

Colby



Colby Quarterly

Volume 37
Issue 3 *September*

Article 5

September 2001

Idioms of Change: The Structuring of Cultural Identities through Language in Friel's Translations

Sara E. Wheaton

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq>

Recommended Citation

Colby Quarterly, Volume 37, no.3, September 2001, p.236-246

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Quarterly by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.

Idioms of Change: The Structuring of Cultural Identities through Language in Friel's Translations

By SARA E. WHEATON

BRIAN FRIEL'S "language of theater" has been said to address "deepening ironies and contradictions of our age" (Etherton quoted in Friel 3). Clearly, ironies of language are evident in his play *Translations*—first performed twenty years ago by Friel and Stephen Rea's newly formed Field Day Theatre Company—which is itself a riddle of translation. On stage, the Irish members of a local hedge school regularly deliver phrases in Latin and Greek, the translations of which are roughly given in succeeding responses through context or paraphrase. Moreover, the audience is meant to understand that a major portion of the dialogue, while spoken and enacted in English, actually occurs in a fourth, unspoken language: Gaelic. This effective absence of the very language often considered central to questions of Irish culture (voiced only in the speaking of place names that the English have come to "standardize" out of the Irish tongue) denotes the near disappearance of Gaelic as a result of English domination.

The British had long sought to prevent the Gaelicization of English settlers and to facilitate colonial rule of the "primitive" Irish by requiring use of English. In 1367 the Statutes of Kilkenny barred Gaelic speech from "the Pale" and courts of law. When in 1800 the empire officially subsumed Ireland into its "United Kingdom," as Dean identifies, the "long disputed colony" became "integral to the imperial power and yet remained a problematic element within it" (363). The inauguration of an Irish national school system in 1833, the year in which *Translations* is set, can therefore be seen to perpetuate a long-standing tradition of cultural suppression in Ireland. One cannot help but note the irony in Lord Stanley's institution of compulsory, state-funded education to be conducted completely in English, thirty-seven years before the British government established such a comprehensive program in England proper.¹ Furthermore, it was here—not England—that the

1. Tony Crowley brought this irony to my attention. In 1870 nationally funded "board schools" were established in Great Britain, and in 1876 and 1880 compulsory elementary education was mandated (Wardle 70ff). Akenson marks 1831 as the beginning of the establishment of a national school system in Ireland (59, 122). While he contends that the national schools "cannot be blamed for the abandonment of Irish by many Irishmen as early as 1831" and that there was no rule against the use of Gaelic in them as "hardly anyone seems to have even considered that it might be used," he himself notes the unavailability of information from before 1831 for tracking this decline (380-81). Furthermore, Akenson cites economic and social causes of the near cessation of the native tongue—factors highlighted by the language debates in Crowley's book—which are clearly the result, whether directly or indirectly, of British colonization.

British began their Ordnance survey of the empire which required the Anglicization of Irish place names (Friel 31, 43).

Discourse on Irish nationalism has considered the impact of and possible responses to this intentional suppression. Movements seeking the “production and recovery of a national literature and [...] revival of the national language” (Deane 363) have conflicted with positions such as “Liberator” Daniel O’Connell’s that “the old language” was “a barrier to modern progress” (Friel 25; Crowley 185). The strands of discourse represented in *Translations* echo issues raised by such language debates. Here Friel explores through idiom and gesture, the role of language in forming cultural identities. While language is shown to shape and be closely tied to identity, the multiple perspectives in the text points to a fluidity that enables culture to supersede both colonialist and nationalist expectations of Irish culture. His polyphonic construction of the relation of language and cultural identity suggests a synthesis of opposing themes that addresses itself with timeliness to the present truce. While language is shown to significantly shape culture, and culture to shape identity, neither constitutes identity’s sole essence. Since language is a fluid medium, as Friel portrays, possibilities for new linguistic expression emerge in the changes of history and culture over time, possibilities that allow for the necessary renewal of both cultural and personal identity.

The recognition of identity begins with naming. As words in language bestow identity by giving different labels to distinct items, naming establishes the birth of personal identity. The play opens as the waiflike Sarah, previously silent because of a speech defect, symbolically gives birth as Manus coaxes her to breath deeply and deliver her own name (12). This event is juxtaposed with the disclosure of both the child’s and the father’s identities in the reported christening of Nellie Ruadh’s newborn (18, 23). This idea that names can reveal knowledge is in keeping with Manus’s anticipation of the “secrets” the now articulate Sarah will divulge (12). Furthermore, when the hedge-school master, Hugh, comments wryly on one recent dropout, “Nora Dan can now write her name—Nora Dan’s education is complete,” he points to education (although certainly extending beyond learning the pronunciation and physical representation of one’s name) as also beginning with the language of self-identification (24).

In this culture, place names also denominate personal and local identities. When Owen enters, he asks for his father by calling his name and place of occupation—“Could anybody tell me is this where Hugh Mor O’Donnell holds his hedge school?” (26). Moreover, he remembers Sarah by more than her chiasmic full name, Sarah Johnny Sally; he names where she lives as well and then gives his own name and place of origin (28). Sarah is later asked to repeat this means of identification under less pleasant circumstances by both Manus and Captain Lancey (56, 62). In a similar fashion, Hugh, calling upon his beloved classical tradition, jokes that “Sophocles from Colonus” would agree with the thick-headed “Doalty Dan Doalty from Tulach Alainn” (24). Alternatively, Lancey’s threatening of Bridget in the play’s closing act asserts

this connection between place and identity negatively: “I know you. I know where you live” (62).

Labels, however, are not always reflective of reality. Jimmy Jack Cassie, who is happiest reading and speaking Latin and Greek, is paradoxically named “the Infant Prodigy.” This inappropriate appellation of “infant” (derived from the Latin *in fans*, meaning “without speech”), along with the classical learning of the other hedge-school pupils, actually works to falsify common colonialist stereotypes of the Irish that would portray them as child-like, simple, ignorant, and barbaric (Deane 364). Hugh’s boast of the “happy conjugation” of Irish culture and the classical tongues is connective and cross-cultural in scope (25). In light of this learning and Jimmy Jack’s fluency, his familiar reprimand of his students—“*Ignari, stulti, rustici*” [Ignoramuses, fools, peasants]—is humorously incongruous, as Doalty’s impersonation suggests (17). Less innocuous or ironic, however, is Hugh’s later application of this phrase to the hordes of marauding English soldiers (58).

The play’s first image of the culture of empire is comic. Bewildered by Doalty’s surreptitious displacement of their surveying markers, the sappers recheck their calculations and disassemble the machine upon which they rely (18). The necessity of this tool to the soldiers emblemizes the dependence on industry and technology that Deane identifies as characteristic of imperialism (354). The play’s first representations of the English language are similarly comic: Maire’s set phrase (“In Norfolk we besport ourselves around the maypoll”), Jimmy’s “bo—som,” and Doalty’s gibberish impersonation of the sappers’ language are variously incomprehensible (15-17). Addressing Lancey, Hugh snidely characterizes English as a language of commerce, not poetry (25). Indeed, the captain’s presence in Ireland shows his language also to be the language of war. In contrast with Irish “peasants,” Captain Lancey, the visible representative of imperial power, is woefully ignorant of the classical languages, failing to even recognize spoken Latin as such.² (He thinks Jimmy and the others are speaking Gaelic.) Furthermore, his inability to understand the Irish language is coupled with a noncomprehension of the culture, education, knowledge, or ability of the Irish. In addressing them simply, as children, he manifests a xenophobic expectation that mutual understanding with these Irish “others” will not be possible (30-31).³ An administrator of empire whose “skill is with deeds, not words” (29), not unlike Yolland’s energetic, efficient father (40), the captain speaks instead the imperial language of power and domination.

2. I am reminded of the “small Latin and less Greek” Jonson attributed to Shakespeare, the celebrated figure of English literary culture.

3. Deane draws from Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1978; *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993) in using this term in his essay (356). Without obviating the effort required to attain clear intercultural dialogue, the corrective Owen offers Lancey suggests advice for building bridges in a postcolonial world: “It might be better if you assume they understand you” (31).

To this meeting of rural Irish and colonial cultures, Owen returns from Dublin, like the wayward younger son of the parable. Although he claims that “nothing’s changed” after six years, his coming coincides with the inception of drastic change (27). He laughingly calls his former classmates “civilised” yet appears to consider them “primitive subjects” in typical colonialist fashion (Deane 264). (Although they are neither citizens of an Irish state, nor inhabitants of a city [civis], these civilians are subjects of the empire whose force these soldiers uphold.) His joke about the same “smell” of the schoolroom (Doalty identifies the source as Jimmy Jack’s perpetually unwashed feet) alludes to images of rural Ireland as “stagnant,” cut off from the world of progress (from which he has come), and “limited” by a “backwards” language (Friel 27). Owen’s assertion, “My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King’s good English,” itself reeks of distancing: “you people” shows he has begun to adjudge them as “others” (29). An agent of modernization “with all its attendant bureaucracies, technologies and controls” (Deane 354), this “friend” of the British has begun to view his countrymen through lenses of superiority (Friel 28).

Yolland, with whom Owen soon begins to work, claims he’s a “soldier by accident,” yet his position locates him as an imperial agent (30). In his fated arrival in Baile Beag/Ballybeg, he purports to find an instinctive “recognition” that is not mere nostalgia for the past, but a sense “of experience being of a totally different order [...] a consciousness that wasn’t striving nor agitated, but at its ease and with its own conviction and assurance” (40). Is his identification with the culture genuine, or superficial exoticism, as Owen’s teasing “He’s already a committed Hibernophile” indicates (32)? Deane writes of the “modernist experience of the dissolution of self” following the European Enlightenment (355). Perhaps Yolland prefigures this experience and is already seeking to escape from the empire’s “imposed system of rational domination”—as pictured in his relief at not becoming a bureaucratic civil servant in Bombay—by a “reimmersion in the concrete, the specific, the heterogeneous” that he envisions in Irish culture (357-58). Notably, it is the exchange of stories—“about Apollo and Cuchulainn and Paris and Ferdia—as if they lived down the road”—that captures Yolland (Friel 40). In light of Hugh’s later conclusions, Yolland appears to be drawn to this culture’s meaningful perpetuation of “images of the past embodied in language” (67). His task of translating the place names of the locality brings him directly in contact with the stories of the past that they mark.

While Yolland embraces the local setting as a possible “home,” as did many Anglo-Irish before him, the native-born Owen chides him for being “a bloody romantic” (34, 38). Displaying characteristics of “the perfect colonial servant” himself, Owen undertakes the translating work with “great energy and efficiency” (34, 39-40). He speaks the names of the places in Gaelic and then provides a “correct” Anglicization to be recorded in the Ordnance Survey “Name-Book” (32). Reminiscent of the tradition of dinnseanchas, place name poetry, the naming and the book are tied to biblical images of

Eden (45), John's Gospel, and the heavenly book of life in Revelation—suggesting the alignment of colonial ideology with concepts of divine authority that Deane identifies (354). Notably, Owen is the Anglicization of Eoin—Irish for John. John's Gospel pictures Jesus as the Word of God “translated” into human flesh to reveal God to men. Moreover, the gospel text, using similar language as the Genesis account (“In the beginning ...” [Gen. 1:1; John 1:1]), represents Christ as the author of both physical creation (“Through him all things were made” [John 1:3]) and spiritual regeneration. The men's translating activity is shown to function much as naming does in Genesis where Adam is given the task of calling the plants, animals, and even the woman who is “flesh of his flesh” as he saw them (Gen. 2:19). Like the book of life described in Revelation, which records the names of the saints (Rev. 20:15), the Ordinance book they are compiling also represents ultimate authority.

Ironically, in this calling of place names out of Gaelic into English, the Englishman feels that “something is being eroded” while the Irishman praises standardization and the elimination of “confusion” (Friel 43). Yet while Owen insists that it is possible to “denominate and at the same time describe” aspects of the land clearly in English, the text implicitly questions the possibility of accurate descriptions in either language (35). His story of the origin of Tobair Vree suggests the untranslatability of place names and questions the logic of holding to traditions that no longer map to their original meaning in most people's minds: “Do we keep piety with a man long dead, long forgotten, name ‘eroded’ beyond recognition, whose trivial little story nobody in the parish remembers?” (43-44). Nevertheless, it is precisely this argument that convinces Yolland that the Irish should be preserved. At the same time, however, the authority of his position as cultural defender is weakened by his status as an outsider and his failure, as he then learns, to call his Irish friend by the right name (44-45). (Perhaps the resemblance of “Roland” and “Yolland” indicates his having cast Owen as a sort of colonial namesake—or obliquely alludes to the possibility of their together finding a middle way, halfway between “Owen” and “Yolland.”⁴)

The text questions whether in fact this “renaming of the whole country” really does function as a sort of new creation (36). Earlier, Owen defended to Manus the soldiers' misspeaking of his name, insisting that a different name makes no difference: “Owen—Roland—what the hell. It's only a name. It's the same me, isn't it?” (33) When he later corrects Yolland, however, he appears to have discovered a power and significance in naming:

Owen: Eden's right! We name a thing and—bang!—it leaps into existence!

Yolland: Each name a perfect equation with its roots.

Owen: A perfect congruence with its reality. (45)

4. Tony Crowley suggested to me that Roland might be a mutual blending of Owen and Yolland.

Nevertheless, these lines are clearly informed by their context. While the men articulate a fantastical view of their naming power and accuracy (“perfect congruence with reality”), they are getting drunk on Anna na mBreag’s “poteen.” Her name, Anna of the Lies, and their intoxication show this estimation of their role to be somehow unconnected with reality. Here, naming one another correctly, they at once begin to understand both who they are and the ludicrousness of their endeavor. Rather than further distinguishing people, things, and places as distinctively Irish or English, their lines blend together: Owen calls “Lying Anna” by her English name, and Yolland finally pronounces the Irish names for the woman and her drink correctly (45).

Learning Owen’s name and pronouncing Gaelic words meaningfully leads Yolland to believe in the possibility of cracking another culture’s “code.” His meeting of Maire further presents the possibility of cross-cultural understanding, even (or perhaps especially when) coupled with the failure of verbal language. Owen, a cultural and linguistic “go-between” (33), first plays interpreter for the couple. Prefiguring the rest of their relationship, Maire asks Owen, “Has he anything to say?” but Yolland can only respond, “Sorry—sorry?”—both an apology and plea to understand that he repeats throughout the play (32). Furthermore, Yolland questions the possibility, once he has mastered the lexicon, of his truly understanding the cultural code, which operates on a deeper level: “I may learn the password but the language of the tribe will always elude me, won’t it?” (42).

Nevertheless, Friel constructs Yolland’s and Maire’s connection as being deeper than language or culture (consider Maire’s naming of the elements: “water,” “fire,” “earth,” in English). Despite the failure of words, they successfully decode one another through shared experience, imagination, and hope for the future. Near Tobair Vree (the place name of Yolland’s linguistic epiphany), after they have run away from the dance, their thoughts become symmetrically intertwined:

Maire: “The grass must be wet. My feet are soaking.

Yolland: “Your feet must be wet. The grass is soaking.” (49)

Yolland forbids Maire to call him soldier, seeking to shed his military identity (50). And as he names her and calls the places of her home in Irish, Maire responds to his speaking of what she recognizes as meaningful and draws closer (51-52).⁵ This flowing together of their thoughts and feelings (“Don’t stop—I know what you’re saying”) as they join in the speechless communion of a kiss marks the culmination of act 2, the play’s central act (52).

Although their connection surpasses barriers of language, Friel also frames the desire to be joined into a new culture—Yolland to stay in Ireland and Maire to go away with him—as contradictory and potentially transient. Symbolically, the place names that convey Yolland’s English home to Maire

5. The naming of that which one holds as meaningful—this I identify as one of the functions of compelling literature and of this play as a whole.

will soon be wiped from the sand (60). And both ask the other, “‘Always’? What is that word—‘always’?” before expressing opposing wishes (52). This question shows the difficulty of conceiving an unchanging future and can be seen as both an expression of doubt as to the viability of an intermarriage of cultures and of hope for a future in which borders are crossed. Nevertheless, the specter that lingers is that of Terminus, god of boundaries, the “correct” boundaries of property Yolland had come to establish (42). Although he seeks to leave this endeavor behind, it appears that the lurking, nameless Donnelly twins come to enforce their “tribal” code of endogamy by getting rid of him (68).

Does the play indicate a need for the shifting of boundaries to embrace the English language? From the beginning Maire has been clamoring to learn English. She, like many of the Irish, sees America and thus English as keys to survival. Her master, Hugh, initially rejects the invading tongue with nationalist logic: “English, I suggested, couldn’t really express us” (25). At the same time, in mocking an English translation of Ovid as “successfully” making the poetry sound “plebeian,” he is clearly “parodying himself” (40-41). Hugh’s “performance”—an element Jehlen and Greenblatt find central to culture—counterbalances the weight of the cultural pieties he utters (265, 228-29). Although he enacts the supposed superiority of Gaelic and Irish literature, Hugh mocks the paradoxical representation, one commonly accepted by both colonizers and nationalists (Deane 364), of conquered peoples as content with the riches of religion and art. Sarcasm underlies the literal sense of his remarks to Yolland: “You’ll find, sir, that certain cultures expend on their vocabularies and syntax acquisitive energies and ostentations entirely lacking in their material lives. I suppose you could call us a spiritual people” (Friel 42).

Hugh characterizes Wordsworth, the British poet laureate, as merely a figure “in the distance” with whom he (nor Yolland really) has little connection. Nevertheless, his declamation—“We feel closer to the warm Mediterranean. We tend to overlook your island” (41)—is undermined by the political and economic impossibility of Ireland ignoring the English language. Hugh’s application to be master of the government-funded national school also belies the view that “spiritual” wealth without material goods can suffice. Tired of living “like a journeyman tailor” he hopes to benefit from the comforts of government housing (41). Hugh’s pointed response to Yolland’s admiration of the “enormously rich and ornate” Irish language embodies the deep contradictions in Irish culture. He identifies Gaelic as “full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception—a syntax opulent with tomorrows. It is our response to mud cabins and a diet of potatoes; our only method of replying to ... inevitabilities” (42).

Hugh does appear genuine in deeming “access” to his culture possible. (Yolland has announced he is learning Gaelic.) Here he importantly points to the dangers of revering culture dogmatically: “But remember that words are signals, counters. They are not immortal. And it can happen [...] that a civi-

sation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of ... fact" (43). Such a pronouncement destabilizes Jimmy's reverence for the classics—in addition to the bathos of Jimmy's own quality of life (never bathing)—as pathetic as his literary loves are "noble." Hugh's earlier declaration, "We like to think we endure around truths immemorially posited," should be similarly understood (42). Although Owen does not recognize it, Hugh's closing argument in act 3 shows him to be truly "astute" (43) in his recognition that flexibility in a culture's language and mythology are necessary for survival (66-67). Maire too voices this perspective in her interrogation of Manus's unwillingness to adjust to change: "What? Teach classics to the cows?" (29). Paradoxically, while his father embraces the national school, Manus looks to isolate himself further from future change at a hedge school on an outlying island. That neither are successful in the end suggests the inevitable difficulties of change.

In the denouement of act 3, ideologies come face to face with the "unalterable facts" of colonial rule. A series of apparent reversals reveal the complex balance of language and cultural meaning. Owen's translation of Lancey's speech in act 1 had mapped the same terrain as the captain's words—the details of the survey project—but with different points of emphasis, translating inherent meaning rather than the exact words themselves. (Lancey's "proof of the disposition of this government to advance the interests of Ireland" was effectively rendered as "the government's interest in Ireland" [31]). When Lancey forces the whole class to translate to the families of the area his threat of imminent "eviction" ("eviction" of a sort less subtle than that which Yolland had sensed in the place-name translations [43]), the brutal, destructive force underlying the Ordnance Survey project is duly exposed (61). As a result, Owen's retranslation of local place names for the students from the captain's English to Gaelic appears as a fitting, symbolic undoing of his and Yolland's work.

With this threat of the undoing of culture and language comes confusion. Sarah is demanded to speak her name and address (in a manner reminiscent of the interrogation of Ulster foot patrols). She, who had just the night before warned Manus with her newfound voice, is dumb once again. Now Manus, the "lame scholar" who had given her the confidence to speak, chooses to acknowledge neither her words nor her underlying care for him (54-55). Unable to understand the crossing of boundaries (he seems to have never left his father's house), Manus had first told Yolland, "I understand the Lanceys perfectly but people like you puzzle me" (37). Later, in the confusion of betrayal, he too had experienced failure of language: he angrily insulted Yolland with "the wrong gesture in the wrong language" (55). Likewise, Hugh (having lost the school position to a bacon-curer from Cork) expresses his sense of disorientation in the words of Ovid: "I am a barbarian in this place because I am not understood by anyone" (64). The language of normalcy (Greek) has become the babbling (barbarian) tongue.

Owen thus considers the Name-Book to have been a “mistake—nothing to do with us,” neither desirable for shaping the future nor for recovering the forgotten past (54, 66). Yet Hugh (drunkenly) insists to the contrary, “We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home.” Thus he represents the desire to use a variety of perspectives to perceive the factual “contours” of his present surroundings and situation (66). Key to his vision that “it is not the literal past, the ‘facts’ of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language” is his conclusion: “We must never cease renewing those images; because once we do, we fossilise” (66). Since language is not “immortal” Hugh recognizes the need for emergences in language and mythology to enable a living culture to perpetuate itself (43). He is willing to glean renewed images of both the past and the present from a book originally intended to serve purposes of taxation and colonial rule.

Remembering 1798, Hugh recalls how he and Jimmy had for a moment believed real life to be epic. Soldiers with weapons and “the Aeneid in their pockets” they had marched confidently to Sligo: “Everything seemed to find definition that spring—a congruence, a miraculous matching of hope and past and present and possibility. Striding across the fresh, green land [...]” (67). Hugh’s description of their “heightened rhythms of perception” and “accelerated consciousness” is strangely similar to Yolland’s enthusiasm for being in Ireland. Like Yolland they had ultimately preferred love to war. Moreover, they became homesick with “the need for [their] own” (67). Might this text be suggesting that Yolland would have grown homesick for his own culture, thus reinforcing the taboo on exogamy (68)? The passage does reflect the confusing cultural upheaval that the crossing of borders has produced. Perhaps Hugh’s consolation states the inevitability of such confusion in times of conflict: “My friend, confusion is not an ignoble condition” (67). The inebriated Jimmy, for example, no longer recognizes the distinction between fact and image. Not able to recognize the impossibility of consummation with a myth of the past, he remains uncomforted in his loneliness (65).

As Jimmy draws his images from the past, Maire’s images of the future are tied to her memory of Yolland’s happiness with her and an impossible belief that he will return home, as she has done (possibly figuring the image of many Irish emigrants who ultimately return) (67). Beyond this, however, her description of the place names of England represents English as a successor to the classical tradition of the hedge schools: Yolland’s words were “strange sounds” but “nice”—“like Jimmy Jack reciting his Homer” (60). Although Hugh agrees to teach her the invaders’ language, he recognizes the unpopularity of his position (“Indeed you may well be my only pupil”). He also expresses uncertainty as to the benefits of passing on a new language: “I will provide you with the available words and the available grammar. But will that help you to interpret between privacies? I have no idea. But it’s all we have. I have no idea at all” (67). Furthermore, he locates the time for learning English after a period of mourning. The actual funeral will be for

Nellie's illegitimate child (born and dead in the brief span in which Yolland and Maire meet and part), yet Hugh's remarks indicate the need for public grieving for cultural losses as well, as people adjust to the future.

The union of Yolland and Maire, though their human connection was real, is prevented by both colonial and national forces that limit cultural mobility.⁶ To what extent does the play indicate the possibility of future union of these two cultures, without extinguishing one completely at the expense of the other? Can boundaries be crossed over time and for more than a brief moment? While Hugh has deemed the Irish language "opulent with tomorrows," Yolland has mistakenly bid Maire farewell with "I'll see you yesterday" (59). In what time will they be able to meet? Hugh's instruction that "always" is "a silly word" (67) connotes both the past sadness of broken promises and the future hope that conflicts over culture need not persist. Real sharing across borders by those on both sides retains the possibility for peaceful change.

The hope for future concord therefore lies in the language of both past and present. Hugh warns his son of retaining what has happened: "Take care, Owen. To remember everything is a form of madness" (67). Present attempts to restore a culture of peace in Ireland necessitate the same caution: to grow strong, the fragile new order that has been born requires both restitution and forgiveness for genuine past wrongs. Friel's text works to make room for a "new language" of peace, like that pictured in Eavan Boland's "Child of Our Time":

[...] To make our broken images rebuild
 Themselves around your limbs, your broken
 Image, find for your sake whose life our idle
 Talk has cost, a new language [...]. (13-16)

Thus it is that Hugh, as the curtain falls, has begun the process of forgetting the opening lines to the Aeneid—the old story of fighting and war. The new image for which we, the audience, have been prepared must be constructed across borders and through language—a renewed lexicon of peace.

6. This concept is outlined in Greenblatt's essay on culture (225).

Works Cited

- AKENSON, DONALD H. *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century*. London: 1970.
- BOLAND, EAVAN. "Child of Our Time." In *An Origin Like Water*, 52. New York: Norton. 1996.
- CROWLEY, TONY. *The Politics of Language in Ireland 1366-1922*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- DEANE, SEAMUS. "Imperialism/Nationalism." In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed., edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 354-68. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.

FRIEL, BRIAN. *Translations*. London: Faber, 1981.

GREENBLATT, STEPHEN. "Culture." In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed., edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 225-32. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.

Holy Bible, New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.

JEHLEN, MYRA. "Gender." In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed., edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 263-73. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.

WARDLE, DAVID. *English Popular Education, 1780-1975*. London: 1976.