

**Translations**, by Brian Friel

--- one of the plays presented March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 by Foote Theatre School Ensemble Class

Manus ... Dave

Sarah ... Janice

Molly ... Grace

Maire ... Marianne

Doalty ... Dustin

Bridget ... Shelby

**Hugh** Mor O'Donnell ... Philip

Owen ... Marc

Captain Lancey ... Lori

Lieutenant Yolland ... Keenan

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**Act One pg. 23**

Bridget: Watch what you're doing, Doalty!

Doalty: False alarm, boys. The bugger's not coming at all. Sure the bugger's hardly fit to walk.

**HUGH:** *Adsum*, Doalty, *adsum*. Perhaps not in *sobrietate perfecta* but adequately *sobrius* to overhear your quip. Vesperal salutations to you all.

Molly: *Ave*, Hugh.

**HUGH:** Molly. Apologies for my late arrival: we were celebrating the baptism of Nellie Ruadh's baby.

Bridget: What name did she put on it, Master?

**HUGH:** Was it Eamon? Yes, it was Eamon.

Bridget: Eamon Donal from Tor! Cripes!

**HUGH:** And after the *caerimonia nominationis*—Maire?

Maire: The ritual of naming.

**HUGH:** Indeed—we then had a few libations to mark the occasion. Altogether very pleasant. The derivation of the word ‘baptise’?—where are my Greek scholars? Doalty?

Doalty: Would it be—ah—ah—

**HUGH:** Too slow. Molly?

**Act One pg. 24**

Molly: ‘Baptizein’—to dip or immerse.

**HUGH:** Indeed—our friend Pliny Minor speaks of the ‘*baptisterium*’—the cold bath.

Doalty: Master.

**HUGH:** Doalty?

Doalty: I suppose you could talk then about baptising a sheep at sheep-dipping, could you?

**HUGH:** Indeed—the precedent is there—the day you were appropriately named Doalty—seven nines?

Doalty: What’s that, Master?

**HUGH:** Seven times nine?

Doalty: Seven nines—seven nines—seven times nine—seven times nine are—Cripes, it’s on the tip of my tongue, Master—I knew it for sure this morning—funny that’s the only one that foxes me—

Bridget: Sixty-three.

Doalty: What’s wrong with me: sure seven nines are fifty-three, Master.

**HUGH:** Sophocles from Colonus would agree with Doalty Dan Doalty from Tulach Alainn: ‘To know nothing is the sweetest life.’ Where’s Sean Beag?

Manus: He’s at the salmon.

**HUGH:** And Nora Dan?

Maire: She says she’s not coming back any more.

**HUGH:** Ah. Nora Dan can now write her own name—Nora Dan’s education is complete. And the Donnelly twins?

Bridget: They’re probably at the turf. There’s the one-and-eight I owe you for last quarter’s arithmetic and there’s my one-and-six for this quarter’s writing.

**HUGH:** *Gratias tibi ago.* Before we commence our *studia* I have three items of information to impart to you—a **bowl of tea, strong tea, black**—Item A: on my perambulations today—Bridget? Too slow. Maire?

Maire: *Perambulare*—to walk about.

**HUGH:** Indeed—I encountered Captain Lancey of the Royal Engineers who is engaged in the ordnance survey of this area. He tells me that he speaks only English; and to his credit he seemed suitably *verecund*—Molly?

**Act One pg. 25**

Molly: *Verecundus*—humble.

**HUGH:** Indeed—he voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language. I explained that a few of us did, on occasion—outside the parish of course—and then usually for the purposes of commerce, a use to which his tongue seemed particularly suited—and **a slice of soda bread**—and I went on to propose that our own culture and the classical tongues made a happier conjugation—Doalty?

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—Maire? Too slow. Bridget?

Bridget: *Acquiesco.*

**HUGH:** Indeed—and Item B ...

Maire: Master.

**HUGH:** Yes? . . . Well, girl?

Maire: We should all be learning to speak English. That's what my mother says. That's what I say. I don't want Greek. I don't want Latin. I want English. (*Manus reappears on the platform above.*)

I want to be able to speak English because I'm going to America as soon as the harvest's all saved. **Act One pg. 26**

**HUGH:** (*after tossing back a drink*) We have been diverted. Where were we?

Doalty: Three items of information, Master. You're at Item B.

**HUGH:** Indeed. I have had a strenuous day and I am weary of you all. Manus will take care of you.

Owen: Could anybody tell me is this where Hugh Mor O'Donnell holds his hedge-school?

Doalty: It's Owen—Owen Hugh! Look, boys—it's Owen Hugh!

Owen: . . . . And how's the old man himself?     **Act One pg. 27**

**HUGH:** Fair—fair.

Owen: Fair? For God's sake you never looked better! Come here to me. Great to see you, Father. Great to be back.

**HUGH:** (*with moist eyes*) I—I'm—I'm—pay no attention to— (*as if, I'm overwhelmed with emotion*)

Owen: Come on— . . . , spent last night in Omagh     **Act One pg. 28** half an hour ago.

Manus: You're hungry then.

**HUGH:** Indeed—get him food—get him a drink.

Owen: Not now, thanks; later. Listen—am I interrupting you all?

**HUGH:** By no means. We're finished for the day.

Owen: Wonderful. I'll tell you why. Two friends of mine are waiting outside the door. They'd like to meet you and I'd like you to meet them. May I bring them in?

**HUGH:** Certainly. You'll all eat and have . . .

Owen: Not just yet, Father. You've seen the sappers working in this area for the past fortnight, haven't you? Well, there is Captain Lancey . . .

**HUGH:** I've met Captain Lancey.

Owen: Great. He's the cartographer in charge of this whole area. Cartographer—Molly?

Molly: A maker of maps.

Owen: Indeed—and the younger man that I travelled with from Dublin, his name is Lieutenant Yolland and he is attached to the toponymic department—Father?—*responde—responde!*

**HUGH:** He gives names to places.

Owen: Indeed—although he is in fact an orthographer—Doalty?—too slow—Manus?

Manus: The correct spelling of those names.

Owen: Indeed—indeed! Beautiful! Beautiful! Honest to God, it's such a delight to be back here with you all again—'civilized' people. Anyhow— May I bring them in?

**HUGH:** Your friends are our friends.

Owen: I'll be straight back. .... That's a new face. Who are you?

Sarah: My name is Sarah.

Owen: Sarah who?

Sarah: Sarah Johnny Sally.

Owen: Of course! From Bun na hAbhann! I'm Owen—Owen Hugh **Act One pg. 29**

Mor. From Baile Beag. Good to see you.

**HUGH:** Come on now. Let's tidy this place up. Move, Doalty—lift those books off the floor.

Doalty: Right, Master; certainly, Master; I'm doing my best, Master.

Owen: One small thing, Father.

**HUGH:** *Silentium!*

Owen: I'm on their pay-roll.

Sarah: I said it, Manus!

Manus: You haven't enlisted, have you?!

Owen: Me a soldier! I'm employed as a part-time, underpaid, civilian interpreter. My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King's good English.

**HUGH:** Move—move—move! Put some order on things! *(another drink)*

Manus: You didn't tell me you were definitely leaving.

Maire: Not now.

**HUGH:** Good girl, Bridget. That's the style.

Manus: You might at least have told me.

**HUGH:** Are these your books, Molly?

Molly: Thank you.

Manus: Fine! Fine! Go ahead! Go Ahead!

Maire: You talk to me about getting married— ... .. teach classics to the cows! Agh— **Act One pg. 30**

Owen: Here we are. Captain Lancey—my father.

Lancey: Good evening.

**HUGH:** You and I have already met, sir.

Lancey: Yes.

Owen: And Lieutenant Yolland—both Royal Engineers—my father.

**HUGH:** You are both very welcome.

Yolland: How do you do.

Owen: And I'll make no other introductions except that these are some of the people of Baile Beag and—what?—well you're among the best people in Ireland now. Would you like to say a few words, Captain?

**HUGH:** What about a drop, sir?

Lancey: A what?

**HUGH:** Perhaps a modest refreshment? A little sampling of our aqua vitae?

Lancey: No, no.

**HUGH:** Later perhaps when ...

Lancey: I'll say what I have to say, if I may, and as briefly as possible. Do they speak *any* English, Roland?

Owen: Don't worry. I'll translate.

Lancey: I see. .... (*Walks to center*) You may have seen me ... **Act One pg. 31**

Owen: It might be better if you assume they understand you—

Lancey: Yes?

... Owen: This survey demonstrates the government's interest in Ireland and the captain thanks you for listening so attentively to him.

**HUGH:** Our pleasure, Captain.

Lancey: Lieutenant Yolland?

Yolland: I—I—I've nothing to say—really—

Owen: The captain is the man who actually makes the new map. **Act One pg. 32**

George's task is to see that the place-names on this map are ... correct. Just a few words—they'd like to hear you. Don't you want to hear George, too?

Maire: Has he anything to say?

Yolland: Sorry—sorry?

Owen: She says she's dying to hear you.

Yolland: Very kind of you—thank you ... I can only say that I feel—I feel very foolish to—to be working here and not to speak your language. But I intend to rectify that—with Roland's help—indeed I do.

Owen: He wants me to teach him Irish!

**HUGH:** You are doubly welcome, sir.

Yolland: I think your countryside is—is—is very beautiful. I've fallen in love with it already. I hope we're not too—too crude and intrusion on your lives. And I know that I'm going to be happy, very happy, here.

Owen: His already a committed Hibernophile—

Molly: He loves—

Owen: Alright, Molly—we know—he loves Baile Beag; and he loves you all.

**HUGH:** Please ... May I ... ?

Owen: Go ahead, Father. Please—please.

**HUGH:** And we, GUESTS, we in turn are happy to offer you our friendship, our hospitality, and every assistance that you may require. GUESTS—welcome! (*clap then over to Lancey*)

Owen and Manus interact: **Act One pg. 33** Owen: ... And in a way we complement each other. Alright—who has met whom? Isn't this a job for the go-between?

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## **Act Two pg. 41**

(*Hugh enters.*) Owen: Where are you off to, Father?

**HUGH:** An *expeditio* with three purposes. Purpose A: to acquire a testimonial from our parish priest—a worthy man but barely literate; and since he'll ask me to write it myself, how in all modesty can I do myself justice? Where did this (*Drink*) come from?

Owen: Anna na mBreag's.

**HUGH:** In that case address yourself to it with circumspection. Aaaaaaagh! Anna na mBreag means Anna of the Lies. And Purpose B: to talk to the builders of the new school about the kind of living accommodation I will require there.

Yolland: Some years ago we lived fairly close to a poet—well, about three miles away.

**HUGH:** His name?

Yolland: Wordsworth—William Wordsworth.

**HUGH:** Did he speak of me to you?

Yolland: Actually I never talked to him. I just saw him out walking—in the distance.

**HUGH:** Wordsworth? ... no. I'm afraid we're not familiar with your literature, Lieutenant. We tend to overlook your island.

Yolland: I'm learning to speak Irish, sir.

**HUGH:** Good.

**Act Two pg. 42**

Yolland: Roland's teaching me.

**HUGH:** Splendid.

Yolland: I mean—I feel cut off from my people here. And I was trying to explain a few minutes ago how remarkable a community this is. **Act Two pg. 43**

**HUGH:** Lieutenant, I understand your sense of exclusion, of being cut off from a life here; and I trust you will find access to us with my son's help. But remember that words are signals, counters. They are not immortal. And it can happen—to use an image you'll understand—it can happen that a civilization can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of . . . fact. Gentlemen. (*referring to Yolland and Owen*) (*Hugh leaves.*)

Owen: 'An expedition with three purposes': the children laugh at him: he always promises three points and he never gets beyond A and B.

Yolland: He's an astute man.

Owen: He's bloody pompous. And they continue, back to the map, Tobair Vree ...

Act Two Scene One ends on pg. 49 with Owen, Yolland, Maire, and Manus, and drinking ending with Yolland saying "bloody marvelous!"

Act Two Scene Two with Maire and Yolland goes on to pg. 53.

### **Act Three pg. 64**

Doalty: ... think the same as me.

Owen: That's a matter for you.

Doalty: If we'd all stick together. If we knew how to defend ourselves.

Owen: Against a trained army.

Doalty: The Donnelly twins know how.

Owen: If they could be found.

Doalty: If they could be found. Give me a shout after you've finished with Lancey. I might know something then. *(Doalty leaves.) (Owen has the Name-Book which falls to the floor. He leaves it.)*

*(Hugh and Molly enter drunk.)*

**HUGH:** There I was, appropriately disposed to proffer my condolences to the bereaved mother . . .

Molly: Hugh—

**HUGH:** . . . when I experience a plucking at my elbow: Mister George Alexander, Justice of the Peace. 'My tidings are infelicitous,' said he. Unhappy indeed. 'Master Bartley Timlin has been appointed to the new national school.'

Molly: Hugh—

**HUGH:** *Barbarus hic ego sum quia non intelligor ulli*—Molly?

Molly: Ovid.

**HUGH:** *Procede.*

Molly: 'I am a barbarian in this place because I am not understood by anyone.'

**HUGH:** Indeed—Manus! Tea!      **Act Three pg. 65**

Molly: Will you listen to me, Hugh!

**HUGH:** Molly. And a slice of soda bread.

Molly: I'm going to get married.

**HUGH:** Well!

Molly: At Christmas.

**HUGH:** Splendid.

Molly: To Apollo.

**HUGH:** Who?

Molly: Apollo, Hugh, flashing-eyed!

**HUGH:** The man has assented?

Molly: He asked me—I assented.

**HUGH:** Ah. When was this?

Molly: Last night.

**HUGH:** What does his mother say? And his father?

Molly: I'm meeting Zeus tomorrow. Hugh, will you be my best man?

**HUGH:** Honoured, Molly; profoundly honoured.

Molly: You know what I'm looking for, Hugh, don't you? I mean to say—you know—I—I—I joke like the rest of them—you know? You know yourself, Hugh—don't you?—you know all that. But what I'm really looking for, Hugh—what I really want—companionship, Hugh, companionship, company, someone to talk to. You've no idea how lonely it is. Companionship—correct, Hugh? Correct?

**HUGH:** Correct.

Molly: And I always liked him, Hugh. Correct?

**HUGH:** Correct, Molly.

Molly: Someone to talk to.

**HUGH:** Indeed.      **Act Three pg. 66**

Molly: That's all, Hugh. The whole story. You know it all now, Hugh. You know it all.

*(Hugh watches Molly fall asleep and all this, about to take drink, sees Name-Book on floor, leafs through. Owen enters)*

Owen: I'll take that. It's only a catalogue of names.

**HUGH:** I know what it is.

Owen: A mistake—my mistake—nothing to do with us. I hope that's strong enough. Molly. Wake up, Molly. Wake up, girl.

Molly: What—what-what?

Owen: Here. Drink this. Then go on away home. There may be trouble. Do you hear me, Molly? There may be trouble.

**HUGH:** We must learn those new names.

Owen: Did you see a sack lying about?

**HUGH:** We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home.

Owen: I know where I live.

**HUGH:** Molly thinks she knows, too. I look at Molly and three thoughts occur to me: A—that it is not the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language. Molly has ceased to make that discrimination.

Owen: Don't lecture me, Father.

**HUGH:** B—we must never cease renewing those images; because once we do, we fossilise. Is there no soda bread?

Owen: And C, Father—one single, unalterable 'fact': if Yolland is not found, we are all going to be evicted. Lancey has issued the order. I've got to go. I've got to see Doalty Dan Doalty.

### **Act Three pg. 67**

**HUGH:** What about?

Owen: I'll be back soon.

**HUGH:** Take care, Owen. To remember everything is a form of madness. My friend, confusion is not an ignoble condition.

Maire: I'm back again. I set out for somewhere but I couldn't remember where. So I come back here.

**HUGH:** Yes, I will teach you English, Maire Chatach.

Maire: Will you, Master? I must learn it. I need to learn it.

**HUGH:** Indeed you may well be my only pupil.

Maire: When can we start?

**HUGH:** Not today. Tomorrow, perhaps. After the funeral. We'll begin tomorrow. But don't expect too much.

Maire: Master, what does the English word 'always' mean?

**HUGH:** It's a silly word, girl.     **Act Three pg. 68**

Maire: When he comes back, this is where he'll come to. He told me this is where he was happiest.

**HUGH:** *Urbs antiqua fuit*—there was an ancient city which, 'tis said, Juno loved above all the lands. And it was the goddess's aim and cherished hope that here should be the capital of all nations—should the fates perchance allow that. Such was—such was the course—such was the course ordained—ordained by fate . . . What the hell's wrong with me? Sure I know it backways. I'll begin again. *Urbs antiqua fuit*—there was an ancient city which, 'tis said, Juno loved above all the lands. *(bringing down of the lights)*

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