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**COLONIAL ASPECTS in BRIAN FRIEL'S PLAYS
TRANSLATIONS and *MOLLY SWEENEY***

by

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ABSTRACT

This work is about the Irish national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It deals with the 'colonial' and 'imperial' viewpoint of Brian Friel's plays *Molly Sweeney* and *Translations*. It can also be taken as the authority assumed by a state, or any military power over another territory. This study tries to show how a culture and history of a land can be changed by forces which seemingly have good intentions; forces defined as the work of 'colonialism' or 'modernization'.

Identity and communication are the most important issues in Brian Friel's plays, *Translations* and *Molly Sweeney*. Language for Friel is closely implicated with identity. Friel tries to show how the Irish identity and language is destroyed by an imperial power practicing what is called colonization. Friel indicates that we can or may learn from other histories, identities or the historical memories without degenerating them.

Consequently, Friel reveals in his plays that the colonized are not pleased with the colonizers. He is complaining about the dominating power exercising its will over other lands and peoples. He ends up by giving clues that colonizers can be destructive and dangerous.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada emperyalist güçlerin ayrılmasının ardından İrlanda'nın yaşadığı güç durum anlatılmaktadır. Bahsedilen durumu açıklamak için Brian Friel'in oyunları *Translations* ve *Molly Sweeney* sömürgeci ve emperyalist açıdan bakılarak incelenmiştir. Aynı zamanda bir devlete uygulanan asgari gücün hakimiyeti vurgulanmıştır. Bu çalışma bir ülke kültürünün ve tarihinin iyi niyetli görünen güçler tarafından 'modernizasyon' adı altında nasıl değiştirildiğini anlatmaktadır.

Kimlik ve iletişim Friel'in oyunlarının iki önemli temasıdır. Friel dil ile kimlik arasında sıkı bir bağ kurmuştur. Friel'in bu iki oyununda da İrlanda kimliğinin ve dilinin önemi vurgulanarak emperyalist güçler tarafından nasıl mahvedildiği gözler önüne serilmiştir. Oysa Friel'in, insanların birbirlerinin dillerini ve tarihlerini yok etmeden de öğrenilebilecekleri yolundaki tezi bu çalışmaya yansıtılmıştır.

Sonuç olarak Friel bize sömürgeleştirilmeye çalışılan ülkelerin sömürgecilerden hiç de memnun olmadıklarını, bu benimsettirmeye çalışılan üstün güçten şikayetçi olduklarını belirtip aslında sömürgeciliğin iyi niyet adı altında yıkıcı ve tehlikeli bir unsur oluşturduğunun ipuçlarını vermiştir. Bu çalışmada da tüm bu unsurlar incelenerek anlatılmıştır.

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COLONIAL ASPECTS in BRIAN FRIEL'S PLAYS *TRANSLATIONS* and *MOLLY SWEENEY*

INTRODUCTION

This is an introduction to Irish national culture after the departure of the imperial power. These sections involve colonization in Ireland. The subject is 'colonial and postcolonial effects' on Ireland and the imperial power, which extends back five hundred years to Columbus' landing in America and the exploration of Africa in good hope. 'Good hope' with the best intentions indicates colonialism, which involves the consolidation of imperial power. First of all in this research I will indicate what the words colonial, imperial and post-colonial mean from the view point of Brian Friel's plays *Molly Sweeney* and *Translations*. 'Imperial' in this work can be taken as the authority assumed by a state, or any military power over another territory.

The approach taken in this research is to define and describe the feelings of colonized people from the view of Brian Friel's plays *Molly Sweeney* and *Translations* in order to show how colonialism affected Ireland. As Chinua Achebe indicates, 'stories define us'. 'Brian Friel's plays can also be taken as colonial literature, one which reflects the aspects of colonialism.

The first two sections deal with the settings of the two plays and the map of Ireland before and after colonization. Section three emphasizes characterization from the colonized, hybrid and ethnic viewpoints. The last two chapters will show specific analyses of linguistic and colonial aspects of Irish identity. The final section provides Ania Loomba's view of colonialism's effects on language and Edward Said's view of colonialism's effects on Irish literature.

Brian Friel's play *Translations* shows the forces of cultural imperialism at work through the colonial project; at the same time it reveals the forces of modernization. This study tries to show how the culture and history of a land can be changed by forces which seemingly have good intentions; forces defined as the work of 'colonialism' or 'modernization'.

Finally, the reference section concerns the list of critical studies in the field and also shows the publication dates of the literary texts cited.

1. A GENERAL OUTLOOK

This paper will talk about the identity issue with respect to the colonizer, the colonized, and the colonial process within power relationships in Brian Friel's *Translations*. Another major feature is the concern with place and displacement, in other words a development or recovery of an effective identity relationship between self and place that is reflected in both plays specifically. In my study, I am concerned with the formation of Irish identity and the effect of that identity. As a general outlook however, language battle is won by the colonizer for this purpose it is important to explain the term of 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' as Edward Said suggests;

The term colonialism is important in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years. Although many earlier civilizations had colonies, and although they perceived their relations with them to be one of a central emporium.... Edward Said offers the following distinction: imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; "colonialism", which is always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 8).

Michael Barrot–Brown argues the same idea as;

“Imperialism is still without question a most powerful force in the economic, political and military relations by which the less economically developed lands are subjected to the more economically developed ” (Ashcroft and Griffiths, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 25)

As the Nigerian, Chinua Achebe, describes the colonial influences from his childhood:

“We lived at the cross-roads of cultures. We still do today, but when I was a boy, one could see and sense the peculiar and the atmosphere more clearly...but still the cross-roads does have a certain dangerous potency; dangerous because a man might perish there wrestling with multiple headed sprits. (Achebe, *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures*, p. 67)

Language, for Friel, is closely implicated with identity. The names of places, for example, contain within them the history and memories, both public and private, associated with them.

In a note during his writing of *Translations*, Friel complains that;

One of the mistakes of the direction in which the play is presently pulling is the almost wholly public concern of the theme: how do his eradication of the Irish language and the substitution of English effect this particular society? How long a society lives without its tongue? Public questions; issues for politicians; and that’s what is wrong with the play now. The play must concern itself only with the exploration of the dark and private places of individuals’ souls. (Pine, *Brian Friel and Ireland’s Drama*, p. 146)

It can be said that we can or may learn other histories, identities or the historical memories without degenerating them, as the British have done in the plays. For a comprehensive approach perhaps we should first direct our focus on the author himself.

1.1 Brian Friel's most important works

His most famous plays are; *Philadelphia here I Come* (1964); *The Mundy Scheme* (1969) about the political independence of the Republic of Ireland; *The Freedom of the City* (1973) about the shooting of innocent civilians in Derry; *Translations*, (1980) about the destruction of the Gaelic language and culture; and *Making History* (1988) about the clash of Irish and English military forces in the late sixteenth century.

After 1988 he turned away from writing plays to epics and historical dramas which concentrated on personal and autobiographical themes: *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), *Molly Sweeney* (1994), and *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* (1997). His early life had a strong influence on his writing. Therefore, before examining Friel's plays we must look at the conditions into which Friel was born and from what he was influenced.

1.2 Brian Friel's political career

Brian Friel was born in 1929 in Omagh, Tyrone County, Northern Ireland. He is one of Ireland's best-known playwrights. His father was a native of Derry and a primary school principal. His mother was from Donegal. In 1939 the family moved to Derry where his father had a teaching position at the Long Tower School. Friel was educated for the priesthood at Maynooth Seminary in Ireland but instead of taking Holy Orders, he became a teacher like his father and started teaching in Derry in 1950. He wrote short stories, radio plays and stage plays.

His publishing career began in 1955. In that year he published two stories. He then had two radio plays performed on BBC. His first stage play was *The Enemy*, which is about his religious calling and the demands of his family and home in Ireland. This play was first performed at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1962. From 1964 to 1988 Friel's plays concentrated on the lives of private individuals exploring the impact of national and global historical forces, which is seen in *Translations* and *Molly Sweeney*. His plays suggest that communities, including

family communities, are under a severe threat. His geographic area and family life in his plays become a metaphor for a wider audience. His aim is to show the fragility of all communities and his keen awareness of the poor quality of language as a means of communication. For Friel, communication is evidently an important key to community at all levels.

Communication's importance is also seen in his language, because as a citizen of Gaelic Ireland, he finds himself in the ironic position of writing about native Irish culture in the language of Ireland's colonizer. His plays, especially *Translations*, show the effects of his imperialist language. He had no choice but to write in English in order to reach a broader audience.

Friel demonstrates just how much more satisfying this can be for a much wider audience than simply the people of his home; the northern counties of Ireland. The year in which *Translations* is set Ireland remained a rural Catholic, Gaelic speaking country, under English colonial rule as a result of serious invasions. By that time, the Irish people had to speak English to be allowed to become traders or merchants. That's why communication is an important issue in Friel's plays.

The 1920 Government of Ireland Act divided the island into two separate states, a condition that still exists.

In 1948 the southern, independent state, called Irish Free State, became the Republic of Ireland. Since the partition, Northern Ireland has continued to be divided along largely sectarian lines; Irish-Catholic versus Irish-British-Protestant, with the political power, until recently, in the hands of the Protestants, who have always been much more closely aligned with Great Britain. With Northern Ireland still a colonial base of sorts, the focus of artistic language expression seems to have shifted from Dublin to Belfast and Derry. Brian Friel came from the North where the colonial influence is felt strongly

George O'Brien explains the political situation in Derry during Friel's childhood:

Derry, Northern Ireland's second largest city, had since the state's inception suffered in a particularly fashion from the ruling Unionist party's juridical and social inequities. Despite the majority of its citizens being Catholic Nationalists, they had virtually no chance of replacing the monopoly of Protestant Unionists on the city council, a monopoly maintained by careful gerrymandering of the city's electoral wards and by plural voting rights based on property holding. Friel's father was active in Nationalist circles in the town, as was Friel himself for a period. But the combination of social deprivation and political frustration had a strong effect. (O'Brien, *Brian Friel*, p. 2)

The Irish were feeling increasingly rebellious. Rebellion surfaced most dramatically in the Fenian Revolt of 1866, but rebellion can also be read in the lines of Irish melodramas. In these conditions Friel and his colleagues took to their pens in order to start their revolt, to break out of the chains of the past and to save Irish identity.

Friel's plays mostly deal with identity, the notion of truth and communication, which is only possible through language, as it is seen above.

Tobair Vree. And why do we call it Tobair Vree? I'll tell you why. Tobair means a well. (Friel, *Translations*, p. 53)

This tells where the name comes from historically and also that the identity of a place can be changed by altering its name. According to him, identity is formed through memory, both public and private, and it is the collective memories of a community that distinguishes it from others. However, communal memories often conflict with individual experience and several communal memories may exist simultaneously even within an individual.

According to this point different emotive memories and experiences of individuals and communities allow for different perspectives and perceptions of reality to exist. In examining the issue of memory, Friel exposes the falsity in the notion of a single, comprehensive history or truth. What becomes important is not a factual history or identity but the exploration of different histories and identities.

2. THE SETTING

2.1 The Field Day Group

In this post-colonial environment a group of writers from Northern Ireland combined their efforts into a literary movement concerned with Irish society and identity. The Field Day Group began in 1980. In the same year, the play *Translations* was first performed by The Field Group in the Guilhill theatre in Derry. This was a gathering of writers, artists and actors. Their project was to reinvigorate the political consciousness of Irish literary arts with a respect for the traditions of the nation, self and language. This group was also part of the current Abbey theatre.

Another aim of the Field Day Group was to discuss the potency of language as a way of communicating meaning, accommodating experience and expressing cultural identity and values. They decided to rehearse and premiere the play in Derry with the hope of establishing a major theatre company in Northern Ireland. From the beginning the Field Day struggled to establish a cultural identity, not just for the North, but for all Irish. Much like the stated intentions of the Irish National Theatre established by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory almost one hundred years earlier, the goal was not just to reach or represent an audience, but to create an audience. History and Field Day's post-colonial sensibilities determined that the construction of Irishness would often be worked out against notions of Britishness. In his essay "Brecht and Friel: Some Irish Parallels," Eric Binnie observes that;

The aims of Field Day Theatre Company are to create a shared context which might make possible communication across Ireland's border; to give all Irishmen an artistic 'fifth province' rising above and covering the whole island, an hypothetical province which would neither accept the North/South division,, nor ignore the separate traditional strengths of those on either side. Thus Field Day is located in the North (British Ireland) and works in both North and South, yet has strong reservations about both. The intention is to create awareness, a sense of the whole country, North and South together, and to examine predominate attitudes to the island as a whole.

Friel's artistic development since the formation of Field Day has moved steadily towards a closer integration of historical considerations and contemporary themes, achieved, for example by examining the role of language as a reflection of national character (Binnie, p. 366)

Binnie thus summarizes the aim and method of Friel and the Field Day Group colleagues. In addition, the words below also summarize the conditions of Ireland during those days;

You will understand I draw the line,
At being robbed what is mine,
My path's my deep design
To be at home
In my own place and dwell within
It's proper name.....
(Ireland's Field Day Theatre Group)

2.2 The view of the colonizers towards the place

As expressed before, in the year in which *Translation* is set, Ireland remained a Catholic, Gaelic-speaking country. It was under English colonial rule as a result of a series of wars between 1169 and 1603. Under English colonial rule the Irish suffered a lot and were punished for being Catholic. They were forbidden some of their traditions and some religious education. They were also barred from owning land and entering professional occupations. Such laws had caused considerable damage to Irish society and culture. In addition, the Irish people had to speak English to be allowed to become traders or merchants, while the lower classes in Ireland who spoke Gaelic were Catholic and were tenants on the land without any protection. According to these conditions many of the Irish chose to immigrate to the United States; many chose to rebel against the British dominion, as it is reflected in *Translations*.

Seamus Deane points out the historical process of Ireland as;

Ireland is the only Western European country that has had both an early and late colonial experience. Out of that, Ireland produced, in the first three decades of this century, a remarkable literature in which the attempt to overcome and replace the colonial experience by something other, something that would be 'native' and yet not provincial, was a dynamic and central energy. The ultimate failure of that attempt to imagine a truly liberating cultural alternative is as well known as the brilliance of the initial effort. Now that the established system has again been called into question, even to the point where it must seriously alter or collapse, Irish writing, operating in the shadow or in the wake of the earlier attempt, has once more raised the question of how the individual subject can be envisaged in relation to its community, its past history, and a possible future. (Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature*, p. 4)

2.3 Brian Friel's choice of setting

Brian Friel chose Dublin and Derry for his major works *Molly Sweeney* and *Translations*. Derry is Northern Ireland's second largest city and a significant choice for both geographical and historical reasons and for its roles in the events leading up to the most recent round of violence. With its western location and its relationship to Belfast, Northern Ireland's east coast capital underlines a second historically older division in Ireland; the division between the cosmopolitan east and the rural, romantic West. Dublin, on the east coast of Ireland, is a complex city including invaders, traders, opportunists and social visitors. Robert Lynd describes Dublin—with its wide central streets, its statues and its time-darkened buildings—as having a dignity such as one associates with some of the southern towns in the United States; a dignity of memories and manners. Brian Friel chose those cities because they had been struggling for their independence since their foundation.

3. THE SUMMARIES OF THE PLAYS

The play *Translations* tells the story of a small community that is under change. It can't be read as anything other than a political play because it openly talks about the troubles of Northern Ireland. It would be hard to deny that the play has an explicitly political message. Most of the action takes place in a Hedge school. Hedge schools were underground throughout the 18th century. They were based in barns and sod houses. Hedge schools were set up in local communities throughout Ireland in response to the penal laws enacted by the English rulers. The basic plot of the play depicts a family whose father is a Hedge schoolmaster called Hugh. However, Hugh has grown old, and his son Manus runs most parts of the school. Hugh's other son Owen has been away for six years making his fortune in the British army as an engineer and he has returned from a cartography mission with two British officers; their aim was to map the land and rename the places with English approximations. In fact, *Translations* is a play about the relationship between different languages and cultures, in which the more powerful culture tries to change the other. It shows the opposition between the Irish people and the English soldiers who speak English and seem to be unaware of any culture outside their own. That's why they try to map the land and change the names according to their own culture; to understand the land better. Manus, Doalty and Bridget are suspicious of the English soldiers and suspect that the map the soldiers are making is not as harmless as Owen wants them to believe. One of the officers falls in love both with Ireland and one of the Hedge school students, Maire. But there are problems with language since they cannot communicate because of their different cultures.

It is the tension between these characters from different cultures and of different personalities that makes some enthusiastic to communicate and some to reject it; And it is this which propels the plot of the play forward. At the end of the play Yolland, the officer who falls in love with Maire, disappears and the British Army come for him, threatening to destroy every place they have just renamed if the town's people don't hand over Yolland. In short, Friel's play examines the impact of political conflict on human relationships in one small community within the scope of a few days.

The other important idea in the play is, as it is mentioned above, language. Friel offers us another example of the problems with language itself, in which words work better for connecting us with the world. What we come to understand at the end of the play is that; it's not the facts of history that shape us, but how those facts are told and the language that's used to re-tell those stories. Language is as important as history because language tells us about our history.

Molly Sweeney can also be seen as a prose poem because of its monologist form. It is a story about a woman who was blind since the age of ten months. She is happily married to Frank. Frank becomes increasingly fascinated by his wife's impaired vision and endlessly researches ophthalmology issues related to her blindness. With his boundless energy and enthusiasm, he finally convinces Molly to undergo a series of operations that could restore her sight.

Their hopes are tied to Mr. Rice, a world-renowned eye surgeon, who fled to New York after his wife left him for one of his colleagues. He still prides himself as a fearless doctor respected and celebrated wherever he appears.

His dormant ambition of proving himself one last time comes alive when he meets Molly. Molly, substituting her lack of vision with a beautiful imagination, is at first reluctant to go through with the ordeal but is convinced when she sees the importance her operation has for Frank and Mr. Rice. Expectations and anticipations grow as the moment nears when Molly is to discard her bandage and unveil the result of the operation. Miraculously she regains her sight. At first bewildered by the sensory overload, Molly soon enters a state of profound disillusionment as her safe and secure world, created by her vivid imagination, is swapped for a reality she is not ready to deal with. As a result, Molly becomes 'blind-sighted'—her vision is clear and her movements respond to what she sees, but none of the images reach her consciousness. In her mind the world around her has grown darker than before the operation. She spends her days in a hospital, awaiting letters from Frank, whose ambition and hunger for life has propelled him to Ethiopia, where he leads a relief mission.

4. CHARACTERIZATION

Hugh, Jack, Jimmy, Sarah, Yolland, Manus, Owen and Maire are the main characters in the play.

Hugh is the schoolmaster and the father of Owen and Manus. He represents the culture and lifestyle of Ireland.

Manus is the schoolmaster's older son. He is his father's helper and he is lame. He dreams about marrying Maire in the future. Because of his father's old age sometimes he runs the lessons in the school. He tries to teach Sarah to speak.

Sarah is one of the students in the school. She is partially dumb and has difficulty in speaking; however, she desires to communicate and this urge symbolizes the striving towards finding an identity.

Maire is another student in the school. She falls in love with one of the British officers. She too has difficulty in communication with her lover because of cultural differences. However, he is willing to learn the other culture and this shows the possibility for peace between two nations or two cultures—by their willingness to learn about one another's values and customs.

Owen is the other son of the schoolmaster. He had left home six years ago and he returns in the opening scene as a translator for the two British officers involved in coordinating the ordinance survey. The ordinance survey is the re-mapping of the land as a result of the dissatisfaction of the British rulers because of disorder and inadequate tax collecting. The British government wishes to calculate all measurements of the land and has decided to remap it to gain more accurate information about the tax-troubled areas and of course to gain benefits.

Yolland is one of the British officers. He is entranced with the romance of the land he has come to alter with language and law. At the end of the play he falls in love with Maire and with the realization of what has happened to him, he disappears.

Lancey is the other British officer. He is an expert cartographer.

Jimmy Jack is the man through whom the fallacy of living a mythical past is expressed. He is removed from the realities that he exists within. Fluent in the Classical mythology he studies, he contentedly reads his Homer in Greek. A bachelor in his sixties, he lives alone and comes to the evening classes for the intellectual stimulation. For Jimmy, the world of the gods and ancient myths is as real and as immediate as everyday life in the town of Baily Beag.

4.1 Colonized Characters

At the end of the two plays there is a conclusion giving clues to a shattered identity and a colonized and altered Ireland. Finally, from the viewpoint of the colonizers it seems “freedom” and “modernity” are viewed from outside, particularly from the colonizers’ perspective. As Salman Rushdie points out;

‘Never seen the like. Hundreds of years of decent government, then suddenly, up and off. You will admit we weren’t all bad: built your roads. Schools, railway trains, parliamentary system, all worthwhile things. Taj Mahal was falling down until an Englishman bothered to see it. And now, suddenly, independence....’
(Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, p. 96)

However, Ireland has lost its original “independence” as it is seen with Molly’s new sight; that although she regains her ability to see, she doesn’t want to live in a world the colonizers have created for them. It is impossible now to live in their altered state because everything has changed according to the colonizer’s will. The same idea is seen in *Translations*, too.

As Salman Rushdie indicates;

‘....In every room here there are talking budgies, and in the admirals...And old man Ibrahim is refusing to switch on the ceiling fan in his bedroom, muttering, That machine will fall - it will slice my head off in the night –how long can something so heavy stick on the ceiling?’...and Homi Catrack who is something of an ascetic is

obliged to lie on a large soft mattress, he is suffering from backache and sleeplessness and the dark rings...' (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, p. 98).

These words show how the colonized people try to get used to the colonizers' attitudes.

According to this point Edward Said emphasizes that;

The world cannot long afford so heady a mixture of patriotism, relative solipsism, social authority, unchecked aggressiveness and defensiveness towards others.... The effort to homogenize and isolate in the name of nationalism (not liberation) has led to colossal sacrifices and failures. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 262)

4.2 Hybrid Characters

In these plays it is clearly seen that the nation comes from afar and tries seemingly with good intentions to change the other nation, but by gaining benefits at the expense of the latter. This hybridity is seen in various characters, especially in Yolland and Lancey, the two British officers.

Hybridity is expressed by Hommy Babbha as;

Hybridity has frequently been used in post-colonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural 'exchange'. This use of the term has been widely criticized, since it usually implies negating and neglecting the ambiance and inequality of the power relations it references.

By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonized and the colonizer, it has been regarded as replicating assimilationist policies by masking or 'whitewashing' cultural differences. (Bhabha, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 38)

This trait is seen in the character Owen; he can be seen as an example of Bhabha's 'whitewashing'. His ideas are the same as the British officers. Without Owen they can't change the names of the land in the same way they can't reach their aim. However, Owen is so willing to change his identity in modernity that he doesn't care about his traditional values, as Brian Friel has expressed before. In a cultural context Dion Boucicault expressed that; "one should strive to sound English in order to achieve economic, political and social success." (Boucicault, *The Colleen Bawn*, p. 23)

Molly and Sarah are the hybrid characters. They both try to learn their new land. Molly wants to learn "utterly and immediately every detail" and dumb Sarah trying to make out sounds to speak but speaking a foreign language; they are now in the world of the colonized and aren't allowed things as they wish. In other words, they are creating a new world for themselves and trying to adapt to it. Later, when the colonized won't adapt to this new world, that's to say, if the colonized and colonizer are not in harmony, the colonized will revolt.

5. ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY FROM THE POST-COLONIAL VIEWPOINT

Translations is Friel's vehicle for representing methods central to the colonial discourse of imperialist aspiration. In the foreground of the play the audience is presented with the British Ordnance Survey of Ireland, a process of mapping, renaming and Anglicizing Ireland. Friel portrays the clash between languages and the use of education as a method of resolving the cultural and unequal relationship between colonized and colonizer.

5.1 Irish identity

In section two we see the implications of a new language on Irish identity.

And every child from every house has to go all day, every day,
summer or winter. That's the law. And everything's free in them.
You pay for nothing except the books you use; that's what our
Seamus says. 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 (Friel, *Translations*, p. 19)

Friel reveals that the play revolves around the subject of names and their relation to identity, culture and the possession or dispossession that comes with renaming. Edward Sapir explains the social importance of names and signifiers;

"A further psychological characteristic of language is that while it may be looked upon as a symbolic system which reports or refers to or otherwise substitutes for direct experience, it does not as a matter of actual behavior stand apart from or run parallel to direct experience but completely interpenetrates with it. (Sapir, *Language, Culture and Society*, p. 50)

In the first scene Sarah is represented by struggling to say her name meanwhile establishing her identity. However she is silenced once the colonizers arrive.

We should all be learning to speak English. That's what my mother says. That's what I say. That's what Dan O'Connell said last month in Ennis. He said the sooner we all learn to speak English the better. The old language is a barrier to modern progress. He said that last month. And he's right. I don't want Greek. I don't want Latin. I want English. The sappers have already mapped most of the area. (Friel, *Translations*, p.24)

5.2 Anglicizing and Transliteration

Yolland's official task, which Owen is now doing, is to take each of the Gaelic Names -- every hill, stream, rock, distinctive Irish name -- and Anglicize it, either by changing it into its approximate English sound or by translating it into English words. For example, a Gaelic name like Cnoc Ban could become Knockban or -- directly translated -- Fair Hill. These new standardized names were entered into the Name-Book, and when the new maps appeared they contained all these new Anglicized names.

Owen's official function as translator is to pronounce each name in Irish and then provide the English translation. (Friel, *Translations*, p. 24)

This is a symbolic idea that means the colonizers have taken away the Irish identity and have silenced them by transliteration and Anglicizing. Through transliteration they forced them to learn English.

And every child from every house has to go all day, every day, summer or winter. That's the law. (Friel, *Translations*, p. 19)

By doing this, the British caused linguistic mutilation, which damages the Irish language, a symbol of identity and the same time Anglicizing both the land and the society's mind.

The phrase goes. And I'm interrupting work of moment. (He goes to the door and stops there). To return briefly to that other matter, Lieutenant, I understand your sense of exclusion, of being cut off from a life here; and I trust you will find access to us with my son's

help. But remember that words are signals, counters. They are not immortal. And it can happen – to use an image you'll understand – it can happen that a civilization can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of ... fact. (Friel, *Translations*, pp. 51-52)

By this idea the play indicates that Britain began to make deeper inroads into Irish society and culture. This is an attempt to colonize the mind and the people as opposed to conquering the land through brute force.

As Jamaica Kincaid says:

And so everywhere they went they turned into England; and everybody they met they turned into English. But no place could ever really be England, and nobody who did not look exactly like them would ever be English. (Kincaid, *A Small Place*, p. 8)

The same idea is expressed by Ania Loomba:

In Brian Friel's play, the colonial struggle in Ireland is represented as a contest over words and language. Set in a Hedge-school in Donegal in 1833, it shows how British cartographers, with the Irish help attempted to transliterate and Anglicize Gaelic names for various places in Ireland. At the same time, the Hedge-school's days are numbered, for a national educational system in English is the offing. In this powerful play, the linguistic mutilation of Ireland overlaps with the penetration and 'mapping' of the land. At the same time, English incomprehension of Gaelic is a measure of the distance between the colonizers and the colonized, and their dependence upon Irish subordinates a comment both on the nature of colonial authority and on the complex positioning of the colonial subject. The English Yolland needs the Irish Owen's help to rename Irish place-names, but can not even get the letters name right (Loomba, *Colonialism and Post-colonialism*, p. 25)

Owen: I suppose we could Anglicize it [Bun na hAbbann] to Bunowen; but somehow that's neither fish nor flesh (Yolland closes his eyes again)

Yolland: Give up.

Owen: (at map) back to first principles. What are we trying to do?

Yolland: Good question.

Owen: We are trying to denominate and at the same time describe that tiny area of soggy, rocky, sandy ground where that little stream enters the sea, an area known

locally as Bun na hAbhann ... Burnfoot! What about
Burnfoot?
Yolland: (Indifferently) Good, Roland, Burnfoot's good.
Owen: George, my name isn't ...
Yolland: B-u-r-n-f-o-o-t?

(Friel, *Translations*, p. 39)

The same idea is mentioned by Edward Said, too;

Britain's Ireland was subjected to innumerable metamorphoses through repeated settling projects and, in culmination, its virtual incorporation in 1801 through the Act of Union. Thereafter an Ordnance Survey of Ireland was ordered in 1824 whose goal was to Anglicize the names, redraw the land boundaries to permit valuation of property (and further expropriation of land in favor of English and 'seigniorial' families), and permanently subjugate the population. The survey was carried out almost entirely by English personnel, which, as Mary Hamer has cogently argued, had the 'immediate effect of defining the Irish as incompetent [and] ... depress [ing their] national achievement'. One of Brian Friel's most powerful plays, *Translations* (1980), deals with the shattering effect of the Ordnance Survey on the indigenous inhabitants.

'In such a process,' Hamer continues, 'the colonized is typically [supposed to be] passive and spoken for, does not control its own representation but is represented in accordance with a hegemonic impulse by which it is constructed as a stable and unitary entity.' And what was done in Ireland was also done in Bengal or, by the French, in Algeria.

Once of the first tasks of the culture of resistance was to reclaim, rename, and re-inhabit the land. And with that came a whole set of further assertions, recoveries, and identifications, all of them quite literally grounded on this poetically projected base. The search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes and (occasionally) heroines, myths, and religions-these too are made possible by a sense of the land re-appropriated by its people. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 273)

5.3 Communal aspects in the play

On the other hand, there is the effort of Maire and Yolland to comprehend each other. It had been unsuccessful because of the differences in culture embodied in language that fell through the gaps of *Translations*. This is an ideal relationship between two cultures.

They try to resolve their differences, they try to find out what they love in each other's culture and they try to express themselves instead of causing violence and destruction.

However, by the end of the play, Yolland disappears and this shows that such a relationship is impossible from the perspective of colonialism and imperialism.

A similar effect of colonial power is seen in Brian Friel's play *Molly Sweeney*. It has been described as Friel's least political play. In fact, the play does not dramatize an open conflict between Ireland and England; however, it conflates Molly's individual history with that of Ireland. *Molly Sweeney* narrows its focus to the colonizers' impact on the life of the individual history with that of Ireland. First of all, Friel's play gives us three characters; Molly, as it is expressed above, is a character who had lost her sight when she was a baby and yet she has been happy, capable and independent for forty sightless years; her husband Frank, a self-taught, unemployed, restless enthusiast who makes his new wife's blindness his latest cause; and Mr. Rice, a once famous ophthalmologist whose career, like his sorrows, is half-drowned in Irish whiskey. These characters speak in monologues, all in past tense. The monologues show their absolute loneliness, because they are not speaking to each other.

In a way, this loneliness and speaking about memories of the past are metaphors for Ireland's past and its loneliness. All of Friel's plays are memory plays and are a dream world beyond space and time where the characters hope to find the kind of personal fulfillment impossible in the real world they know. As it is seen in *Molly*, she is happy in her dream world (her blindness). In a way this is her real tactile world, her Ireland. The real world she experiences after the surgery makes

her unhappy. The new visual world overwhelms her, crushing her mind and her spirit, leaving her exiled from her accustomed home in darkness, unable to feel at home in the light. She feels alienated in this light because this is not the light that her father taught her symbolically; this is not the Ireland she had lived in since her childhood. While she was blind she felt at home; with her new-found vision she does not feel at home because this is not what she wanted to see. This point shows the universality of Friel's characters because his characters never really want to leave home metaphorically like Molly.

As it is expressed by Heidegger;

Imperial conquest has always destroyed the land and often regarded the human occupants as disposable, almost as if they were species of exotic fauna. But the conquerors themselves, the present controllers of the means of communication, those who have subjugated or annihilated the original occupants could not feel at home in the place of the colonized. Out of this sense of displacement emerges the discourse of place, which informs the post-colonial condition. This *Unheimlichkeit* (Heidegger 1927) or 'not at homeless' (Heidegger, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 144)

5.4 Colonial aspects in the play

Friel's characters are always restless, they move in strange directions, dreaming of journeys that never take place. Molly is a symbol of the colonial past. She acts for the Gaelic Ireland, a metaphor for the colonized country, and her madness represents the post-colonial state, in other words, Irish life under English control and her treatment shows Ireland's healing after colonization. Her madness can also refer to an impossible idea of the colonizers, such as invading another land with good intentions.

Molly had dull blindness. In other words she was not born completely blind; she could distinguish between light and dark; she could detect the shadow of Frank's hand moving in front of her face. This symbolically refers to an Ireland that was not colonized; in the early years it was an independent country. The colonized years of this land show Molly's blindness and the later years after surgery show

the post-colonized state; a new vision which Molly represented, for the majority of Ireland does not want to see. At the end of the play Molly tells us;

'I think I see nothing at all now. But I am not absolutely sure of that. Anyhow my borderline country is where I live now. I am at home there. Well...at ease there.' (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 69)

With her new sight she thinks she doesn't belong to her country anymore. She decided to live in her borderline country, which refers to Gaelic Ireland. She wants her decolonized country. Here sighted refers to the colonizer who can see the qualities of a land using and corrupting the land seemingly in good "will". Unsighted refers to Gaelic Ireland, those who cannot see the dangers of the colonizers and Ireland as a colonized country. Rice, while conveying Molly's pre-surgery is presented as;

...her calm and independence, her confident way she shook his hand and found a seat for herself with her white cane. And when she spoke of her disability; there was no self-pity, no hint of resignation. (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*. p. 11)

The Gaelic Ireland is described as it is mentioned above. The invaders seem to come with good intentions but Ireland has no self-pity. She is confident and although having a disability there is no hint of resignation, which means no need for any good will by the invaders.

After the surgery we see Mr. Rice asking Molly:

"Tell us how do you think your world compares with the world the rest of us know, the world you should share with us if you had visual perception as well?" (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*. p. 18)

In fact Mr. Rice wants to learn the state of Ireland before and after the colonization. Molly's sight is symbolic; she has to compare those two worlds. Later Frank indicates of Molly's sight:

"Absolutely no doubt about it! A new world—A new life! A new life for both of us! (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 20)

'A new life for both of them' is also symbolic because this is the new life given by the colonizers; different from Irish traditional values, with new place names, new living circumstances.

Molly defines her altered world as:

"I was afraid that things turned out as Frank and Mr. Rice hoped, I was afraid that I would never again know these people as I knew them now, with my own special knowledge of each of them, the distinctive sense each of them exuded for me; and I knowing them differently, I wondered would I ever be as close to them as I was."
(Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 25)

It is seen that Molly is afraid of this new world and its outcome; she is afraid of not having the same relationship with those people she knew after the colonization because they will have changed.

In fact her operation is a symbol of the colonization. After the operation she will have a new sight and according to it she will create a new world for herself, as it is expressed:

"A world of objects and ideas and meanings. We aren't given that world... make it ourselves-through our experiences, by our memory, by making categories, by interconnections...Put it another way: She would have to create a whole new world of her own."
(Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 17)

In this new world she doesn't have the chance to turn back to her former life because the colonizer will change everything in the land they invade so that nothing traditional is left, as it is said before, they try to change the map of Derry. They try to change the borders and they try to change their language. What else can be said about it; all the values are changed. That's why we see Molly saying:

"I just wanted to take perhaps a last walk; in my own world; by myself. (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 33)

Later during the symbolic operation there are again Molly's feelings, which refer to Ireland's feelings:

"And then with sudden anger I thought: why am I going for this operation? None of this is my choosing. Then why is this happening to me? I am being used. Of course I trust Mr. Rice. Of course I trust Frank. But how can they know what they are taking away from me? How do they know what they are offering to me? They don't. They can't. And have I anything to gain? Anything? Anything? And then I knew, suddenly I knew why I was so desolate. It was the dread of exile, of being sent away. It was the desolation of homesickness." (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 25)

It is known that all invaders came with good intentions. Their aim is to bring freedom and equality. However, as it is said above, Ireland screams, "I am being used." Frank and Rice here refer to the good-intentioned invaders who appear good-willed; that's why Ireland wants to trust them. Ireland tries to say that the invaders can't know what they are trying to do to the colonized because the invaders are not at their status and their values are not degenerate. Ireland speaks of this as going to exile, being sent away and that means homesickness. On the other side, Mr. Rice refers to the operation— which symbolizes colonization—as:

"That would be a total success for me" (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 33)

This is the invaders' feelings after getting the land changed according to their own values. While the land is under colonization, the Irish call it homesickness and the colonizers call it 'success'; they don't care about the feelings of the colonized. They don't care what the colonized lose. Meanwhile, Mr. Rice is seen traveling to New York; then he returns to Ireland and resigns from his position at the hospital in Ballybeg. Their colonizing project hasn't turned out as they had planned because the colonizers are always a step ahead; they have the freedom to move on. On the other hand, the colonized are always limited.

The other characters are Molly's mother and father. Molly's father is portrayed as a drunken man who shows Ireland's melancholic situation; one that cannot see the realities. The mother, having a nervous disorder, is given as a metaphor for

the traditional Gaelic Ireland that can't endure the colonization and the changes anymore. Later the mother is seen in a mental institution; again, this shows the post-colonized Ireland trying to heal. However, like Molly, her mother collapses into silence.

“Molly just for days she might be found sitting alone in her bedroom with her eyes shut...just sitting there in silence. (Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p.35)

This shows that the new Ireland will never regain her earlier years; she will struggle to live with her new altered position; those who cope with the new position will live with those who can't cope and will collapse into silence.

Molly's final aspects represent several defining features of 1990s Ireland. This shows us the displaced people whose distrusting reality leads them to root themselves into ideas rather than to places.

Unlike *Translations*; *Molly Sweeney* is set in the present. The play is about the post-colonial Ireland. The men in Molly's Sweeney's life are colonized men. From the view point of Molly there is double force and double meaning.

Double force because Rice and Frank insist on her having the operation and try to teach her the new names they were forced to learn by the colonizer. Molly has, accordingly, double force and double meaning, before her sight and after her sight. In other words she is the post-colonized of the colonized.

...by the time she was five years of age her father had thought her the names of dozens of flowers and herbs and shrubs and trees.
(Friel, *Molly Sweeney*, p. 13)

And now this is the father, in other words the colonized father, teaching her names in English. All the three men in her life teach her different things. It is as if she is having an exam. This recalls *Translations* naming power and it is seen in *Molly Sweeney* as well.

According to Ania Loomba, Molly's world and Yolland's recognition imitates the "otherness" of Gaelic culture. Like Molly's new world, Yolland's recognition that Gaelic Baily Beag represents a different consciousness

"...striving nor agitated, but at its ease and with its own conviction and assurance" (Friel, *Translations*, p. 40)

Like Yolland, Molly won't leave Baily Beag. This is characteristic of Friel's plays; the characters feel homesick.

Displacement or dislocation is a feature of all invaded colonies where indigenous or original cultures are, if not annihilated, often literally dislocated, i.e., moved off what was their territory. At best they are metaphorically dislocated, placed into a hierarchy that sets their culture aside and ignores its institutions and values in favor of the values and practices of the colonizing culture. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 74)

The same idea is indicated by Walter Benjamin;

"There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism"

Molly Sweeney is built up on the life of the individual because the play is built upon monologues, whereas *Translations* is concerned with the community.

CONCLUSION

Finally, in both of these plays we see the invaders degenerating other lands, allegedly to bring freedom. Although it seems to make the colonized happy, later on they feel unhappy and homesick. As it is seen from the plays and from the feelings of the colonized, no one has the right to change the other's language and to redraw their borders. It is clear that the colonized are not pleased with the colonizer. Both of the plays are complaining about the dominating power over their countries. Even though all the characters in those plays want to learn about modernity, technology, and all that, which the colonizer had done, they won't give up their freedom, which is only possible by the colonizers bringing innovation without preventing their freedom. In the play *Translations* the colonizers upon reaching that place, there arose a language and identity crisis. It was a great mistake trying to change Ireland into another Europe. The same serious fact is also seen in *Molly Sweeney*; by changing names and trying to teach them their own language. According to these incredible changes Molly decides to live in blindness. According to this situation as an enlightened intellectual Fanon found the following of the west blindly abhorrent and called such kind of people, monkeys. Because they ended in disaster everywhere they went. Consequently, colonizers can also be called the destructive generation.

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APPENDIX A: MAPS

The geographical location of Derry and Dublin and their relationship to Belfast, Northern Ireland's east coast capital.



