

University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Irish Identity in the Plays by Brian Friel

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Bachelor Paper

2012

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2011/2012

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

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Osobní číslo: **H10547**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**
Název tématu: **Irská identita v dramatu Briana Friela**
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Irish Identity in the Plays by Brian Friel

Práce nazvaná Irish Identity in the Plays by Brian Friel se zaměří na otázku irské identity. V úvodní části se autorka s využitím relevantní sekundární literatury bude věnovat irské identitě a pokusí se nastínit aktuálnost tohoto tématu v druhé polovině 20. století a na začátku 21. století. Po kapitole, která se bude zabývat specifiky díla Briana Friela se autorka zaměří na dvě vybrané historické hry (Translations, The Home Place) a vystopuje v nich, analyzuje a srovná, jakým způsobem jsou v těchto hrách zobrazeny úseky irské historie, otázka identity nebo například nesoulad mezi dvěma kulturami. Na konci práce autorka své závěry přehledně shrne.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Primární literatura: Friel, Brian: *Translations*. London 1981. Friel, Brian: *The Home Place*. Gallery Press 2006. Dantanus, Ulf: *Brian Friel : The growth of an English dramatist*. Göteborg 1985. Roche, Anthony (ed.): *The Cambridge companion to Brian Friel*. CUP 2006. Pilný, Ondřej: *Irony and Identity in modern Irish drama*. Prague 2006. McGrath, M.C.: *Brian Friel's (Post)Colonial Drama : Language, Illusion, and Politics (Irish Studies)*. Syracuse University Press 1999. Kelleher, M., O'Leary, P.: *The Cambridge history of Irish literature. Volume 2, 1890-2000*. CUP 2006
Sekundární literatura : Moody, W. Theodore, Martin, X. Francis : *Dějiny Irska*. Praha 2003. Morgan, O. Kenneth a kol. : *Dějiny Británie*. Praha 2010. Wasson, Ellis: *Dějiny moderní Británie : od roku 1714 po dnešek*. Praha 2010.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

30. dubna 2011

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

31. března 2012



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V Pardubicích dne 25. 3. 2012

Petra Šramhauserová

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to thank to my supervisor, Mgr. Petra Smažilová, for her time, kindness, willingness, valuable advice and reflection on my progress throughout the process of conducting the thesis. And secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to my loving mother for her endless and wholehearted support during my studies.

Abstract

The main subject of this paper is the analysis of Irish identity in two plays by Brian Friel, *Translations* and *The Home Place*. The initial part introduces Brian Friel as a co-founder of the Field Day Theatre Company and its significance for Friel's writing. Furthermore, the definition of identity and nation is provided. Then, the role of language and sense of home as key features of identity and Friel's plays are described as well as the outline of historical events reflected in the analysed plays is drawn. The following part comprises the actual analysis of the pieces of drama. The analysis focuses on the significant elements of Irish identity reflected in the plays, specifically in characters' deeds and attitudes. Despite the juxtaposition of two seemingly different works written in twenty-five years interval, a lot of similarities and identity aspects are compared and finally summarized in the conclusion.

Key words: *Translations; The Home Place*; Brian Friel; the Field Day; national identity; language; history; intrusion; threat; conflict; home place; dilemma

Abstrakt

Předmětem této práce je analýza Irské identity v dílech Briana Friela, *Translations* a *The Home Place*. Úvodní část představuje Briana Friela jako spoluzakladatele divadelní společnosti nesoucí název Field Day a vyzdvihuje její důležitost v jeho tvorbě. Dále následuje definice identity a národa a následně je popsán význam jazyka a domova jako klíčových prvků identity a děl Briana Friela. Práce též obsahuje nástin historických události které jsou reflektovány v analyzovaných hrách. Samotná praktická část se zaměřuje na zásadní prvky irské identity v hrách a zejména pak v činech a postojích hlavních postav. Navzdory analýze dvou zdánlivě odlišných děl napsaných s odstupem pětadvaceti let, je mnoho podobných prvků identity porovnáno a v závěru shrnuto.

Klíčová slova: *Translations; The Home Place*; Brian Friel; Field Day; národní identita; jazyk; historie; narušení; hrozba; střet; domov; dilema

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Introduction

The main purpose of this bachelor paper is the analysis of two plays by Brian Friel, the greatest living Irish dramatist. As a co-founder of the Field Day Theatre Company and its greatest contributor during his eight-year participation in the enterprise, he developed unique style of writing. His work is full of strong motifs and themes which reflect not only his personal experience and attitudes but also historical and current issues in Ireland, more specifically question of individual identity conception and clash of two cultures. The two pieces of his work being dealt with are *Translations* and *The Home Place*. *Translations* is considered to be one of the Friel's best plays whereas *The Home Place* is his most recent play. Nevertheless the analysis is concerned with tracing most transparent features of identity reflected in the two seemingly different plays.

This paper comprises three main parts. The first one provides a theoretical background to the analysis. Firstly, it introduces Brian Friel and his participation in the Field Day Theatre Company and the attention is paid especially to the influence which the company had on Friel's style of writing and its significance as such. Secondly, the terms 'national identity' and 'nation' are defined. Moreover, the symbolism of Irish national identity is included too. Thirdly, the most outstanding elements of identity, such as language and sense of home are looked at in more detail: how they are perceived and captured in the Friel's plays. Lastly, the historical period from the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 to 1880s is captured because the events from this particular period not only create the historical settings of the plays but they also significantly determine the main characters' lives, their decisions and deeds.

The second and the third part of this paper are the practical analyses of *Translations* and *The Home Place*. The individual identity conceptions of the most outstanding characters are traced and described. Moreover, the analogies between these two plays are mentioned as well as some symbols and mood of the plays. In addition the differences and changes in Friel's writing perspective in connection with the setting, themes and characters are paid attention to either.

Finally, all the findings are summarized and the bachelor paper is concluded.

1 Brian Friel and Irish national identity in his plays

This initial part shortly introduces not only Brian Friel as a dramatist and the most significant issues that he deals with in his plays but also the Field Day Theatre Company as well as crucial historical moments from the 18th to the 20th century that influenced the Irish nation, participated in forming its national identity and are reflected in the both plays. The purpose of the following chapters is to set the theoretical background for practical analysis of the two plays.

1.1 Brian Friel and the Field Day

Brian Friel gave up teaching in 1960 to start his career firstly as a short story writer and a dramatist few years later. Nowadays, he is considered to be the greatest living Irish playwright. His first great success is connected with *Philadelphia, Here I come* in 1964. In the following fifteen years his plays had matured and started to be historically and arguably politically oriented with strong demonstration of Irish matters that remained disputable and painful topics within the society until recent times. Breaking point which marked Friel's carrier is represented by the establishment of the Field Day Theatre Company in 1980. *Translations* was its inaugurating production and to use David Grant's words taken from his *The Stagecraft of Brian Friel* "the Field Day Theatre Company for the next eight years would become the principle vehicle for his work." (2009, 25) Moreover, "... through a succession of experiments Friel refined his technique of revealing through his drama the complexities of private truth. ... He begins to cast his net wider to encompass a broader sense of human condition, and in particular a sense of national identity." (2009, 25) Dantanus Ulf in his *Brian Friel: the Growth of an Irish Dramatist* also comments on the significance of Friel's involvement in the enterprise as follows:

The foundation of Field Day Theatre Company in 1980 with the resounding success of *Translations* confirms this historical and obliquely political dimension of Friel's work. Starting in the early seventies it was strengthened with *Volunteers* in 1975 and can be seen as part of Friel's efforts to pursue a definition of the identity of modern Ireland, North and South. (1985, abstract)

As Ondřej Pilný, recent Irish studies expert, caught the idea in his book *Irony and Identity in the modern Irish drama*, the Field Day originated with the attempt “to revise the versions of Irish identity that existed in the second half of twentieth century” (2006, 105). As a result of the fact that most of the Company participants encountered problems in Northern Ireland and spent some time in Ulster, their concern with contemporary political issues influenced reflection of their experience in the stage craft and provided audience with a different perspective. Pilný further defines the objective of Field Day as follows:

The original objective of the theatre company was to stage one play a year and give the opening performances in Derry which was thus to become a third location, after Dublin and Belfast, where the idea of national identity was being (re)formulated. (2006, 105)

Except production of the plays the Company was creative in other activities. Namely Seamus Deane issued an anthology of Irish writing and some series of pamphlets were released as well. “And all this effort was to lead to the creation of atmosphere in which different versions of the Irish past and national identity could co-exist in mutual tolerance and understanding.” (Pilný, *Irony*, 106).

Moreover, the Field Day participants also realised the need to participate in the European theatre, follow the modernistic trend instead of isolating Ireland from the outer world by the constant refusal of the reality that English culture, and especially language, subtly mixes with their own Irish culture. English language undeniably represents the modern phenomenon spread and understood on the international basis. This English cultural dominance means that on the one hand the Field Day tried to free the Irish writing from its persistent mythologies, but on the other hand it was impossible to omit history, politics and the identity of the nation as these have always made the plays vivid, realistic and affordable for the wide population. As a result of such dilemma, they rather tried to find some balance and harmonious co-habitation of two cultures influencing each other for the whole centuries and put the individual people into the main focus. These characters, set into some historical context, would be acting according to their emotions, feelings, beliefs and relationships rather than according to the historical and political influence. This modernist effort and approach to the theatre came to the world in 1980s with the Field Day and continues until today in connection

with globalisation which is a highly modern phenomenon symbolizing big changes of the traditional concepts of theatre. Ondřej Pilný in the introduction to *Global Ireland: Irish Literatures for the New Millennium* addressed the question of changing trends as follows:

Conventionally theories of modernity have largely been founded on the notion of rupture or radical break with the past, the pre-modern, the traditional or primitive, in favour of a 'progressive', more developed, more enlightened present and future. (2005, 1)

Friel has always been more interested in the interpersonal issues, communication, individuals and their emotions. This attitude towards writing style adopted by the Field Day is called the “micro-narration” (Pilný, *Irony*, 113) because it focuses on the microcosms of the individual people and their position in society. “Nevertheless, with Field Day he embarked on a project which explicitly focused on re-examining current myths and metanarratives.” (*Irony*, 113) According to Pilný and his quotation of Friel, *Translations*, as the first Field Day production, is a kind of a mirror reflecting this metanarration for its depiction of the whole country, what the island is about and how it is perceived. Therefore, *Translations* and *The Home Place* belong to the collection of Friel's mature plays thanks to their “awareness of the intimate relations among language, discourse, illusion, myth, politics and history.” (McGrath, 1)

Nevertheless, as aforementioned, with the Field Day Friel inclined to write more about the whole country and the nation, which however means that the history and politics was impossible to omit. Friel was de facto concerned with historical plays which were though criticised for their historical inaccuracy and political context. To oppose this criticism, F.C.McGrath in his *Brian Friel's (Post) Colonial Drama: Language, Illusion, and Politics* stated that “Friel's work was largely apolitical ...“ (1999, 17). Pilný also contributed on the account of historical inaccuracy:

Nevertheless, the situation of Friel's Field Day plays with a historical setting is peculiar in that they were presented as part of an effort to revise entrenched versions of Irish history, while their relevance to 1980s Ireland is fairly self-evident. (*Irony*, 109)

Despite Friel's initially neutral attitude, “as the political situation in Northern Ireland heated up in late sixties and early seventies, Friel and other Northern writers

came under increasing pressure to take a stand in their writing” (McGrath, 1) Friel participated in Derry's Bloody Sunday march in January 1972. Such an experience had been imprinted and reflected in his later writing. In defence of his historical settings, Friel often stresses in his interviews that drama with historical background is first of all fiction and it is the author's choice how he combines fiction and history. To use David Grant's quotation of Friel used in *The Stagecraft of Brian Friel*, in connection with writing *Translations*, Friel wrote in his diary:

The thought occurred to me that what I was circling around was a political play and that thought panicked me. But it is a political play – how can that be avoided? If it is not political, what is it? Inaccurate history? Social drama? (...) The play has to do with language and only language. And if it becomes overwhelmed by (the) political element, it is lost. (2009, 28)

In *Irony and Identity* Pilný, in connection with the Field Day focus and history matters, continues in pondering the question of supplementing the existing myths by the new ones. From that standpoint the potential side-effect of demythologising process can be perceived. This also explains the hesitancy about historical accuracy. If the audience is presented a new myth there is the risk of adopting it. Another fact is whether the spectator is able to find something behind all the myths, find the reality and think about its message and its meaning – think about the 'private truth'. The Field Day was well aware of this influence and that was the concern which the Company was most engaged with – to fight against creating new myths and going in the vicious circle of history, myths, Irishness and all the stereotypes. This proved to be almost a heroic task due to the history rich in oppression and clichés which were hard to give up, forget and leave for the past. As Pilný concludes from one of the Deane's pamphlets, “this clearly suggests that only a particular kind of tradition is to be rejected, while the notion of tradition itself must be retained.” (Irony, 110)

Friel left the Field Day in 1990s. Despite the honourable goal of re-creating all myths at the beginning of the enterprise it didn't achieved its aim completely, although there is remarkable success in their work. At least it “enlivened Irish theatre, while several landmarks of modern drama were created within its framework.” (Global Ireland, 2005, 133) Although, even in recent times “most Irish drama still seems to

Lanterns to be firmly centred around the notion of Irishness (albeit in the frequent attempts to move beyond it), or at least continues to be perceived as such.” (2005, 5).

And Clare Wallace, Pilný's colleague, in her *Suspect Cultures*, adds:

Critically, national identity is still a central concern and has, since the late 1980s, been reinvigorated by postcolonial theory. (...) By the end of the twentieth century, however, such an identity seemed a good deal more complicated and less predictable. (2006,14-15)

To conclude from the preceding quotation, the aim of demythologizing has not been achieved until today despite the interval of twenty years which passed after the Field Day's first attempt to approach the Irish drama from a different angle.

1.2 National Identity

As this bachelor paper analyses the question of national identity reflected in *Translations and The Home Place*, it is necessary to define firstly what the ‘*national identity*’ in general is:

National identity is the cultural outcome of a discourse of the nation. This identity serves many purposes. Firstly, it provides a sense of collective belonging to a group of people who perceive themselves bonded by common experience, and a reference system for distinguishing one group of people from another. Secondly, it is the basis for deciding who should be allowed to be full and acknowledged citizens of a nation-state. Thirdly, it influences the character and goal of this nation-state in a manner supposed to be in the collective interest of all the people. National identity is located in the space between the collective cultural identity of the nation's people – what they consider themselves to be and desire to become – and the political identity that transfers the substance of cultural identity into values that underpin political activity. (O'Mahony, Delanty, 2)

Secondly, there should also be the term ‘*nation*’ as such defined. According to the national identity specialist Anthony D. Smith and his book *National Identity* one possible definition of nation is:

Nation is a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members. (1991, 43)

As the quotations above imply, the identity is closely connected with the word 'nation'. These two terms, 'identity' and 'nation', are often associated with words that denote meaning of identity such as common, collective, group of people, nation, nationalism, history, values and many others. Nevertheless, the most frequent word would be 'collective'. Collective, defined in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary online*, generally refers to something "of or shared by every member of a group of people." (dictionary.cambridge.org) To apply its meaning onto the specific context of the analysis, collective also includes inherited values, customs, language and history that are common for people of one nation.

At the same time, with belonging to some nation also go some duties, obligations and binds. Both positive and negative values and obligations in connection with the identity are adopted individually because not all the people feel the identity in the same way. On the one hand, there are some people proud of their nationality, traditions and history but on the other hand, there are also people feeling uncomfortable about their national identity and often tend to escape from it, deny it or at least take it as inevitability to live within the borders of certain country. This individual attitude to the inherited national identity plays key role in most of the Friel's plays. To paraphrase Dantanus Ulf, although Ireland belongs to the smaller countries, it possesses a very unique and individual racial and national identity. (1985, 4) Furthermore, Ulf says:

In society where members have to rely to a great extent on each other and interdependence is a necessity, there is bound to develop a strong sense of community. The community, while allowing for a fair amount of personal freedom and individuality, is inevitably cemented by common considerations and values. Inherent in this type of situation is the potential conflict between individual and community. (1985, 32)

Feeling of the national belonging is very strong in comparison with other nations and despite many centuries that have passed this theme remained disputable within political, social, cultural and interpersonal sphere. Ireland as a state de facto has existed prevaillingly under the rule of the United Kingdom. The people mostly tried not only to preserve their own identity but also free themselves from the ruling Britons. According to Smith's definition of nationalism ideology "human beings must identify with a nation if they want to be free and realize themselves" (1991, 74) and furthermore "nation must

be free and secure if peace and justice are to prevail” (1991, 74). These principles are the ground stones of individual nations which also the Irish are aware of and have been trying to gain independence from the United Kingdom. This effort and independence tendencies were formative and influential for the changes of, this time the cultural identity, in comparison with its initial concept. To use Smith's words:

Changes in cultural identities therefore refer to the degree to which traumatic developments disturb the basic patterning of the cultural elements that make up the sense of continuity, shared memories and notions of collective destiny of given cultural units of population. The question is how far the such developments disrupt or alter the fundamental patterns of myth, symbol, memory and value that bind successive generations of members together while demarcating them from 'outsiders' and around which congeal the lines of cultural differentiation that serve as 'cultural markers' of boundary regulation. (1991, 25)

This can be applied to the Ireland national development which has been and still strongly is influenced by the persistent conflict with Britain. Therefore the '*national consciousness*' (Smith, 72) developed and spread not only among the educated elites but also among the lower classes. The issues on the national politics level are dealt by the elites, but the majority of people from working and even lower classes care more about their survival. Their most natural and essential needs for survival are a very strong stimulus for defending themselves, their property, lives and food. While politics solve problems on the international basis, the ordinary people have to solve their daily problems. These ordinary people protect rather themselves than their identity. Identity seems to be rather minor reason to fight until they are endangered. In fact, these ordinary people, struggling for more material survival are the main heroes of the Friel's plays. But not only illiterate peasants are depicted but also educated ordinary people facing the more powerful ones. There is political and historical context foreshadowed, but the main conflict is usually on a local basis, an isolated incident happening at the background of the big national changes.

1.3 Language and sense of home as expressions of identity

The previous chapter roughly mapped Friel's involvement in the Field Day and the main purpose of the theatre company. Furthermore identity and nation have been defined as well. At this point, however, it is necessary to devote more space to the most outstanding symbols of the analysed works.

The first symbol is language as it is considered to be the outstanding and noteworthy identity aspect. Anthony Roche in *The Cambridge history of Irish literature* remarked:

Like the first theatre movement, they engaged with the issue of language, in particular what language is appropriate to and Irish theatre that works through the medium of English. Friel's *Translations* approached the subject philosophically by drawing on George Steiner's *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* and historically by looking at the period in nineteenth – century Ireland when the English language began to establish its hegemony. (2006, 509 - 510)

Undoubtedly, *Translations* is widely acclaimed play especially for its language matter focus but it is appreciated as the whole play because:

Translations is also an excellent text which to begin a course in twentieth-century Irish literature because it effectively dramatizes (albeit from a nationalist point of view) so many different issues that have been important to Irish culture, history, and politics over the past century and a half, including the loss of the Gaelic culture and language, Anglo-Irish relations, colonialism and its legacy, and civil rights. (McGrath,178)

When Friel wrote his plays, he wrote them in English instead of in his mother tongue, which in case of *Translations* represents a paradox. The characters are supposed to speak English and Irish, sometimes Latin. Paradoxically, the only Irish occurring in the play are the place names which are about to be transformed into English soon. The audience is expected to imagine such a multilingual setting. The point was that if the plays were intended to be accessible for wide public they must have been written in English and as Friel hoped, the audience's imagination about the characters speaking English will be strong enough to “accept that they are speaking Irish” (Grant, 28). Martine Pelletier in her contributing article to the *Cambridge Companion to Brian Friel* wrote:

Since the focus of the play is very much on language, its role in shaping and expressing personal and collective identity, the very fact that English onstage represents two separate languages-the Irish we are asked to imagine and the English which is now the “natural vehicle” for a play on an Irish stage-is immensely ironic and hugely significant. *Translations* dramatizes this key transitional moment when Irish gave way to English, when a culture was forced to translate itself into a different linguistic landscape. (2006, 68)

The role of Irish language in *Translations* is very symbolic as it represents the wall separating the Irish from modern world and progress. Moreover the Irish language is after its zenith, very close to become one of the dead languages such as Latin and Old Greek. Furthermore, “*Translations* problematizes the relationship between language and identity” (Pelletier, 69). In contrast, the language is undeniable part of the identity and despite the fact that it is slightly dying out it still belongs to the Irish identity as a way of expressing it. Patrick O'Mahony and Gerard Delanty in their work called *Rethinking Irish History* managed to highlight the uniqueness of language spoken by one nation:

The language of the nation is like a secret language which outsiders have great difficulty in following. Its logic does not pretend at rational coherence but is based on an overwhelming sense of sympathetic self-identification by a group of people who feel their collective experience cannot be understood by outsiders, only felt by themselves. (98,2001)

Without any relevance to Friel's plays O'Mahony and Delanty remarkably captured the very important theme which *Translations* deals with. Language is a code which can be hardly understood by non-native speakers who are fairly familiar with the cultural, social and historical context. Each language mirrors its speakers' understanding of the world around them and as a channel of communication it is created by people themselves. The question which Friel placed into *Translations* is whether it is possible for the outsider to decode this mysterious code. Moreover the choice of the name of the play reflects the truth that by translating from one language to another, the original message is transformed into targeted language and loses its uniqueness by the change of expressions, sentence structures and certain phrases that are used only in the original language.

In comparison with *Translations*, *The Home Place* is not concerned with the language at all. *The Home Place* belongs to Friel's late plays, or more precisely said, it

is his last work. The late plays, according to George O'Brien's contributing article in the *Cambridge Companion to Brian Friel* differ marginally in the main idea and concept. The late works focuses on the unpredictability of events and plans which are changed radically according to the unexpected situations. There also occur symbols suggesting that something unpleasant and dangerous menaces and changes are very soon to happen. As George O'Brien said:

But Friel's late quartet is also discontinuous with his earlier works, not least because the plays in question have discontinuity as a theme. [...] The result is a conflicted recognition that the value of plans is not commensurate with the results of their being carried out. (2006, 91)

Nevertheless, the most significant feature of *The Home Place* is a sense of place, which also the name of the play clearly indicates. Unusually the main characters are British people living in Ireland, the descendants of old gentry who, due to the living in Ireland for generations, might have found their home place in Ballybeg, Ireland. Unfortunately, their British origin is the reason for aggression against them and creates heavy atmosphere of threat and fear. Under such conditions the question of loyalty to own family, to home and nation clashes with desires and tendencies to escape from the roles that the characters were born into. Both plays ponder the question whether either British or Irish can change despite their origin. If they can adopt different culture and merge with it even when being confronted with their former culture and own family. Loyalty is though presented in both the plays as conflicting matter which determines people's decisions and behaviour in fatal situations. As Ulf commented on the Friel's main characters, "in Friel's play the focus is on the working of the individual mind. It is not a picture of rational thoughts and calm deliberations but more importantly, a description of the emotional fabric of the mind." (Ulf, 120).

The Lodge where the whole play takes place, according to George O'Brien "is a home which cannot be home" (2006, 99) The Lodge is a melting pot where nobody is at home. All the characters come from different places but live in the Lodge as in a refuge. The Lodge is a restless place where everybody tries to escape from. The play's conception of a "two-homes syndrome" (2006, 99) and split Anglo-Irish identity is transparent in *The Home Place* as well as in *Translations*. Although the plays were

written within twenty-five years and Friel's writing style undergone many changes, the very similar themes are easy to trace. Moreover, they are both set in the same historical period and as a result they share not only the history but also a feeling of looming threat and revolt.

1.4 History in the plays

As both the plays are set in the 19th century and the plot influenced by the political situation of that time, history represents noteworthy aspect as well. For better understanding of the plays' historical setting it is necessary to draw a line of compassing the era from 1691 to 1880s. Despite these two centuries are considered to be rather peaceful, very important laws and legislation changes were implemented and are considered to be influential for further national development.

The Treaty of Limerick ended Williamite War in Ireland. “Cogadh an dá rí” (J.G.Simms, 158) translated into English as War of Two Kings, James II. and William III. of Orange, was a result of absolutist and pro-catholic reign of James II. over the Kingdoms of England, Ireland and Scotland from 1685 to 1689. Parliament called William III. of Orange to invade Britain and defeat James II. The two kings encountered finally in the battle of the Boyne in 1690 where the Jacobite forces were defeated. By signing the Treaty of Limerick Irish Catholics suffered the fatal defeat as the Irish Protestant government started to fix its fragile position over the Catholics. At that moment the term the ‘Ascendancy’ or ‘Protestant Ascendancy’ originated and is used for the era from the 17th until 20th century when the minority of protestant landowners and clergy dominated politically, economically and socially over the Catholic majority of the Irish origin. The locals were officially excluded from the political life; they were prohibited to vote and sit in the parliament, to bear guns, their property was confiscated after war, high rents were put on the hired land and they had to pay tithes to the Church of Ireland and they must not hold services. The motif of Protestant Ascendancy can be traced in *The Home Place*. Brian Friel turned his attention to the representatives of British protestant landlords living in the Irish countryside who have to face the locals on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, as a result of these legal borders, tenant farmers started to organize secret societies as the only way of defending themselves against cruelties from their landowners. They focused on petty actions such as slaughtering livestock, damaging fences and occasional fights with landowners. This heavy atmosphere of the 18th and 19th century inspired Friel to set there his latest play, *The Home Place*, and write from the perspective of British country landowner Christopher Gore who realises that he belongs to the minority which is no longer being tolerated by the secret groups and that his life is endangered. His neighbouring landowner was assassinated and he is afraid of being the next. During the play Gore's family encounters meeting with rebels and life threats. As a result Richard Gore, Christopher's cousin taking anthropological survey, is banished from the country under the threat of violence as the rebels find the survey humiliating. Moreover, the Home Rule is close to be passed and British people are no longer welcome on the Irish territory.

As well as the Gore's family encountered rebel face to face, the very similar conflict appears in *Translations* either but in contrast from the opposite angle when the British mapping survey is sabotaged by isolated actions of the locals. Similarly one of the British is murdered but unlike *The Home Place*, locals in *Translations* will be punished and will pay the highest price as they will face the whole unit of trained soldiers. This action will affect the whole county whereas in the second play, only the Gore's family will bear all consequences.

Ireland economy in the 18th century represented another reason for dissatisfaction of the locals. The overseas trade with Ireland was one of the most important and affluent businesses which England used to have. The problem was high taxes imposed on the goods traded from Ireland in contrast with tax-free goods traded to Ireland. In fact Ireland supplied England and some of her colonies with pork, beef, cheese and other food but the Irish people were starving. The landowners started to grow crops for export as the competition in meat export grown while their tenants lived on potatoes. These harsh living conditions got even harder after very cold winter and following poor harvest in 1740s which resulted in famine in 1740/41. During the famine almost 400,000 people died and almost two hundred emigrated to the United States.

This famine and “diet of potatoes” inspired Friel in *Translations* as well,

particularly in Hugh's dialogue with Lieutenant Yolland. The history served to Friel as an inspiration and helped to create a trustworthy and persuasive frame for the plot of the plays. Outside the scenes, historical events create the setting which subtly influences people's attitudes and behaviour.

Penal Laws implemented after the defeat at the Boyne not only restricted political privileges and church but included education system. Children should be taught in English and attend national schools. The image of hedge-school in *Translations* is more symbolic but was inspired by Friel's own discovery about his family. According to David Grant Friel's "great-great-grandfather had been a hedge-school master" and moreover "the first trigonometrical base for the Ordnance Survey was set up in 1828 just across the River Foyle from where Friel now lives" (2009,27). Grant also mentions that "Colonel Colby was the man in charge of the survey and John O'Donovan was his orthographer, responsible for verifying the correct spellings of place names" (2009,27). Friel often reflected his life into plays, considerably home, father-son relationship, his peasant origin, teaching career, language, his beliefs and experience.

Current Irish studies specialist Ondřej Pilný has written great deal about the Irish identity and Friel's conception of plays and the matter of historical inaccuracy could not escape his attention. He addresses the symbolic depiction of the hedge-school as follows:

A case in point is how Friel handles the Irish hedge school in *Translations*. To an extent, the criticism of the politics here appears to be just. Not because of the fact that such a school could not have existed: research in this area shows that there really may have been hedge schools which taught not only basic reading and writing skills but also Latin and Greek, although such schools would clearly have been an exception. What is significant, however, is that even if the play ceases to be regarded as a mirror image of reality, the hedge school will still stand out as a distinct allegory of culture in decline, an allegory that exhibits a considerable degree of nostalgia for an ancient learned civilisation which has to give way to a materialist world of commerce and warfare. (Irony, 115)

Pilný further stresses that the image of the Ordnance Survey has also been rather changed for which Friel was criticised as well. To paraphrase his words the former intention of the Survey was to peacefully manifest imperial power which according to Friel's interpretation looked as a violent intrusion of "old-age real of poetic culture" by "armed barbarians" (2006, 115).

To conclude the history outline, the Irish people rebelled unsuccessfully in 1798 and, as a reward for their uprising, in three year time Ireland was united with England and the year of 1801 is remembered as the origin of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland when Ireland became the constituent part of the empire until 1922. However, the Irish started their journey to independence. The road was though full of hardships. In 1840s another famine stroke, this time known as the Great Famine. The whole 19th century is remarkable especially for the Home Rule Movement which formulated demand for the abolishment of the Union Act and establishment of independent Irish government within the United Kingdom which would be responsible for the Irish affairs. Influential personalities of political life were Daniel O'Connell, Charles Stewart Parnell and many others, but only these two are mentioned in *Translations* and *The Home Place*.

2 Irishness in *Translations*

The two plays being analysed, *Translations* and *The Home Place*, are very different and similar at the same time. Both plays are set in the 19th century, in the era of Ireland being a constituent part of the United Kingdom. As a result, the historical background of the plays is an inseparable and an influential component which frames the whole story. Even though, the plays were written within the interval of 25 years, serious issues such as threat of losing own identity, anxiety, tension and insecurity what comes next create weighty atmosphere in both of them.

Translations on one hand, paints the picture of Irish people being confronted with the royal soldiers, intruders and occupiers, taking a map-survey with the help of one of the Irish tribe as a go-between and translator. Considering the motives, the matter of language as the part of national identity stands out and goes hand in hand with the question of Irishness. Nevertheless, Friel focuses more on the characters, their emotions and personal experience with the situation encountered. The characters suffer from internal dilemmas either because of dissatisfaction with their lives, home place or love and family. Above this all, however, stands the question of the identity, who they really are, who they want to be, where they really belong to and what is worth fighting for.

On the other hand, *The Home Place* is built up from a different perspective. Unorthodoxly the ones in the centre of attention are the British landlords. Now the British gentry living in Ireland is facing the local people. The fragile coexistence is harmed by the looming revolt and arrival of British scientist taking anthropologist survey. And similarly as in the *Translations*, the conflict between two nations, two identities and conflicting loyalties becomes very transparent and fatal for the characters.

Before the analysis itself, it is necessary to point out that the core purpose of the paper is the aspect of identity and its reflection in the deeds of most outstanding characters notwithstanding their mutual relationships. Of course, both the plays are rich in relationships and interpersonal issues no matter what kind they are but these are not paid much attention to due to the prior search for identity.

2.1 Language as a symbol of identity

Translations is set in a rural hedge-school, in a disused barn and paradoxically it is the place where old traditions, myths, classical education, revolt and identity mix and melt together. The school is attended by youngsters, specifically Doalty, Bridget and Maire, also by Sarah who learns to speak and can be either 17 or 35 but nobody can judge her real age. The last student is an old bachelor Jimmy Jack. Each of the learners is different in his or her dreams, opinions and qualities. The same situation is with the teachers – Hugh in his early sixties and a passionate drunk, and his older son Manus in his late twenties and often delivering lessons instead of his father.

All of a sudden, Hugh's younger son Owen, after living in England for six years, returns home and brings two foreigners, two British soldiers, with him into his home place in Ballybeg. At that point, the clash of two cultures takes place because, to general surprise of all the locals, the British soldiers need to have Owen as a civilian interpreter to be understood and they speak neither Latin, nor Greek and moreover nor Irish. Such a situation appears to be rather comic and shameful for the soldiers. There are four languages used at the scene but the soldiers and the locals do not have a single language in common. The Irish used to speak Latin which was rooted in their Christian traditions and history despite the island isolation. Latin was considered to be the language of civilised and educated people. From this point of view, the British are presented as barbarians because they do not understand Irish, do not speak Latin or Greek as a lingua franca of ancient times and moreover they are not even able to differentiate the languages. The only language they are fluent in is their mother tongue - English. Therefore the whole scene gets into its extreme. The problem has always been in the expansion of British empire which has wanted to take over neighbouring and other nations not only legally but also change their identity into the pure British one. Deep in the ancient times the long-lasting conflict started. The Irish have been keen on preserving their own identity and protecting it against the British invaders, language included. The more British have become expansive the less understandable it was for the Irish that the British are handicapped by the knowledge of only one language. Contrastingly, the British soldiers and surprisingly some Irish youngsters think that the

only useful and superior language is English. Owen, already partly anglicised, comments on this situation: “*My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King's good English.*” (Friel, 32)

The question is whether the locals really consider their language as an archaic language and if they really feel the need to learn English only because they have to. They might have not come into contact with the Royal Engineers if some of their horses and equipment wouldn't have been misplaced. And as a result, captain Lancey contacts Hugh to enquire about possible rebels responsible for that incident and he discovers that only few locals speak English, Hugh included. Although captain Lancey seems to be ashamed of knowing only his own language he does not hide his surprise that the locals do not speak English at all. For Lancey it is impossible to understand how English superior to the other theoretically dead languages is not used in Ireland widely:

Hugh: (...) I expressed my regret and suggested he addresses you himself on these matters. 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* - James?

Jimmy: *Verecundus* – humble

Hugh: Indeed -he voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language. I explained that few of us did, on occasion – outside the parish – of course – and then usually for the purpose of commerce, a use to which his tongue seemed particularly suited - (...) and I went on to propose that our own culture and the classical tongues made a happier conjugation

Doalty: *Conjugo* – I join together.

Hugh: Indeed – English, I suggested, couldn't really express us. And again to his credit he acquiesced to my logic. (*Acquiesced – to rest, to find comfort in*) (Friel, 26-27)

The only people speaking English in the hedge-school are Manus and Hugh. But they do not use it, only “outside the parish and for purpose of commerce” as Hugh described him encountering Captain Lancey some days ago and discussing the soldier's military deal in Ireland. Hugh's attitude and behaviour can be considered as one of a gentleman and adequate to his classical education. From a different point of view his behaviour can be characterised as one of a pathetic alcoholic. Nevertheless, there is no sign of disrespect and superiority of any Irish characters. Hugh is just factual and explains his attitude towards English. In this respect, his feelings are quite understandable. Hugh's words can be perceived as a defence of his own nation and its

uniqueness. And not only language, but the identity as such. He further faces Yolland and develops his confidence and believes more deeply:

Hugh: Yes, it is a rich language, Lieutenant, full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-depiction – a syntax opulent with tomorrows. It is our response to mud cabins and a diet of potatoes; our only method of replying to ... inevitabilities. (Friel, 50)

Hugh describes the language as something very precious which is worth protecting and retaining for tomorrows. In fact the language, history and other abstract terms which the identity of any nation comprises of cannot be separated violently. This might be called as a 'mental wealth' which no tribe-outsider can understand until his own identity is endangered. Hugh can be characterised as a patriot as well as most of his students despite the fact that some of them solve the internal conflict. Namely Maire, the milkmaid whose family lives in poverty and she decides to leave for America to earn some money and stop her family living on the edge. She is young and feels the opportunity of better living but the only obstacle is the language. She must learn English for practical purposes which, however, changes after she meets Yolland, the British soldier. They fell in love but the language barrier is almost impossible to break.

Owen returns from England as a young, handsome, smartly dressed city man. Ballybeg is his home place and as a result he is employed as an interpreter to help with mapping and renaming the country. He becomes to be a go-between of the two nations and tries to make the mapping survey as tolerable as possible for both the sides. Even at the very beginning the misunderstanding and languages clash appears:

[...]

Lancey: Do they speak any English, Roland?

Owen: Don't worry. I will translate.

Lancey: I see. (*He clears his throat. He speaks as if he were addressing children – a shade too loudly and enunciating excessively.*) You may have seen me – seen me - working in this section-section?-working. We are here-here- in this place-you understand? - to make a map- a map -a map and -

Jimmy: Nonne Latine loquitur? (*He doesn't speak Latin?*)

(*Hugh holds up a restraining hand*)

Hugh: James.

Lancey:(*to Jimm*) I don't speak Gaelic, sir (*He looks at Owen.*)

Owen: Carry on (Friel, 34)

It is evident that the English are made fun of because they tend to speak with people in the hedge-school in a way little children or silly people are spoken to. As mentioned before, such a situation appears absurd to the core, because they do not understand each other and each of the opposing parties considers the second one as illiterate. Each nation has own language specific for different meanings of words. The question is whether people of diverse languages and nations can really understand each other only via words.

This problem of conveying message via translation faces Yolland who desperately fell in love with Maire and Ireland but he cannot manage to overcome obstacle represented by Irish language:

Yolland: Poteen – poteen – poteen. Even if I did 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? The private core will always be hermetic, won't it?
Owen: You can learn to decode us. (Friel, 47-48)

For Yolland a matter of language becomes a crucial issue and he suffers from the internal fight between his duties as a British soldier and his desire to become an Irish. He likes the sound of Irish place names, he likes the language as such but it seems to be almost impossible to get through a symbolic wall standing between two nations which is strongly built on the basis of hatred, aversion, mistrust, oppression, tension and fright. To turn into an Irishman means to accept their proud, though often suppressed, identity and stand up against his former culture. Yolland is a very romantic and he is not able to foresee what the reality of living in Ireland really means and moreover he is blind to the signals of aversion, he feels only the positive vibrations of the place. Hugh, despite his passion to alcohol, provides Yolland with very accurate commentary:

Yolland: I am learning to speak Irish, sir.
Hugh: Good.
Yolland: Roland is teaching me
Hugh: Splendid.
Yolland: I mean – I feel so cut off from the people here. And I was trying to explain a few minutes ago how remarkable a community this is. (...) (Friel, 49)
[...]
Yolland: I understand it's enormously rich and ornate.
Hugh: Indeed Lieutenant. A rich language. A rich literature. You'll find, sir, that certain cultures expand on their vocabularies and syntax acquisitive energies and ostentations entirely lacking in their material lives. I suppose you could call us a spiritual people.
[...]

Hugh: ... 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 will understand – it can happen that civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of fact, Gentlemen. (Friel, 51)

Yolland in his twenties hasn't decided yet where he belongs to and what he really wants to do. Until coming into Ireland he always did what his father expected him to do. As he felt to be a great disappointment he enrolled for the military as the officer. Unfortunately, his army career does not match with his qualities as honesty and kindness. In Ireland he suddenly finds inner peace, stability and desirable place to live. At each occasion he pays compliment to Hugh or Owen about their country, people and culture. He admires almost everything and his enchantment by Ireland is getting even stronger when he falls in love with Maire Catach.

On one hand Yolland is very respectful and he realises how split between his job and his desires is. On the other hand, as Ballybeg became so close to his heart he reveals to Owen his worries about real purpose of their mapping business. He is afraid that new map will serve for evictions based on it. Yolland noticed that Hugh also knows about the threat of evictions which is why Hugh is so keen on applying for the headmaster's position in a new national school. In fact, new school offers him better living conditions. His drinking becomes heavier because he is well aware of looming English hegemony and expansion over the whole nation. The only possible way of surviving lasting misery is to silently agree with being anglicised. In contrast, Yolland goes against the intended mainstream and wants to fuse with the Irish completely however as he remarked "something is being eroded" (Friel, 51) because the locals do not see a blessed mission in renaming places. They know their home place and are not confused at all. The only people who need to map the land because of confusion are the British. They need translation not to get lost in Ireland. The same it is with the language, nation and identity as such. The goal of empire is to anglicise the Irish so that their minds would be readable and understandable. The question is whether the translation and some kind of metamorphosis opens door to reading identity. Moreover, by translation something is being lost from the initial meaning especially if the translator is needed.

Translator as a mediator, puts his personal understanding and conceptions of translations and can also omit some things and usually conveys very basic message, rarely provides he the exact translation.

2.2 Revolt and Owen's dilemma

Friel tends to liven up his plays by some comic situations as well as with tense moments full. *Translations* is full of both, mixing tragic and comedy and creating play which keeps the audience with things to ponder. According to the history, the tradition of small secret organisations sabotaging British actions and fighting with the British landlords is an inseparable part of dealing with British emperors, especially in the 18th and 19th century as a reaction to deepening misery of life in Ireland. It goes without saying that Friel could not omit it in his stories.

First trace referring to the activity of individuals sympathizing with secret organization in *Translations* appears straight when Dan Doalty boasts before all his hedge-school classmates about himself changing the position of measuring poles. He is really amused by observing soldiers desperate about their incorrect measurements:

Doalty: 'Shape!' Will you shut up, you aul eejit you! Anyway, every time they'd stick one of these poles into the ground and move across the bog, I'd creep up and shift it twenty or thirty paces to the side.

Bridget: God!

Doalty: Then they'd come back and stare at it and look at their calculations and stare at it again and scratch their heads. And Cripes, d'you know what they ended up doing?

Bridget: Wait till you hear!

Doalty: They took the bloody machine apart!

Bridget: That's the image of them!

Maire: You must be proud of yourself, Doalty.

Doalty: What d'you mean?

Maire: That was very clever piece of work.

Manus: It was a gesture.

Maire: What sort of gesture?

Manus: Just to indicate ... a presence.

Maire: Hah! (Friel, 17)

Doalty's action may seem negligible and only childish fun but for Doalty and not only him it symbolizes something more which Manus recognizes when he calls Doalty's action as a gesture "to indicate a presence" (Friel, 17) and let the English soldiers know that they are on the Irish land. This pity intrusion of British work could have been

punished strictly if Doalty was caught but it makes the situation more adventurous and for this time funny. Moreover Doalty tries to demonstrate that he belongs to nationalists who are not willing to tolerate the foreigners. Manus understands his deed fully as he is of the same feeling about the soldiers but rather for his own personal reasons.

The next episode but more serious in contrast with the first one is stealing horses and some equipment from the soldiers. Although Doalty did not participate, he surely knows about Donnelly twins who have disappeared suddenly and are suspected from the crime. Captain Lancey, “uneasy with people-especially civilians, especially these foreign civilians” (Friel, 33) launched the investigation and contacted Hugh to ask for help. This investigation triggers the heavy atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Since that moment British soldiers starts to be cautious and distrustful of the Irish which is strengthened by the fact that they do not understand each other and to investigate this episode and deal with the mapping survey, they need to have a civilian interpreter.

In case of Owen as a go-between his situation is even more complicated. Despite his six-year stay in England he returns to his home place in Ireland and is supposed to get his family and friends familiar with the purpose of the survey. During his introductory translation he balances between two languages and almost everything from the original is lost either to protect the locals and himself or avoid saying the truth. Fortunately for him, Lieutenant and Captain speak only English and have no suspicion about his translation into Irish. On the other hand, locals do not speak English except Manus and Hugh. Hugh is too drunk to concentrate on the content of Owen’s translation. Moreover it provides him an excuse for his deliberate way of ignoring what is about to happen. Whereas Manus is alert enough. He remains loyal to his brother and does not comment on his strange translation until they have some privacy apart from the others:

Manus: What sort of a translation was that, Owen?

Owen: Did I make a mess of it?

Manus: You weren’t saying what Lancey was saying!

Owen: ‘Uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry’ – who said that?

Manus: There was nothing uncertain about what Lancey said: it’s a bloody military operation, Owen! And what’s Yolland’s function? What is ‘incorrect’ about the place-names we have here?

Owen: Nothing at all. They’re just going to be standardised.

Manus: You mean changed into English?

Owen: Where there’s ambiguity, they’ll be anglicised. (Friel, 37)

Language provides Owen with a weapon of immense value. By language transition he can easily manipulate people who are not fluent in one of the languages used. He is able to deceive any of the participants without being suspected. What remains unclear is the reason for such attitude. There are several possible explanations but the most probable ones are to protect himself from being expelled from his home community and called a traitor and at the same time to maintain his position in the British community, his property and better living conditions. During the first and half of the second act Owen is persuaded by the harmless purpose of the survey and he tries to present his persuasion to the locals so that they would completely believe in it and would be helpful and would not cause any troubles by unexpected secret actions against the soldiers. But again, he does not succeed in persuading his brother Manus. Owen's superiors call him Roland which symbolizes his change into a British gentleman. And what makes Manus angry about it is the fact that Owen let them to call him Roland except by his own Irish name. As if Owen was ashamed of his Irish roots which he tries to conceal by pretending that he does not care how he is being called because it will always be him no matter how people nicknames him in different languages:

Manus: And they call you Roland! They both call you Roland!

Owen: Shhhhh. Isn't it ridiculous? They seemed to get it wrong from the very beginning – or else they can't pronounce Owen. I was afraid some of you bastards would laugh.

Manus: Aren't you going to tell them?

Owen: Yes –yes-soon-soon.

Manus: But they ...

Owen. Easy, man easy. Owen –Roland – what the hell. It's only a name. It's the same me, isn't it?

Manus: Indeed it is. It's the same Owen.

Owen: And the same Manus. And in a way we complement each other. Alright – who has met whom? Isn't this a job for the go-between? (Friel, 38)

It is only a name, as Owen said. This can be applied on the place names too. The places also remain the same, it is only a name what changes so there is no reason for being hostile. On the other hand, the name in Irish denotes something specific which gave the name to the place. It simply belongs to it, it is inseparable. The change of name can cause confusion and hesitation. Locals surely know these places and their names but by changing them not only the names but places also seem to be changed. These will be

places in Ireland but they will bear English names. That is why Ordnance survey was considered by locals as uninvited and unpleasant action which intrudes and disrupts their home place and identity.

Owen, in fact, tries to find compromise between his split identity although subconsciously. He lives and works in England where he has already established certain position, got used to higher standard of living and gathered considerable property. As already mentioned, he partly converted to the British culture which offered him what Ireland could not. Although when he returns home he definitely do not regret leaving home as he sees the same misery persistent in Ireland, the same people only older. It seems that the time has stopped there in Ballybeg. For him there is nothing harmful in British intervention at all until Yolland is missing and as a result of previous unsolved rebellious actions Captain Lancey steps to a very strict resolution. If Lieutenant Yolland is not found within 3 days he will slaughter all cattle in the area, than he will continue with evictions and finally he will proceed with a complete clearance of the entire parish. Suddenly, the reality strikes Owen and he realises what is being endangered. He is frightened by Lancey's attitude who orders him to do his job and translate to the locals so that they could spread the news all around the parish. Lancey is pretty sure that the locals are involved and he is determined to punish them for their presumptuous and unwise action. The British suddenly appear to Owen as enemies, cruel and intransigent who are not easy to mess with. What makes them though so dangerous is the fact that they are scared but in contrast equipped with bayonets, which assures them about their superiority and authority to act. They find themselves in foreign country full of foreign people speaking different language and threatening each other because they cannot read their minds and do not know what to expect. Fear controls them and the only way how to protect themselves is by weapons in a violent way. The Irish are more handicapped by no remarkable possession of guns and they do not have numerous troops of trained soldiers on their side. At that moment Owen feels mobilized by urgency and seriousness of this situation. And as the soldiers' camp is set on fire they are all aware of the war they got into with soldiers. Moreover, he has suspicion about his brother Manus who suddenly leaves too, in a great hurry to hide far enough. He might have got entangled into Yolland's disappearance as a result of his love to Maire and feeling that he is no longer her prospective husband thanks to Yolland

who she felt desperately in love with. Owen is parted again, he is standing on crossroad not knowing which way to choose. Either to stay loyal to his family and people or to his British employer who is now menacing by destroying the whole parish. From human perspective, he cares about Yolland because they became friends. On the other hand he also cares about all the local people being imperilled on life and survival. The problem is that he cannot solve this situation and stop the terror by himself as he is seen as a traitor, at least in Doalty's eyes who is not willing to provide him with any useful information about Yolland until Owen "is finished with Lancey. I might know something then." (77) Owen is not trusted until he discontinues all the connections with the British and therefore he must decide immediately what to choose. He is now ashamed of his mistake and realises that the survey should have never happened. He knows where he belongs to and what his undeniable sense for own people and respect to them is and moreover he is determined to save Yolland. The only possibility is to find Donnelly twins, enquire where Yolland is and avoid fatal disaster for the whole parish. The price for all the locals would be unbearably too high with no exceptions.

3 The Home Place

In *The Home Place* Friel returns to the 19th century Ireland, again to his favourite Ballybeg in County Donegal. For this time the main characters are the British. It may occur that this analysis juxtaposes two completely different plays but under more detailed inspection they prove to be very similar only written from the antagonist angle and within twenty-five years interval.

3.1 Individual identities

As if symbolically, the play starts with Thomas Moore's song 'Oft in the Stilly Night' which appears to be placed into the hard times atmosphere to compensate, harmonize and ease all the tension. Moreover, the song is one of the Irish national harmonies and not just a song. Its power over the people is almost mystical, as Clement, the choir master says “ the music liberates them briefly from their poverty... When they sing they fashion their own ethereal opulence and become little heavenly themselves. ...”(Friel, 38). Margaret, the family housekeeper and Clement's daughter, knows this song because she used to sign in the school choir under her father's leadership. The old Irish song works in the same way as reciting of Homer and Ovid in Latin and Greek does in *Translations*. These symbols remind people of old, prosperous times. Although Margaret tries to keep distance from her Irish neighbours and family, this song fills her with peace and comfort as well as it serves as a reminder of her origin, culture and people. Moreover as if the song would have some power over her, she is hypnotized by the rhythms floating in the air.

Margaret's father Clement is a pathetic school teacher, drunk and he relentlessly mourns for the old times. He escapes from the reality to his choir work and old songs symbolizing eras that are irretrievably lost. Clement remarkably resembles Hugh in his passion for alcohol, exaggerating and pathetic pompous words. They both tend to elude the changing reality and escape to alternatives which solve nothing but provide them with imaginary though comforting world. Unfortunately, by their attitudes and patriotic ideas they are both made fun of and nobody takes them seriously, paradoxically except the British, either Yolland and Lancey or David and Christopher. Hugh is still respected as the person maintaining classical education and he also manages to gain adulation

from Yolland who is blinded by the spirit of Ireland while reality escapes his eyes. Clement is on one hand respected by Gore's as a remarkable man but on the other, his daughter is ashamed of him. Hugh was seen by Owen as a pompous man whereas when Clement meets Christopher's cousin Richard, an anthropologist and a very arrogant man, he is completely humiliated. Fortunately for him, he is too excited and too drunk to take Richard's sarcasm personally:

Clement: I imagine you have poets in England of much greater accomplishment, Mr Richard. But Tom Moore is the finest singer we have; the voice of our nation. Yes-yes- a romantic man and given to easy sentiment, as I myself; a mixture of rapture and pathos. But he has our true measure, Mr Richard. He divines us accurately. He reproduces features of our history and our character. And he is an astute poet who knows that certain kinds of songs are necessary for his people. And they were especially necessary at the time he sang them.

Richard: Good heavens.

Clement: Oh yes, out true measure, as I hope you will agree when you hear us. Truer of us, I am certain, than the people who felt they had to take vengeance on the unfortunate Lord Lifford.(...)

He exits. Richard bursts out laughing.

Richard: Well-well! What a grotesque! And the reek of whiskey off him! Or was it either?

Christopher: Don't underestimate him. An interesting study is Clement.

Richard: A buffoon! 'The voice of our nation'- good God! (Friel, 40-41)

This dialogue is almost identical with the one that Hugh and Yolland have in *Translations*. Hugh also tried to point out what culture means to his nation and how it enables to the Irish to express themselves. It is just an inseparable part of their identity – national poets, songs or rhyming in Latin. This belongs to them and what makes others laugh for the Irish represents a self-realisation and heritage passed from the generation to the following ones. Richard practically derides not only to Clement but also to the Irish as such and starts his sorting according to the racial features. The only person who defends Clement is David.

David is well-natured, maybe too placid and easily manipulated but definitely polite and tolerant man who feels that his father is humiliating him and that he is in love with Margaret which makes them rivals rather than father and son. David, in his character, is very similar to Manus in *Translations*. He also suffers under father's dominance and strives for an independent life somewhere else with the woman he loves. Moreover, he also defends the Irish and faces his brother Owen regarding the incorrect translation. The only difference is in their nationality – Manus is the Irish whereas

David the British but they both share same personal qualities such as respect to the others notwithstanding their nationality or social status. They judge people objectively, according to their qualities not the origin. Unfortunately, they both are too kind and they bare all the humiliations and at the moment when they finally stand up it is usually too emotional act to bring them any good.

3.2 Violence and conflicts

Christopher Gore, a middle-aged widowed landlord whose family has settled in Ballybeg several generations ago, represents one of the main characters. He is no newcomer and his position in the parish is long-established. Although 1880s are years of immense changes which caused great discomfort to the British landlords living and owning property in Ireland countryside. This has been projected into *The Home Place* as its historical setting and atmosphere.

Christopher, the owner of the Lodge, enters the scene in a rather desperate mood. He returns from Lord Lifford's funeral who was violently assassinated by his tenants. This somehow indicates to Christopher that the local people, as a result of the expected dawn of Home Rule and unstable era, are no longer willing to tolerate presence of British landlords occupying their own land and living prosperously while they are starving. What scares Christopher is the unexpected violence which the Lifford was murdered with. This moreover supports his theory about potentially existing list of oppressors who are sooner or later supposed to be evicted or killed by the locals and his intuition says to him that he might be one of them. His household is run by Margaret, very charming, intelligent and adorable woman in early thirties, who is, by the way, Irish but working for the Gore's since she was fourteen. Margaret represents the woman element in the house as well as the presence of Irish nation. She knows her tribe but it seems that she is more ashamed for them instead of being proud. To Christopher she means a lot because he loves her, unfortunately as his son David does too. Margaret balances between the two of them as she does not intend to hurt Christopher's feeling by revealing her true feelings to David. When Christopher returns she is trying to comfort him and prevent him against falling into despair and fear. Nevertheless, she definitely

suspects that something is secretly happening and she is unarguably in opposition to any rebellious action against the British landlords:

Margaret: And how was the memorial service?

Christopher: Subdued. No, it was awful, just awful.

Margaret: A big turn-out?

Christopher: Eleven of us.

Margaret: Is that all?

Christopher: Huddled together; talking in whispers.

Margaret: There were no locals?

Christopher: What am I, Margaret?

Margaret: What I mean is -

Christopher: No, only us. Frightened-terrified, for God's sake: which of us is next on the list?

Margaret: You know there is no list. It was an isolated crime, Christopher. ... (Friel, 10)

Christopher is of a purely British origin, from the third generation of the old landlords living in Ireland since 17th century but on the country he is also a member of very small and isolated group of aristocrats. One of them was really violently murdered but Christopher is pondering the real motif of the crime whether there exists a list of all that should be murdered or it was just a matter of personal revenge as he knows that Lifford was not very popular, especially among his own people which was proved on the funeral where nobody from the locals occurred. Although "locals" is very ambiguous to use as Christopher feel himself at home in Ballybeg so he considers himself local too and until now he had no reason to be afraid and feel endangered in the Lodge. However, Gore's family have always lived for centuries in more or less harmonious relationship, or at least tolerance with the local people despite the fact that the locals call them "The Lodgers" (Friel, 21). The Lodgers stands for "someone who pays for a place to sleep, and usually for meals, in someone else's house." (Cambridge Dictionary online) This name indicates that even tolerated, the Gore's family is not welcome as well as the other British landlords. They are still taken as guests who have been staying for an unwelcome visit too long and they are still expected to leave because they settled in the houses of former Irish landowners. At these times of tenuous social and political atmosphere tolerance suffered firstly by murder of lord Lifford and secondly by coming Christopher's cousin Richard to the Lodge with the purpose of taking an anthropological survey. These two incidents, however, triggered the wave of hatred and secret revolt because Richard believes that:

Christopher: [...] behind that physical portrait, beneath that exquisite Celtic appearance, there is a psychological portrait. And if only we could read that, it would tell us how intelligent that tribe is, how stupid, how cunning, how ambitious. How faithful, for heaven's sake. (Friel, 14-15)

The murder of Lord Lifford disconcerts peaceful flow of the lives. At the very beginning, Sally, the Irish servant in the Gore's house, and Margaret are doing the laundry and Sally comments on the Lifford's violent pass-away:

Sally: That long? God, that was one dirty job. And no sign of the peelers lifting anybody either.

Margaret: They will in time.

Sally: I hope they do. Well, maybe I do ... God knows they've questioned enough. Every man and boy in the parish must have been dragged in. All the same, he was a bad beast, Lifford. The Lecher Lifford – wasn't he well named? **Margaret:** Put a newspaper in that bucket, Sally. (Friel, 5)

Sally more openly expresses her opinion about the whole situation. As one of many local people whose only chance to survive is to work for the landlords, Sally is easier with saying that Lifford, although a member of higher society, was in fact a man of very reprehensible qualities, especially his lechery. This unflattering vice made local men having their daughters, sisters and wives in service for this lord highly uncomfortable. Sally, in a very circumspect manner pronounces that Lifford deserved his death as a result of his misbehaviour. She somehow tries to show Margaret that these people sometimes really risk their lives themselves not realising that even inferior people are also humans and that they should be treated accordingly, otherwise they will rebel. In contrast Margaret, as a reserved person rather neglects all Sally's comments to avoid any discussion. She definitely prefers to stay aside from all of this and just mind her own business and look after the household. Whereas when Sally meets Con Doherty accompanied by Johnny MacLoone who have just arrived from some secret business they had in England, Margaret shows her attitude very resolutely which leads to a little fight between them:

Margaret: Who were you talking to, Sally?

Sally: Con Doherty from Ballybeg.

Margaret: I thought that wastrel had left the country?

Sally: Comes and goes.

Margaret: What's he doing trespassing up here?

Sally: Snaring rabbits maybe. How would I know?

Margaret: He knows very well that's not permitted on these lands.

Sally: Cousin of yours, Maggie, isn't he? Maybe he thinks that entitles him?

Margaret: He's very wrong, then.

Sally: Or maybe like a lot of others about here he believes he's entitled to walk these lands any time he wants.

Margaret: And like a lot of others it would fit him better to do a decent day's work instead of going around whispering defiance into ears of stupid young fools. Whatever ugly activity he's involved in, we want none of it here. And spread a tablecloth on the lawn. We'll have afternoon tea outside today.

Sally: Will 'we'? You'd do anything to be one of the toffs, Maggie, wouldn't you?

Margaret: Any more cheek like that from you, miss, and you'll be back down below herding your one cow. (Friel, 8-9)

Margaret used very strong words addressing her cousin Don such as wastrel and ugly activity. She sensed that Con is involved in some private group which might be connected with the death of Lord Lifford. This also indicates danger and threat. Margaret, as Irish, should be supportive and understanding according to Sally. At least she should be aware of the belonging to one family and one nation. Instead Margaret is seen as a traitor who desires to become one of the British and live better than the rest of her family and people. Margaret in her strong personality and attitudes strongly resembles Owen in *Translations*. They both have chosen and prefer better living to pride and identity which means living on the verge of poverty. The question however is whether both are really traitors. From their point of view they just have pursued chances they were offered to. Owen left completely whereas Margaret stays but live with the British. Due to her age and life experience she definitely sees far-reaching consequences of her deeds. Contrastingly, Owen awakens after the fatal conflict with British at the very end. Margaret is very stable and strong in her attitudes and senses that despite her origin and responsibility to her nation she feels more like human rather than English or Irish which means that she has some moral code and killing other human is the most serious crime. Moreover she was undeniably brought up in a Christian family and so certain principles were imprinted in her.

3.2.1 **Richard – the intruder and the cause of fatal conflict**

Richard Gore came to measure the Irish in order to define their distinctive features. This seems as an honourable scientific research in connection with the scientific growth of humanities, science and progress. The same honourable mission brought to Ireland by

the British as is the Ordnance Survey in *Translations*. As the scene development in *Translations* shows, the Survey was the cause of many serious and escalated confrontations. The Irish felt that their culture, identity, something what is exclusively theirs and what they have tried to preserve for centuries is now being endangered again. Moreover, as Yolland said, the people were not confused by the place names, they do not call for any mapping. The only purpose of the survey was to map the area and name the places in English so as the Ireland as a constitutional part would be in fact unified in everything – language, school system, legal system, parliament and so forth. This meant a great intervention into lives of the locals. The flow of the days and daily work had been disturbed by the presence of soldiers.

In *The Home Place*, the British are represented by the aristocracy – the Gore's family and oppressing military action is replaced by Richard's anthropological survey. In both cases the local Irish do not welcome them at all as they are going through hard times of uncertainty and fear. Even David, Christopher's son, tries to warn the father about inappropriateness of the survey being hold at these times.

David: I just wondered, is this perhaps the right moment for Richard to carry out his ... whatever Richard intends doing?

Christopher: No idea what you're talking about, David.

David: Just that I got a sense in the village recently – you felt it at the service today, too – just that everybody seems to be a bit ... I don't know ... vigilant? ... on the edge?

Christopher: For heaven's sake who could object to Richard's silly tabulations? Nothing to worry about. Good to be vigilant. (...) (Friel, 18)

As well as Owen saw nothing bad in the mapping survey Christopher is also very positive about Richard's survey as he considers him as a harmless fool who just wants to measure some people to benefit human sciences. But similarly Owen and Christopher have completely forgotten about the fact that their opinion is not widely shared among the locals. The mistrustful and vigilant behaviour against the British was deeply rooted in history, became a part of their identity and is deepened by every inconsiderate action held by the British on the Irish territory. Even a neglectful misunderstanding can give rise to the violent and maybe self-protective reaction of the Irish and they are able to fight against everything what comes even with bare hands not to give up without a considerable defence and fight to the last man. The Irish are proud nation as Hugh often stated and finally Doalty as well when he spotted the military

camp set on fire.

Richard, as Friel described him, “is a bachelor in his sixties. A man of resolute habits and Victorian confidence: he is aware that this is how he is seen and it gives him sly pleasure to play up to that stereotype” (Friel,24). Richard's character emanates arrogance in his manners and the way of speaking. He truly looks down on the Irish like on the inferior people. As he speaks about his survey in connection with the Irish expected to come and be examined he uses very unflattering words while addressing them like hoplites, vengeful, specimens, sampling, primeval people, mongrels or subjects which undeniable denotes the legal system of the United Kingdom. There the inhabitants, the Irish included, are called subjects of the monarch but definitely not citizens with rights and duties. Being a subject clearly radiate the meaning of inferiority and unequal social status. Moreover, it says that the one who has the power is legally allowed to manipulate with people's freedom as they are only subjects, in other words property of the Crown. Richard truly believes in his own British identity and he is adequately proud of it. His pride, however, makes him feel to be privileged to sort out people into inferior races according to their facial and body features.

An interesting and maybe a little bit comic situation however is that even though the British have tools, no matter whether it is a mapping survey or anthropologist survey how to approach decoding the Irish minds and identity, they are still not able to decode them. The inability to understand the Irish and predict their behaviour and thinking seems to be the reason why the British are frustrated and relentlessly try to disrupt and undermine the Irish culture. The more they try, the less successful they are. As Richard outlines in his dialogue with David, the Irish race is in fact a mixture of the Celts, the Norwegians, the Scots, the Spanish, and the mongrels which stand for the British. Each nation's typical features mixed in the Irish.

What is Richard focusing on is, again, decoding the people and the fact that even if people are considered as hard-working and peaceable people, they still can be predisposed to the uprising and violent counteractions. These predispositions are though observable in the course of time, as he thinks, and so some results can be drawn out of the observations and future problems could be prevented which is highly desirable outcome of the anthropological survey – to decode, anticipate, and completely take over and rule over the other nations:

Richard: Isn't it just possible that that combination of black hair and strong chin and clear complexion is much more than the haphazard confluence of physical accidents? That they constitute an ethnic code we can't yet decipher? That they are signposts to an enormous vault of genetic information that is only just beyond the reach of our understanding? Are they saying to us – these physical features – if only we could hear them – are they whispering to us : crack our code and we will reveal to you how a man thinks, what his character traits are, his loyalties, his vices, his entire intellectual architecture. Because if we could interpret that hair and chin and complexion, would it tell us that artful Sally could be a designer of a brilliant canal system, a compulsive liar, a new Florence Nightingale, a rebel at heart maybe, maybe even traitor? Is that the concealed Sally?

Richard: (*softly*) If we could break into that vault, David, we wouldn't control just an empire. We would rule the entire universe. (Friel, 33)

Richard approaches all people from his scientific angle, he comments on his servant Perkins, on Sally, on Margaret and highlights their facial features. Such attitude to the others is on the one hand interesting but on the other it is also considered as highly offensive and in Margaret's words “I think you're secretly laughing at us all, Richard!” (Friel,34). When Richard's 'specimens' finally arrive, Christopher being aware of Richard's insensitive manners, asks him to be as polite as possible:

Christopher: (*quietly, to Richard*) These are not sophisticated people, Dick. You will be considerate of them?

Richard: You're twittering, Chris.

Christopher: And patient, if you would. They are my neighbours; this is my home.

Richard: Neighbours-home-what's this sudden delicacy?

Christopher: But you will be -?

Richard: I'm a scientist, not a nanny. (Friel, 43)

According to his reaction Richard is definitely not willing to behave differently from his usual, aristocratic and arrogant way. He is not dealing with humans but with samplings for his research which is even strengthened by his British aristocratic origin. In his attitude towards other people, Richard is very similar to Captain Lancey who is also very impersonal, reserved, restrained and looks down on the Irish. In these two plays particularly, Friel likes to contrast the two nations as unequal. The inequality in the prosperity, wealth, way of living and other easily remarkable and material things is transparent in contrast with the differences in behaviour, especially mutual relationships, paying respect, traditions and stand to other people. As the Irish are shown as people living on the verge of poverty, their daily work and worries focuses more on survival and at the same time preserving their culture, whereas the British, living prosperously

and making no worries about tomorrows, they are more comfort and pleasure-oriented which makes them feel more superior. Such situation appears in *Translations*, while Maire speaks about the harvest and potatoes on which their lives mostly depend on and in *The Home Place* as well. There during the Richard taking his measurements, Mary, one of the specimens, humiliated herself and agreed to come and to have been measured against the Christopher's promise to give her some money in reward. Christopher in this case truly appears as a prototypical do-gooder balancing between his cousin Richard who needs some volunteers for the measurements and the local people who are very proud but starving which makes them vulnerable to make compromises and being manipulated in order to feed their children:

Mary (*wheedling*) You'll pay me money, Sir, won't you? Just a few coppers. I'm only a widow-woman.

Richard: You'll get a photograph like everybody else. Feet together-head up-shoulders back.

Mary: It's money I need, Sir.

Richard: (*calls*) Span-1703. Sit down-yes-there! Sit! Sit!

Mary: The man's dead since Easter last and I'm alone with six wee ones and it's money I need to put a crust on the - (Friel, 52)

The Irish people are more tempted by their fate and suffering which seems to be the reason why they are very kind and tolerant people but it also gives them the strength and will to fight against all the obstacles and tortures caused by the British. That is why they sometimes tend to face, stand out and incline to such resolute counteractions such as killing on the purpose of their own protection and defence. On the other hand, the British in these plays are sometimes depicted as very cruel people. Sometimes it is a little bit exaggerated, especially when Richard cannot stand Mary's whining and tells a story of a woman who, according to the Hindu custom, committed suttee when her husband died. Richard de facto openly suggests that instead of mourning Mary should commit suicide to show her loyalty and love and even to stop her misery if she is not able to deal with it after her husband's pass away.

Richard: First she distributed her jewels to the assembled mourners. Then, when her husband's funeral pyre is blazing away merrily-keep your arms still!-up she scrambles to the very top of it, nimble as a goat, and immolates herself! Astonishing!
[...]

Richard: And the amazing thing is she never uttered a sound. (*Tweaks Mary's ear playfully.*) You could learn a thing from her, couldn't you? We banned the bizarre custom fifty years ago, but it persists in a few remote areas still. (Friel, 52-53)

Nobody, however, noticed Con Doherty and Johnny MacLoone entering the scene and observing these measurements for a while. The atmosphere menaces with fear and the story gets into its climax. Like *Translations*, *The Home Place* ends with direct confrontation between the two nations.

Con Doherty observes the process of measuring and sees how little girl, Maisie, trembles with fear as she does not know what is going on. Moreover he listens to Mary's desperate pleas for money in contrast with Richard's sarcastic and offensive commentaries. After a while he is noticed by Christopher and he exchanges few polite phrases with all. Suddenly, he demands Christopher to ask his cousin to stop the survey. Christopher is firstly shocked and alarmed by Con's insolence but he awakens in a short while:

Con: We have no quarrel with you, Mr Gore. But I'm not going to say this again. Tell your cousin to pack his things and leave. Himself and his assistant. (Friel, 55)
[...]

Christopher: I don't know what you think you are doing, but this is a perfectly innocuous survey. And this is my home. And you are trespassing.

Con: I'm not trespassing, Mr Gore. (*To Richard*) You two –pick up your belongings and get out of here. (Friel, 56)

Richard refuses to leave and tries to confront Con but Johnny moves towards him with a cudgel. Con stops him and ask both sides to calm down and do what is wise and orders Richard to leave immediately. Sally packs their belongings. Christopher tries to have the situation under control but he fails as the only person in charge is Con. The situation for Christopher is as hopeless as for Owen in *Translations* when Captain Lancey threatens with evictions. Margaret tries to force her cousin from being so violent and at the same time she pushes Christopher to be strict and order the rebels out of the Lodge. The situation starts to be very tense as Richard starts to shout and uses offensive expressions because his ego was harmed by “two peasant cut-throats” (Friel, 59). Finally, Christopher decides to do what Con asks him to do and betrays his family in order to save their and especially his own life:

Christopher: This discussion will now end. I have listened with attention to both sides and I have now decided that what is going to happen-in the best interests of all of us-

what must happen is this. Cousin Richard and his assistant will leave immediately. Their work here is complete. If they make reasonable progress they will be well on their way to Galway before dark. This is best for all. Their work here is finished.

Richard: Are you betraying me, Christopher?

Con: Mr Gore is being sensible. (Friel,60) [...] You know you've made the right decision, Mr Gore, don't you? (Friel, 61)

Few hours later, Christopher still cannot overcome his shock and his feelings are so confused even though he is sure that he made the only possible decision. The reality suddenly strikes him, he feels that he is no longer welcome in his own home. The romantic spirit of the place is so fragile that it has already almost vanished and is soon to be replaced by threat, fear and violence.

As symbolically both plays started they also conclude. In *Translations* Hugh tries to recite the *Aeneid* and although he knows it by heart he suddenly forgets the verses. And similarly, Christopher in *The Home Place* go to cut hundred years old magnificent trees. Trees are cut, verses forgotten and old culture breaks into pieces and dies out with all its the reminders. As soon as the these reminders are removed and replaced by new trends only the recollections of old times will remain.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this bachelor paper was to find and analyse the main aspects of Irish identity in two plays by Brian Friel, namely *Translations* and *The Home Place*. *Translations* belongs to one of the Friel's most acknowledged plays, translated and performed all around the world whereas *The Home Place* represents his last piece of work. The unorthodox choice of seemingly distinct plays, each had its première in a different century, was purposeful not only because of their similar historical setting but also due to the analogies in motifs, dilemmas, characters, identities and above all, in order to compare whether and how themes of Friel's plays have changed within twenty-five years.

Firstly, Friel's connection with the Field Day Theatre Company was foreshadowed and the themes of *Translations* as its opening play were included to demonstrate the main elements of identity occurring in Friel's plays. Furthermore, the essential terms such as 'identity' and 'nation' were defined. Then, the main themes of the analysed plays, 'language' and 'sense of home' were looked at in detail. The theoretical part was concluded by outline of historical events relevant to the plays.

Secondly, the analysis of *Translations* was conducted. By focusing on the identity elements it was found that each character comprehends national but identity differently. Certain roles were imposed on the heroes and they are expected to be patriots and protect the material as well as the spiritual heritage of their Irish culture. These expectations however clash with their own conceptions of truth and identity. As the name of the play denotes, *Translations* is concerned with the aspect of language as a very dominant element of identity interpreted and used individually. Representatives of older generation, namely Hugh and Jimmy Jack, are somehow stuck in old times and by escaping to the ancient culture, its classical literatures and language they try to evoke peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. Language provides them with reassurance that until they are speaking Irish they are able to express themselves precisely and nothing will be lost in translation. Sadly, these escapes though go hand in hand with vulnerability to alcoholism or to negligence of reality which de facto helps them accept the inevitability of British culture overtaking their Irish one.

On the contrary, the youngsters and the most significantly Owen and Yolland perceive identity and the expected roles as the obstacles in pursuing their dreams.

Yolland cannot speak Irish and feels as an outsider and unless he learns Irish and is able to understand Irish way of thinking he will not obtain the key to the Irish. Whereas Owen sees Irish language as a useless relic which needs to be replaced by English language and he is not able to recognize the significance of language for his own culture. Owen's attitude changes abruptly when the fragile border between the British and the Irish is broken and the fatal conflict is looming in the air. At this very moment influence of the historical events appear to be evident and influential for the characters. Hatred rooted in history starts to determine people's deeds and decisions. Conflicts on the national level had been transmitted to ordinary people who, being aware of their origin, put their ordinary troubles and dilemmas aside to rise and rebel against the invading British enemies and defend their unique culture.

The last part of the analysis is devoted to *The Home Place*. This play is based on the question of home, in other words, feeling that a person belongs somewhere and feels comfortable there. *The Home Place* in contrast with *Translations* is written from the British perspective. The main characters are the British landlords living in Ireland who, as a result of changing political atmosphere, start to feel uncomfortable and unsafe in their house in Ireland. Although the Gores family consider Ireland to be their home place, the local Irish people perceive them as intruders occupying their land. By arrival of Christopher Gore's cousin Richard in order to take anthropological survey of the Irish tribe, situation is becoming very tense. Richard's survey, similarly as the Ordnance Survey in *Translations*, represents a tool via which the Irish should be decoded in order to prevent any possible conflicts. In fact, possession of a map of places in Ireland with English names would help to better orientation on the Irish territory as well as the anthropological survey defining features of the Irish tribe would help to read their minds and predict their actions. All this effort should lead to inventing means by which the Irish would become easily controllable.

Another analogy with symbolism of *Translations* was traced in people's dilemmas and solving conflicts. The flow of days is disrupted by arrival of Richard who, by measuring the local Irish and humiliating them, provokes a counter-attack by members of local secret organisation. Christopher from the position of owner is now facing two parties – his family and rebels. Finally, he solves his dilemma by ordering his family out to save lives of all participants and bring the conflict to the end. Although

seen as a traitor, he is sure about making the right decision.

This analysis proved that even seemingly contrasting plays written within a very long interval have many features in common. Firstly, they share similar historical setting resulting in a very tense atmosphere which showed to be highly influential regarding characters' deeds, feelings and decisions. Secondly, both have one outstanding motif of identity; language and home. These motifs provide characters with securities which worth defending and preserving and they usually realise their value at the moment when these securities are endangered in fatal conflicts. Which denotes another analogy of one crucial conflict in the end of the plays as their climax. The conflicts are escalated by intrusion of British soldiers or the anthropologist. These intrusions worsen tense and heavy atmosphere of restless times and fill the air with threat and fear. Two cultures are confronted and the characters, significantly Owen and Christopher, are forced to make choices under distress. Last but not least similarity is in the symbolism of the plays. *Translations* starts with the picture of hedge-school where old traditions are maintained and is ended by Hugh reciting Aeneid. *The Home Place* opens with tones of Irish national harmony which also float in the air in the end of the play when old trees are being cut down. And finally, problematic relationships between lovers and usually fathers and sons are found. Moreover, some characters find consolation in alcohol.

To conclude this bachelor paper, via the analysis of *Translations* and *The Home Place* it was not only possible to trace similar features of the plays and key elements of identity of one nation but also to find out that Brian Friel's style of writing and the themes occurring in his plays have not dramatically changed. Moreover, his works always have strong historical background which influences characters in their thinking. Furthermore, as mentioned in the theoretical part, national identity is an inseparable part of Irish nationalism and despite the effort of the Field Day Theatre Company and modern theatre companies it is almost impossible to ignore aspect of identity which anyhow always penetrates into the arts, Friel's plays not excluded.

Resumé

Cílem této práce je analýza dvou divadelních her, *Translations* a *The Home Place* od Brian Friela. Tento irský dramatik píšící anglicky je považován za největšího žijícího dramatika současného Irska.

Brian Friel se proslavil zejména díky svým divadelním hrám, přičemž první větší úspěchy slavil v roce 1964 s hrou pod názvem *Philadelphia, Here I come*. V roce 1980 se stal spoluzakladatelem divadelní společnosti The Field Day Theatre Company a ku příležitosti otevření, napsal jednu z analyzovaných her, *Translations*. Tato divadelní společnost byla založena s cílem pojmout irské drama z jiného pohledu a soustředit se spíše na jeho osvobození od mýtů a předsudků. Tato snaha ovšem znamenala, že pokusem o jiné pojetí a uchopení identity a historie v dramatu budou vytvořeny jiné mýty a koncepce. Možná i z tohoto důvodu byla Brianu Frielovi často vytýkána jeho historická nepřesnost a politická zaměřenost her. Nicméně, Brian Friel se spíše soustředil na jednotlivce a jejich osudy, vnímání světa, problémy a především mezilidské vztahy. Pravdou ovšem zůstává, že historické pozadí se v jeho dílech objevuje velmi často, ale nejde o popis událostí, jako spíše o vytvoření autentické atmosféry, do které je pak příběh zasazen. Co se týče politické vyhraněnosti, nelze říci, že Frielovy hry odrážejí byť sebemenší politickou propagandu. Ba naopak. Velmi výrazným prvkem Frielových prací je ovšem národní identita a její aspekty. *Translations* je hrou, kde převažuje otázka jazyka a *The Home Place* naopak řeší spíše místo, které můžeme nazývat domovem. Ačkoli se Brian Friel obecně zabývá spíše osudy jednotlivých postav, motiv identity se stal neoddělitelnou součástí jeho děl stejně tak jako irského národa. Irsko je zemí s velmi silným smyslem pro nacionalismus a bránění vlastní identity, včetně jazyka proti vlivům Velké Británie a angličtiny. Nesnášenlivost těchto dvou národů je hluboce zakořeněna v dávné historii a jejich vzájemný spor se vleče již po staletí. Je tedy pochopitelné, že otázka identity, zejména národní identity je přes všechny snahy se od ní odporstít, neustále reflektována v umění, v literatuře a v dramatu nevyjímaje.

Brian Friel opustil Field Day po osmi letech ale i tak byl jeho styl psaní již navždy poznamenán jeho účastí na tomto projektu a určité motivy se v jeho hrách objevují neustále. Field Day svého cíle zcela nedosáhla, ale přesto je její přínos irskému

divadlu a oceňován dodnes.

Hry, které jsou předmětem analýzy patří k celosvětově uznávaným pracem Briana Friela. Rozdíl spočívá pouze v tom, že *Translations* byla napsána v roce 1980, kdežto *The Home Place* představuje jeho nejnovější hru z roku 2005. Zdánlivá odlišnost těchto dvou dramát je ovšem jedním z hlavních důvodů, proč jsou porovnávány. Pod drobnohledem je totiž možno v těchto hrách vystopovat velké množství podobností v symbolice, tématech, postavách ale i v historickém pozadí 19.století. Děj obou her se navíc odehrává ve známé vesnici jménem Ballybeg v hrabství Donegal, v Severním Irsku. Hry jsou analyzovány se zaměřením na otázku irské národní identity, která se promítá do činů a chování jednotlivých postav a ovlivňuje tak jejich rozhodnutí a postoje zejména v zásadních momentech, kdy dochází ke střetu dvou identit a kultur, britské a irské, a kdy je zejména ta irská ohrožena. K aspektům identity, kterým je věnována největší pozornost patří jazyk, historie a otázka domova.

První analyzovanou hrou je *Translations*, která, jak už bylo zmíněno výše, patří k nejzásadnějším hrám z dílny Briana Friela. Hlavním tématem hry je otázka irského jazyka, který je čím dál tím více nahrazován angličtinou, s čímž se ne všechny postavy dokáží smířit. Jazyk zde představuje jakýsi symbol a prostředek jehož prostřednictvím lze vyjádřit nikoli pouze myšlenky, pocity a reflektuje specifika daného jazyka, ale také slouží jako zbraň, kterou lze použít ve svůj prospěch.

Děj se odehrává ve školní třídě, respektive v provizorních prostorách staré a dávno již nepoužívané stodoly. V tomto nevládném prostředí jsou studenti, většinou ve věku dvaceti až pětadesáti let vyučováni klasickým jazykům, tedy latině a řečtině. Škola je vedena Hughem, který je ovšem po většinu času opilý a hodiny tedy místo něj vede jeho starší syn Manus. Poklidný běh dní je narušen příchodem vojáků, kteří mají za úkol zmapovat oblast a veškerá jména cest, mostů, kopců a podobně přeložit do angličtiny a zanést do mapy. S vojáky nečekaně přichází i Owen, mladší syn Hugha, jako jejich civilní překladatel a prostředník mezi Brity a Iry. Owen odešel před šesti lety do Anglie hledat štěstí a za tu dobu se mu podařilo získat dobré postavení a majetek. Při návratu si uvědomuje, že lidé doma, v Irsku, se vůbec nezměnili a žijí neustále v té samé bídě, stále utvrzeni ve svých starých principech a přesvědčeních. Při představování velícího důstojníka kapitána Lanceyho a poručíka Yollanda své rodině má Owen za úkol přetlumočit důvody, proč se tato vojenská akce koná a co je jejím cílem.

Owen však nepřekládá přesně, ba naopak obsah značně přetváří a zmírňuje tak fakt, že vojáci přišli s cílem změnit jména míst a zmapovat území. Proti jeho překladu nemá nikdo námitek, jelikož vojáci neumí irsky a studenti ve škole zase anglicky. Jediní lidé, kteří mluví anglicky jsou Hugh, který je příliš opilý a Manus, který také bratra později konfrontuje. Owen ovšem ve svém překladu a stejně tak i v účelu vojenské akce nevidí nic špatného, co by mohlo komukoli ublížit. Neuvědomuje si však, že vojáci narušili chod života místních lidí a ty začínají podnikat drobné záškodnické akce, aby práci vojákům alespoň zkomplikovali. Dochází k menšímu insidentu, kdy je vojákům ukradeno nějaké vybavení a pár koní. Již tento menší konflikt však rozsévá pocit nejistoty, nedůvěry a podezíravosti Britů vůči místnímu irskému obyvatelstvu a atmosféra hry se začíná naplňovat jistou hrozbou a strachem.

Poručík Yolland ve svém jádru velmi romantický snílek je okouzlen Irskem, krajinou, místem a jazykem a později i Maire, místní dívkou, kterou si ovšem zamiloval Manus. Yolland se na jednu stranu cítí v Irsku velmi št'asten, ale na druhou stranu také ví, že nemluví jazykem místních obyvatel, což ho velmi trápí. Je si rovněž vědom faktu, že i v případě, že by se naučil irsky, nedokázal by pochopit a porozumět irské identitě jako takové. Otázka jazyka jako součásti identity a prostředku jejího vyjádření se stává pro Yollanda velkou překážkou. Možná právě proto, že tolik obdivoval krásu Irska si neuvědomil, že vojáci nejsou vítáni a že atmosféra je čím dál tím těžší a těžší. V závěru hry je poručík Yolland nezvěstný a jeho zmizení tak definitivně spouští otevřený střet mezi neozbrojenými Iry, kteří jsou ale pevní ve svém přesvědčení a odhodlání bojovat do posledního muže, a britskými vojáky, kteří jsou ohrožováni cizími lidmi na cizím území a navíc nemají ani společný jazyk. V tuto chvíli je Owen donucen přeložit místním, k jakým krokům se vojáci uchýlí, pakliže nebude Yolland nalezen. Owen si náhle uvědomuje, co to identita a pocit sounáležitosti je a jak velmi se to liší od jeho koncepce a od jeho vnímání lidí kolem sebe. Je nucen si vybrat a volí tedy svou původní identitu.

Druhou hrou, které je v analýze věnována pozornost je *The Home Place*. Tato hra, ačkoli se zdá být odlišná, je naopak velmi podobná v mnoha směrech *Translations*. Hlavními hrdiny jsou tentokrát Britové, lépe řečeno potomci aristokratů, kteří přišli po roce 1690 do Irska, zabrali půdu jejich původním majitelům a v Irsku se usadili nastálo. Toto dílo v sobě, stejně jako dílo předchozí, skrývá historické události, které nepřímo a

přesto velmi výrazně ovlivnily atmosféru a i děj celé hry. V *Translations* se viditelně odrážela atmosféra nově vzniklé unie a trestních zákonů z předchozích let, a stejně tak se v *The Home Place* odráží debata ohledně nezávislosti irského parlamentu. Obě hry rovněž reflektují tradici tajných záškodnických organizací, které se snažili sabotovat a škodit svým britským pánům.

Na rozdíl od *Translations*, *The Home Place* se nese již od počátku v poměrně melancholickém duchu, když se Christopher Gore vrací z pohřbu lorda Lifforda, který byl brutálně zavražděn jedním z místních lidí. Christopher začíná tušit, že se blíží hrozba nepokojů a že už není ve svém domě v bezpečí. Zde se prvně objevuje hlavní motiv hry, tedy otázka domova. Ačkoli se Christopher cítí v Irsku doma, místními lidmi jako jeden z nich vnímán rozhodně není. Cítí, že britští lordi již nejsou vítáni a má strach o vlastní život. Jeho irská hospodyně, Margaret, ho ujišťuje, že se není čeho bát. Christopher ale dále zůstává ostražitý. V tu dobu je u něj na návštěvě jeho bratranec Richard, který přijel za účelem provést antropologický výzkum. Tento výzkum by mu, a hlavně celé britské společnosti, pomohl v rozluštění irské povahy a tím pádem by bylo možné předvídat jejich chování a předcházet dalším nepokojům a nakonec si Irsko podmanit včetně jeho obyvatel. Zde se objevuje další podobnost her, jako je narušení běžného chodu dní příchodem britského vědce, který rovněž jako vojáci, hledá způsob, jak zmapovat nikoli území, ale mentalitu lidí v Irsku a dokázat je pak ovládat. Richard svými povýšenými způsoby vyvolává velké pohoršení u místních, kteří ale trpí a hladoví a několik jich souhlasí s účastí na Richardově výzkumu. Tento výzkum ovšem zapříčiní, že místní tajná skupina vnikne do Christopherova domu a donutí Christophera, aby vykázal Richarda z domu a Irska a předešel tak střetu, který by vyústil v několik ztrát na životech. Christopher ze strachu o svůj život volí vykázání svého bratrance z domu a ukončuje tak tuto vyhrocenou situaci.

Obě dramata jsou si podobná i ve svých symbolických začátcích a koncích. *Translations* začíná ve staré stodole symbolizující jakýsi azil pro vzdělání, místo, kde klasické jazyky a vzdělanost ožívají. Atmosféra uvnitř jako by měla poskytnout jediné klidné místo vhodné pro rozjímání, zatímco venku se ovzduší třese strachem z budoucnosti. Tak jak symbolicky hra začala, tak také končí, když po výhrůžkách Hugh začne citovat Aeneis. Náhle se ovšem zastaví, jelikož zapomněl verše, které zná nazpaměť. Jako by to znamenalo, že staré věci se mění, odcházejí a na jejich místo

přicházejí nové. Stejná symbolika je patrná i v *The Home Place*, která začíná za tónů národní písně. Tato harmonie má nad lidmi velkou moc a dokáže jim v dobách nestability poskytnout duchovní útěchu a na chvíli zapomenout. Ve stejné melodii jsou káceny staré stromy s jejichž pádem také něco starého nenávratně končí a opona padá i za celou hrou.

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