Language and Power in Brian Friel's Translations

Lesjak, Paula

UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Paula Lesjak

Language and Power in Brian Friel's *Translations*

undergraduate thesis

Rijeka, 2023

UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Department of English Language and Literature

Paula Lesjak

0009090318

Language and Power in Brian Friel's *Translations*

undergraduate thesis

Bachelor's degree (B.A.) programme in *English Language and Literature* and *Philosophy*

Mentor: Dr. sc. Aidan O'Malley

Rijeka, 2 September 2023

ABSTRACT

This thesis will offer an analysis of Brian Friel's *Translations*. Brian Friel was born in 1929 in Northern Ireland. His play *Translations* was written in 1979, and it was the opening production of the Field Day Theatre Company which he founded in 1980 with Stephen Rea. *Translations* deals with the issues of language, but with a consideration of the power dynamics involved. Chapter 1 deals with historical background of *Translations*. Chapter 2 deals with the linguistic aspect, focusing on characters in terms of their attitudes to languages. Chapter 3 deals with the politics of translation.

Keywords: Brian Friel, *Translations*, Irish studies, postcolonialism, Field Day, language, politics

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Brian Patrick Friel was born in 1929 at Kilclogher, near Omagh in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. His father was a Derry schoolmaster, and his mother was a Donegal postmistress (Whelan 2010, p. 7). He received his education at St. Patrick's College in Maynooth and at St. Mary's University College. After that, he taught at a school in Derry for ten years. It wasn't until 1960 that he started writing full-time, writing short stories and plays. His first dramatic success was *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, which he wrote in 1963 and produced at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 1964 (Britannica 2022).

He wrote many successful works, some of which are *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1966), *Lovers* (1967), *Crystal and Fox* (1968) and *The Mundy Scheme* (1969). Later, he focused more on the political themes, inspired by the political situation in Ireland at the time, such as the Troubles. The Troubles, also known as the Northern Ireland conflict, was a violent sectarian conflict which lasted roughly from 1968 to 1998 in Northern Ireland, between Protestant unionists and Roman Catholic nationalists (Wallenfeldt 2023). Some of the works he produced in the light of this are *The Freedom of the City* (1973), *Volunteers* (1975), *Living Quarters* (1977) and *Making History* (1988) (Britannica 2022). In 1980, Friel founded the Field Day Theatre Company along with Stephen Rea, and this Northern Irish group had a goal to promote the cultural unity of Ireland by utilizing the communal aspects of theatre (Cullingford 1996).

Field Day was created as a cultural response to the political crisis caused by the Troubles. Soon enough, Seamus Heaney, Seamus Deane, Tom Paulin, Tom Kilroy and Davy Hammond joined Field Day, and over time, Field Day developed into a publishing company. It published many works on history, politics, cultural studies and literary criticism, such as the Field Day pamphlets (1983–88), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (1991 and 2002) and the series 'Critical Conditions' (1996–2005). Furthermore, Field Day contributed to the development of postcolonial theory and of Irish Studies, more generally (*Field Day* 2019). The foundational play of this group, as well as its opening production, was *Translations*, written in 1979 by Friel. It was produced for the first time in the Guildhall, Derry on 23 September in 1980 (Whelan 2010, p. 8). Being written at the height of the Troubles, the play can be interpreted with regards to the post-partition community in Northern Ireland (O'Malley 2011, p. 26). Despite being inspired by the Troubles, the play itself does not mention the Protestant tradition, but instead

focuses solely on the erosion of the Gaelic culture under the English cultural colonization (Cullingford 1996, p. 228).

Overall, *Translations* deals with the issues of language, which can be interpreted as an aspect of colonization that was brought upon Ireland. It depicts a historical act of a dying Gaelic civilization under the imminent Anglophone modernisation, dying of Irish language and the power dynamics between the two cultures. In my understanding, the play represents the ways in which the cultural consciousness is being 'translated' into another. This further reflects the power imbalances, which are also evident in Owen's translations. As stated by Friel himself, *Translations* is not a history play, rather a language play, the play "has to do and only to do with language" (Whelan 2010, p. 10). Upon closer inspection, this can be debated – as the play is analysed, it becomes more evident that language cannot be easily removed from the political context it exists in.

I've divided my thesis into 3 chapters. Before Chapter 1, I offer a short summary of the play. Chapter 1 deals with historical background of *Translations*, where I list details regarding the time in which the play is set. Chapter 2 analyses characters in terms of their attitudes to languages, as well as an analysis of the love scene between Maire and Yolland. Chapter 3 deals with the politics of translation, where I look into the mapmaking process performed in the play. Finally, I state my final thoughts in the conclusion, after which I list my references.

PLAY SUMMARY

The play *Translations* is set in a fictional, Irish-speaking town Baile Beag, a community in County Donegal. The play is divided into three acts: Act 1 is set in the afternoon in late August of 1833, Act 2 is set a few days later and Act 3 is set in the evening of the following day. In Act 1, we are introduced to the characters Manus, Sarah and Jimmy Jack Cassie. Sarah is a young woman with a very bad speech defect, to the point she doesn't speak at all and instead makes unintelligible sounds and grunts. Manus is a young man who works as an unpaid assistant to his father, master Hugh; and Jimmy is in his sixties, unmarried and unhygienic. He is known as the Infant Prodigy and is perfectly fluent in Latin and Greek. He enjoys ancient texts to the point of dissociation from the real world.

They are learning and being taught at an informal school, known as a 'hedge school', led by the old master, Hugh, in a makeshift barn. New characters enter, first Maire, then Doalty and Bridget. After some time, the master, Hugh, arrives. Hugh is in his sixties, a man of extensive knowledge of languages and a drunkard, and while he teaches Greek and Latin, there seems to be a growing demand for learning English. Soon enough, another character enters – Owen. He is Hugh's younger son and is described as an attractive, young man. He arrived with two men, Captain Lancey, a cartographer who will make a detailed map of the entire area, and Lieutenant Yolland, who is attached to the toponymic department, meaning he will standardise the placenames of the area.

While Captain Lancey announces the map-making as a military operation meant to capture detailed hydrographic and topographic information of Ireland for tax and military purposes, Owen translates it to the rest of the characters in a manner that Manus finds problematic. This dispute is one of the key moments that I will cover in this paper. In Act 2, Owen and Yolland are translating and Anglicizing placenames. They change the names either by the way they sound to the English ear or translate them directly into English words. Scene 2 of Act 2 shows an intimate moment between Yolland and Maire. They are in love with each other, but are divided by a language barrier as neither of them can understand what the other is saying. Act 3 is the closing act, where we are met with Manus taking his leave, Yolland's disappearance and Owen's realisations about the nature of the operation he is working for, something he starts to consider a mistake on his part. Jimmy Jack is lost in his fantasy about Athena and Hugh is drunkenly stressing the need for accepting the new. The play ends with lines from Virgil's *Aeneid*, quoted by Hugh.

CHAPTER 1: *Translations*: Historical background

Translations is set in 1833, reflecting the situation in Ireland in the 1830s. The 1830s were a particularly hard time for the Irish. In 1829, the final Catholic Relief Act became law which meant that Irish Catholics were allowed to hold legal positions and sit in parliament (Melaugh 2023). Catholic emancipation, however, was delivered alongside the Protestant supremacist Disenfranchisement Act, which meant that the qualifications were raised – for example, property qualifications for those entitled to vote went up from 40 shillings (about £2) to £10 income per year. This ensured that only relatively wealthy individuals were able to hold political power in Ireland, resulting in a power imbalance and an anti-democratic environment. As a result of this, the electoral franchise was greatly reduced from roughly 216,000 Irish voters to 37,000, meaning that a great number of Catholic voters were excluded (*The 1830 Limerick Food Riots* 2016).

The same year, in 1829, there was a riot in Belfast, which spread to counties Antrim, Armagh and Tyrone. During this riot, around 30 people were killed. In 1830, Ireland was faced with a potato crop failure, which caused food shortages, as well as an increase in food prices. There are records of famine across Ireland: in County Sligo, there was a bounty for anyone willing to import oatmeal; in counties Kerry and Clare potato prices rose and poverty increased, and typhus fever broke out. In County Cork, people were starving to the point of relying on nettles and corn marigolds as the only source of food. In counties Derry, Fermanagh and Kilkenny, it was reported that store houses were being broken into and livestock killed in the fields. Irish peasants had been relying on the potato crop for decades, so they knew that it was prone to infections and diseases. However, most of the other produce was being exported, as most of the land was in possession of the mainly Protestant Anglo-Irish ascendancy, who tended to gravitate more towards Britain. Ireland relied on agriculture, and there was too little industry to expand their economy. Unemployment, low pay, illiteracy and diseases were common (*The 1830 Limerick Food Riots* 2016).

In 1834, the Irish political leader Daniel O'Connell used food riots and famine as examples when he proposed a motion in the House of Commons calling for the Repeal of the Union[1]. He believed that all of these problems were caused by the lack of independent legislature. His

[1] The Act of Union was a legislative agreement which united Great Britain and Ireland, thus bringing Ireland into the United Kingdom. It came into force in 1801 (Britannica 2023).

proposal was defeated, as the Duke of Wellington thought that the poverty in Ireland was something that couldn't be helped (*The 1830 Limerick Food Riots* 2016). In an attempt to combat the poverty and famine in Ireland, a new law system, known as the 'Poor Law system', was introduced in 1838. This system would aim to provide a public health authority in Ireland, and it divided Ireland into 130 Poor Law Unions. There would be a workhouse built in each of the districts (Melaugh 2023).

From the seventeenth century there had been Penal Laws in force in Ireland. These laws served as acts of injustice against Roman Catholics in Ireland because they limited the religious freedom and property holdings of Irish Catholics, and imposed civil disabilities (Britannica 2022). Under these laws, Irish Catholics suffered severe penalties, such as imprisonment, fines or death for participation in Catholic rites. They weren't allowed to vote, enter a profession, own land, possess weaponry or hold commissions in the army. They also weren't allowed to teach, study law or medicine or play Irish music. Some Irish Catholics converted to Protestantism because of the pressure, especially as a way of keeping their own property (Howell 2016).

Since Catholics weren't allowed to teach, Catholic schools were shut down. However, some Catholic teachers continued to teach secretively. They taught religious beliefs in hidden, secret locations, which led to the creation of the informal, illegal schools named 'hedge schools'. Hedge schools were set up to teach Catholic and Presbyterian children, since the Penal Laws also prohibited them from receiving education unless they converted to the established Protestant Church of Ireland. In Irish, hedge schools were called 'scoileanna scairte' (*Hedge schools* 2014). The Penal Laws were one of Britain's methods to weaken Ireland – the suppression of the Irish religious practices in the Gaelic language was somewhat achieved because of these laws. Since the Penal Laws weren't a set groups of rules applied at the same time or in the same way, they were sometimes enforced more strictly, and sometimes more laxly. It took a while for them to be completely nullified – the last of the Penal Laws lasted into the 20th century. Generally speaking, they were almost entirely nullified by the acts passed down in 18th and 19th century, such as the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791, the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and the Roman Catholic Charities Act of 1832 (Britannica 2022). After these Acts hedge schools were no longer illegal.

Hedge schools were often located in small buildings, such as huts, barns or houses, as well as near rivers or hedges. More often than not, they would be held wherever they could find shelter. These schools were fee-paying schools, where parents had to pay the teacher to educate their

children. Most of the time, the parents were too poor to be able to pay with money, so they paid with turf or food, if they had any (*Hedge schools* 2014). This made it very difficult for teachers to get paid. Most hedge schoolteachers were men, but there were also teachers who were women, and it was reported that, generally, teachers weren't adequately qualified to teach since they had also received their education in such schools. This meant that their teaching methods and information were often old-fashioned and insufficient. The main method of learning at hedge schools was constant repetition, known as 'rehearsing', and it was one of the most important pedagogical methods. The quality of education at hedge schools varied greatly, but there were a couple of subjects in common: reading, writing and arithmetic. The prices for these were about ten shillings annually for reading, along with writing it was about seventeen shillings and four pence, and if arithmetic was included, that was about one pound and six shillings. Additionally, many hedge schools taught Greek and Latin (Ulster Historical Foundation 2013).

It was very common for hedge schools to teach different age groups at the same time, under the same teacher. There are children who had to work in the fields and farms during the day, which meant that they would attend schools in the evening. By the 1830s, there were approximately 300,000 to 400,000 students attending hedge schools in Ireland. Most hedge schools remained as private and paying schools up to the 1880s. In 1831, the newly founded National Board of Education introduced a national system of primary schools to Ireland. The national schools were paid for by the government, so they were free for children to attend. On top of that, the government paid for all building costs and the teachers' salaries by giving a grant. If an area wanted to have a national school, they had to apply for a grant. The national schools in Ireland were English-speaking and compulsory (Ulster Historical Foundation 2013).

Apart from the introduction of national schools, the play also deals with the standardized mapping of Ireland, which was led by the Ordnance Survey. Between 1829 and 1842, the Ordnance Survey worked on and completed a large-scale map of entire Ireland. To be precise, the scale of the map was instructed to be six inches to one mile – it was meant to be accurate and precise. The Ordnance Survey was founded in 1791, and up until 1824, it made only small-scale maps of England. In 1824, the Ordnance Survey was commissioned to make a map of Ireland, as a first step before the nationwide valuation of land and buildings. Originally, the map was meant to be accompanied by written topographical descriptions for every parish, but this idea was abandoned in 1840. It was intended for each parish to take up about 6 pages. According to the Ordnance Survey's manuscripts, the counties containing the most detailed

topographical information are Antrim and Derry, followed by Donegal, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone (Maxwell 2013). This can be considered relevant to the play, since the play is set in County Donegal. All mentioned counties are located in the north, and all but Donegal are situated in what is today Northern Ireland. Seeing as they contained the most information, and owing to the majority of their residents being Anglo-Irish Protestants, it shows the importance of these lands to Britain, as well as Britain's authority over them.

The Ordnance Survey was conducted by the British army, with the assistance of Irish scholars and Irish locals. The teams under the Ordnance Survey were led by the Corps of Royal Engineers, who provided technical support. The Royal Engineers in charge were specifically Colonel Thomas Colby and Lieutenant Thomas Larcom. George Petrie was in charge of the topographical department of the Ordnance Survey, and when it came to the research of placenames, John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry were consulted. Additionally, information on agriculture and national history was provided by Captain J. E. Portlock. A lot of valuable information relating to history and socioeconomics was gathered by the field officers, as well as information regarding migration out of Ireland (Maxwell 2013).

Throughout the 19th century, Ireland was facing a great shift from Irish to English, and there are many causes and reasons as to why that happened. For instance, all of the occurrences listed above would have contributed to the decline of the Irish language. It is known that the Irish tongue had been suppressed for centuries – the plantation of Laois and Offaly and the plantation of Ulster in the 16th century, the Cromwellian and Williamite wars in the 17th century all contributed to the English language extending its reach in Ireland. Because of this, spoken Irish language was used less and less. Statistics show that 45% of people born between 1771 and 1781 spoke Irish, while only 13% of those born between 1861 and 1871 spoke Irish (Lane 2021). This can be considered drastic, as the usage of the Irish language had evidently dropped by 32% in 80 years. The reason for this decline is, of course, not only that fewer generations learnt Irish, but also because of the many deaths and mass emigration caused by the Famine.[2] This means that there isn't only a decline of the language usage, but also the decline in the actual number of Irish speakers in this century. Moreover, the introduction of National Schools in 1831 is one of the obvious contributors to the decline of the Irish language, seeing as they were not only compulsory, but they also banned Irish. However, teaching in these schools had many issues. There wasn't enough staff who could teach English, so even the teachers had to

[2] The Famine, also known as the Great Irish Famine or Irish Potato Famine, spread throughout Ireland from 1845 to 1849. The famine was a result of potato crop failures caused by blight. (Mokyr 2023)

learn English. When the students were taught, they weren't taught in Irish, so learning and picking up information proved difficult for them, which resulted in a great number of students leaving school without knowing much English. It wasn't until 1878 that the Irish language was added to the curriculum as an additional language, and in 1904 it became a part of the newly established bilingual programme. Although, at that point it was too difficult to find teachers who would teach Irish, and most of the teachers had to learn to speak it first (Lane 2021).

Another factor of the decline of the Irish language is the economic aspect, and even O'Connell considered English a better way of communicating when it came to business affairs. English was the language of power, and it was simply the only way to rise to a higher position. It became clear that, with time, increasing numbers of the Catholic middle classes knew English and used it to climb the social ladder. English provided easier access to politics and to the business world alike (Lane 2021).

As life in Ireland was difficult due to food shortages and famine, emigration acted as a solution. Thus, speaking English proved helpful, even essential, for advancing in a foreign country. Many Irish learnt English solely to be able to build life elsewhere, for example in America. Some built businesses in England and travelled between the two countries. The language situation in Ireland was thus complicated. More and more people learnt English, and less and less people had the opportunity to speak Irish. Some Irish Catholic priests had attempted to preserve Irish for the sake of it, so they continued to write literature and religious texts in Irish (Lane 2021).

CHAPTER 2: Translations and Languages in *Translations*

As stated by Friel, *Translations* is a language play. It exploits the questions of language – what is its significance to culture and to Irish cultural identity? What happens when we translate? Language is used as means of self-definition, and in that sense the play problematizes its relation to culture. Friel used a fair number of lines from George Steiner's *After Babel*, which is a master text for *Translations*. In *After Babel*, Steiner wrote about ideas concerning language – each language is comprised of private or intimately shared experiences, which communicate inwards to the native speakers. This is what makes translation difficult – language consists of shared histories and legacies, and it can be tricky to convey these experiences to those outside a specific community (Whelan 2010, p. 8-9).

As previously mentioned, the play deals with two Anglicizing projects that were taking place at the time – the standardized mapping of Ireland led by the Ordnance Survey and the replacement of informal schooling with the national system of education (Whelan 2010, p. 8). This is commented on in the play:

> **Bridget:** Did you know that you start at the age of six and you have to stick at it until you're twelve at least – no matter how smart you are or how much you know.
>
> **Doalty:** Who told you that yarn?
>
> **Bridget:** And every child from every house has to go all day, every day, summer or winter. That's the law.
>
> **Doalty:** I'll tell you something – nobody's going to go near them – they're not going to take on – law or no law.
>
> **Bridget:** And everything's free in them. You pay for nothing except the books you use; that's what our Seamus says.
>
> [...]
>
> **Bridget:** And from the very first day you go, you'll not hear one word of Irish spoken. You'll be taught to speak English and every subject will be taught through English and everyone'll end up as cute as the Buncrana people. (*T*, Act 1, p. 13)

Through this, the audience are already able to sense the potential conflict between Irish and English. In the play, the characters show different attitudes towards languages and express themselves in various languages, such as Latin for Hugh, or Greek for Jimmy, despite the play

being almost completely in English. Because of this, the play portrays a multilingual scene. For example, Manus is a native Irish speaker, as well as a master of English, Greek and Latin.

Much like Hugh and Jimmy, Manus is well-educated and interested in ancient literature. He teaches at his father's hedge-school, where he teaches Sarah to speak. The first words he tries to teach her to say are her own name: 'My name is Sarah'. Sarah is struggling to say her name, to claim her own name and thus, in a way, she is struggling to claim her identity. Manus is trying to help her claim her identity by teaching her to say her name. According to Manus, once she learns to say her name, nothing will stop her and after that, anything is possible ("Nothing'll stop us now! Nothing in the wide world!" *T*, Act 1, p. 2).

We also see that Manus doesn't seem to accept Anglicization. He opposes it in a way that he insists on speaking Irish, for example, when he refuses to speak English to Yolland, despite being perfectly fluent:

> **Owen:** Can't you speak English before your man?
>
> **Manus:** Why?
>
> **Owen:** Out of courtesy.
>
> **Manus:** Doesn't he want to learn Irish? (*To **Yolland***) Don't you want to learn Irish?
>
> **Yolland:** Sorry – sorry? I – I –
>
> **Manus:** I understand the Lanceys perfectly but people like you puzzle me.
>
> (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 3-4)

Manus's last line might indicate that he understands colonizers who impose their language because at the very least, they are straightforward and openly express their lack of a need to deal with the other's language. However, Yolland puzzles him because his role is to Anglicize and 'correct' the Irish names, yet he romanticizes Ireland and considers learning Irish. To Manus, it's confusing that someone would romanticize and colonize at the same time, because these two ambivalences seem contradictory at first. Perhaps he thinks that romanticising is just a pretence and that, ultimately, the power of colonisation will always come first for Yolland, the same way it does with Lancey. Another example of Manus's resistance is the following:

> **Owen:** Come on, man – speak in English.
>
> **Manus:** For the benefit of the colonist?

Owen: He's a decent man.

Manus: Aren't they all at some level? (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 13)

Manus's refusal to speak or adopt English language for the "benefit of the colonist" is somewhat opposed to his father Hugh's belief. At first, Hugh does show a slight aversion to the English language, as according to him, English makes things sound "plebeian" (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 8) and it is not as rich a language as Latin, Greek or Irish. This attitude should slightly shift the expectations of the audience – usually, it would be natural to consider English to be richer, both in terms of its vast vocabulary and its economic power. Hugh uses a lot of Latin words mixed into his everyday speech ("*Adsum*, Doalty, *adsum*. Perhaps not in *sobrietate perfecta* but adequately *sobrius* to overhear your quip. Vesperal salutations to you all." *T*, Act 1, p. 14), and he writes Latin poetry.

Hugh is ambivalently proud of what Gaelic language and literature have to offer, seeing as it's "full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception", a response to "mud cabins and a diet of potatoes" (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 9). He is particularly baffled by the ignorance of the English and their lack of knowledge of the other languages, which I find similar to Lancey's attitude. Each side takes pride in their language that they fail to grasp someone else's viewpoint of that particular language being insufficient to them. We can see that in Hugh's line: "He then explained that he does not speak Irish. Latin? I asked. None. Greek? Not a syllable. He speaks – on his own admission – only English; and to his credit he seemed suitably verecund (...) he voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language (...) English, I suggested, couldn't really express us" (*T*, Act 1, p. 15-6).

Eventually, he comes to recognize the need for adopting the language of the colonizers. This happens in Act 3, after the threats have been issued. Hugh is trying to accept the new placenames ("We must learn those new names. (...) We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home." *T*, Act 3, p. 13), thus trying to domesticate the invading language and reinforce it with one's own personal meanings ("the desiderium nostrorum – the need for our own" *T*, Act 3, p. 14). Hugh understands that only by adapting he can retain some of himself and that it is the only way that Irish culture and the residents of Baile Beag can survive. Hugh agrees to teach Maire English, yet he insists that she shouldn't expect too much. He is able to teach her available words and grammar, but "will that help you to interpret between privacies? I have no idea. But it's all we have" (*T*, Act 3, p. 14).

Maire's experience of Irish life is that it's exhausting and hard, involving a lot of housework and heavy farming – she is embarrassed by her rough hands and blisters. To Maire, English serves as an opening to the world, and she seeks to pursue it, thus explaining her overall welcoming attitude towards the colonizers (Chu He 2010, p. 5). She fell in love with Yolland because he was her escape out of Ireland ("Take me away with you, George." *T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 21), not knowing about his opposing wish to stay in Ireland. I understand her falling in love with Yolland as a falling in love with a sense of 'otherness'. She is attracted to the difference, and she sees that in Yolland. It is because she sees the promise of a better life outside of Ireland that she expresses her wish to learn English and move to America ("We should all be learning to speak English. That's what my mother says. That's what I say. (...) I don't want Greek. I don't want Latin. I want English. I want to be able to speak English because I'm going to America as soon as the harvest's all saved." *T*, Act 1, p. 16-7).

So far, she knows only three words in English ('water', 'fire', 'earth', as seen in Act 2, Scene 2, p. 18) and a line taught by her aunt ('In Norfolk we besport ourselves around the maypoll'). Her delivery of this line somewhat symbolises her shift from Irish to English, as the first time she says this line in Act 1, she speaks it with a strange accent because she doesn't understand what she is saying. The second time she speaks the line, which is to Yolland in Act 2, she delivers it "as if English were her language – easily, fluidly, conversationally" (*T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 19). Of course, she doesn't understand it the second time she says it either, but such sudden improvement of her spoken English shows her growing willingness to move away from her Irish reality. To Maire, "the old language is a barrier to modern progress", meaning she sees Anglicization as means of advancement, which to her justifies the rejection of Irish ('the old') and the embrace of English ('the new') (*T*, Act 1, p. 17).

Unlike the other characters I have looked at so far, Jimmy Jack Cassie is neither 'this' nor 'that'. He is not shown to be against colonization, neither is he praising Anglicization. He is completely lost in languages which are not English or Irish, but rather Greek and Latin. Even when speaking basic Irish, he constantly seeks foundations in Latin or Greek by searching for etymologies of words – "Theodolite – what's the etymology of that word, Manus?" (*T*, Act 1, p. 8). I don't think Jimmy is fully aware that colonization is even happening, since all he concerns himself with is the world of gods and myths. In Act 1, he wonders which goddess to choose as if that is the most pressing question of all, and then in Act 3, while drunk, he fully believes he is getting married to Athene. All in all, this character is overwhelmingly

disconnected from the real world and real-time languages, and instead focused on seemingly 'dead' languages.

The reason I called them 'seemingly dead' is because Latin had been considered an unused language for centuries. In the linguistic sense, it is a dead language because it has no native speakers. However, we see the Irish in this play learning it and even using it. After all, it was one of the standard subjects taught at hedge schools in the early 19th century Ireland. Jimmy speaks Latin fluently and even converses in Latin with others. Latin and Greek are classical languages, and they were once languages of colonization – the Roman Empire and ancient Greece were colonizers, each in their own respects, and extending their languages onto those territories. In this play, the Irish characters regard them as the languages of great ancient writers, such as Homer or Virgil, instead of considering them vehicles of imperialism. They use and praise the classics, but in reality, the English colonizers, who don't even recognize them, are the ones who are able to control the classical legacy. This poses a question of who the classics belong to, which further ties this issue to the question of identity and belonging.

The Latin text the characters are quoting is Virgil's *Aeneid*, a Latin epic poem which follows the story of the hero Aeneas, who travels from Troy to Italy in order to establish a peaceful and stable world. The characters in *Aeneid* are of different ethnicities, such as Trojan, Latin, Greek, Tyrian or Italian, but all of them speak Latin, similar to how all characters in *Translations* speak English. Furthermore, Hugh's last lines, which quote the beginning of *Aeneid*, could be understood as an allegory. For example, "from Trojan blood to overthrow some day these Tyrian towers" is a line about colonization, which I understand as a metaphor for the Anglicization of Ireland in the play (*T*, Act 3, p. 15).

The next character I'll look into is Sarah. She is especially interesting as a character because in terms of language, she doesn't speak at all. She uses grunts and gestures to convey information or to express herself, which makes her almost childlike. Sarah's means of communication is Friel's way of representing another form of language, and that is physical, such as gestures, waving, mimicking, eye contact – "*Sarah goes to Manus and touches his elbow. She mimes a rocking baby.*" (*T*, Act 1, p. 4). She is unable to say her own name, and at the start of the play we see that she's learning how to do it. This is related to the questions of naming and identity, as learning her name is the first step to claiming her identity. Near the end of Act 1, she managed to articulate her name when Owen asked who she was. However, at the end of the play, she fails to do the same when asked by Lancey. When it comes to her name, it is one of the only things the audience may know about her. She is not given a specific age or any personal history.

In fact, her only defining qualities are her muteness and her fragile, waiflike appearance. I believe that because of this, Sarah symbolizes the Gaelic language, and perhaps also stands for the Irish people. Her fragility and weak spirit make her seem like she could fade away at any moment, similar to the way Gaelic language was fading away under the British rule. Her voicelessness, in turn, could symbolize the state of the Irish when faced with the English takeover. Sarah's inability to speak or say her name when Lancey asked presents the audience with the result of the British imposition - being faced with a colonizer exercising their power, her name and her identity were suppressed. I argue that Sarah's character successfully shows how cultural colonization reduced Ireland to silence.

As for the English characters, there are two – Captain Lancey and Lieutenant Yolland, both of whom are based on real people. Captain Lancey is based on Colonel Colby who was the director of the Ordnance Survey in Britain. He was 'given a relatively free hand, and took advantage of this to enlarge substantially the scope of their project' (O'Malley 2011, p. 29-30). Lancey saw colonization as creating 'a brave new world', as if they were bringing something new and better to the Irish. I would describe him as ignorant – the first time he is mentioned, it was said that he was baffled that no one spoke English. Additionally, upon conveying orders to the characters in Act 1 and learning they can't speak English, he continued speaking English, just slower, as if a person who doesn't understand a language will suddenly understand it if it is spoken slower – "*He speaks as if he were addressing children – a shade too loudly and enunciating excessively*." (*T*, Act 1, p. 22). His ignorance peaks in the following lines:

> **Jimmy:** *Nonne Latine loquitur*? (***Hugh*** *holds up a restraining hand.*)
>
> **Hugh:** James.
>
> **Lancey:** (*to* ***Jimmy***) I do not speak Gaelic, sir. (*T*, Act 1, p. 22)

The way I interpret this line is that Lancey lacks knowledge of other languages to the point of not even recognizing them, as Jimmy spoke to him in Latin, the language lying in the very foundation of half of the English language, and Lancey still mistook it for Gaelic. The English critics in 1980 found this interaction absurd. Latin was considered the language of the upper-classes and of the civilised so, realistically, the British should have been able to recognize it, especially British officers. In the play, the Irish peasants understand Latin perfectly. This would mean that Friel purposefully reversed the roles, perhaps to dislodge the audience's expectations – the Irish peasants were able to speak Latin, the 'language of the civilised', but the 'civilised' English officers weren't, which is ironic.

As previously mentioned, Yolland was also based on a real-life person – Lieutenant Larcom, who was recruited as Colonel Colby's representative in Ireland (O'Malley 2011, p. 29-30). Yolland romanticizes Ireland, the Irish language and the Irish lifestyle. He believes that Ireland suits him much better than England, or even India ("And while I was washing this morning and looking across the Tra Bhan, I was thinking how very, very lucky I am to be here and not in Bombay." *T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 7). He feels foolish for being in a foreign country yet not being able to speak the language ("I feel very foolish to – to – to be working here and not speak your language." *T*, Act 1, p. 23) – he wants to get to know the country and its people better, as well as learn to speak Irish and live there.

> **Yolland:** Do you think I could live here?
>
> **Owen:** What are you talking about?
>
> **Yolland:** Settle down here – live here.
>
> **Owen:** Come on, George.
>
> **Yolland:** I mean it.
>
> **Owen:** Live on what? Potatoes? Buttermilk?
>
> **Yolland:** It's really heavenly.
>
> **Owen:** For God's sake! The first hot summer in fifty years and you think it's Eden. Don't be such a bloody romantic. You wouldn't survive a mild winter here.
>
> (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 6)

In these lines we can see how much Yolland romanticizes Ireland – he finds it heavenly. However, Owen's reactions tell us that the Ireland that Yolland praises is a mythical one, and that life in Ireland is actually pretty harsh (we can also understand that from Maire's perspective). Even though his job is to translate Irish placenames into English, he seems reluctant to do so and keeps trying to retain as much as possible ("Let's leave it alone. There's no English equivalent for a sound like that." *T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 2). He feels that there is something wrong with their acts of renaming and calls it an "eviction" and "erosion" (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 10). Still, he keeps repeating the Irish names, mostly to himself, until there comes a scene where he intimately recites them to Maire, the very same names he is meant to be translating into English (*T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 19-20).

His love for Ireland and the Irish language makes him lean into the world of the colonized. There is a gap which Yolland cannot overcome – it is a language gap, because the two cultures are very different. Despite his preference for Irish life, he would still be unable to decode the Irish language – even if he was to learn to speak Irish, "I'd always be an outsider here, wouldn't I? I may learn the password but the language of the tribe will always elude me, won't it?" (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 7).

Owen mediates between Irish and English, between the colonizers and the colonized, and later on between Maire and Yolland, which, in my opinion, could be another symbol for attempting to join or bridge two cultures – Irish (Maire) and English (Yolland). Owen's role is a translator ("My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King's good English." *T*, Act 1, p. 20) and like Lancey and Yolland, his character was also based on a real person – Friel has confirmed that he had based Owen on John O'Donovan. O'Donovan was an Irish scholar employed by the Ordnance Survey as an 'orthographer and etymologist' in 1830, with instructions to determine the correct placenames of Ireland and to make those placenames 'recognizable and pronounceable by the English map-reader' (O'Malley 2011, p. 35-6). He was indispensable to the topographical department, as he personally sourced and anglicized 140,000 Irish placenames by travelling on foot and studying them from 1834 to 1841. These anglicized placenames are still, to this day, the legally binding versions of place names in the modern Republic of Ireland (Whelan 2010, p. 17).

Owen's duality between Irish and English is evident in his dual name – his given name is 'Owen' and Irish characters call him by that name, but English characters call him 'Roland' ("They seemed to get it wrong from the very beginning – or else they can't pronounce Owen." *T*, Act 1, p. 24). His Anglicized name, 'Roland', could be considered a name that was imposed on him, and his inability to correct this quickly indicates his submissive position.

In fact, most of Owen's lines are painted in submission, as if he had accepted Anglicization a long time ago – when asked to say the placenames by Yolland, he immediately started listing the Anglicized names, even though they weren't yet official ("...Poolkerry, Ballybeg - ..." *T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 5). He starts to reconsider his work upon telling the story of Tobair Vree – it is a name of a crossroads, which got the name after an old man, Brian, had drowned in a well that used to be there. The placename itself is an erosion of the name 'Tobair Bhriain' ('Tobair' meaning 'a well', and 'Bhriain' being the Gaelic version of 'Brian'). People had long forgotten the man and the story, and the well has long since dried up. Owen knows the story because it had been passed down to him orally, yet he acts like he doesn't understand the value of this. He

doesn't seem to consider it relevant generational knowledge, because barely anyone remembers it - "ask Doalty – or Maire – or Bridget – even my father – even Manus – why it's called Tobair Vree; and do you think they'll know?" (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 10). Eventually, this motivates him to reclaim his correct name, 'Owen' ("**Yolland:** It was never Roland? **Owen:** Never." *T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 11).

In 1911, Ferdinand de Saussure stated that "the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary", meaning that "there was no inevitable or natural relationship between the sound of a word and the thing that it represents", further illustrating that languages are artificial structures and that intrinsic meaning is an illusion (Whelan 2010, p. 23). Owen's attitude to proper names presents this viewpoint in the play. His line "Owen – Roland – what the hell. It's only a name. It's the same me, isn't it?" (*T*, Act 1, p. 24) displays his initial belief that the connection between a name and what it represents (in this case, a person) isn't tangible and that the name bears no relation with the actual reference. Regardless of him being called Owen or Roland, it still refers to the same person – there is no intrinsic meaning the name 'Owen' has that 'Roland' doesn't. Words, in this understanding, are "mechanically given" and are "eminently unmysterious entities to be used as instruments for the representation, mapping or classification of reality" (O'Malley 2011, p. 29). If the name 'Roland' signifies his submissive position in the power structure, simply reclaiming his given name cannot revert the process, or alter his position. This would mean that, regardless of the name Owen claims, he would remain an agent of colonialism because he works for the colonizers, and not because of the name they call him.

The first of Owen's translations we see (translating Lancey's speech at the end of Act 1) does not exactly convey what Lancey is saying. Owen translates the intentions of the survey into a form of friendly cultural exchange and as a benefit for the Irish. I consider the translation poor because it is inaccurate. However, regarding Owen's line of work, which is working for the colonizer, it is a good translation. There is a common saying in translation studies: 'traduttore, traditore', meaning 'translator, traitor'. As a translator, Owen is situated at the place of a power imbalance – he is hired to do a job for the colonizer, regardless of the ties between the colonizer and the colonized. In that sense, Owen being a translator means he's also a traitor. He betrays the Irish by translating for the English in a manner that hid the real colonial power dynamic. Since his job is to translate for the colonizer, he was also forced to translate Lancey's threats in the final act. His translation of the threats is different from his work in Act 1, as this time it conveyed Lancey's exact words. I would argue that it makes no difference to Lancey how these

threats were translated, since he doesn't seem to concern himself with who hears them either. In that sense, Owen's translation, which this time openly showed the real power of the colonizers, could also be interpreted as his attempt to atone for his treason.

When asked about Irish locations by Lancey, he gave him Irish placenames instead of the Anglicized ones – "**Lancey:** Where does she live? **Owen:** Bun na hAbhann." (*T*, Act 3, p. 9) and "**Lancey:** Where does he live? **Owen:** Tulach Alainn." (*T*, Act 3, p. 10). However, giving Irish placenames made no difference, because he had to translate them to Lancey in English anyway. At the end of Act 3, he says that the Name-Book is "only a catalogue of names", "a mistake" and "nothing to do with us" (*T*, Act 3, p. 13). Owen, by translating the way he did, made the entire process smoother for the colonizers, but the colonization would have happened with or without them. His translations, in that way, reflect a power structure that he has had to negotiate (Chu He 2010, p. 8).

One of the key features of this play is that, besides some lines of Greek and Latin and a few Irish placenames, it is written entirely in English. Despite the fact that all the actors speak their lines in English, we have to imagine that the actors playing Irish characters are saying their lines in Irish. This gives the audience the impression that English and Irish are semantically interchangeable and equivalent (Stambler 2021, p. 41). The way I interpret this is that having nearly the entire play in one language leaves an impression that the meanings between the two languages are shared. However, this notion should also be questioned. It feels like the play is trying to warn us not to be quick to see the languages as the same.

This is especially apparent during Yolland-Maire exchange in Act 2, Scene 2. Yolland speaks in English, but Maire speaks in English which we have to imagine as Irish. As the scene progresses, we are led to believe that their thoughts are matching perfectly and that they understand each other. I will offer the following excerpt as an example:

> **Maire:** You're trembling.
>
> **Yolland:** I'm trembling because of you.
>
> **Maire:** I'm trembling, too. (*T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 20)

Their responses seem to match at first, as if to convey the idea that love goes beyond language. In reality, they don't understand what the other is saying – one doesn't understand Irish, and

the other doesn't understand English. But then, at the same time, we can also notice some miscommunications, misunderstandings, cross-talking and confusion in their dialogue:

> **Yolland:** Yes, I know you're Maire. Of course I know you're Maire. I mean I've been watching you night and day for the past –
>
> **Maire:** (*Eagerly*) What-what?
>
> **Yolland:** (*Points*) Maire. (*Points.*) George. (*Points both.*) Maire and George.
>
> ***Maire*** *nods: Yes – yes – yes.*
>
> I-I-I- (*T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 18)

This would show that, so far, their communication isn't really working. Maire tries to establish a better communication by speaking Latin ("Tues centurio in – in – in exercitu Britannico –..."*T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 18) and English (her three words and one line), but neither of those languages work. The two of them start to really communicate through Irish, when Yolland starts listing the placenames in their original, Irish form:

> **Yolland:** Bun na hAbhann? (*He says the name softly, almost privately, very tentatively, as if he were searching for a sound she might respond to. He tries again.)* Druim Dubh?
>
> ***Maire*** *stops. She is listening.* ***Yolland*** *is encouraged.*
>
> **Yolland:** Poll na gCaorach. Lis Maol.
>
> ***Maire*** *turns towards him.*
>
> Lis na nGall.
>
> **Maire:** Lis na nGradh.
>
> *They are now facing each other and begin moving – almost imperceptibly – towards one another.*
>
> **Maire:** Carraig an Phoill.
>
> **Yolland:** Carraig na Ri. Loch nan Ean. (*T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 19)

Only through Irish do Maire and Yolland really start responding to each other. According to O'Malley (2011), their responses can be seen as "a form of mirroring increment", instead of a simple repetition. They both share the knowledge behind what they say – Maire knows these locations from her experience, and Yolland has been working on renaming them. Their intentions resonate through the topographical names, and thus they're able to form an understanding of some sort. This doesn't last long, as the moment they mention the word 'always', they once again enter a state of confusion and misunderstanding. Both of them say the word 'always', first in English and then in 'Irish', and they repeat the other's sound. Although it would seem that both languages share the word's intrinsic meaning, the characters still fail to understand each other:

> **Yolland:** I would tell you how I want to be here – to live here – always – with you – always, always.
>
> **Maire:** 'Always'? What is that word – 'always'?
>
> [...]
>
> **Maire:** I want to live with you – anywhere – anywhere at all – always – always.
>
> **Yolland:** 'Always'? What is that word – 'always'? (*T*, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 20)

The word 'always' is an abstract term, conveying the idea of distance from the real flow of time and the real world. Its meaning is ahistorical and suggests a state that is unaffected by temporal issues such as politics. Saying it to each other is a promise that their companionship will remain unbroken regardless of what happens. However, soon after their farewell Yolland goes missing, and his disappearance makes the word 'always' almost entirely meaningless. It would seem that the word 'always' is "at the mercy of historical, social and political factors" because Maire and Yolland can no longer be 'always together' – Yolland is gone (O'Malley 2011, p. 39-40). Evidently, even a word as ahistorical as 'always' couldn't retain its meaning, because the colonial politics that brought about Yolland's disappearance still affected it.

CHAPTER 3: The Politics of Translation

When it comes to mapmaking, language is one of the crucial parts of the map. Maps are made to mark the names of places and the landscape, and they should convey both geographic and linguistic information to the reader. According to Yolland, completed maps can't be printed without the names, as they would make no sense without them (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 2). Maps and the language used on maps should be understood by their target audiences.

In the case of this map of Ireland the target readers were not the Irish. It was for an English and anglophone audience, and was produced so that "the military authorities will be equipped with up-to-date and accurate information on every corner of this part of the Empire. (...) And also so that the entire basis of land valuation can be reassessed for purposes of more equitable taxation" (*T*, Act 1, p. 22). For that reason, they found it easier to have names on the map they could understand or, more accurately, pronounce, thus the need to Anglicize them. As such, this Anglicization isn't a 'true' translation of the Irish placenames, it is rather a form of transliteration. Transliteration is the process of transferring a word from one language to another by writing it in a familiar alphabet, or writing it the way it is pronounced. Unlike translation, transliteration is not concerned with the meaning of the word, only with an idea of how it is pronounced (Vocabulary.com Dictionary). The result of this is that the new, Anglicized names only resemble the original Irish names by sound alone, while the semantic content gets lost. For example, names with the Irish word 'cnoc', which in English is 'hill', were translated as 'knock', since it sounded the most similar – such as Ballyknock (Irish: Baile na gCnoc, 'the town of the hill') (Stambler 2021, p. 51).

This was the case for most of the English translations of Irish placenames in the play, yet there were still issues. Encountering the name 'Druim Dubh', Owen and Yolland aren't sure what to do. The English translation of the name is 'Black Ridge', yet there are other names marked in the registry such as 'Dramduff', 'Drimdoo' and 'Dramduffy'. For the sake of consistency, Owen notes that they have rendered every other 'Dubh' (which means 'black') as 'Duff', and 'Druim' has previously been standardized as 'Drom' in the name 'Druim Luachra', and so 'Druim Dubh' should become 'Dromduff'. However, this causes the name to become arbitrary, since it doesn't have a meaning in either Irish or English – the Irish meaning is lost, and the English one is never created. This method of standardization is trying to find a compromise between the two languages, and although it is a perfect middle ground for combining an Irish sound with an English spelling, it fails to retain the semantics of either.

Even though it's not always the case, many placenames describe a place in a way that is recognizable to the locals who would come into contact with that place. That is the reason so many names are composed of "natural features, metaphor, associated activities, and stories", such as 'Bun na hAbhann' ('the mouth of the river') or 'Baile Beag' ('little town') (Stambler 2021, p. 55). These types of names acquired their meaning orally, through folklore, and because of this their significances were not known outside of the targeted group of locals. This is shown in the play when Sarah tried to explain where Hugh was. Since Sarah is unable to speak, she gestured that Hugh was at the pub, and further tried to indicate which one it was. Manus was able to understand it and knew which pub she was referring to, since he is also a resident of Baile Beag and shares the same toponymic knowledge. On the other hand, Owen wasn't able to understand the gestures, since he hadn't been living there for a while, and therefore was not really a part of the community (Stambler 2021, p. 55). In general, most placenames resist standardization, and the same applies to Irish placenames. This is because they often contain many different spellings resulting from "centuries of modification by successive rounds of English settlement", or they're based on oral narratives (such as Tobair Vree), or due to the accumulation of the multiple, variant names by locals to denote the same place (Stambler 2021, p. 50). This would mean that locations can be understood as narratives and narrative constructions, because placenames rely on the shared knowledge of the locals and commonly understood meaning behind them. Naturally, that's not the case for all names, since the locals don't necessarily know the origins of them. The result of this is that, very often, these meanings are lost, as evident in the example of Tobair Vree.

The problem with placenames and renaming stems from the fact that the mapmakers who were making the new maps still relied on the existing ones, causing errors to remain. There needed to be changes undertaken in order to make new maps more accurate and suitable for the goals of the Ordnance Survey. In the play, they say that what they're doing is "trying to denominate and at the same time describe" the places on the map (*T*, Act 2, Scene 1, p. 2). Yet, when faced with the name 'Bun na hAbhann', Owen names it 'Burnfoot' and by doing so he fails to retain the 'describing' aspect. Burnfoot denominates the place, but it doesn't describe it like the Irish name did ('the mouth of the river'), thus erasing "the original name's reference to the landscape" (Stambler 2021, p. 46-55). As for the 19th century Ordnance Survey, it was O'Donovan who attempted to retain the Irish sound of the Irish names while Anglicizing them, since he wanted the names to still be understood by the Irish speakers (Stambler 2021, p. 51). It would seem like O'Donovan was trying to find a middle ground between Irish and English –

the names are Anglicized, but in a way that the Irish understand them, too. I understand this as potentially aiding the Irish in retaining, at the very least, their sound, instead of completely replacing the Irish names.

On the other hand, Owen's contribution as a translator only resulted in strengthening the domination of the English – in Act 2, Scene 1 he claims to be translating accurately, but the arbitrariness of the new placenames gives the impression that the Ordnance Survey, as colonizers, had the power to rename the places in any way they wanted. Although it wouldn't have been politically expedient to erase the names completely, the fact remains that, more or less, they had the power to do so. Some places kept their original Irish name ('Tobair Vree'), some were completely changed into English ('Burnfoot'), and some were transliterated ('Ballybeg'). From a different perspective, one might claim that all of these could just as well have been picked randomly.

There is a philosophical school that I find relevant for the concept of authority and mapmaking in this play, and that is positivism. For a positivist, the maps would be seen as being free of influence and free of judgement: they offer a passive, unembodied viewpoint of the world. Maps, in this perspective, only describe and represent, they do not interfere, which means that they are supposed to be a true and exact picture of what we see and what there is to see, and there is no need to question that. In short, maps were claimed to be 'distant from man and his attendant baggage of history and language'. (O'Malley 2011, p. 28).

However, as the play illustrates, standardization, Anglicization and renaming of the Irish placenames meld geography and history into one – we can see the slow and steady renaming of Irish places as a metaphor for the slow yet steady cultural domination of the English over the Irish. That way, the map of Ireland with Anglicized placenames allows us direct insight into how colonization dug into the community. Ireland had been under political colonization by the English for centuries, but what the Ordnance Survey did is slightly different – by imposing the English language via standardization of the placenames, the English are performing cultural colonization. This way, *Translations* suggests that the cultural and political are perhaps not so easily disentangled.

Translation often involves a power imbalance – one language is almost always above the other. In this case, English and Irish are not equivalent, but are locked in a political hierarchy in which English dominates Irish. After all, the play is written in one language, in English. There is something ironic and powerful about the fact that an Irish play about the Irish language,

performed on an Irish stage is produced in English. It speaks volumes about the consequences of cultural colonization – while listening to the English lines meant to be imagined as Irish, the audience becomes involved in this act of linguistic violence.

In the play, it is clear from the start that the English wield the dominant role – the way Lancey, the embodiment of an ideal colonial servant carries himself is full of arrogance and pride, and when he talks to the Irish characters, he speaks to them as if he were addressing children. The power dynamic between children and adults is that the adults have power over children – children are the ones who ought to listen, obey and learn, because the adult has authority. Treating the Irish characters as children, Lancey asserts dominance over them.

The more Irish places get Anglicized throughout the play, the stronger the English dominance gets. At the beginning, Lancey treated Irish characters as regular residents who should cooperate with the orders of his Majesty's government. Soon we come to realize how much power he actually possesses – he is able to issue orders and threats. In Act 3, he threatens to destroy their houses, their crops and shoot all livestock unless Yolland is found. The sole fact that he is able to do that speaks volumes about the dominance that was possessed by the English. Yolland's disappearance is yet another example of the power dynamics. The actions of the Ordnance Survey created resistance among the Irish residents and they attempted to fight back. Yolland was very likely taken by the Donnelly twins, and possibly murdered. I see this as an attempt to shift the power dynamics. Of course, this doesn't work, as seen by Lancey's violent response to Yolland's disappearance, proving that the English still have the upper hand. What the English are doing is not a gradual reform, but rather is an act of invasion and forceful takeover. Thus, we come to realize that languages are conditioned by history, and the moment one language is imposed on another's culture, it will "send their history adrift among the accidents of translation" (O'Malley 2011, p. 31).

CONCLUSION

Translations allows us to glimpse a moment in history through a focus on linguistic issues, but with a careful consideration of the power dynamics involved. The play is a wonderful example of a language drama, and it enables us to understand the history of how the English imposed their authority not simply through military means and in political terms. It teaches us that power can be produced through social practices, which in turn instantiate a new set of power dynamics (Stambler 2021, p. 47).

Being produced at the height of the Troubles, the play had a political agenda of its own. The Troubles were considered an explosive era. In 1921, in the aftermath of the Irish War of Independence, Ireland was partitioned into two – the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, which remained under British rule. The Irish Free State was almost entirely Catholic, while Northern Ireland was predominantly Protestant, with a Catholic minority. This Catholic minority in Northern Ireland was often discriminated against, seeing as the political power remained in the hands of the Protestants. Soon enough, opposing forces were created and conflict broke out between the Catholic 'nationalists' and the Protestant 'loyalists'. The following years, especially between the 1960s and 1990s, were characterized by sectarian violence, car bombings, riots, shootings and revenge killings. This era, known as the Troubles, left about 3,600 people dead and over 30,000 people injured (Roos 2023).

1980 was marked with this type of violence, along with recession, unemployment and emigration. *Translations* premiered in this context, and members of the first-night audience were thoroughly searched on the way in and helicopters hovered over the Guildhall. The play received mixed reactions – there were some critics who questioned what they perceived as Friel's misrepresentation of history, while the majority of the audience along with politicians, writers and activists gave the play a standing ovation (Garden 2020).

Gaelic culture and language have been largely lost due to colonization, and by writing about that part of Irish history, Friel turns the audience's attention to the problematic histories of their cultural identities. Both instances of Irish history, the years 1833 and 1980, can be understood in terms of identity conflicts. In 1833 the issue was the loss of Gaelic cultural identity and the need to conform to the British rule, while in 1980 it concerned the deadly clash of two opposing identities in Northern Ireland – one of which had held power over the other for decades. Through this play, Friel connects the past with the present, and gestures towards the fact that

the structure of the power relations in Northern Ireland that generated the 'Troubles' are a legacy or continuation of Ireland's colonial history. However, in the play cultural identity is presented as a matter of consciousness – it is not stated that it depends on language, or that it constructs it, but instead it urges the audience to debate this for themselves. To a large extent, cultural identity depends on negotiations. We see that in Owen, as much as in any other characters. Owen negotiates the situation through his translation, and so do Hugh or Maire, who recognize the need for adapting to the (post-)colonial world.

As for the Northern Ireland in 1980, this play attempts to convey the world-creating aspects of Irish culture, while at the same time it warns not to idealize or romanticize that culture. After all, languages and cultures may not last for 'always'. It has been said that "countless indigenous languages in the world were programmed to vanish when the maps were made" (O'Malley 2011, p. 27). According to Whelan (2010), "a language dies somewhere in the world every fortnight". This is shown by statistics, as there are records of the living and dead languages: out of 6,800 known distinct languages, there are 400 languages which are soon to go extinct, and 3,000 languages that are endangered. Currently, in the Republic of Ireland, there is no longer a growing tension between the dominance of either Irish or English language. Nowadays, there are all kinds of languages of the minorities; from Polish, Russian and French, to Arabic, Chinese and Zulu (Whelan 2010, p. 27).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Act of Union". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 18 Jan. 2023, https://www.britannica.com/event/Act-of-Union-United-Kingdom-1801. Accessed 22 August 2023.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Brian Friel". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 28 Sep. 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Brian-Friel. Accessed 2 August 2023.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Penal Laws". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 12 Feb. 2022, https://www.britannica.com/event/Penal-Laws. Accessed 4 August 2023.

Chu He, 'The Dilemma of Colonial Hybridity in Brian Friel's *Translations*', *Études irlandaises*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2010), pp. 117-129.

Cullingford, E. B. (1996). British Romans and Irish Carthaginians: Anticolonial Metaphor in Heaney, Friel, and McGuinness. *PMLA*, *111*(2), 222–239. https://doi.org/10.2307/463103

Field Day—A Brief History (2019) *Field Day*. Available at: https://fieldday.ie/about/ (Accessed: 01 August 2023).

Friel, Brian. *Translations: A Play.* Faber and Faber, 1981.

Garden, A. (2020) *Translations: The 'Boy-Girl School Romance'*, *Queen's University Belfast*. Available at: https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/friel-reimagined/friel-papers/translations/ (Accessed: 12 August 2023).

Hedge schools (2014) *Ask about Ireland*. Available at: https://www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/5th-+-6th-class/history/my-school-history/17th-and-18th-century-hed/hedge-schools/ (Accessed: 04 August 2023).

Howell , S. (2016) 'From Oppression to Nationalism: The Irish Penal Laws of 1695 ', *HOHONU*, 14, pp. 21–23. Available at: https://hilo.hawaii.edu/campuscenter/hohonu/volumes/documents/FromOppressiontoNationalism-TheIrishPenalLawsof1695SamanthaHowell.pdf (Accessed: 04 August 2023).

J. H. Andrews, *A Paper Landscape: The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*. Oxford, 1975.

Lane, M. (2021) *Ireland: Language shift from Irish to English in the 19th century*, *Marteen Lane*. Available at: https://marteenlane.com/2021/02/01/language-shift-from-irish-to-english-in-the-19th-century/ (Accessed: 05 August 2023).

Maxwell, N. (2013) *The Ordnance Survey Memoirs; a Source for Emigration in the 1830s*, *History Ireland*. Available at: https://www.historyireland.com/the-ordnance-survey-memoirs-a-source-for-emigration-in-the-1830s/ (Accessed: 05 August 2023).

Melaugh, D.M. (2023) *A Chronology of Key Events in Irish History*, *CAIN*. Available at: https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch1800-1967.htm (Accessed: 03 August 2023).

Mokyr, Joel. "Great Famine". Encyclopedia Britannica, 18 Aug. 2023, https://www.britannica.com/event/Great-Famine-Irish-history. Accessed 26 August 2023.

O'Malley, A. *Field Day and the Translation of Irish Identities: Performing Contradictions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Roos, D. (2023) *How the Troubles Began in Northern Ireland*, *HISTORY*. Available at: https://www.history.com/news/the-troubles-northern-ireland (Accessed: 13 August 2023).

Stambler, A. (2021). The Language of Ireland's Six-Inch Map: Theorizing Standardization in Brian Friel's Translations. *Ariel-A Review of International English Literature, 52*(2), 39–70. https://doi.org/10.1353/ari.2021.0011

The 1830 Limerick Food Riots (2016) *The 1830 Limerick Food Riots – The Irish Story*. Available at: https://www.theirishstory.com/2016/02/23/the-1830-limerick-food-riots/ (Accessed: 03 August 2023).

"*Transliteration.*" Vocabulary.com Dictionary, Vocabulary.com, https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/transliteration. Accessed 17 Jul. 2023.

Ulster Historical Foundation (2013) *Hedge schools*, *Ulster Historical Foundation*. Available at: https://www.ancestryireland.com/history-of-the-irish-parliament/background-to-the-statutes/education/hedge-schools/ (Accessed: 04 August 2023).

Wallenfeldt, J. (2023, July 3). the Troubles. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/event/The-Troubles-Northern-Ireland-history

Whelan, K. 'Between: The Politics of Culture in Friel's Translations', *Field Day Review*, No. 6, 2010, pp. 7-27.