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| *Translations*  (1980)  by  Brian Friel  (1929 - 2015) | Irish Cultural Center / McClelland Library Book Discussion  Saturday, December 5  10:30 AM – 12:30 PM  ZOOM  [To receive the link by email, you must have an email on file.] |

Discussion Guide:

Note: Brian Friel is an Ulsterman, who is associated with Derry and Co. Donegal. The Troubles in Northern Ireland inspired Friel and actor Stephen Rea to form the Field Day Theatre Company, which first performed *Translations.*  This play remains one of the most performed Irish plays in modern theatre.

► Novelists spend pages and pages giving descriptions of location, time, and characters. Dramatists depict location on stage and quickly provide clues about time and circumstances. If we are not viewing the play, then we have to read the playwright’s notes for these clues. Our task as critics is to decide whether the playwright is skillful or stilted in presenting characters and exposition necessary to understand the action. What do you think of Friel’s opening scenes? How is “translation” a focus?

► Select a character to follow closely and analyze the function of the role (protagonist, antagonist, foil, supernumerary). Remember that some of the minor roles are the most fun. Consider what we learn about the people of Baile Beag.

► Critics and scholars have stressed both politics and language in approaching this play. After reading it, what do you think Friel is saying in *Translations*? Think about the importance of language in identification.

► Think about other Irish plays you have read or seen. Compare and contrast them with *Translations*. Consider theme, characters, and dramatic techniques. (Other plays by Friel: *Philadelphia, Here I Come*; *Dancing at Lughnasa*; *Faith Healer*; *Making History*)

►Eavan Boland’s Poems: If you would be willing to read one of these poems before we discuss it, please let us know (info@azirirsh.org) Link for titles

Additional information:

\*Some Influences on Friel and his play:

P. J. Dowling*, The Hedge Schools of Ireland* (1968)

Gorge Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language in Translation* (1975*)*

John Andrews, *Paper Landscape* (1975)

\*Statistical Information:

1851—1.5 million people spoke Irish (25% of total population)

20% of Irish speakers had only that language

County Derry: 5,000 speakers, less than 3% of population

County Donegal: 73,000 speakers, about 30% of total population (34,882 spoke only Irish)

By 1901 the total number of Irish-only speakers was less than 3% of population.

In 1911 in Co. Donegal there were 4,733 Irish-only speakers (3% of population)

►►► LOOKING AHEAD: On Saturday, January 23, 2021, our focus will be *Star of the Sea* by Joseph O’Connor. We caution you to allow a little extra reading time because it is a long novel and will invite you to assume the persona of a 19th reader.

Happy Holidays!