scepticism towards progress and development;
- a psychological bias, a turn towards introspection.[\[22\]](#)

Manlove remarks that the preference for absolute contrasts may perhaps be accounted for by the influence of Calvinism; and in relation to the psychological bias he points out that the hero is often solitary, though frequently mirrored by a *doppelgänger*, which raises the question of the boundaries of identity.

The scepticism towards progress manifests itself in various ways. Scottish tales tend to be static rather than dynamic; the motif of the house is more common than the motif of the journey. The action is often violent, sometimes even 'gleefully savage', which may demonstrate that evolution, as well as civilization, is a fiction.[\[23\]](#) The process dominating the stories is regression: 'there is always the sense of a pull backwards, or even downwards, to one's roots.'[\[24\]](#) Consequently, at the end there is a sense of reduction and loss rather than gain. If we accept Manlove's analysis, TJ and TL are indeed uncommonly, perhaps even uncannily, Scottish. This may point to one possible answer to Galbraith's initial question of what can be 'Scottish' about a text in German: the plot motifs and 'moves' of the tales may of course be rendered in a foreign tongue, though they may not acquire their special resonance unless based on local folk beliefs.

The central operating folk belief in TJ is that a dead body may be possessed and animated by the devil: 'folk said, that Janet was deid lang syne, an' this was a bogle in her clay-cauld flesh' (TJ 415). This concept recurs in the final scene when Janet is eventually struck by lightning: 'An' at that moment the Lord's ain hand out o' the heevens struck the Horror whaur it stood; the auld, deid desecrated corp of the witchwife, sae lang keepit frae the grave and hirsled round by de'ails, lowed up like a brunstane spunk an' fell in ashes to the grund' (417). In German translations, both 'clay-cauld flesh' in the first and 'corp' in the second quotation are translated as 'Leichnam'

(corpse), but also occasionally as 'Leib' (body). The first of these two options is preferable, since it more expressly renders the gruesome image of a dead body still forced to walk the earth, animated like a marionette, but no longer inhabited by a living soul.<sup>[25]</sup> In this context, it may be of interest that Freud mentions as one instance of the uncanny doubts as to whether an apparently living being is animated, or, vice versa, whether an apparently lifeless thing is alive after all.

The folk belief of the dead body animated by the devil is also reflected by the fact that, after her stroke, Janet is no longer treated as a human being by the inhabitants of Balweary, but as an object: 'they never gied that Thing the name o' Janet M' Clour; for the auld Janet, by their way o't, was in muckle hell that day' (412fn). Twice again, Janet is referred to as a 'thing': 'she was an eldritch thing to see' (413) and 'the fearsome thing' (417). As in the case of 'yam-yammered', noted above, German translators by and large hesitate to imitate the linguistic cruelty of the citizens of Balweary – they merely use the neutral German 'Ding' in the first example (and even here, Mummendey favours 'Wesen' – being), omit the noun altogether in the second case, and all use 'Wesen' in the third instance.

Stevenson's use of the term 'thing' for the uncanny figure or object is not limited to TJ, but may be encountered in his other stories of the uncanny.<sup>[26]</sup> In TL, he uses 'thing' even more pervasively to refer to a being both mysterious and sinister. In this case, the use of the identical term also serves to reinforce the link between the character of Tod Lapraik and the solan goose into which he has temporarily transformed himself. In his translation of TL, Mummendey recognizes 'thing' as a key operative term and renders it by an identical German word, 'Ding', wherever possible, throughout the narrative. Thesing, by contrast, uses 'Ding' less frequently than Mummendey – employing 'Wesen' or 'Etwas' (literally: 'something') or omitting the noun altogether – but interestingly she introduces the term where Stevenson himself does not even use 'thing', rendering 'What's yon on the Bass?' (123) as 'Was ist das für ein *Ding* da auf dem Felsen?'. This may indicate that Thesing, just like Mummendey, notices the stylistic function of the repeated use of the term 'thing'. Tables 1 and 2 show the various translations of the term 'thing' in TL and TJ.

Table 1.

| <b>'Thrawn Janet'</b>    | <b>Thesing</b>        | <b>Mummendey</b>       | <b>Hecht</b>          | <b>15 Satan-Stories</b> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| that Thing               | dem Ding da           | diesem Wesen           | das Ding da           | das Ding                |
| an eldritch thing to see | schauerlich anzusehen | gespenstisch anzusehen | schauerlich anzusehen | gruselig anzusehen      |
| the fearsome thing       | das gräßliche Wesen   | das furchtbare Wesen   | das gräßliche Wesen   | das scheußliche Wesen   |

Table 2.

| <b>'Tod Lapraik'</b>                                    | <b>Thesing</b>  | <b>Mummendey</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| a thing dementit  | wie nicht recht gescheit                                | wie nicht gescheit  |
| this thing is nae bird                                  | das Ding da ist kein Vogel                              | das Ding ist kein Vogel   |
| as sune as that thing was gane                          | und so wie das Ding fort war                            | sobald das Ding weg war   |
| Whatten kind of a thing?                                | Was für ein Ding?                                       | Was für ein Ding?   |
| Thon Thing  | das Ding dort   | das Ding dort   |
| the wanchancy thing                                     | das unselige Ding                                       | das unselige Ding   |
| this thing was its lee-lane                             | das hier war ganz allein                                | dieses Ding hier war mutterseelenallein                         |
| this thing had nae music but the skirling of the solans | dieses Wesen als Musik nur die Schreie der Lummen hatte | und dieses Ding hatte keine Musik außer dem Geschrei der Tölpel |
| the thing had clean disappeared                         | war das Ding vom Erdboden verschwunden                  | war das Ding reinweg verschwunden                               |
| thon awesome thing                                      | das schreckliche Etwas                                  | das schreckliche Wesen  |
| What's yon on the Bass?                                 | Was ist das für ein Ding da auf dem Felsen?             |   |

The use of 'thing' with reference to Tod Lapraik corresponds to the fact that, as in the case of Janet M'Clour, doubts are raised as to whether his body is animated or not. What renders Tod Lapraik uncanny to the inhabitants of his community is that he is subject to 'dwams', fainting fits.<sup>[27]</sup> Tam Dale obscurely remarks about these fainting fits: 'folk hae brunt far dwams like yon' (TL 121), leaving it ambiguous whether he is referring to a witchcraft trial or the eternal punishment of burning in Hell.<sup>[28]</sup> Both Mummendey and Thesing render this remark similarly: 'Wegen dergleichen (solcher) Ohnmachten sind Leute schon (schon Leute) verbrannt worden'. These translations unambiguously refer to witchcraft trials, stating that 'people have *been* burned' rather than 'have burned', for which there is a perfectly acceptable equivalent in German.

A more substantial reduction of ambiguity and manipulation of meaning occurs in the translation of TJ in 15 S-S. Here, the entire final paragraph of the story is removed, a paragraph which reads: 'But it was a sair dispensation for the minister; lang, lang he lay ravin' in his bed; an' frae that hour to this he was the man ye ken the day' (418). While the original story ends with a focus on the character development of the priest, the version of 15 S-S finishes with Balweary's visitation by the Devil. The stress on the case of Satanic possession rather than on the character development of the minister accords well with the general gist of the anthology, which seems intended to present the reality and existence of the Devil – Peter Haining's introduction is entitled: 'Modern Satanism – the Facts'. A short story like Stevenson's TJ, which keeps the reader

permanently suspended between a supernatural and a rational solution can only find its place in this kind of anthology if the essential ambiguity of the story is removed as far as possible.

After all this elaborate analysis it remains for us to gauge just how 'uncanny' Stevenson's stories in Scots are when read in a German translation. They indubitably lose some of their power unless read in the original idiom, but even in German translation their effect is still undeniably uncanny. Possibly, however, it is just the feeling that behind the German text there is something lurking that defies translation, that we (as German readers) will always fail to find out, that contributes to this effect.

## NOTES

[1] Ian Galbraith, 'Scottish Poetry in German: Paradox, Transaction, Context, Superstition', *Scottish Studies Review*, 9.1 (2008), 79-100.

[2] Ibid. p. 80.

[3] Cf. Roderick Watson, 'The Double Tongue', *Translation and Literature*, 9.2 (2000), 175-78 (p. 178).

[4] In *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12 (London: Imago, 1947), pp. 229-68.

[5] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Catriona* (1593; Edinburgh: Canongate, 1989), p. 117f. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[6] 'Thrawn Janet', the other short story discussed here, also favours 'unco' to 'uncanny'. 'Unco' occurs four times in the story and 'uncanny' only twice. One of the two instances of 'uncanny' appears in the frame narrative introducing the story.

[7] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 424.

[8] The publisher credits five translators with the translation of the stories in this volume – Hans Maeter, Wulf Bergner, Richard Paul, Birgit Reß-Bohusch and Leni Sobez – but fails to point out which translator(s) translated which individual story.

[9] In his introduction to his collection of Stevenson's Scottish stories and essays, Kenneth Gelder discusses the influence of Covenanting history on Stevenson's writing in greater detail. See Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Scottish Stories and Essays*, ed. Kenneth Gelder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989).

[10] Cf. Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), translated by Richard Howard as *The Fantastic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975).

[11] *Catriona*, p. 126.

[12] At the outset of the embedded narrative, Reverend Soulis is an enthusiastic, enlightened young minister who in the course of events learns to acknowledge the existence of personified Evil.

[13] *Critical Heritage*, p. 251.

[14] Cf. Gelder: 'in some of the Scottish stories he did write, Stevenson drew attention to the difference between Scots and English, linguistically and culturally' (p. 1).

[15] Paul Barnaby, 'Three into One: Twentieth Century Scottish Verse in Translation Anthologies', *Translation and Literature*, 9.2 (2000), 188-99 (p. 191).

[16] *Ibid.* p.196.

[17] *Ibid.* p.195.

[18] All references to TJ are to this edition: Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Complete Short Stories*, Vol. 1, ed. Ian Bell (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), pp. 409-19.

[19] Galbraith, p. 95.

[20] Cf. *The National Covenant; or, The Confession of Faith* of 1580: 'But, in special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the scriptures of God, upon the kirk, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men; all his tyrannous laws [...] his manifold orders, auricular confession...'

[21] Mummendey's gloss reads: 'Im Jahre 1590 waren ein gewisser John Fian mit Agnes Sampson und anderen wegen Hexerei verurteilt worden, weil sie mit dem Teufel in der Kirche von North Berwick ein Abkommen getroffen hatten, um König Jakob und Königin Anna zu ermorden.' [In the year 1590 a certain John Fian with Agnes Sampson and others were convicted of witchcraft because they had entered a contract with the devil in North Berwick Church to murder King James and Queen Anne.]

[22] Colin Manlove, *Scottish Fantasy Literature* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994), p. 7.

[23] *Ibid.* p. 6.

[24] *Ibid.* p. 4.

[25] In this context, the etymology of 'Leib' and 'Leichnam' may be of interest. 'Leib' specifically refers to the living body, since it is etymologically related to 'Leben' (life). 'Leichnam', on the other hand, is etymologically related to 'Leib', referring to the 'shell of the body' which clothes the immortal soul.

[26] Cf. for instance 'The Body Snatcher' and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

[27] As with the palsy in TJ, the source of the uncanny in TL is a disease; in this context, it is interesting to note that Freud also mentions some diseases, for instance mental illness or epilepsy, as causes of uncanny effects.

[28] Cf. 'Nae doubt they burn for it in muckle hell', TL 125.