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• testing and evaluation
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Storyworlds in Miniatures: Peripheral World making in the Gawain-Manuscript

Dr. Wajih Ayed, University of Sousse, Tunisia

Abstract: The verbal text of the Gawain-manuscript has received significant critical interest, but its four illuminations have generally been discarded as low-quality drawings. When viewed from the perspective of Possible Worlds theory, however, these peripheral miniatures show complex relations with each other and with the verbal part of the narrative. They also appear to assist in the mental creation of the storyworld, where characters’ private domains compete for validation in the Textual Actual World, and where mental and physical events intertwine into a braided plot. This paper contends that, far from being disposable, the iconic peritexts of Ms Cotton Nero A. x. (art. 3) help generate the elements of the storyworld and accelerate the modern readers’ immersion in its past alterity.

Keywords: Possible Worlds, Gawain-manuscript, miniature, peritext, storyworld

Introduction
If by a sleepy river on a summer day some readers hurry on the trail of a curious white rabbit, they may go down a hole under a hedge and land in wonder where they meet figments of fancy, which grin and serve tea, or frown and sever heads. Stranded on a tropical island, others would fly to safety in the claws of a roc or land on a planet far, far away where dunes are giant worms. Some bookworms may shudder in fear at the screech of a dragon or shed helpless tears at the silence of the lambs. Mind travelers to the seen chanted worlds may meet the uncanny or the familiar, feel excited or afraid, and shake hands or keep their distance, but they are rarely the same when they come back. Liminal zones of contact with the other in fictional narratives are portals transporting readers across borders by virtue of the magic of some painter of worlds. Premodern literature offers deeply immersive escapes into the captivating mindscapes of unreal worlds, as suggested by the enduring appeal of epic duels, magical rings, and shaky thrones. Medieval manuscripts offer lively textual spaces where codex folios exuberate with the familiar, altered, or impossible worlds of borderline subjects, liminal places, and hybrid races. These still race the imagination and tap the emotions of their viewers, but they marvel from the edges of manuscript pages. While some of these medieval marginalia have recently accessed a world of general interest, many others remain confined to their margins, twice removed from critical attention. Left in their manuscripts when proofs are sent to printing houses, they stay outside the modern editions and remediation of their companion verbal texts. And yet, scrutiny of these marginal miniatures can significantly improve the experience of reading a classic medieval text like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*SGGK*). Supplementing future editions of this medieval tale of adventure with the original iconic fringe of the only extant manuscript of *SGGK*, namely, *BL Ms Cotton Nero A. x. (art. 3)* will significantly accelerate immersion in the fictional world of the chivalric romance and give the reader/viewer an imaginative flight to tropics south of modern sensibility. Indeed, departure into the romance storyworld is landing in a mental space where the iconic and verbal parts of the text make a vibrant fictional world. Borrowing some of the theoretical and analytical tools of Possible Worlds theory (PW), this article argues that the peripheral elements in the manuscript productively interact with the verbal text to create the storyworld and allow the subtleties of private worlds, which unfold in the experiencing minds of the characters, to refract on the actual world of the text and to reflect on the participating minds of the readers/viewers.

### 1. Making Storyworlds: A Possible-Worlds Story

The term *storyworld* is borrowed from the conceptual toolkit of PW theory, which was initially developed in the formal semantics of logician Saul Kripke and in the modal realism of philosopher David Lewis. The theory postulates that "apart from what we perceive as unshakable reality we can conceive a limitless number of alternatives of

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what the world could be like" (Koten 47). In this ontological model, reality is seen as a universe where the actual world (AW) is surrounded by alternative possible worlds (PWs) situated at different removes from and having different accessibility relations with the AW. Marginal as they are, optative PWs nevertheless offer venues for subversion which generate conflict and empower a dynamic of change. This relativistic conception of reality helped to credibly solve a major problem related to the truth value of literary fiction. Before PW theory, as Jiří Koten reminds us, the answer to the question What does a fictional text refer to? was either that it has no reference at all, or that it recreates, rather than represents, the reality depicted in its textual world; PW theory offers a third way which places the referent of the literary text in the latter's own fictional world, rather than in the real world (48). This indexical approach was adapted to the study of fictional worlds in literary narratives mainly thanks to the contributions of Umberto Eco, Doreen Maître, Thomas Pavel, Lubomír Doležel, and, more recently, Marie-Laure Ryan. 2 Using PW theory to study diegetic worlds is part of the latest developments in narrative theory in the wake of the classical, structuralist phase (Nünning 250). Without originally being part of postclassical narratology, 3 the PW approach intersects and increasingly overlaps with the most recent trends in narrative analysis, such as the cognitive and transmedial fields of narrative theory, as Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik rightly observe in relation to Ryan’s recent works (12). PW research has for example contributed to the ongoing debate on what constitutes a storyworld and provided tenable categories and definitions.

Refining Koten’s distinction between fictional world as “a model of a semiotic system,” and storyworld as “a discursive or mental model the reader necessarily creates in his [or her] mind in order to understand the narration” (50), Ryan cleverly untangles storyworld from other commonly used terms. In “Story/World/Media,” she distinguishes between world, storyworld, fictional world, and reference world in the analysis of narrative texts. Ryan argues that world loosely covers the typical setting, the recurring themes, and the literary motifs of the author’s works, as well as his/her general worldview; fictional world designates a story which is more or less accurately presented as true of the real world; and reference world refers to the real world itself, independently of its fictional or factual renderings (“Story/World/Media” 32). These distinctions have a validity that accommodates the worlds of literary works, regardless of periodisation. In the case of SGGK, the world where a man rides away holding his severed head is one that does not obtain in the reference world. Similarly, deference to the author’s world would be futile because the poem has not yet been ascribed, and


3 As theorised by David Herman mainly in his seminal monograph Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis (1-30), postclassical narratology refers to the “frameworks for narrative inquiry” which “build on the work of classical, structuralist narratologists but supplement that earlier work with concepts and methods that were unavailable to story analysts such as Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, A. J. Greimas, and Tzvetan Todorov during the heyday of structuralism” (Herman, Narratology beyond the Human 339).
his/her other works have little in common with the chivalric romance under study. Its storyworld is one in which magic acts on reality in a way that can be simulated by readers if they momentarily accept the logic of a story which was plotted by a cunning witch. In the light of these preliminary observations and theoretical delimitations, it may be possible to conceive of the storyworld of *SGGK* as the spatially situated and temporally inflected movement of the plot, from the eruption of the Green Knight in Camelot to the return of Gawain from the Green Chapel, as experienced by the characters and simulated by the readers.

2. Making the Storyworld of *SGGK*: A Possible Arthurian World

2.1. Storyworld Media

Building storyworlds and making sense of them are two mediated cognitive processes involving at least one semiotic channel. Before the dissemination of printing, narratives were mainly recited orally and received aurally while writing/illuminating and reading/viewing parchment books were experiential modes accessible only to the literate clerical community and few members of the nobility or gentry. The *Gawain-*manuscript contains the verbal text of the alliterative poem (ff. 91r-124v) and four illuminations pertaining to key moments in the narrative, shown in Figure 1 below (f. 90v, f. 125r, f. 125v, and f. 126r). The storyworld of this romance thus develops through two media: the verbal and the iconic, and each complements the other in the spiral processor immersion into the storyworld. While the verbal medium is the main vector of world making in literature, the visual fringe is “sensually richer and more immersive” and therefore has an “immediate effect on the audience’s emotions” (Wolf 252). This is particularly relevant in the case of the first miniature of Cotton Nero A. x. (art. 3), which also provides generic cues that make the granulation of the storyworld denser, as will be argued below. The primary focus of this study is on world making in the liminal iconic paratexts as well as the verbal ‘prologue’ (1. 1-36) and ‘epilogue’ (4. 2521-25) which provide a condensed pseudo-historical background about the fall of Troy, the foundation of Britain, and the reign of King Arthur. It should be noted that “visual world building,” in Mark Wolf’s felicitous phrase (115), precedes and follows its verbal counterpart in the *Gawain-*manuscript, thus doubly acting as a threshold into and out of the of the romance. The two media grant access to the storyworld of *SGGK* and assist the framing processes of immersion in and emergence from its domain. Although the peritextual iconic apparatus of the poem is inferior in length to the verbal text, the initial miniature alone teases the senses and provokes the imagination with enough intimations of narrativity to suggest a storyworld. The three miniatures at the end of the poem keep immersion in motion and extend the lifespan of the storyworld in the reader’s mind.
Fig. 1. The Four Miniatures of the *Gawain*-Manuscript
2.2. Into the Storyworld: *Recentering and Minimal Departure*

In her pioneering study of *Narrative as Virtual Reality*, Ryan makes a succinct survey of relevant theories of immersion in literature and electronic media. In psychology, it means *transportation* into (Richard Gerrig) or *entrancement* by a text (Victor Nell); in PW theory, it purports to *recentering* in the Textual Actual World (Ryan); and in art philosophy (Kendall Walton), it is a matter of make-believe (Ryan, “The Text as World”103-04). From Ryan’s PW perspective, immersion means *relocation to a possible world presented as actual of the text being experienced by the reader/viewer*. Indeed, “the user who is immersed in a storyworld knows that it is created by the medium, but he or she pretends to believe that...it is real” (“Story/World/Media” 34-35). This fanciful runaway still has concrete reality as its runway. Ryan refers to this as the principle of minimal departure (MD). As she explains, “we construe the world of fiction and of counterfactuals as being the closest possible to the reality we know;” therefore, “we will make only those adjustments which we cannot avoid” (“Fiction, Non-Factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure” 406). Minimal as this fanciful departure may be, it still plays a maximal role in suturing shears in the storyworld texture.

The recentered destination world is not complete on arrival, but the density of its mental texture increases when MD makes the reader import more and more elements from the actual world. In Terry Eagleton’s apt formulation, he/she makes “implicit connections, fills in gaps, draws inferences and tests out hunches; and to do this means drawing on a tacit knowledge of the world in general and of literary conventions in particular” (66). Thanks to his/her active participation in world-building, the reader comes to the recentered world trailing clouds of knowledge about the actual world and its governing rules, and also with expectations about the storyworld—ones that determine the length of the imaginative leap into the new world. Names, spatial dimension, temporal extension, motifs, formulas, allusions, and paratextual elements create specific inferences and generate gradient expectations about genre, depending on the reader’s general knowledge and mastery of literary conventions. These necessary calibrations include deference to the ontological rules of the destination world created by the medium/media of the storyworld. In the manuscript of *SGGK*, the adjustments necessary for the reader’s relocation into the storyworld begin from the first illumination.

A storyworld is governed by tacit ontological rules which determine what is actual, possible, or impossible in the recentered world. As Ryan explains, these principles determine how far the secondary world is located with reference to the primary world (“Ontological Rules” 74). Different measures of distance between the two worlds situate the literary work on a spectrum which ranges from crude naturalism

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4The peritextual elements that assist in recentering include the author’s name, the work’s title, the book’s covers, the illustrations, maps, notes, glossaries, prefaces, introductions, forewords, introductory quotations, epigraphs, etc. Epitextual paratexts can be anything from social media posts to scholarly reviews.
to sheer surrealism. While some of these rules governing the generic associations of the literary work can appear belatedly as the narrative unfolds, many of them are rather suggested early by the iconic and verbal peripheries of the text. In SGGK, the given title of this otherwise untitled poem immediately distances the storyworld from the realm of realism because the proposition green knight has no referent in the AW. The first miniature stretches the distance even further by showing a green knight on a green horse holding his green head high in his green hand. The four other drawn figures, three men and a woman, appear in courtly attire. The crowned couple has the appearance of royalty. The king and one retainer have brandished swords, and the third man holds an intimidating axe. These sartorial and armorial clues place the storyworld in the medieval courtly timeframe. While there are no dragons or other non-human species in the initial iconic peritext, a version of reality where a horse is all green and where a man in the same color survives a beheading must be one in which natural laws are altered and natural species are augmented by magic. These painted hints suggest the medieval genre of chivalric romance and the modern genre of historical fantasy. Table 1 shows the ontological rules of the recentered world of SGGK and the concurrent generic signals generated by the four marginal illuminations in the manuscript.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontological Rules</th>
<th>In SGGK</th>
<th>Iconic Peritext</th>
<th>Generic Associations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alethic Value</td>
<td>True/False</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>f. 90v</td>
<td>the fantastic; travel narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inventory of Individuals</td>
<td>Same</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Augmented</td>
<td>f. 90v; f. 125v</td>
<td>chivalric romance; the fantastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties of Common Individuals</td>
<td>Same, Verified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>f. 125r; f. 126r</td>
<td>historical fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>f. 90v; f. 125v</td>
<td>chivalric romance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinds of Natural Species</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Augmented</td>
<td>f. 90v; f. 125v</td>
<td>chivalric romance; the fantastic</td>
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<td>(Different?)</td>
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<td>Natural Laws</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>f. 90v</td>
<td>chivalric romance; the fantastic</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
<td>Same</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cosmology</td>
<td>One world</td>
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<td>One universe</td>
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<td>Parallel universe</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<td>f. 126r</td>
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<tr>
<td>Space / Geography</td>
<td>Same (= 3)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>f. 125r; f. 125v</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Augmented</td>
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<td>f. 90v; f. 126r</td>
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<td>Spatial Dimensions</td>
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<td>Systematically violated</td>
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Table 1. Ontological Rules and their Generic Associations in SGGK, based on Ryan (“Ontological Rules” passim)

These ontological principles, I hasten to note, pertain to the postmedieval disenchanted world as seen from the vantage point of modern rationality. Premodern readers or listeners (some at least) were probably more inclined to believe in the supernatural than their descendants. MD would have been literally minimal for them and would perhaps have involved mere temporal retroframing. Even the alethic value of the proposition Green Knight could have held as true for the members of the audience/readership who accepted the world of magic as a possible, though perhaps as a past world now veiled in the mists of Avalon. Natural laws, the kinds of natural species, the inventory of individuals, and the latter’s characteristics would accordingly gain validity in a possible past world set in the geographically identical landscape of Britain and Wales. Here, the rules of logic and spatial dimension are respected, but
magic is a force to be reckoned with. Hence the text borrows from the travel narrative and vacillates between realistic fiction and (medieval) fantasy. Serving as the first cover of the romance, the initial iconic peritext raises the fictional bar so high that it inevitably overshadows the other iconic and verbal liminal elements. The account of the destruction of Troy and the westward migration of its illustrious warriors belatedly evokes the epic, then funnels into a brief pseudohistorical account of Arthur’s reign, which diverts martial associations with the legend of Aeneas into connections with the Matter of Britain. If reference to this cycle would have suggested a bygone world of chivalry for medieval readers, it certainly evokes historical fiction for many modern users. The last three miniatures, however, anchor SGGK in the genre of romance, with the element of magic toned down in favour of courtesy and chivalry.

Gawain’s return to Camelot in full armour follows his stay in Bertilak’s castle and his second encounter with the Green Knight. The third apostil admittedly hearkens back to the world of magic, with its depiction of the decapitated rider, impossibly whole again after the dolorous stroke delivered by Arthur’s preferred nephew. The ominous display of weapons and armour is mellowed by the presence of well attired noble women—teasing Lady Bertilak on f. 125r and stately Queen Guinevere on f. 126v. The record of common existents, their species, and their attributes fluctuates between the same and the different or augmented, then settles for the same in the last illumination. While time is fictional, historical, or even counterfactual, the spatial setting leans towards the lush medieval British natural landscape interspersed with cities and castles. The three-dimensional space of the world projected by the graphic fringe reinforces the realistic effect suggested by the absence of parallel universes and by respect for the laws of logic. This mixture of ontological parameters generates a storyworld situated in between the actual world and one of its fictional projections, hence the generic positioning of SGGK between fantasy and realism, a space which perfectly accommodates medieval romance, with its staple elements of quest, courtesy, chivalry, and the supernatural. Thanks to its graphic medium, the painted fringe of the verbal text is likely to have an immediate immersive effect on the viewers. As a matter of fiction, it propels them into a possible world governed by the hybrid conventions of medieval romance where adventurers can go on a quest too far in the realm of the uncanny and where magic augments or altogether alters alignments with reality. Initial and final graphic peritexts accelerate the mind travellers’ immersion of in the TAW by evoking romance-specific conventions which follow from the configuration of ontological rules in the storyworld. These preliminary considerations allow for are centering of the cooperative reader into the possible world generated by the narrative and determine the existents of the storyworld and its dynamics.
3. Storyworld Elements and Dynamics in SGGK

3.1. Exsists

King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Morgan le Fay, and the Knights of the Round Table are transnarrative characters from the literary cycle of the Matter of Britain. The transtextual migration of these borrowed existents has semantic and pragmatic potentials the realisation of which depends on the extent of the familiarity of the reader/viewer with other Arthurian texts. For informed readers, the presence of these characters in the narrative increases the saturation of the secondary world by importing previous knowledge collected from similar storyworlds from the same literary constellation. The same observation is valid for non-human existents, like Gringolet, Gawain’s horse, and Camelot, Arthur’s capital. These transnarrative elements accelerate MD for readers with a background on the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. If they lack this prior knowledge, however, readers/viewers will be limited to a rather low-detail initial mental representation of the storyworld drawn from parallels with television series, documentaries, statues, paintings, drawings, or other medieval- or fantasy-themed texts. Still, the low graphic density of the initial mental representations will eventually improve as readers explore the storyworld of SGGK. What the viewer can see in the four illuminations and read in the prologue is enough to generate a viable population of the TAW, namely, a famed king with prestigious descent, a protagonist who appears in all four apostils of the manuscript, an antagonist who is initially seen headless and then whole, and a sly temptress. This setup features accessories of feasting, sleeping, and fighting and includes two equine participants. It should be noted in this respect that the iconic and verbal fringes of the work feature the main human and non-human existents of the fictional world, with the notable exceptions of Morgan le Fay and Sir Bertilak. The former plans two dangerous games, and the latter executes her plans at the expense of Sir Gawain, who sees through their scheming darkly until the end of the narrative. If they are invisible to the protagonist himself, there is no point for the painter in breaking their cover so easily. Just like their furtive intentions, the sorceress and the knight should remain invisible to the viewer.

3.2. Setting

Storyworld components do not exist in void, and neither do they remain frozen in time. A narrative hosts its constituents in a mental space where they become actual and places them on a timeline along which they interact. The storyworld of SGGK has a spatial dimension and a temporal extension. Its existents inhabita royal court sometime in the British mythical past, a castle somewhere in its forbidding wilderness, or the thick forest of chivalric adventure—and these are the recurring locations of Arthurian romance. This spatial layout is cued by the four miniatures depicting Arthur’s royal court (1 and 4), Gawain’s chamber in Bertilak’s castle (2), and the Green Knight’s cave.
To this circular spatial configuration, one can add a telescoped account of Gawain’s travels in N. Wales in Fit 2. An exact map of this adventure space has been attempted by many scholars, so there are different accounts of the Arthurian knight’s route and his travel landmarks. The brief account of the destruction of Troy and founding of Western European cities and states in the verbal prologue is spatially dysfunctional in the storyline of SGGK because the romance plotline takes place in England and Wales only. This space can be studied cartographically or analytically. To retrace the exact route and pin down the green and limestone landmarks of Gawain’s adventure on a map of modern or medieval Britain is what a geographic description of the actual storyworld space attempts to achieve as accurately as possible. Analytically, this space may be approached in terms of such categories as public/private, dangerous/safe, and testing/safe zones. Either way, the four miniatures assist in the construction of the dynamic mental space of the TAW. Table 2 charts the geographical and analytical configurations of space in the iconic fringe of the manuscript.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space Type</th>
<th>Geographical Space</th>
<th>Analytical Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Royal Court</td>
<td>Hautdeser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 90v</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 125r</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 125v</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 126r</td>
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Table 2. Geographical vs. Analytical Space in the Four Illuminations of the Gawain-Manuscript

While analytical space lacks the precision of a map, it should be conceded that an accurate map of the storyworld of SGGK cannot be precisely drawn on the sole basis of the manuscript. This is not only because confidently identifying the vague landmarks of Gawain’s adventure on a modern-day map of Britain is a serious cartographic challenge, but also because Camelot, the second most important spatial location in the romance, has so far not been recognised as a historical location in the first place. In the absence of precise geographic evidence, one should perhaps focus more on the analytical dimension of space in the storyworld. Figure 1 is an attempt to visually render the knight’s progress to the Green Chapel:

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5 It would tax the little space of a footnote to attempt even a brief survey of the proposed maps of Gawain’s travel through N. Wales. Erik Weiskott has recently proposed a commendable interactive map of the knight’s journey, but the most credible geography in this respect remains Michael Twomey’s Travels with Sir Gawain.
Despite its obvious pedagogical advantages, a spatial layout of the storyworld based on the sole surviving codex will inevitably lack cartographic precision. Fortunately, this is not an obstacle for imagining a working map of the romance space. Notwithstanding the absence of clear spatial evidence in \textit{SGGK}, MD spatialises the storyworld in the reader's/viewer's mind by borrowing from available knowledge drawn from actual familiarity with British geography and similar medieval or medieval-themed texts, such as movies, documentaries, TV serials, and historical or fantasy novels. The first miniature in the manuscript is likely to generate a preliminary set of expectations about the genre and setting of the narrative, but the mental map of the storyworld develops as the plot unfolds in the reader's mind until it is unbroken at the end of the text, when Gawain comes back to Arthur's court. The initial iconic peritext sparks the viewer's memory and imagination then makes the space of the storyworld develop dynamically and reach a navigable low-detail spatial definition at the end of Gawain's journey. The three final illuminations would redraw some contours and thicken some textures if seen at the end of the reading experience, but they would add some vivid paintbrushes to the mental painting of space and its occupants if viewed while still reading the text. This discussion of the spatial dimension of \textit{SGGK} has insisted on its dynamic nature because space in the narrative is not a heap of still life mental pictures but a storyworld element which is affected by the passage of time and the succession of seasons.

The four iconic peritexts under scrutiny are stills, and still they only contribute (more effectively and with more immediate effect than the verbal text) to the cognitive construction of the storyworld space as it begins to take shape, and as its scenes subsequently fade in and out in the reader's mind. Each miniature has a unique setting.
and is uniquely populated by a specific configuration of participants. Their very difference is evocative of time lapse. If the space of a narrative is the theatre of all action and the sand of all time, then the quester spends is respite from the incoming blow over a year at varying cadences, at times matching Gringolet’s hooves, and at other measured by a fair lady's visitations. Time is not on Gawain’s side, but it drives him on his adventure along paths trodden by few. Time and again, he remembers his promise to the Green Knight, for it is his resolve to honour his pact which causes him to journey through the wilderness looking for the Green Chapel. This gives him strength to resist Lady Bertilak’s temptation and makes him accept the green girdle only to save his neck from the gruesome edge of the Green Knight’s deadly gisarme. As Figure 3 suggests, the plotline of the romance begins with a game (2) and ends with a reckoning (9).

As characters act and interact in the romance storyworld, its space becomes denser and its narrative traffic busier. As the plotline develops over space, readers mentally reconstruct the original story in time, particularly following Gawain’s axial meeting with the Green Knight in Hautdesert. Spared but humiliated, Arthur’s nephew learns from his formidable host the truth about the beheading and temptation scenarios. It appears that his sorceress aunt, Morgan le Fay, has slyly staged both games because she wanted to pluck Arthur’s fine flower of chivalry from their bed and make them bet their crowns in a dangerous game of mowing. To borrow some relevant concepts from Gérard Genette, this crucial piece of information is an ‘internal completing homodiegetic analepsis’ (51) which chronologically comes at the beginning of the ‘first narrative’ (49). Following this revelation, the ‘pseudo-time’ of the plot (34) is cognitively reorganised to be cognate with the time of the story. Figure 4 represents the storyline of the narrative, placing event headers sequentially and temporally.

![Fig. 3. Plotline of SGGK](image-url)
The two last figures attempt to graphically render the plotline and storyline of the first narrative in *SGGK*. Condensed in the prologue and (partially) reiterated in the epilogue, the second narrative claims that Arthur descends from Aeneas. This prestigious lineage supplements the monarch’s syncopated illegitimacy with his supposed ancestor’s celebrated destiny. Heroic blood runs in Gawain’s veins because he is Arthur’s nephew. This bloodline loosely connects the otherwise distant diegetic worlds of the first and second narratives.

The prologue and epilogue of the romance relate a secondary narrative whose wide reach is paralleled only by its indeterminate extent. The ancestral chronology of the prologue ties a funnel to a pipeline of events whereby events are channelled from the inception of the narrative to Gawain’s return to Arthur’s court. The epilogue then reiterates the descent story in reverse of the prologue so that it places *SGGK* once again in the world of past heroism. The two funnels place the first narrative temporally in an epic pseudohistory which evokes the heroic past of the house of Pendragon but which is not part of the TAW. The prologue and the epilogue frame the timespan of the first narrative of the romance as its sands elapse finely down the narrating. These shapes of time connect as a time machine and suitably make an hourglass, represented in Figure 5 below. Of course, the events narrated in the epilogue are a function of discourse, not time. The Trojan War does not happen again, nor does true Aeneas truly leave it twice. The timeline of the narrative ends with Gawain’s return to Camelot. The inverted funnel is the narrator’s condensed reiteration of the prologue in reverse order, to bridge the distant worlds of Camelot and Troy.

![Fig. 4. Storyline of SGGK](image-url)
3. 3. Laws, Rules, and Values

If the rule of time is to elapse, the rule of law is to recur. While characters interact and while events unfold in *SGK* over time and across space, the movement of the plotline is governed by physical laws, social rules, and moral values. As I argued in section 2. 2. above, physical laws in the storyworld partly determine and are partly determined by its generic location in the space between medieval fantasy and historical fiction. The first miniature in the manuscript situates the story in a world with magically altered physiological laws. Hence the unnatural colour of the horse and its rider, and hence the ability of the headless Green Knight to ride away on his courser. These breaches of natural laws are acceptable in a plastic world where magic can suspend or alter physical laws. Less acceptable, yet more frequent in medieval chivalric romance are breaches of social norms. As Ryan relevantly observes, “social rules are opportunities for transgressions and, consequently a source of conflict” in the
storyworld, which is “a particularly powerful source of narrativity” (“Story/World/Media” 36). Once again, the initial miniature in the peritextual fringe of *SGGK* signals a violation of rules. The brandished swords and the menacing gisarme testify to a breach so big as to prompt a call to arms in the royal court. Viewers cannot at this stage ascertain the exact nature of the transgression, and they need to read the first fit to learn that the green stranger is in Camelot to challenge its famous master and his renowned retainers. Not only does the grim rider feign not to recognise the regally dressed king suitably seated on the high dais (*SGGK* 1. 221-31), but he also declines Arthur's hospitality (1. 256-57) and refuses to dismount his horse. He thus slyly avoids kneeling to the lord of Camelot, as Gawain appropriately does in the last miniature. He couches his irreverent words and manners in his desire to find a partner in a simple game—of beheading (1. 258-74; 285-300). These infractions of proper courtly conduct have a parallel in the same iconic fringe.

Arthur courageously rises to the challenge, but Gawain duly asks for the green axe, now in the king's hands (1. 343-71). His defence of his liege lord and maternal uncle derives from his observation of chivalric values, according to which a knight should protect his king, and from his respect for blood ties, in line of which he must help his kin in right cause or wrong. The initial iconic fringe of the romance graphically represents the king's knight and nephew right-shouldering the grim axe and raising his left hand facing his uncle, as if to assure him of his love and loyalty. Gawain further shows his respect for social rules and moral values when he resists Lady Bertilak's temptations. The second miniature in the peritextual fringe shows the fair chatelaine tickling the chin of her guest who seems sound asleep. In the verbal text, we learn that the Knight of the Round Table was aware of the lady's presence, that he suspected her intent to be indecorous, and that he was feigning sleep to make her leave (3. 1187-96). His respect for his oath to his absent host and his fear from mortal sin enable him to resist her advances on her second and, especially, on her third visitation (3. 1773-76). Gawain’s observation of proper social and moral conduct saves his honour, as the Green Knight tells him later, and earns him high praise (4. 2359-68, 4. 2393-95). The storyworld of *SGGK* is indeed one in which norms and values are expected to govern human interactions. The characters populating this storyworld are aligned into two antithetical camps, yet they have compatible values, as Bertilak's accolade on Gawain’s conduct suggests. Character development and quest outcome depend on respect for the ethics of chivalry and courtesy. Desire to affirm these laws is what governs the events of the romance.

3.4. Events

The storyworld of *SGGK* includes existents, spatial locations, temporal extensions, as well as laws, rules, and values. Still, there is little life in this configuration without the events that make the plot move forward towards crisis and resolution. The
eruption of a green knight in King Arthur’s court on a New Year’s Eve signals the beginning of a conflict that sparks the events and spawns the situations that bring together all the components of the storyworld. Bimodally represented through the verbal text and (partly) its iconic fringe, the events of the storyworld proper spread over three spatial locations and include not only the main timeline of Gawain’s adventure (2-10), but also the ‘backstory’ narrative (1) about Morgan’s plan. The secondary spatial and temporal frames of Arthur’s august descent are not included in this analysis because they do not impact the dynamics of the plotline of SGGK. Figure 6 below represents the ten key events of the romance storyworld, anchored in space and time. The four illuminations of the manuscript depict the first round of the beheading game (2), the temptation episodes (6, 7, and 8), the second round of the beheading game (9), and Gawain’s return to Camelot (10). The iconic fringe visually remediates the verbal narrative of these four key scenes representing three situations of crisis and the scene of resolution. Polarised as they are towards the beginning of the romance and its ending, they graphically capture the key events in the storyworld and bring them to life in the viewers’ minds through MD. ⁶ The miniatures do not just depict a world; they help generate a lively and dynamic storyworld.

⁶ In the case of chivalric romances, Ryan cautions, “we cannot assume that everything that exists in the real world also exists in the fictional world. In these cases, MD will be superseded by a ‘generic landscape,’ or a landscape constructed on the basis of other texts rather than on the basis of life experience” (“Story/World/Media” endnote 7). A basis for this generic landscape can also be sought in the iconic peritexts of the poem. It can certainly be reinforced by tapping medieval-themed games, films, serials, and books. Hence the need for a pedagogy of MD.
Fig. 6. Events of SGGK in Space and Time

To subscribe to Ryan's assertion that “narrative is a travel within the confines of [narrative] space” is also to recognize conflict as the force that makes the plot develop in space and time (Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory 5). Because storyworld space is perceived by characters and mediated by narrative discourse, its temporal rendering depends on their experience of pseudo-time as they interact in constantly shifting situations. The reader's mental simulation of situated physical events is what lends life to the storyworld.

3.5. Mental events

“Physical events cannot be properly understood without linking them to mental events,” Ryan contends in “Story/World/Media” (36). This is probably one of the main insights brought to narrative studies by PW theory. From this perspective, “the semantic domain” of the storyworld is seen as a universe in which an actual world is opposed to a variable number of alternate possible worlds created by the mental activity of characters” (31-32, emphasis added) and generated by their “beliefs, wishes, fears, goals, plans, and obligations” (36). In this modal constellation, a factual world is set against incompatible private possible worlds vying for actualisation in the storyworld. The ensuing competition inevitably brings in conflict, which motivates planning and warrants acting to bring the wish-world to coincide, or at least to overlap with the fact-world. In SGGK, two such domains vie to come closer to the TAW, where their wishes are fulfilled. This pits Gawain against Morganle Fay and her avatars.
Green Knight/Bertilak, and the latter's wife). Figure 7 represents four moments in this war of worlds:

Fig. 7. Cognitive Model of Conflict Evolution in SGGK in Four Narrative Moments. Based on Ryan’s Template (“Diagramming Narrative” 29)
The four constellations in Figure 7 represent high watermark moments in the storyline and correspond to the three first miniatures in the manuscript. As pointed out above, the first and arguably most important event in the narrative is not represented in the iconic fringe of the text. Had it been painted, it would have been a major spoiler of suspense, so its ellipsis is well justified. Table 3 shows the associations of the competing private worlds represented in Figure 7 with their corresponding verbal and iconic representations in *SGGK*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constellation Association</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding storyline event</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding miniature</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>f. 90v</td>
<td>f. 125r</td>
<td>f. 125v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. Modal-Private Constellations with their Verbal and Iconic Associations**

The modal-private constellations in Figure 7 show the TAW in the centre of a system around which the private worlds of Gawain and his antagonists gravitate as they vie to make their subjective models of reality come true in the objective world. This interstellar strife of worlds with shifting trajectories and gravities governs the relations between the two opposing parties.

In constellation A, Morgan is convinced that Arthur and his knights are too proud and therefore would not decline a challenge, no matter how absurd it may be. Her belief (K-world) is not totally correct, so it does not fully coincide with the TAW. Her resentment makes her wish (W-world) to humiliate her brother, so she devises a plan to fulfil her active goal (GP-world). The beheading game is a formidable challenge for the Knights of the Round Table, as it strains their human fear from death. She has no moral obligations to her targeted victims, which explains why her O-world is far from the centre. Meanwhile, Gawain is unaware of Morgan’s scheming, so his K-world is largely outside the TAW although his wishes and obligations are satisfied and entirely fall inside the real world. Unaware of her plan as he is, Gawain has no active goal and no plan to carry it out. The modal configuration of the storyworld changes when the Green Knight thunders into Camelot, asking for a partner in a beheading game. Arthur’s nephew rises to the rescue of his king, but when he falls the green head, he falls in the trap. Now, he has an active goal, namely, to honour his promise to the Green Knight, even though he is still largely in the dark as to what his foe actually is. After the deed, he begins to regret having played the gruesome game. Now, his W-world is not superimposed on the TAW domain. Still having no obligations toward Gawain, Morgan induces Bertilak to send his wife to tempt him. Her second plan fails on the first and second days as Arthur’s champion honours his vow to his host, thus keeping his O-
world inside the actual world. Because he still ignores Morgan’s plan, part of his K-world is still removed from the centre. Constellation D comes after the bereaved knight hides the green girdle from his host on temptation day three. At the Green Chapel, he learns the truth about the two games. Because he has partly failed to uphold his obligations, his O-world is no longer enclosed in the TAW, and because he regrets his weakness, his W-world only overlaps with the version of reality in which Gawain is a perfect pearl of chivalry. Through Bertilak and his wife, Morgan has partly achieved her goal, so she now has no active plan. Because she now knows that her brother’s knights largely deserve their fame as the fine flower of chivalry, her K-world is mostly inside the TAW. Her wish to humiliate Arthur and his knight, however, has not been totally fulfilled, so her W-world remains partly in excess of reality.

Figure 7freezes the dynamics of interpersonal interaction in the storyworld of SGGK at four important moments of a narrative conflict between two parties with incompatible private worlds. Three of these stills are mediated by the verbal text and its visual threshold, so that narrative conflict can be seen before it can be read. The storyworld participants otherwise have modal-private worlds which gravitate at constantly shifting distances from the textual-actual world of objective reality as it simultaneously affects and is affected by the changing pace of physical events. Precisely in this respect, the PW diagram represented in Figure 7has a major limitation, namely, that its model “tells us [little or] nothing about the events that cause these movements” (Ryan, “Diagramming Narrative” 31). Hence the need for a diagram which makes a clearer correlation between “actual states and events” and their “mental representations” (33). Following Ryan, I try to make this relationship in SGGK graphically more explicit by using a new layout made of three columns: Physical events taking place in the actual world scroll down in chronological order from the centre, and the mental events of the private worlds of the two parties develop in the adjacent two columns in function of the same modal registers used in Figure 7 (knowledge, wishes, goals, plans, and obligations). Still following Ryan, I indicate “the impact of mental events on physical events” and vice versa by labelled arrows indicating the nature of their relations with the actual word (33-34). The initial or final “affective value of a state or event for a character” is represented by the letter A (sable) with the signs + and – respectively indicating a positive or a negative affective value (33).

Figure 8turns this template into a diagrammatic scrutiny of the interplay of public and private worlds as mediated visually and verbally in the making of the storyworld of SGGK. Conflict is here represented as a mental event preceding physical action. Morgan’s resentment of what she considers to be the excessive pride of Arthur and his highly capable chivalric agents explains her initial negative emotional state, as shown in the upper right column. This affective value prompts her reaction, which aims

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7 This visual model is admittedly static and sectional, but its aim is simply to focus on four critical moments in a plotline as driven by the incompatible intents of Gawain and his antagonists. A fully dynamic and seamlessly fluid animation of conflict development in the romance can be achieved using modern infographic software.
to gauge the true worth of the king’s men. Hence her plan of sending Bertilak, transformed through magic into a formidable foe who can survive a lethal death blow. Arthur remains oblivious of her plan until the Green Knight reveals the truth to distraught Gawain at the end of the narrative. While the latter’s nephew kept his promise to his supernatural challenger and honoured his pact with the lord of Hautdesert, his failure to surrender the green girdle leaves no doubt about the limitations of worldly chivalry. Morgan’s plan achieves a measure of success, which terminates the previous affective value of her mental state. That fear from death conquers even the most accomplished Knight of the Round Table is cause enough for Morgan’s change of emotional state into satisfaction. Acting by proxy on physical events through her goons, she can fulfil her plans and bring the overall scheme to bear on the actual course of action in the storyworld. Gawain’s mental domain is structured around his reactions to the two phases of his opponent’s plan. His limited knowledge hinders his ability to initiate action, so his plan to survive death by keeping the supposedly magical green girdle is defensive and as a matter of fact counterproductive, earning him a punitive scar and stern rebuke. His ability to influence physical action is outweighed by Morgan’s superior planning. The change of the affective value of his mental state from positive to negative derives logically from his failure to see through her scheming.
Fig. 7. Interplay of Mental and Physical Events in *SGGK*.  
Based on Ryan’s Template ("Diagramming Narrative" 34)
The interplay of mental and physical events in SGGK mainly unfolds in the verbal text, so the role of the peritextual apparatus is likely to be minimal—except that it is not. The apostils on folios 90v and 125v suggest a plan in miniature. Seen headless then miraculously whole again, the Green Knight first appears unarmed then looms ominous holding the same massive axe which Gawain has brought slashing across his green neck. Revenge is indeed in the air. Even before beginning to read the romance, the viewer would guess that this is some set up. The Round Table Knight is lured away from his support base in the company of his august fellows to a disadvantaged and solitary confrontation with the otherworldly knight. The would-be executioner towers on top of a mound, evidently waiting for his victim, who is seen at the bottom of the folio, all but lost in the lush valley. Juxtaposing the first miniature with the second begs interpretation as a trap, as a sinister plan to bring gallant Gawain to his death galloping on his Gringolet. What the two miniatures cannot show, however, is the mastermind behind this well-made trap. The mental work of Morgan the sorceress can be seen, but not immediately traced to her, which is a clever decision by the painter, who would otherwise have decreased the effect of suspense in a prequel scene showing her, for instance, sending the Green Knight to Camelot. The graphic fringe of the verbal text heightens tension in the storyworld and maintains a high level of suspense in there, not unlike a modern poster about a new movie—which would be fittingly entitled Green Knight (pun intended). The two miniatures suggest a structure of mental events which can effectively cue the trap in which Gawain can but fall.

The idea of a trap is also evoked by the temptation scene depicted on f. 125r. Medieval illuminators did not always shy away from drawing sexual subjects, so there is no reason to suspect that the artist censured the fulfilment scene—had it happened. The noblewoman’s taunting of her guest does not have more than the trappings of a set up. At a time when parchment space was precious and painting was painstaking, a miniature had to convey its main idea as succinctly as possible. The expressive power of the second illumination in the Gawain-manuscript is hard to overlook. That naked Gawain stays in bed (‘eyes wide shut, ’ as it were) feigning sleep in the presence of a lavishly attired young woman is very intriguing. The viewer of this miniature will probably suspect a scheme, not a blue scene. The disarmed knight is evading a confrontation where he might lose his honour as a guest. He seems to be deliberately missing his chance with his beautiful temptress, so his plan is simply to wait for her to leave the room and his vow unbroken. Later, we learn from the verbal text that this was a trap planned by Morgan, anxious as she was to pit the chivalric values of her guest against his human weaknesses. Mind is here set against mind with an energy that keeps the plot in motion. In his insightful Social Minds in the Novel, Alan Palmer writes about “the mind in action” as “the total perceptual and cognitive viewpoint, ideological worldview, memories of the past, and the set of beliefs, desires, intentions, motives, and plans for the future of each character in the story as presented in the discourse” (11). If one adds a visual extension to this conception of mental activities as they intertwine with physical events, it may be possible to conceive of the miniatures of the manuscript
as ‘the mind in pictures.’ Despite their average artistic quality and the toll of time on their fragile parchment pages, the four paintings still retain their power to suggest and their immediate effect on viewers.

The representation of the dynamic interplay of mental and physical events in Figure 8 shows aspects of a finely woven storyworld texture made of iconic and verbal threads. The three columns of the diagram scroll down the page while arrows sew them together, tightening logical, temporal, and modal relations, and bringing down mental and physical events in a cascade flooding the storyworld with private constellations vying for closeness to its actual centre. One of the merits of this visual model is that it allows viewers to have clear ideas about the mental activities of characters, and particularly to see through the subtleties of their planning. Viewers can also have a deeper grasp of the contribution of marginal miniatures in building a visually rich mental model of the storyworld. Despite their polarised location at the beginning and at the end of the manuscript, the four paintings shed immersive light on key moments in plotline development and suggest aspects of the wars of the private worlds of the characters as they interact in what is primarily a battle of wits. However, the last diagram does not provide the storyworld with a spatial dimension or a temporal extension. Perhaps because her case study is a timeless fable (“Diagramming Narrative” 34), Ryan’s model only conveys a sense of chronology in the middle column but does not provide temporal anchors for physical events. The vagueness of the spatial setting of “The Fox and the Crow” can similarly be justified by the universal validity of its wisdom, regardless of actual location. These limitations of Ryan’s template can perhaps be compensated for by a new diagram where story elements come together analytically.

Figure 9 is my attempt to improve on previous visual models by relating existents in the storyworld of SGGK to physical and mental events anchored in their spatial and temporal setting. I likewise aim to signal the interdependence of the iconic and verbal texts in this new visual model by embedding the four marginal miniatures as closely as possible to the physical events which they illustrate. The diagram consists of five superposed layers; namely, the spatial setting, physical and mental events, the registers and the relationships between event types, the storyline, and, finally, the contextual situation of the miniatures. Since the new visual model retains the ‘story logic’ of Figure 8 and its synergy of physical and mental events, there is no need to elaborate on that again here. It may be objected that the diagram is so detailed as to be confusing. This can be overruled by the following arguments. First, that the diagram is complex is a compliment to the craftsmanship of the romance studied. Second, it has the merit of synthesising all previous diagrams in this study—they are, so to speak, its peritextual apparatus. Third, like the miniatures studied, the visual model invites the gaze of the viewer; its round shapes and sharp angles curve meaning into a semantic circuit which freely offers what it has at once. Finally, the romance is the thing still, not the diagram, so the latter merely supplements its bimodal narrative with a mirror
where its errant soul can reflect an image of itself as a coherent subject, with meaning and purpose.

Conclusion

Words make and unmake worlds, but words without worlds have little meaning, and worlds without minds have little value. Words make sense in worlds made of signs, but they have significance in mental worlds which take in what texts make up. Minds enter textual portals and move along one semiotic trail or another with or without a shooting star to guide them as they give in to the flow of words carrying them into vicarious worlds. These can be possible or impossible, but the actual world around which they gravitate is the centre of the modal system and its nodal interpersonal network. This nexus of textual reality is true of the fictional work while its satellite constellations of private domains remain virtual until they overlap with or become enclosed in the ontological limits of the central world. As characters
Fig. 9. Interplay of Mental and Physical Events in SGGK
contend to impregnate the TAW with their desires and wishes, they plan for success by setting goals, and these often conflict with their own obligations and/or the goals and plans of other participants in the fictional world. The result is a plot, which usually unfolds verbally in a narrative. This does not, however, exclude other media in the process of making its fictional world. In Cotton Nero A. x. (art. 3), four miniatures placed at the extremities of the manuscript frame the narrative and participate in generating a coherent storyworld with spatial and temporal coordinates, one that is inhabited by existents, subject to rules, laws and constraints, and vibrant with physical events governed by the mental activities of its major characters.

The people of the margins do not stay in their painted poses. Their lifelike movements are paused in postures that promise to resume their interactions once the manuscript folio is turned. Sir Gawain stays when others leave the illuminated fringe of the verbal text, where he deals with friends and foes according to his chivalric values. The quest of the valiant takes him to a zone of testing where traps line up for him in high halls and death lurks in rich trappings. Ever loyal to his private modal world made of courtesy and respect for the ideals of Arthurian chivalry, he resists temptation after another, but his fear for his life ultimately shows his human weakness when faced with death. This episode teaches him to temper pride with humility and confidence with compassion. The architect of his trials is Morgan le Fay, who lives in the borderlands of Logres as an outcast or an exile. Discontent and rebel at heart, she opposes her brother and seeks to change an actual world where knights errant believe in themselves as morally and martially superlative demigods into one in which even the most capable chivalric agents temper their pride with humility. Bimodally, then, the narrative generates a storyworld in which two private constellations compete to modify the actual world in line with their ideological stances. New worlds can indeed be made from the margins, where resistance begins to simmer. SGGK is not a graphic novel, so the storyworld which hosts this friction is essentially woven from words, and yet, the iconic quadrupole brings to the verbal text an immediacy that moves fancy and relocates the viewer into the storyworld by virtue of MD. Miniatures in the margins are far from peripheral in the fictional world of the romance. Perhaps, this is just how new worlds begin after all—contingent and consigned to the edge at first, then coming closer to the actual world, and finally being one with the ontological nexus of that domain. The result of such a plotting is a well-knit plot which may well ensnare the valiant knight looking for a green cave, or the avid bookworm surfing the dunes of a planet with a double moon, or the mind traveller to the city of brass on a winged horse. All this, and perhaps more, can happen in a storyworld if some readers hurry on the trail of a white rabbit on a summer day by a sleepy river.
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The Irish American Tragic Stasis and Nostalgic Longing in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*

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**Abstract**

In this research paper, tragic stasis and nostalgic longing in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* are investigated from existentialist prisms. Eugene O’Neill transcribes the dramatic life experiences of his Irish American family in the New World. Their “journey,” dramatically compressed, is characterized by perennial tragic struggles. The journey from Ireland to America entangles James Tyrone and his family into nothingness and absurd circuits. Consequently, they resort to the consumption of morphine and alcohol as modes of endurance and purgation, expressing their nostalgia, melancholia and mourning. Self-alienation, estrangement and solitude are the existential forces that make the four Tyrones fragmented and stagnant in a confined existential world. Their inability to find ways towards salvation leads them to bad faith. Indeed, this autobiographical work reveals O’Neill as an existentialist absurdist thinker.

**Keywords:** Nostalgia, stasis, existentialism, autobiography, struggle, nothingness, regret, mourning, bad faith, absurdity.
In Eugene O’Neill’s four-act autobiographical masterwork *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, written in 1940 and published in 1956, the Tyrones were alienated from their Irish roots. In this dramatic work, which takes place over a single day in 1912, O’Neill expresses the nostalgic longing and mourning of his actual family through the Tyrones’ secret tragic experiences in America. He draws the family portraits, trying tirelessly to disguise them. But his contemporaries and critics like Travis Bogard, Michael Manheim, Stephen Black, Barbara Gelb and Robert M. Dowling approach the play as a truthful autobiographical document, uncovering accurate details and facts about O’Neill’s domestic family life. Actually, this subject is irresistible for biographers, conducting psychoanalytical explorations of the playwright’s nuclear family life. O’Neill confronts the horrible facts in the present and profound depression in the past, producing episodes of the dark side of the Tyrones’ life experiences. Thus,

On the whole, *Long Day's Journey into Night* is accurate in matters of fact about the author’s parent’s lives. Eugene apparently intended to work from the facts as he knew them to discover whatever understanding might emerge from unconscious thoughts and feelings as a consequence of re-creating habitual family patterns. (Black 16)

The audience can, therefore, discover the tragic core of the playwright’s life and his strange experience in a family which is alienated from its roots.

In fact, James Tyrone, O’Neill’s father, was the Irish man who escaped to the New World as the perfect destination, seeking peace, wealth and happiness. Like other Irish immigrants, he was enthralled by utopian dreams that drove him into incessant strife. Unfortunately, the journey from Ireland to America was a ferry crossing. It turned into
terrible conflicts with existential forces. Thus, solitude, alienation and despondency became the dominant emotions that made the Tyrones helpless and restless in confined territories. Whiskey drinking and morphine consumption were the modes of endurance of their constant suffering in static condition. O'Neill himself, who could be taken for Edmund in the play, was condemned to drinking whiskey, seeking refuge from the tyranny of time:

MARY. (addressing Edmund (in a detached reminiscent tone)Please don't think I blame your father, Edmund. He didn't know any most ignorant kind of poverty-stricken Irish. I'm sure they honestly believed whiskey is the healthiest medicine for a child who is sick or frightened. (Long Day's Journey into Night 111)

In this research paper, as a contributive autobiographical study of Long Day's Journey into Night, the focus will be on the existential forces that made the Tyrones' life struggle a vicious game beyond mourning and tragedy. In addition to the Irish tragic reminiscences of the 19th century, the playwright heightens the existential limitations that intensify the crisis of the Irish-American identity. The search for transformation and formation of new subjectivity is dramatically lined as unattainable aspiration, because of the deadly nostalgic scenes and new cross questions that shape the daily routine in the United States. Thus, Mary and James are inhibited by nostalgic dreams of happiness, peace and appropriation. Under the load of memorial wishes and desires, the Tyrones suffer from anxiety, loss and homesickness. In this context, Rosi Braidotti's view is pertinent: “Fear, anxiety, and nostalgia are clear examples of the negative emotions involved in the project of detaching ourselves from familiar and cherished forms of identity” (188).

The attitudes and conflicting emotions experienced by of O'Neill's Irish family towards the new lifestyle and cultural stream are constantly historicized in the play. In America, the Tyrones’ utopian journey is full of existential complexities. They are fated to live in tragic tensions, carrying the burden of the ugly past. Thus, they feel incapable of liberating themselves from the Irish paranoia and diaspora. They suffer from existential malaise and nothingness. Their desire to construct an Irish-American identity leads them to vagueness and uncertainty in loose absurd circuits. In this respect, Sartre claims that Being means
Nothingness and vice versa. Thus, Nothingness can be annihilated only on the foundation of being. Both coexist together to define the subject’s existence or non-existence.

Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being – like a worm. ... Nothingness can be conceived neither outside of being, nor as a complementary, abstract notion, nor as an infinite milieu where being is suspended. Nothingness must be at the heart of Being, in order for us to be able to apprehend that particular type of realities which we have called négatités. ”(Sartre 26)

Indeed, in Long Days’ Journey into Night, O’Neill succeeds in dramatizing the existential life of an Irish family in the alien American territory, which is full of “negatités”. The latter form all negative aspects of life that make the human subject stagnant and fragmented. The playwright depicts his subjects in a ghastly world as lunatics who struggle for salvation and ways of becoming. Their addiction to drugs, alcohol and the language of estrangement reveals stagnation and the depth of a tragic autobiography.

O’Neill’s subjects’ pursuit of happiness turns into anxiety and inauthenticity. This leads to what Sartre famously calls ‘bad faith’. Indeed, to fathom the implications of the Tyrone’s tragic discourses as Irish American aliens, symbols, images, allusions and puns are to be operated as requisite tools. O’Neill deploys strong dramatic techniques, heightening the cathartic experiences of his protagonists. They are free to make choices and decisions in utopian spaces, but they are responsible for all repercussions and frustrations. Subsequently, they are disappointed by existential barriers, becoming mad and pessimist in their adventures. This is the culpable fate that has shaped the discontinuous phases in the Irish American Tyrones’ family life.

MARY. My father paid for special lessons. He spoiled me. He would have sent me to Europe to study after I graduated from the Convent. I might have gone if I hadn’t fallen in love with My Tyrone. Or I might have become a nun that was the more beautiful one. To become a concert pianist, that was the other... I fell in love right then. So did he, he told me afterwards. I forgot all about becoming a nun or a concert pianist. All I wanted was to be his wife. (Long Day’s Journey into Night 104-5)

Mary is fated to be alienated from the Convent and her dream to be a nun. Her dreams of well-becoming turn into nightmares. Love is a long journey which deprives her of good
faith. Her desire to build the marriage institution deflects her life from its existential essence. At this level, the playwright seems to advocate the idea that freedom of choice is an absurd matter. It is a process that leads to nothingness and big void. Indeed, as Martin Esslin contends: “Man is nothing because he has the liberty of choice and therefore is always that which is in the process of choosing himself to be a permanent potentiality rather than actual being” (156). Mary’s deliberate choice of James Tyrone as a future husband deprives her of the natural process of living happily in the ground of birth, Connecticut. Mary’s nostalgia is focused on her father, her youth, and her religious belief and training:

I even dreamed of becoming a nun: “I’ve never had the slightest desire to be an actress” Mary: I was brought up in a respectable home and educated in the best convent in the Middle West. Before I met Mr. Tyrone I hardly knew there was such a thing as a theater. I was a very pious girl. I even dreamed of becoming a nun. I’ve never had the slightest desire to be an actress.

(\textit{Long Day’s Journey into Night} 102)

Indeed, \textit{Long Day’s Journey into Night} schematizes juxtapositions and paradoxes that frame the spectrum of the Irish American’s fate. Free will and determinism\textsuperscript{2}, hope and despair, optimism and melancholia are the bounds of the Irish domestic and public tragedy in the New World. O’Neill’s philosophical views are engendered inexistentialism\textsuperscript{3}, reconsidering the Irish nostalgic longing as the soul of the tragic plot. Although Connecticut is constantly a vivid dramatic image in her memory, Mary loses the sense of belonging. However, O’Neill describes her voice as soft and attractive, and thus “when she is merry, there is a touch of Irish lilt in it” (13). Mary hates the town, which is New London, and all people where she lives:

I’ve always hated this town and everyone in it. You know that. I never wanted to live here in the first place, but your father liked it and insisted on building this house and I’ve had to come here every summer…I’ve never felt it my home. It was wrong from the start. Everything was done in the cheapest way... You’ve never had the chance to meet decent people here...

(\textit{Long Day’s Journey into Night} 44)
Mary suffers from self-alienation and estrangement in a confined social space. She is constantly suspected and mistrusted. O’Neill seems to advocate the dramatic thought that human existence without longing is meaningless. This is tragic stasis in the life cycle of the Irish American family in the United States. Actually, O’Neill’s tragic mind is imbued with extravagant thoughts on the tragic flaws that put the four haunted Tyrones Mary, James, Edmund and Jamie on the track of doomed life. Their nostalgic longing maps out the mythical trajectories of their journey. Edmund, who is supposed to be O’Neill himself, feels strange and lonely, regretting even the fact of being born:

   EDMUND. It was a great mistake, my being born a man, I would have been much more successful as a sea gull or a fish, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must be a little in love with death. (Long Day’s Journey into Night 153-4)

Edmund feels annihilated and dehumanized. He desperately expresses his wish to be a “fish,” longing for freedom in a natural place. However, the sea is a symbol of disorder and inconstancy. Edmund is displaced and abandoned by the human world. He has lost the sense of human qualities and belonging to the natural existential realm. He is incapable of any reciprocal communication with the surroundings. Hence, his desire for death as flight strategy from stasis affirms his constant apprehension of the negation of existence. As a member of the immigrant family, he loses faith in life. He prefers to act under masks because he despairs of the human condition. He is caught between tragic paradoxical forces. Here, the audience may be astonished by Edmund’s foolishness and pessimism. Indeed, O’Neill’s pessimistic view of human struggle for happiness is echoed in Schopenhauer’s philosophy in "The Vanity of Existence":

   How can it (happiness) dwell where, as Plato says, continual Becoming and never Being is the sole form of existence? In the first place, a man never is happy, but spends his whole life striving after something which he thinks will make him so; he seldom attains his goal, and when he does, it is only to be disappointed; he is mostly shipwrecked in the end, and comes into harbor with masts and rigging gone. And then, it is all one whether he has been happy or miserable;
for his life was never anything more than a present moment always vanishing; and now it is over. (Schopenhauer 35)

On American soil, the Tyrones live in darkness and disguise. They adopt odd modes to resist the daily routine and the constant void. Despite the hazy atmosphere, O'Neill transfigures the subjects obviously in the mind of the audience. Their nostalgic longing manifests their endurance of seclusion in a foggy world. The thick fog symbolizes vagueness and loss. The Tyrones are blended with the fog, stammering as "fog people" (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 154). Their eloquent speeches on the nonsense of the subject's struggle against life forces become condensed with the fog in the surroundings and inside their heads. Actually, the Tyrones’ minds are fogged by tragic dilemmas mainly nostalgic longing and reminiscences. In this context, in *The Eugene O'Neill Review* (vol. 38), Robert Simpson Mclean comments on the production of the play: “from the bright sunlight of the cheerful morning to the dark gray foggy night, the Tyrone family revealed its suffering and pain with extraordinary realism” (149). So, I can confirm the idea that O’Neill’s autobiographical play is dramatized with realistic aspects.

Further, there is much self-determination and rhetoric in the conversations between the protagonists, fostering their conviction that crossing the fog barriers under the effect of the damnable whiskey is impractical. The fog is, figuratively, a dystopian sphere where the protagonists are figured as fugitive. In *Contour in Time*, Travis Bogard points out that the thick mass of the fog is the barrier beyond which the Tyrones, especially, Mary and Edmund enjoy a mysterious atmosphere, which gives them a sense of protection and liberation from constant control. Thus, "the fog becomes the physical evidence of the isolation of the Tyrones" (430). It is the obstruction that hinders the Tyrones from blending with the surrounding. Mary addresses the Irish servant Cathleen depicting the relation with her husband, the children and the fog:

They have always been kind to me, and I to them. But I've never felt at home with them. Their life is not my life. It has always stood between me and- She gets up – abruptly. How thick the fog is. I can’t see the road. All the people in the world could pass by and I would never know. I wish it was always that way. (*Long day's Journey into Night* 102)
Again, it seems to me that the thick fog represents the growing obscurity on the stage. It intensifies the sense of tragic mystery and existential vacuity in the theatrical aura. It is the contingent space of incongruous longing and contemplation about the farcical pattern of the Irish American existence in the New World.

In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill writes the tragic memories which resume the life history of his family. Mary Tyrone, O'Neill’s mother, is a drug addict; Edmund, Eugene O'Neill himself, his brother Jamie and his father James are alcohol addicts. They are doomed to resort to such modes to endure the daily routine and void. The tragic tension intensifies when they absent themselves from one another, moving inside the house like ghosts, especially Mary who is haunting them by any sudden cry under the damnable effect of drugs. She desperately consumes drugs, suffering from sleeplessness. She is anxious and suspicious, being caught in endless restlessness and nervousness because of “the damned foghorn” (58). Even during the day, her room is dark and gloomy, like a tomb. Edmund compares his mother, who is moving around upstairs the whole night to a ghost. This recurrent tragic act increases their agony, soreness and panic. In a tragic static condition, the Tyrones are haunted and tormented by ghosts which hover everywhere in their house. Within O’Neill’s tragic spectrum, ghosts stand metaphorically for the inscrutable forces that shape the Tyrones’ traumatic life. To quote Braidotti, the Tyrones are the “people who have been confronted by the irreparable, the unbearable, the insurmountable, the traumatic and inhuman event will do anything to find solace, resolution, and also compensation (181).

Besides, Edmund’s tragic discourse on the miserable condition of his mother on the one hand and his unbearable reality on the other hand indicates the loss of all senses. He is dissolved psychically in the mass of fog, becoming a “ghost within a ghost” (131). He is moving like a phantom. This is the miserable and horrible condition of O’Neill’s Irish American family in America.

EDMUND. Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it is... The fog and the sea seemed part of each other. It was like walking on the bottom of the sea. As if I had drowned long ago. As if I was a ghost belonging to the fog, and the fog was the ghost of the sea. (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 131)

The sea symbolizes the ebb and flow where Edmund and his parents desperately try to find a bond with the natural world. Actually, O’Neill’s family life history is dramatized in a long
utopian journey into darkness, tracing the scars of “a wasted past.” In this context, I quote Dowling:

overarching everything in Long Day’s Journey into Night is the horrifying surety of a wasted past. James and Mary, along with their dissipated elder son Jamie, present two selves - the selves that might have achieved their potential and the selves they’ve been fated to endure. (Dowling 433)

The journey is full of secrets about the strange interludes of the Irish American family life. The Tyrones are fated to endure the existential hazards and ills. Then, at this level I find out that most of the scenarios are elaborated in enigmatic structures to scrutinize the mysterious events and process that have shaped the family’s autobiography. The tragic protagonists can undergo Catharsis by being always drunk and dissolved in the beauty of nature, seeking a “wild joy”. This mode of struggle is adopted for the cessation of consciousness. The latter is the condition where the subject can put an end to pain and sufferings. Edmund’s following speech conveys the depth of O’Neill’s tragic spirit. He is, like Edmund, lost and wandering in an imaginary world.

You’ve just told me some high spots in your memories. Want to hear mine? They are all connected with the sea…. I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm, became of it, and for a moment I lost myself – actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! … I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy. (Long Day’s Journey into Night 153)

The grievances of the past cannot be forgotten and, thus, Mary wonders, saying: “the past is the present, isn’t it? It’s the future too. We all try to lie out of that but life won’t let us” (Long Day’s Journey into Night 87). The playwright is an existentialist thinker who explores life as a cluster of existential forces which are stronger than human willingness. Here he meets Arthur Schopenhauer, Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre on the inescapability of the power of doom as an existential deterministic force that obliterates the efficacy of free will. The Tyrone’s life history remains the constant burden of ailments. The feelings of alienation and torment cannot be redeemed and, thus, awful stasis will not be surpassed. In a very
desperate condition, the Tyrones express their subjection to the power of doom. The past determines the present and the future is out of their control.

O'Neill’s experimentation with human agony and sorrow, relying in particular on his family’s history as typically Irish model in the New world, makes him aware of the subjects’ inability to alter the workings of the power of fate within a stifling existential world. The Tyrones have been engulfed into the crypt of silence without being redeemed as if they were cursed. The journey of James Tyrone from Ireland to America has been (over)determined by uncontrollable forces, missing the lines of survival. Mary addresses Edmund (with detached amusement):

Your father is a strange man, Edmund. It took many years before I understood him, too, and not feel contempt because he is close fisted. His father deserted his mother and their six children a year or so after they came to America. He told them he had a premonition he would die soon, and he was homesick for Ireland, and wanted to go back there to die. So he went and he did die. *(Long Day’s Journey into Night 117)*

Mary Tyrone is mourning the limitations of their will to avoid the sense of sickness and incongruity which are rooted in Irishness. She warns Edmund: "It's wrong to blame your brother. He can't help being what the past has made him. Anymore than your father can. Or you. Or I" *(Long Day’s Journey into Night 64)*. Nostalgia, therefore, seems to be the mode of the daily life that may alleviate the sense of despair and anguish.

Moreover, “O’Neill’s description of Mary’s state could apply equally well to the rest of the family... The only refuge is the past, the world of childhood innocence” *(Bigsby 101)*. Mary, who lives in decency, desperately expresses her homesickness and nostalgic longing for the past, which is associated with innocence as Bigsby claims. Her miserable situation draws the sympathy of the audiences who might be Irish descent people in America, but they have never been lucky to meet each other. She even regrets her marriage to James Tyrone, wishing that he remained a bachelor, because she is always abandoned and friendless at home. She laments her deprivation of the natural harmony and happiness that a family might fairly enjoy in the United States.

MARY. Oh I’m sick and tired of pretending this is a home! You won’t help me! You put yourself out the least bit! You don't know how to act in a home! You don’t
really want one! You never have wanted one—never since the day we were married. You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertained your friends in barrooms! Then nothing would have ever happened. (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 67)

In this respect, in *The Eugene O'Neill Review* (vol. 34), Elizabeth Fifer argues that “the passion in *Long Day's Journey into Night* all leads in one direction. The recognition of the impossibility of Mary’s rehabilitation provides the structure and the climax, and the despair that follows” (189).

In the course of the play, the tragic stasis intensifies while Mary gets paler and strangely isolated. She finds a kind of sanctuary in the fantasies of morphine:

Mary is paler than before and her eyes shine with unnatural brilliance. The strange detachment in her manner has intensified, she has hidden deeper within herself and found refuge and release in dream where present reality is but appearance to be accepted and dismissed unfeelingly—even with a hard cynicism—or entirely ignored. (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 97)

The “unnatural brilliance” in the eyes of Mary is a sign of drug consumption and James’s “glazed look” is also a sign of alcohol addiction and weariness. These strange inclinations reflect the peculiar character of the Irish American people who try to hide their existential torment. The Tyrones, like O’Neill’s parents, are weary in their quest to find a cure for their weird disconnection from the Irish background. Edmund’s(O’Neill’s) father “never went to school after he was ten. His people were the most ignorant kind of poverty-stricken Irish” (*Long Day's Journey into Night* 111). Mr. Tyrone’s experiments with the ‘good tonic’ of the Irish whiskey in bars as the best mode of purgation are reminiscent of the lifestyle of O’Neill’s father. But, "despite all the whiskey in him, he has not escaped, and he looks as he appeared at the close of the preceding act, a sad, defeated old man, possessed by hopeless resignation" (*Long Day's Journey Into Night* 125). Edmund’s (O’Neill's) mother embodies the tragedy of an Irish American woman.

EDMUND. (dully) Yes. She will be nothing but a ghost haunting the past by this time. He pauses–then miserably. He pauses – then he miserably.

Back before I was born-
TYRONE. Doesn’t she do the same with me? Back before she ever knew me. You’d think the only happy days she’s ever known were in her father’s home, or at the Convent, praying and playing the piano...As I’ve told you before, you must take her memories with a grain of salt. Her wonderful home was ordinary enough. Her father wasn’t the great, generous, noble Irish gentleman she makes out. (137)

Consequently, Mary resorts to nostalgic longing which is charged with misty dreams. This tragic static condition is unbearable. Then, when Edmund becomes aware of the ‘ugly past’ of the family, he prefers forgetfulness to consciousness, illusion to reality and insanity to reason. His strange character reminds us of melancholy Jacques, in Shakespeare’s As You Like It, who talks about the fusion of “the Jolly” and “the folly” (59).

Then, within the stifling family atmosphere, Edmund becomes rebellious, denouncing sanity. He utters with a sharp tone: “To hell with sense! We’re all crazy. What we want with sense? (Long Day's Journey into Night 130). This speech act reminds us of what Albert Camus argues in The Rebel: “Every act of rebellion expresses a nostalgia for innocence and an appeal to the essence of being”(54). The Tyrone’s inclination to cross existential borders makes them always pessimistic in oblivious states. They are evolving in a vicious circle. Mr. Tyrone affirms: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with sleep" (Long Day's Journey into Night 132). The Tyrones cannot unload the horrible burden of trouble and existential boredom which are dramatized as ‘the infinite sorrow of life’.

Indeed, their experiences epitomize the Irish desperate condition in America. Although, they break with the spell of the Irish brogue, Irishness remains a constant yoke in their heads. Mr. Tyrone sadly says: “I educated myself. I got rid of an Irish brogue you could cut with a knife” (150). At this level of tragic thought, O'Neill emphasizes the futility of human strife and the vanity of existence in an alien territory. The journey of the Irish Tyrones into nostalgia and pessimistic longing culminates in the subjugation to the power of existential fate.

The closure of the Tyrones’ struggle, while alienated from the ground of birth and nourishment, results in the loss of faith in religion, God and love. This resonates with the endgame that Samuel Beckett dramatizes to reveal the absurd struggle of the subject who despairs of the human condition. Indeed, O'Neill and Beckett get along with each other on
the absurd vision of human existence, heightening the tragic stasis that intensifies when the subjects realize their condemnation by the physical contingencies of the farcical pattern of life. There is no certainty, no pleasure, no purgation and no relief. So, accordingly, Long Day’s Journey into Night presents a tragic paradigm that intersects with Endgame in pessimism and absurdity. Edmund quotes from Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra embracing his nihilist view:

EDMUND. Then Nietzsche must be right. (He quotes from Thus Spoke Zarathustra.) ”God is dead: of His pity for man hath God died.” (87)

MARY. If I could only find the faith I lost, so I could pray again! (106)

TYRONE. When you deny God, you deny sanity. (134)

Immigration from Ireland to the New World marks not only the loss of geographical belonging and identity, but also spiritual faith. The Tyrones have lost ideals, particularly their belief in Christianity. They feel homeless, outsiders and atheists. This results in the loss of the sense of stability. The imperfection of Mr. James Tyrones’ flight from Ireland to America can be subsumed as the loss of paradise. In the alien land, the four haunted Tyrones live in conflicts and bickering under the control of unfathomable forces. Their break with the Irish cultural environment and heritage makes them destined to existential fragmentation, foolishness and health problems.

TYRONE. (guiltily explosive) Don’t be damned fool! I meant nothing but what’s plain to anyone! His health has broken down and he may be an invalid for a long time.

JAMIE. (Stares at his father, ignoring his explanation.) I know it’s an Irish peasant idea consumption is fatal. It probably is when you live in a hovel on a bog, but over here, with modern treatment-

TYRONE. Don’t I know that! What are you gabbing about, anyway? And keep your dirty tongue off Ireland, with your sneers about peasants and bogs and hovels! (34)

To conclude, Long Day’s Journey into Night is an autobiographical drama which resumes the tragic episodes of the Irish-American family history. The journey diverges in strange trajectories and dilemmas, depriving the Tyrones of security and constancy. It is full of sad memories. As an Irish American playwright, O’Neill succeeds in the theatrical design of the
autobiographical subjective experiences of the Tyrones as stereotypes. Liquor and drugs are the Irish means of recovery from despair in the world of nostalgia. They convey the constant effect of Irishness on O’Neill’s dramatic mood and writing. Reviewing the production of the play at Monte Cristo Cottage, New London, Connecticut, Dowling heightens the effect of the final scene on the audience. In The Eugene O’Neill Review (2017), Dowling writes that “after the final scene an air of guilt filled the room as the audience watched O’Neill’s personal tragedy draw to a terrible close” (163). Being deeply touched by the domestic tragedy, the audience feels pity and sympathy. Actually, O’Neill and his family were doomed to be trapped in absurd circuits, pitying each other desperately. They lived on grief, lamenting the loss of dreams while uprooted from the grounds of birth. The tragic stasis and nostalgic yearning in the play reveal Eugene O’Neill as a pessimist Irish American dramatist.

Endnotes

1) Bad faith: It is coined by Sartre to depict the existential crisis of the modern man. Thus, it is marked by the abortive attempts at escaping anguish. Bad faith is used excessively by existentialists, consisting, in Sartre’s terms, “in evading what one cannot evade, in evading what one is” (Esslin46). According to Arnold-Baker, “bad faith” is reduced into ‘self-deception’ (46).

2) Free will and determinism: They are two opposite doctrines. Free will/Freedom forms part and parcel of human existence. In fact, Man can determine his choices and decisions despite the obstacles he may encounter. In Sartre’s philosophy, Man is free to make himself be, but he is tied to the responsibility for that. In O’Neill’s dramatic spectrum, the subject is free to desire the very things that turn his fortune into tragic alienation under the rubric of absurdity.

3) Existentialism: It is a philosophy which is rooted in the thought of nineteenth and early twentieth-century figures such as Nietzsche and Kafka. Existentialism is a philosophical theory which explores the phenomenology of the subject’s consciousness. Morner and Raush state that “according to Sartre, human beings are born into a moral and metaphysical void. There is no plan for their lives, no definition of their essential being. They simply exist” (73). Man’s quest in his existence is the fulfillment of essence. Within these boundaries of existential
thoughts, O'Neill’s protagonists seem to be existentialists who are alone confronting nothingness.

4) Absurdity: It was introduced by Albert Camus and several precursors of the avant-garde movement to promote the meaningless side of life. Thus, Man is compelled in to exist in a purposeless sphere. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Martin Esslin writes on absurdity:

   In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land. This divorce between a man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity. (17)
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II Secondary Sources:


US Foreign Policy from the Restraints of Isolationism to the Excesses of Interventionism: The Realist Perspective and the Neoconservative Exception

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“American foreign policy since the Spanish-American War of 1898 has sought to ensure U.S. supremacy in the Western Hemisphere while at the same time asserting American influence widely around the globe. Until 1945, U.S. foreign policy makers sought to fashion the United States into a great power, the equal of the major European nations. During the Cold War era, the United States surpassed the Europeans and contended with the Soviet Union, the other so-called superpower, for mastery of world politics. In the decade after the Cold War, it stood at the apex of an international hierarchy.”

Robert D. Schulzinger, U.S. Diplomacy since 1900; 2002.

I- Introduction

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines ‘excess’ as “more than the reasonable action that exceeds proper or lawful bounds (416).” Some degree of irrationality is therefore associated with this notion, as it represents the actions or behavior going beyond acceptable terms. In its historical evolution, American foreign policy has been modeled by excessive and sometimes maximalist actions, doctrines and deeds. To justify these excesses, high profile politicians (presidents, secretaries, Congressmen etc...) have resorted to rhetoric; from their vantage point of decision-makers, they had the moral and the
political obligation to constantly communicate with the masses on their intentions, plans and resolutions towards the rest of the world. This constraint has been made compulsory by the nature of the American political system in which the dialectic ruler/ruled is a dynamic construction imposing communication and mutual understanding.

The purpose of this paper is to scrutinize some of the debatable historical US Foreign Policy decisions, to measure their degree of 'justifiability', and to understand their impact. Special light will be shed on the post 9-11 era, when the very ideology-prone Bush administration took American Foreign Policy to new extremes. For that purpose, the Realist theory in international affairs will serve as the methodological tool, so as to test the notion of 'excess' from its perspective.

II- The Realist School in International Relations

Realism has been one of the major schools in studying international affairs since the end of World War II, and its scholars have long since occupied important positions in academia, in the media industry as well as in many liberal think tanks in Washington D.C and New York. Throughout the decades of the Cold War and beyond, they have achieved prominence and guaranteed a strong influence on policy and decision-makers regardless of their political affiliations. Today, this school of thought and its various sub-branches is certainly a reference in terms of intellectual power.

Realists have built their original theory on two premises:

1- The world is chaotic by definition and the international order generated by wars, conflicts and diplomacy is fragile and non-consistent;

2- The material power of a state necessarily determines its range of action on the international scene. This material power includes wealth, armament, manpower and resources.

Out of these two main premises, Realism builds up a world vision where strong states have a better control of their environment than the weaker ones, possessing all the prerequisites for such control enabling them a larger margin of maneuvering both on the regional and the international stages. Weak states, by contrast, are confined to limited control of their environment, and constantly run the risk of being absorbed by stronger ones, through different channels (military, economic, cultural etc.) As defensive realists, these weak states
can hope at the establishment of a balance of power, while the strong states have interest in imbalance as a way of domination.

« Because other states are potential threats, and because there is no higher authority to come to their rescue when they dial 9-1-1, states cannot depend on others for their own security », argues John Mearsheimer in his seminal The Tragedy of Great Power Politics published in 2014 and considered by many as a Realist blueprint. These words do encapsulate a major tenet of Realism: that the international order is indeed chaotic as the legitimacy of the use of violence is perpetually under discussion and remains hard to define and delineate. In those conditions, states cannot allow themselves the luxury of sticking to ideology or to cultural norms: Wisdom commands that they engage in a perpetual calculation of their power potential to measure it up with the rivals', and act only accordingly.

In Realism and International Relations, Jack Donnelly identifies “emphasis on self-interest’ as the primary tenet of the Realist canon. Much in a Machiavellian mode, Donnelly asserts that Realism’s superiority in analyzing and understanding international relations is explained by the fact that the search for self-interest is an everlasting motivation, common to strong and weak states alike. It is precisely that eternal aspect that makes this theory superior to mere ideologies that, by contrast, can only be operative on a short and limited timespan. Realism therefore claims at universalism. Robert Cox puts it clearly: “It [Realism] takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action.”

III- National Interest, Expansion, and Interventionism

Among the cements of the American nation since independence, the notion of “national interest” is often elevated to the rank of dogma. In its name, the different administrations have found justifications to achieve sometimes contradicting purposes; for its sake, civil liberties have been episodically curtailed, and for its guaranteeing, non-principled action has been made. Tracing its historical roots in the ministry of French Prime Minister Cardinal de Richelieu, ‘raison d’État’ found anchorage in America as the first generation of presidents used it for purposes as diverse as maintaining the status quo, territorial expansion, or wars for land. In its most basic definition, ‘raison d’État’ is the epitome of
Realism in state relations: a motive for governmental action based on alleged needs or requirements of a political state regardless of possible transgressions of the rights or the moral codes of individual persons. Read as such, this doctrine can be interpreted as excessive in the sense that it assumedly transgresses codes and limits. Richelieu, Chief Minister of King Louis III between 1624 and 1642, adhered to the maxim that "the ends justify the means." Although he strongly believed in the mission of the Roman Church, he sought to assign the church a more practical role, detached from the center of policy-making. Richelieu argued that the temporal is above the spiritual, and that religion is a mere instrument to promote the policies of the state. This doctrine, therefore, justifies the subordination of the powerful religious factor to the superior National Interest. Richelieu, a man of Church, had therefore outstepped the field of the clergy and gave supremacy to the temporal realm of policy-making. In his seminal book Diplomacy, Henry Kissinger evokes the French leader:

Though privately religious, he viewed his duties as minister in entirely secular terms. Salvation might be his personal objective, but to Richelieu, the statesman, it was irrelevant. “Man is immortal, his salvation is hereafter,” he once said. “The state has no immortality; its salvation is now or never.” In other words, states do not receive any credit in any world for doing what is right; they are only rewarded for being strong enough to do what is necessary.” (Kissinger, 58).

Richelieu's strong sense of realism found an echo in the American political practice under different administrations all putting National Interest as a supreme goal. The “ends justify means” leitmotiv has been a blueprint directing policy, and occasionally justifying diplomatic and military excesses too. The following examples shortly illustrate this fact:

- The notion of Manifest Destiny was the popular motto of the America of the 1840s assuming that the Westward Expansion was a messianic mission vesting a divine ordeal: that of conquest and submission of nature and peoples to the will and power of the American Man. In 1845, John L. O’Sullivan (editor and democratic leader) defended America's claims to new territories: “The right of our Manifest Destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the Continent
which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative development of self-government entrusted to us. It is a right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth.”

The Monroe Doctrine (1823): It proclaimed that any efforts by European nations to colonize land or interfere with states in North or South America would be considered as acts of aggression or declarations of War, commanding U.S. intervention. The Doctrine also added that the United States would neither interfere with existing European colonies nor in the internal affairs of European countries. The first public expression of the doctrine by President James Monroe came during the latter’s seventh annual State of the Union Address to Congress. Later, the Doctrine would be used by many U.S. statesmen and several U.S. presidents, including Theodore Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Ronald Reagan and many others. The impact of the Monroe Doctrine has been lasting for almost two centuries. Its primary objective was to free the newly independent colonies of Latin America from European intervention and control that would make the New World a battleground for the Old. The doctrine put forward that the New World and the Old World were to remain distinctly separate spheres of influence, for they were composed of entirely separate and independent nations. Practically, Monroe simply wanted to free America’s hands to intervene in what he termed the “Western Hemisphere”.

In what came to be known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1904), Theodore Roosevelt asserted that European nations should not intervene in countries to the south of the US, however under certain conditions, United States intervention might be justified: “There are certain republics to the south of us which have already reached such a point of stability, order, and prosperity that they themselves, though as yet hardly consciously, are among the guarantors of this doctrine. These republics we now meet not only on a basis of entire equality, but in a spirit of frank and respectful friendship, which we hope is mutual. If all of the republics to the south of us will only grow as those to which I allude have already grown, all need for us to be especial champion of the doctrine
will disappear, for no stable and growing American republic wishes to see some great non-American military power acquire territory in its neighborhood. All that this country desires is that the other republics on this continent shall be happy and prosperous; and they cannot be happy and prosperous unless they maintain order within their boundaries and behave with a just regard for their obligations toward outsiders." *(Fifth Annual Message, Washington, December 5, 1905).*

These three examples, chronologically distant, show that there has always existed in American Foreign Policy a thread of expansionism and a self-renewing definition of the term “frontier”. These policies perfectly correspond to the canons of Realist policymaking: each one of them is contextually justified by an appreciation of the hard power that the United States disposed of in those different historical moments. This “excessive” quest for expansion has marked its stamp on the United States as the country voluntarily gave up its relatively comfortable isolationism to replace it by assumed interventionism: Until the turn of the twentieth century, American foreign policy was quite simple: to fulfill the country’s manifest destiny, and to remain free of entanglements overseas. America favored democratic governments wherever possible, but avoided action to impose forced democratization. However, the reverse side of this policy of self-restraint was the decision to exclude European power politics from the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed in 1823, considered the Pacific Ocean as a natural and a political barrier, declaring that Europe must not be entangled in American affairs. Monroe’s idea of what constituted American affairs- the whole Western Hemisphere- was expansionist indeed.

Until early in the twentieth century, the isolationist tendency prevailed in American foreign policy. Then, two factors projected America into world affairs: its rapidly expanding power and the gradual collapse of the international system centered on Europe. By 1902, Great Britain had abandoned its claim to a major role in Central America. Supreme in the Western Hemisphere, the United States began to enter the wider arena of international affairs. America had grown into a world power almost despite itself. America’s leaders might continue to insist that America’s basic foreign policy was to serve as a “beacon” for the rest of mankind, but a realist interpretation of the new world map suggested otherwise; it confirmed that America’s power entitled it to be heard on the issues of the day, and that it
did not need to wait until all of mankind had become democratic to make itself a part of the international system. It was the triumph of Realism as the most suitable grid of interpretation.

IV- Interventionism and its excesses: The Neoconservative Example

At the level of political action, interventionism has historically helped America grow from being an ensemble of colonies freshly free from British occupation to a regional power, then to a leading nation and ultimately to a global power or “hyper power” as ex-French Minister of Foreign Affairs Hubert Védrine had it. Still, recent experiences related to post-war social engineering in Iraq for example proved that the interventionist experience had reached its limits, notably because of a double excess: excess of zeal and excess of power use. The Neoconservatives within the Second Bush administration proved this fact.

Neoconservatives can be best defined as Wilsonian idealists, believing in the moral superiority of the American model and in its Universalist nature, and justifying interventionism and preventive action as Foreign policy imperatives in order to spread the US model. The events of 9-11 gave credit to the Neoconservative theses and discourse, as the Bush Junior administration retaliated to the attacks by the immediate invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent intervention in Iraq. Bush, by doing so, vindicated Neoconservatism and imposed it as the major Foreign policy doctrine of the beginning of the millennium. These interventions, if ever justified, occasioned many excesses of different types.

Francis Fukuyama, in his America at the Crossroads, did not hesitate to blame the Bush administration for what he viewed to be a series of cardinal mistakes: chief among these is what Fukuyama interpreted as an excessive “threat assessment” of the terrorist menace. In other words, he blamed them for their lack of realism. Second, Fukuyama was also critical of the deficit of image at the international level caused by the War on Terror and the various scandals linked to it (the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo exactions especially). He is joined in that denouncing by Klaus J. Milich who, in a Cultural Critique article, does not hesitate to use the adjective ‘totalitarian’ to refer to the Bush administration:

And indeed, the Patriot Act, the scandalous practices at Guantánamo
Bay and Abu Ghraib, the debacle about the election of 2000 and the enduring stretching of the facts in the 2004 campaign, not to speak of the media’s voluntary subordination to politics and its renunciation of critical distance, bolster the notion that the United States has fallen prey to totalitarian practices. Against this array of incidents, it is difficult to imagine that the “fundamentally un-American” wrongdoing at Abu Ghraib, as George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld termed it, is just the failure of some evil individuals in an otherwise good society. The accumulation of events rather speaks for a structural problem disquieting for a nation so proud of its democracy. (93)

Last, Francis Fukuyama pointed at a historical neoconservative failure, that of “social engineering”:

Finally, the Bush administration failed to anticipate the requirements for pacifying and reconstructing Iraq, and was wildly over-optimistic in its assessment of the ease with which large social engineering could be accomplished not just in Iraq but in the Middle East as a whole. This could not have been a failure of underlying principle, since a consistent neoconservative theme had been skepticism about the prospects for social engineering. Rather, proponents of the war seem to have forgotten their own principles in the heat of their advocacy of the war. (6, 7)

Harsh criticism from within is perhaps the greatest evidence of the wrong direction taken by a particular political movement during the course of its own action. Francis Fukuyama had been notoriously neoconservative since the late eighties. His landmark *End of History*, published in book-length size in 1993, is seen by many critics as the legitimating voice of the neoconservative action. Also, he was a signatory of the PNAC letter sent to President Clinton in 1998 as a warning against the upcoming Iraqi threat, and that document had always been regarded as a major neoconservative blueprint. Therefore, it can be asserted that Fukuyama had been one of the major neoconservative intellectual voices to populate the media and the specialized press for over a decade. The return of the mack was
spectacular when Fukuyama's 2006 *America at the Crossroads* was published. Its thesis revolved around the reasons why Fukuyama no longer felt to be a neocconservative, and his call for the movement to adopt new lines of thought and do away with the shortcomings of the neocon experience under the Bush administration. To his merit, it can be argued that Fukuyama, at least, escaped the classical attitudes of denial that other neocons complied in. Through his book, his declared intention was to save neo-conservatism from its own excesses and errors of appreciation. For instance, Fukuyama objects on the neoconservative disdain of multi-nationalism, and finds that principle excessively simplistic in a globalized world witnessing the inexorable rise of regional powers with legitimate ambitions for economic and political domination (12). He concludes dismantling the theory that he had himself revealed in his *End of History*: that American 'benevolent hegemony' seriously lacked credibility at the international level: other countries, especially in the Middle East, simply perceived it as yet another tool of domination invented by the United States to pursue its interests in matters of obtaining natural resources, securing energy sources and setting up geo-strategic bases worldwide (111). This newly-found assumption by Fukuyama is nothing less than historical: here is one of the modern intellectual fathers of neo-conservatism reaching the conclusion that the whole movement’s ideology had to be re-considered altogether, re-cast and re-thought. As he confirmed this position in his *America at the Crossroads*, Fukuyama announced the failure of Wilsonian Internationalism to be a good foreign policy engine, victim of its own excesses. America was at the crossroads, and so were the neoconservatives.

The following table illustrates the core differences between Realism and Neo-conservatism:

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<th>Realism</th>
<th>Neo-conservatism</th>
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<tr>
<td>The pursuit of self-interest</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Focal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation with multilateral institutions</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<td>Resort to military intervention</td>
<td>Only when necessary</td>
<td>Prioritized</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideological constraints</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Maximal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partisan affiliation</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>Important</td>
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V- Conclusion:

Foreign policy is an interplay of diplomatic restraint, military deterrence and principled action. Throughout its history, the United States approached world affairs through the prism of Realism, switching form the cautious isolationism so characteristic of the early days of the Republic, to the cautious interventionism in World War I, then to a more open and assumed type of leadership during World War II and the ensuing Cold War. If ideological considerations can never be discarded upon analyzing these events, it remains that the shifts of policies have generally been dictated by a pragmatic and non-utopian interpretation of the stakes. When occasionally, Realism was sidelined to be replaced by sheer ideology (as the Neoconservative episode testifies), the consequences in terms of national interest, victories on the ground, cost and social engineering have been debatable. In the light of these results, Realism has been rehabilitated again as the one historical international relations theory that is most suitable to accompany American decision-makers. In the recent years, the names of Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, Fareed Zakaria, Robert Gilpin and Samuel Huntington to name but a few, have become audible again, offering credible prescriptions. The Realist motto pursuing self-interest in a potentially dangerous international environment is more than ever the leitmotiv of the elected administrations in Washington D. C.

References:


http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/02/Why_Obama_Has_Failed_in_the_Middle_East
Discursive Power and Subversive Strategies in Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People*: The Displacement of Power-Structure

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**Abstract**

Each page of the South African history has its dark stain. Having cradled Apartheid for so long, South Africa has constantly been prone to many inconsistencies that led to social, racial and economic inequalities. Accordingly, writers took charge of answering back so as to come to terms with a past that was marked by wretchedness and injustices. After the collapse of apartheid, post-colonial literature was centered on the fashioning of an egalitarian regime that places all people, regardless of their skin color, on an equal footing. In this context, much infuriated by the inhumanities of the old system, novelists tried to overturn the parameters of power in an attempt to favor black people. This paper is an attempt to underscore the subversive strategies that Nadine Gordimer employs in her novel *July’s People*.

*Keywords: Gordimer, South Africa, Apartheid, post-apartheid era, Power, subversion*
“The white who has declared himself or herself for that future, who belongs to the white segment that was never at home in white supremacy, does not know whether he will find his home at last”

(Nadine Gordimer, Essential Gesture)

Writing literature both during and in the aftermath of the Apartheid regime critically evokes the question of power. The latter has always been viewed as a motif typical to this kind of literature which purposely seeks to address various issues related to inequity, dominion, and authority. Many South African writers, chief among them André Brink, G. M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer and others, have put a lot of stress on power as a prime factor which shapes the very social design of South Africa. Over the years, the notion of power has adopted different manifestations because social stratification depends on those who have supremacy, relegating blacks to the bottom rung. Accordingly, one of the major motifs that have garnered much criticism in post-colonial literature as a whole is the reversal and displacement of power-structure. In fact, before the collapse of apartheid, white people used to be the holders of power consigning the colonized to a subordinate status. Yet, after the demise of the old regime, power relations have fairly changed as blacks are no longer censored. Conspicuously, power relations are apt to change over time.

What is most common between these writers is that they are fierce anti-censorship advocates who take charge of tackling the South African cause. The paper under scrutiny is centered on Nadine Gordimer’s eighth novel July’s People; a piece of literature that received much credit and attention from scholars regarding its many major themes. One of the key motifs that the novel addresses is perceptibly the issue of power displacement.

One of the hallmarks of Anglophone literature as a field of enquiry is the strong value that is conferred to the question of power. In fact, the inversion of ‘power-play’, as Abdul Karim Ruman (2014) terms it in his article “Politics of Power: A
Postcolonial Reading of *July’s People* (p. 1), is typical to this novel wherein Gordimer fervently subverts the parameters of power between blacks and white liberals.

Fighting for social justice has always been one of the salient features of Nadine Gordimer’s fiction. This female writer dedicates her art to lay bare the inhumanities and injustices of the Apartheid regime. In fact, Anglophone Africa has long been hierarchically stratified, reducing its indigenous inhabitants to a second-class position. Hence, the process of washing out the atrocious and horrific policies of Apartheid, which dates back to 1788, is a thorny route as writers could hardly break with a very long history of despicable oppression and cruelty.

South African history is marked by the polarity of its very fabric. The dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed, black and white, colonizer and colonized is deeply inherent in the different domains of life. Quite noticeably, a line is set between blacks and whites, relegating the former to a state that is less than human and putting the latter at a higher pedestal. Indeed, the past has long been stained by the issue of ‘color’ which still permeates and seeps into the social fabric of society.

The official demise of the Apartheid regime did not bring such bigoted policies to an end. Quite perceptibly, political and socio-economic mobility remained far-fetched and almost implausible in the midst of a society that utterly cherishes people of whiter complexion. For many South African writers, it is almost unlikely to cut ties with the wretchedness of the past. Social equity proved difficult to materialize as inequality is reflected at another level, which is the linguistic one. Put differently, the duality of black and white did not go into oblivion and it still pervades the very social design of South Africa.

One proof to the perpetuation of colonialism is reverberated in the behavior of the family of the Smaleses whose liberalism proves shallow at its core. The Smaleses’ phony liberalism is utterly displayed. M. A. Quayum (2009) argues in “July’s People: Gordimer’s Radical Critique of White ‘Liberal’ Attitude” that “in South Africa, where the problem of apartheid is so deep rooted, the half-hearted commitment of the liberals and their lukewarm promises are not enough to provide a definitive solution to the problem” (p. 15). Accordingly, blacks remain consigned
to an inferior position in their native lands. Much enraged by the inhumane inequities of apartheid, writers, and most specially Nadine Gordimer took charge of divulging the awful practices of the old system. In the process of fighting for social and racial equity, Gordimer refers to some subversive strategies that help her destabilize power relations and tilt the balance in favor of the black race.

The dialectics of power is substantial in Nadine Gordimer’s novel *July’s People* that was set during the eighties (1981), that is before the demise of Apartheid. It is a futuristic novel that depicts the image of South Africa in the aftermath of the collapse of the official system of ‘apartness’. The novel chronicles the history of a white family; the Smaleses, who escaped from riot-stricken Johannesburg to a mud hut offered by a former black servant. Their present life in July’s village is a far cry from the affluent lifestyle they once had in Johannesburg. Eventually, they encounter many problems to fit into the new social milieu. Throughout their stay in the distant village, the white liberals; Bam and Maureen Smales and their three children Gina, Royce and Victor, become entirely reliant on their former servant July. Their dependence on a black man for survival acts in breach of the norms of the vertical relationship between blacks and whites before the end of Apartheid. For this very reason, they could hardly digest the new kind of relationship they now have with July. Quite clearly, the process of the overturning of power is met with much contempt from whites. Isidore Diala (2001) affirms in “Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, and Andre Brink: Guilt, Expiation, and the Reconciliation Process in Post-Apartheid South Africa” that “the transfer of power from oppressor to oppressed is usually characterized for the former by shock, sorrow, and anger at the chaos of the upheaval” (p. 50). In the same vein, Jeffrey J. Folks (1998) argues in “Artist in the Interregnum: Nadine Gordimer’s *July People*” that “the abdication in *July’s People* reverses the guest-host relationship between July and Maureen; instead of July's being encamped in the Smales’ servants’ quarters the Smales now live in July's mother’s hut” (p. 119). The unforeseen reversal of roles haunts and irks whites. In this novel, Gordimer destabilizes many of the foundations of the South African society.
The subversive nature of *July's People* is made manifest from the title. Formerly, blacks used to be viewed as something white people own. Servants were defined by their reliance on their owners who grant them a place to live in while laboring. Conspicuously, things have fairly changed now as whites become dependent on blacks in interregnal South Africa where violence and wars become a bitter reality. “The title of the novel” contends Jeffrey J. Folks “is a play on “possession” in several senses, perhaps most significantly in expressing Gordimer’s hope for a multiracial society … in which the Smales would actually be felt to be July’s people” (p. 116). This play on the concept of ownership is put in the foreground all along the novel as Gordimer juxtaposes the former and new possessions of the Smaleses in order to stress their demise. She underscores the differences between the past years of ease and the present days which are typified by disintegration and degeneration. Representing the Smaleses in a quite disfigured version is part of Gordimer’s literary tactics to further downgrade the image of white liberals. Clearly, one of the prime steps towards building up a full-fledged post-apartheid South Africa is the process of demoting whites. In this context, Jeffrey J. Folks argues that:

The novel includes many contrastive examples: house versus hut, pets versus animals as food, sports (Bam’s bird-hunting) versus hunting for survival (wart-hog hunting), eating versus feasting, wilderness as hobby (camping, birding, and botanical manuals) versus real wilderness, suburban trash (orange plastic bags) versus useful objects (rope, containers), bathed flesh versus body odors including, as Maureen learns, “the odors that could be secreted by her own body” (103). (p. 120)

Equally of weight is the process of decolonization which typifies Gordimer’s *July's People*. Although this piece of fiction is an anticipation of the image of South Africa after the demise and official termination of apartheid, projecting an image of a post-apartheid nation where democracy and equity would reign is not straightforward. This idea is first reflected in the epigraph of the novel which reads as follows, “the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms” (Gordimer, 1982, p. 1). In fact, Gordimer’s choice of Antonio Gramsci’s lines as an epigraph to her novel is evocative
of the gruesome and morbid period that the country is going through. An inability to break with a past of morose conditions, on the one hand, and the need to get a better future, on the other hand, characterize the text. Robert Green (1988) contends in “The Lying Days to July's People” that the epigraph “alludes to the novel’s location in a moral and political intermission, during which customary relationships have been overturned and new ones are still embryonic” (p. 562).

The world of the interregnum has received much attention from critics as it reflects much of the inconsistencies of the new South Africa. This is materialized in the way the family of the Smaleses react when July drives their car without getting their permission. Their reaction displays the fake nature of their liberalism as it is almost impossible for them to digest the new parameters of their relationship with July. Therefore, Ali Erritouni (2006) claims in his article “Apartheid Inequality and Post-Apartheid Utopia in Nadine Gordimer's July's People” that “as long as July was obedient and vulnerable, they felt outraged by the racism of apartheid, but as soon as his relationship with them entails material equality, they resent him” (p. 71). Bam Smale says:

I would never have thought he would do something like that. He’s always been so correct. _ Bam paused to be sure [Maureen] accepted the absolute rightness, the accuracy of the word. _ Never gave any quarter, never took any, either. A balance. In spite of all the inequalities. (Gordimer, p. 44)

For Bam, getting a minimum of autonomy is a sin and, thus, July erred in having the keys without informing his ‘masters’. Equally, Maureen believes that such an act would trouble the kind of relationship they have. This transgression of the norms set between servants and masters is daunting. Quite revealingly, both are unable to digest July's misdemeanor. In this regard, Ali Erritouni further comments on Maureen’s treatment of July:

[Maureen] commandingly sends for July to come to her hut in an apparent attempt to replay the hierarchical structure that characterized their relationship in Johannesburg: “Go and say I want to see him” (68). […] What is hidden is obviously her ingrained sense of superiority over July. Understanding well the hierarchical nature of their relationship, July refuses
to concede that they are equal—a recognition she is anxious for him to admit. (p. 73)

*July’s People* has garnered much critical attention regarding its many subversive strategies. Gordimer subverts power relations therein, destabilizing, thus, the long-established classification of white and black. Quite obviously, a reversal of the roles characters perform is quite patent in the novel. To get directly into the hub of this matter, it is useful to point to the many instances in the novel wherein characters strike at the underpinnings of the old South African norms.

Usually, blacks are placed within a white community, laboring as servants. This tenet is flouted in the novel under study. Gordimer contravenes and acts in breach of this rule by letting the smales family seek refuge within a black neighborhood, in an impoverished little hut. It is the Smaleses who have fled the war-torn village heading to a black neighborhood. Thus, an infringement of the norm is quite conspicuous in the novel.

Abdul Karim Ruman (2014) claims that “this turning of the tables of dependency in the family and the servant’s relationship like Hegelian dialectical materialism metaphorically foreshadows the re-making of history or decolonization in South Africa” (p. 1). Quite clearly, the master-slave relationship has been displaced because part of the re-making of a more democratic and egalitarian country is the inversion of roles.

Quite perceptibly, a relationship of dependence and reciprocity arises as economic powers are overturned, thus central is the rethinking of the structures of the tie between both sides (blacks and whites). The relationship between the master and the slave is no longer determined by superiority and inferiority, authority and obedience. Fair enough, “the whole scenario turns into a subverted topsy turvy situation” (Ruman, p. 1).

Survival and subsistence become the only aim the Smaleses have. Leading a life of luxury, that was evidently guaranteed for every white, is now beyond their reach. At some point in the novel, Bam loses all of the items that he brought with him, including the radio, the car key, the guns and he is no longer able to drive his
car. Thus, these equipments which used to give him a short-term sense of authority and responsibility are gone. This is reminiscent of Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* where the protagonist Milkman Dead gets dispossessed of all the luxurious garments in his Southward journey. The affluence and material comfort of the North become a hindrance in the process of discovering his pedigree and history. It is only when he loses all of the rich items that he comes to heroically reclaim his genealogy. This makes part of the test of purgation that characters undergo in the process of expiation. They have to suffer so as to cleanse their sins. July’s disobedience and gradual independence are more ubiquitous as the story unfolds for as the Smaleses increasingly lose their authority, July becomes more and more insubordinate. Equally, as the Smaleses grow more dependent on him, July stops the habit of knocking at the door to get in the hut. Gordimer says that “he used to have the habit of knocking at a door, asking, The master he say I can come in? and they had tried to train him to drop the ‘master’ for the ubiquitously respectful ‘sir’” (Gordimer, 1982, p. 40).

“To the shops” (Gordimer, p. 41), such is July’s answer to his master’s enquiry about his being absent for a whole day. A quite direct and simple reply that denies any respect for a supposed-to-be master-slave relationship. Conspicuously, July’s way of responding changes, given his new status as a savior. It is, equally, meaningful to point to the fact that July is given the image of the protector of his community. His people depend on him for survival and so do the Smaleses. Gordimer, therefore, puts him at a higher status while downgrading Bamford on the other hand. Gordimer says that “he turned out to be the chosen one in whose hands their lives were to be held; frog prince, saviour, July” (Gordimer, p. 11). Whenever she needs anything, Maureen would turn to her “own solution [and say] ask July” (Gordimer, p. 42). For her, he is a rescuer and a mentor they “owe him everything” as Maureen once says (Gordimer, p. 44).

Equally significant is the study of place as an empowering aspect that gives July the power to reclaim some kind of authority. Maureen once tells July that “it’s different here. You’re not a servant.” (p. 54). Hence, his being home empowers him
and makes of him a ‘master’ instead. When asked about his decision to get trained on how to drive cars, July answers in an authoritative tone meaning that ‘here’ is what gives him the patent to drive. Similarly, when he was asked whether people have seen him driving or not, July said that “[p]lenty people is know me. I’m from here since I’m born, isn’t it? Everyone is greet me. — (Gordimer, p. 41). Revealingly, it is place that defines his rights. This insistence on ‘place’ or ‘home’ as something that defines July’s rights is, perhaps, a reminder to the Smaleses to keep in mind that they are not supposed to behave as previously. Whites are not to rule for they are no longer at home. Conspicuously, they must be well aware of the limits of place. Now July participates equally in the making of discourse. This implies that the relationship between blacks and whites is no longer one-sided. It is rather a reciprocal and equal one. Reporting the discussion between July and Bamford is evocative in this context:

You didn’t say you were going to learn to drive. You never said you wanted to learn. —
—In town?—He was affable, deprecating his own ability, or reminding that they knew he had known the limits of his place.
—Here. Here. —
He leaned forward confidentially, using his hands. —Is no good someone else is driving the car, isn’t it? Is much better I myself I’m driving. —
—If they catch you, without a licence ...—
He laughed. —Who’s going to catch me? The white policeman is run away when the black soldiers come that time. Sometime they take him, I don’t know ... No one there can ask me, where is my licence. Even my pass, no one can ask any more. It’s finished. — (Gordimer, p. 45)

Gordimer shakes the old dichotomy of ‘here’ and ‘there’. Earlier, the ‘here’ was used to refer to the white world, whereas the ‘there’ signified the realm of the so-called ‘other’, that is black people. Likewise, the ‘us’ was used to refer to whites as opposed to ‘them’ which designated black people. These words set lines between the privileged race that stands for the center, and non-whites who epitomize the
periphery. In her novel *July's People*, Gordimer destabilizes this norm by letting blacks occupy the center, and relegating whites to the periphery. The ‘here’ and ‘there’ are conspicuously juxtaposed in the novel where July’s wife fiercely argues about the arrival of the Smaleses. She says “Why do they come here? Why to us? […] White people here! Didn’t you tell us many times how they live, there” (18). Fair enough, there is a process of expiation whites are to go through, which is materialized at different levels, the most important of which is the linguistic one. Rejection and denial are displayed because the Smaleses are considered as unwelcome guests, and this is reflected through language.

Linguistic empowerment should be given its due heed as the way Gordimer represents July and his wife is revolutionary. It acts as the crux and very hub of subversion in the novel. Language represents a prime tool in the overturning of the parameters of power. As the story unfolds July’s rebelliousness gets more visible. The closing scene displays the extent to which July is being empowered. Accordingly, Ali Erritouni (2006) comments on that:

After July makes it painfully clear to Maureen in their final confrontation, where he berates her in his own language, that even communication, let aside understanding, is impossible between them, she finds her liberal views relentlessly put to the test, and her faith in them irreparably undermined; as a result, she reaches an impasse, as Rowland Smith observes. (p. 75)

Ali Erritouni points to the shift in the power structure in relation to ownership as one’s power is determined by one’s possession. In the past, whites used to seize all of the riches of the nation, which authorized them to hold all the power. Clearly, one’s worth is measured by the things s/he possesses. But now, having lost much of their belongings and economic position, that was secured under the ancien régime, whites’ lose their sense of identity. Gordimer deliberately dispossesses them of their valuable items in an attempt to call for a more equal redistribution of wealth. For her, this is one of the pillars that the new South Africa should cherish. It is equally of weight to call attention to the fact that Gordimer shakes and tests the very liberalism that the Smaleses used to claim. Indeed, before
the collapse of apartheid, the family of the smales used to vocally declare that they are liberalists who foster racial equity. Yet, in effect their respect for July is only due to his being so obedient for as long as he becomes less subservient, the Smaleses express their rejection and disapproval. This idea finds echo in this quote:

As Rosemarie Bodenheimer puts it, “Struggling unsuccessfully to maintain the rights of possession, the Smales couple manifest the ‘morbid symptoms’ of a dying consumerist culture in which identity is created by ownership and relationships are mediated by objects.” With “[a] psyche shaped to the specifications of Western consumer capitalism” (109), they refuse to share one of the last vestiges of their life under the ancien régime, namely the bakkie, their vehicle. (qtd. In Erritouni, p. 71)

The transfer of power is fairly obvious especially when the guns were no longer at the disposal of the Smaleses. At the beginning of the novel some power items were owned by the white family, but as the story unfolds and having lost much of their authority accordingly, these items which stand for authority are seized by the blacks. Thus, power circulates as the strictures of society have changed. In the process of questioning the very liberalism of the Smaleses, Gordimer “makes it clear that sharing property is the litmus test for the white South African liberal position. It is not sufficient, for her, to sympathize with blacks, reject racism, and object to the policies of apartheid” (Erritouni, p. 74). Thus, she tries to overturn economic positions so as to test the political ideals that the Smaleses used to fallaciously display.

For Gordimer, it is of primary concern to introduce new perceptions of possession whereby blacks get compensated for the injustices of the past. Clearly, that is a utopian ideal that Gordimer strives to advocate in her alternative post-apartheid South Africa. For certain, this perception is met with much apprehension and disapproval from her characters like Maureen and most particularly her son Victor. The latter does not want to mingle with the new environment that he vehemently scorns. When they reach the African bush, Victor confirms his refusal to let black children share or even touch his belongings. His behavior translates his
deep conviction that blacks have no right to possess the items of whites. Ali Erritouni (2006) keenly comments on that:

Victor displays a good deal of the unduly aggressive sense of ownership that Gordimer finds objectionable in white South Africa. When he arrives in the village, he wants to impress other children with his racing-car track [...]. He also reacts with vehemence to the villagers using water from the tank which his father has installed [...]. His sense of the inalienable rights of private property, however, seems merely a persistent remnant of a dying system. (p. 79)

Having underscored the way Gordimer subverts power relations through the principle of ownership, it is suggestive to revisit Hegelian dialectics of power. In fact, Hegel’s interpretations of the master-slave dialectic are useful in the study of the reversal of roles in the novel. Hegel collapses the old dichotomy of colonizer/colonized, contending the very vertical relationship between both sides. This reversal of roles applies to July’s People wherein Gordimer “[collapses the Smales’ prior position of dominance and July’s prior position of subordination; i. e., master-slave relationship” (Ruman, 2014, p. 2).

Considering Hegelian dialectics of power is paramount to better dissect the shift of power relations. Put differently, subverting economic conditions is a prime step towards the naissance of an egalitarian regime where humane values reign. Ruman links Hegelian dialectics of power-reversal to Marxism. He states that:

From Marxist point of view, a culture or race is determined to be ‘powerful’ in terms of money. And the more materials it possesses, very often the more it exploits that race/culture whose possession of money/material is less than itself. Thus, the economic distinction creates the class division and the inevitable power-struggle arises. In this context, the whites are greatly shocked at the adverse situation where they have lost their powerful position as colonizers, and are trying to adjust with this inversion of power-play. (Ruman, p. 3)
Referring to the dialectic of the gaze in the process of dissecting power reversal is equally fundamental. This concept encapsulates the way whites look down at black people. Jean-Paul Sartre puts a lot of stress on the fact that the white gaze has to be reversed. Put more straightforwardly, there must be an end to the white stigmatization of the ‘colonial object’ and thus, blacks should turn back the gaze to whites. The way July’s wife looks at Maureen is suggestive of the reversal of the gaze. She expresses her disgust at the white woman’s sight for being unclean. And she is, also, unwilling to let them live in their hut. Clearly, rejection is quite discernible. Subverting the gaze marks the beginning of anti-colonialism. Margaret A. Majumdar (2007) alludes to the reversal of the gaze in her book *Postcoloniality*:

The essential characteristic of the colonial gaze is to deny any possibility of reciprocity. [...] Thus, there is always the option for the colonised Others to turn the gaze back on to the colonisers, transforming them, in their turn, into Others, objects of their gaze. In fact, this reversal of the gaze, which heralds the beginnings of the anticolonial struggle, forms the second moment in a dialectic of the gaze, which is closely modelled on that of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave, or more accurately of the lord and the bonded servant (Hegel (1807)/1977: 111–19). (p. 92)

Due heed is to be paid to the presence of violence in the novel. Sartre links it to his theory of the gaze as it is substantial to equate colonial violence. He fully advocates the idea of counter-violence. The extreme hostility and aggression that blacks were subjected to cannot be left unheeded or overlooked. Said differently, blacks should react and get retaliation. The presence of violence in *July’s People* translates this very idea. Majumdar (2007) says that “the reversal of the gaze does not, of course, suffice on its own to eliminate the colonial system. For this, the full espousal of counter-violence to meet the violence of the colonial power was deemed necessary” (p. 92-93). Thus, violence is what led the Smale’s to flee their home, in search for a secure refuge. All along the novel, Gordimer highlights the motif of violence which lurks all the time. Likewise, Isidore Diala (2001) dwells on the idea that acknowledging the culture of violence in post-apartheid South Africa is one way
to let whites minimize their sense of guilt and cleanse the sins of the past. Diala advocates the idea that there must be a collective and official apology for blacks. That is whites are to sign the “guilt list” (p. 50). The ubiquity of violence in the novel is what leads whites to live in a vicious circularity, frightened and terrified all the time. Bombing and rioting become horrendous. The presence of violence in post-colonial literature is rife and predominant. Indeed, André Brink’s Other Lives is also no exception as it is saturated with violent behaviors. Several fights occur in this Brinkean novel which haunts and daunts the reader. The presence of violence translates the horrific conditions in post apartheid South Africa.

Subversion is even more patent in characters’ account of each other. In fact, July’s wife is disappointed at the view of Maureen. She thinks that the white woman does not meet the standards of the white privileged class as she looks pretty dirty. This negative description of Maureen might astound the reader because whites have always been represented in a positive way. Gordimer, thus, destabilizes this norm in an attempt to play down the image of whites.

As is often said, July’s People breaches the representation of white women. They are consigned to domesticity and housewifery, while white men are the breadwinners. This is quite perceptible in the novel where Maureen’s roles are utterly trivial. Representing Maureen in a quite demoted image is also part of Gordimer’s strategies to further downgrade the white race. The way Maureen is represented recalls the image of ‘the weaker vessels’ or ‘the beautiful at home’ as her activities are solely restricted to housewifery. On the other hand, the writer upgrades the image of July’s wife as the roles she performs are far from being only domestic.

Maureen’s act of running after the helicopter in the final scene reveals more of her character. Perhaps that emblematizes her craze to break free from the new circumstances that no longer favor her. She is not pleased with the present that wholly stifles her. What might be assured here is that she can no longer bear the burden of being trapped in a society that treats her imperfectly. Seeing her former black servant yelling at her might have driven her mad to the point that she fervently
wants to escape. The coming of the helicopter is symbolic of the thorough change that it will ensue. Here, Gordimer promises going beyond the world of the interregnum. Accordingly, Ali Erritouni (2006) says that “the last scene prefigures a future South Africa whose outlines are undefined, and that it contains a “Utopian vision”—a future projection intimating a realm of possibilities beyond the interregnum” (p. 76). Indeed, various are the readings that are conferred to this incident. Ali Erritouni enumerates the miscellaneous interpretations detractors have brought forth:

[Maureen] is running from old structures and relationships, which have led her to this cul-de-sac” (203). Since the present has proven impossible to reclaim from apartheid, the only egress that is left for Maureen is the possibility of change that the helicopter promises. Unlike Clingman, Nancy Topping Bazin holds that “Maureen’s impulsive attempt to escape is more likely to be self-destructive than liberating” (124). Bazin contends that “the people most likely to exit from the helicopter are black revolutionaries who, under the duress of a revolution, would be more likely to rape and/or kill her than rescue and protect her” (124) (p. 75)

It is equally of weight to point to the fact that the villagers exhilarated at the view of the helicopter. For them, it might usher a new beginning and bring some good tidings of a far better future. Perhaps, they will be rewarded for the wretchedness they have suffered for long. Mixed feelings of exhilaration and despair are put on view at the sight of the airplane. By doing this, Gordimer juxtaposes and contrasts two reactions which foreshadow two possibilities for the future, or maybe more. Erritouni elaborates on that in his aforementioned article:

Their response to the helicopter is characterized by a cacophony of “yells, exclamations, discussions and laughter” (159). Unlike the villagers, who are rather jubilant at the sight of the helicopter, Maureen is frightened by it. […] Is it possible to read in the villagers’ laughter and exhilaration a recognition of their approaching salvation, the end of an era and the beginning of a new one?
Are Maureen’s fears actuated by her uncertainty about how she would fare in a post-apartheid South Africa? Are the celebration of the one and the apprehension of the other echoes of the same theme Gordimer evokes in “Living in the Interregnum” when she says, “[T]he black knows he will be at home, at last, in the future. The white who has declared himself or herself for that future [...] does not know whether he will find his home at last” (270)? (Erritouni, p. 77)

It is equally suggestive to say that Maureen’s run is a leap into the unknown because her fate remains vague and so is the villagers’. *July’s People* resists closure which leads critics to give a whole network of possibilities. Readings of this ending are divergent which is typical to the postmodern feature of the absence of closure and clarity. Ali Erritouni further comments on that saying that:

radical novelists understand the subversive nature of “ant closure.” They shy away from smoothing out the rough edges of their novels because they generally seek to proclaim undefined utopian possibilities. [...] This politics of anticlosure accords with the aims of Gordimer in *July’s People*. (p. 77)

The new world that Gordimer tries to fashion is not a mere utopia and the nation she depicts is not fully idyllic. It is just an attempt to look for an alternative South Africa where blacks and whites are on an equal footing. Ali Erritouni says that:

The postapartheid era Gordimer foresees does not offer a full-fledged ideal commonwealth, for instance, in the tradition of Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Hers is a postmodern utopia that avoids prescription and contents itself with adumbrating fresh possibilities. (p. 74)

In a nutshell, the aim of Nadine Gordimer is to call for a more equal coexistence between blacks and whites. Presumably, the latter should go through a process of purgation whereby Gordimer subverts the parameters of power. The peaceful co-presence this female writer yearns for is most materialized in Gina who wholeheartedly gets into the new social milieu. The way she treats her black friends
bespeaks her conviction that they are, no doubt, alike. In many instances in the novel, the reader comes to notice Gina’s willingness to learn and follow the traditions of non-whites like the African lullabies. Erritouni says that “Gina thus hybridizes her identity by mixing her own cultural background with that of the Africans” (p. 79). And this is the gist of what Gordimer longs for; a hybrid formation of the South African identity. Accordingly, by enabling blacks to gain some weight in the midst of a more egalitarian South Africa, Gordimer helps coloureds “fashion the contours of a new identity” as Ali Erritouni claims in his article “Apartheid Inequality and Post apartheid Utopia in Nadine Gordimer’s July’s People” (p. 68).

The road to democracy has never been simple or trouble-free. It is utterly tough. Quite perceivably, the transition from colonization to decolonization is a thorny process because the policies of the Apartheid regime still haunt and daunt the new South Africa. However, Gordimer has succeeded in subverting power relations. Ultimately, detractors have emphasized the motif of expiation in the novel. Leading an entirely different lifestyle is a process through which the Smales pay the bill of inequity. Henceforth, by dint of the usage of some subversive strategies, blacks gain some value because they are now the holders of the torch of power.

South African history is marked by the presence of conflicts and inconsistencies for having officially cradled Apartheid laws from 1948 till 1994. After the demise of Apartheid, a counter movement that targeted whites emerged and aimed at shaking the very pillars of the old regime destabilizing, thus, the dynamics of power relations. Such was the concern of many South African writers who dedicated their literature to answer back and unveil the woes of the past, eventually.

Literature, in the postcolonial context, is a ‘site’ of resistance and discourse is an embodiment of power. Postcolonial writers got equipped with literature as a means to react, retort and equate the harm of the past. Norman Fairclough (1995) claims in Critical discourse analysis the critical study of language that “according to Foucault [...] discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the
power which is to be seized” (1984: 110). (p. 248). Clearly, literature is a potent tool to overturn the parameters of power. It can upgrade as well as downgrade a race or a given social group. Literature is what fashions the contours of relationships. It is what defines the dominant and the dominated. Fairclough (1995) also contends that “establishing sociolinguistic hegemony means establishing relations of domination and subordination among alternative language practices” (p. 248). Quite perceptibly, literature is a kind of social force that gives shape to the social matrix.

Some critics have argued that Anglophone writers unintentionally instilled racial policies in their literature, drawing lines between blacks and whites. In fact, several critical attempts were made to display linguistic colonialism in the works of South African writers. The image of blacks remains trapped in subjugation and utter inferiority. Put differently, language can liberate as well as downgrade the status of the colonized. In spite of the fact that post-colonial writers have subverted, to a certain extent, the structure of power, blacks are still looked down at because the only thing that defines them is their skin color. The mere appellations (like blacks, negroes) used to refer to the indigenous people of South Africa are themselves discriminatory. Nevertheless, Gordimer is deemed as a fierce vocal opponent of apartheid practices. Her desire to infringe the strictures of power in the alternative South Africa she imagines is quite conspicuous in the novel under consideration, and this is the essence of the paper in hand.
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International Students’ Challenge of Cultural Straddling: Lingua Franca or Language of the Linguistic Environment for Getting their Bearings?

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Abstract
This study attempts to delve into the experiences and belief systems of international students enrolled in the Faculty of Sciences in Sfax through having recourse to semi-structured interviews. Participants are African students who travelled to Tunisia to carry on their tertiary education. They belong to eight different African countries, such as Gabon, Guinea, and Mauritania, to name a few. The overall objective is unveiling the ongoing in-class and off-class challenges they have been confronting since their arrival; specifically, the demanding task of straddling cultural boundaries in the mainstream of Tunisian culture. Integral to understanding their attitudes towards the target culture is identifying their ideological profiles (i.e., assimilative, opponent, or resistant). This paper also tries to investigate whether Lingua Franca (LF) per se enables them to find their feet, build their identity, and feel a sense of belonging in their new socio-cultural milieu. Among the crucial findings is that being incapable of speaking the language of their speech community makes them feel discarded and peripheral. For this reason, they perceive learning the language of the linguistic environment as indispensable inasmuch as it can help them not only comprehend their Tunisian-born peers and teachers, but also slot into the Tunisian community in general.

Keywords: International students – straddling – cultural boundaries – ideological profiles – identity – belonging – Lingua Franca – language of the linguistic environment.
Introduction

Among the social factors that play a role in the academic well-being of students are culture, ethnicity, race, and identity. Nonetheless, how and why they are significant keep eluding scientific research (Carter, 2006). Little or no attention has been paid to investigating international students’ socio-cultural and socio-affective challenges came across in academic and social circles in the Tunisian context. Based on the existing literature, no scholarly pieces of research that thoroughly approach their struggle of cultural straddling for getting their bearings in the mainstream of Tunisian culture were found. This study, therefore, tackles this research niche and tries to have a good grasp of the repository of beliefs, feelings, and idiosyncratic ideologies characteristic of international students so as to gain better insights into their personal and communal experiences. What is meant by ideology here is the “societal system of ideas and values which underlies cultural behaviors” (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015: 407).

As a matter of fact, the researcher’s behind this study personal experience as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) adjunct teacher at the Faculty of Sciences, which is a multiethnic academic environment, in the region of Sfax (the second major metropolis in Tunisia after the capital Tunis) has driven her to hold some informal discussions with her own African immigrant students. This was meant to dig beneath their excessive resort to silence in class, feelings of discomfort and in some cases, academic underachievement. One intuitively knows that teachers are not supposed to psychoanalyze their students, but teaching is a relational profession and developing a sense of empathy is among the vital professional competencies for humanizing the teaching-learning process.

This study is driven by the spirit of differentiated pedagogy and as Grenier and Moldoveanu (2011) put it, it is believed to enhance learning by smoothing the integration of recently arrived refugees and immigrant students. In multiethnic school settings, differences among students in terms of culture are manifest which requires from teachers valuing the practice of differentiated pedagogy by adjusting their practices to their learners’ personal backgrounds and characteristics, such as differences in language, learning abilities, styles, interests, and values. Hence, this impelled the researcher to undertake an investigation on the challenge of straddling cultural boundaries that African immigrant students are
stumbling upon in the hope of gaining some practicalities and insights that may help Tunisian community members, namely teachers and university students, deepen their appreciation of the merit of student diversity and widen their cultural intelligence (CQ hereafter) \((i.e., \text{the ability to handle intelligently culturally diverse situations (Christopher & Soon, 2003)})\) and sensitivity of how issues like language, culture, ethnicity, and identity represent constitutive strands crucial to the making of an interwoven societal tapestry.

This paper seeks to attain the following objectives:

- Expound on the ongoing in-class and out-of class challenges international students have been meeting since their arrival, notably the academic, the socio-emotional, as well as the socio-cultural.
- Identify their ideological profiles \((i.e., \text{assimilative, resistant, opponent})\) vis-à-vis the target culture.
- Investigate whether Lingua Franca (LF hereafter) is adequate enough to help international students straddle cultural frontiers, weave dialogic relationships with their Tunisian-born peers, build their identity, and find their feet in the mainstream of Tunisian culture.
- Raise CQ and cultural-variance sensitivity to assist Tunisian teachers and students sustain effective cross-cultural communication with people from other cultures.

In an attempt at contextualizing this study, figure 1 exposes an illustrative picture of how the researcher behind this study conceptualizes international students’ challenge of straddling cultural boundaries:

*Figure 1. The challenge of cultural straddling (as cited in Radka (2017))*
This depiction is adopted to figuratively translate how African immigrant students’ crossover from one cultural environment to another engenders a chiasmic cultural gap enclosing discrepancies in racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds quite difficult to negotiate. Overall, it is hard on some to surmount this challenging task of straddling cultural boundaries, especially the most evident intrinsic aspect of culture, milieu language.

Theoretical overview

This section lays bare a set of cardinal key concepts that this study revolves around and which are considered necessary to get the gist of the subject matter.

International students

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (2006), an international student refers to someone who has left his or her home country and moved to another with the sole objective of studying. What is generally known is that some students from different nationalities choose to be on the move to seek better opportunities by pursuing their studies elsewhere and amongst the ways leading them toward their target destinations are governmental mobility and exchange programs.

Tunisia, as a case in point, is classified on the list of the seven African countries feeding continental mobility as stated by Campus France Notes (2016: 2) “[o]ut of the 51 African countries, 7 countries group more than half of mobile learners world-wide: Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Tunisia and Kenya”. It has been among the pioneering African countries to attract foreign students to its universities prior to 2011 as
Mr. Abdellatif Khamassi, the President of the Private University for Scientific and Technological Studies, asserted (Jamel, 2017). Based on 2013 approximations, the number of African students dwelling in Tunisia reached 16,889 (Campus France Notes, 2016: 2). But according to more recent estimates presented in the first assembly of the Tunisian African Empowerment Forum held at the Palais des Congrès in Tunis, Tunisia from the 22nd to the 23rd of August, 2017, foreign students constitute 6,000 out of approximately 260,000 students in 13 public universities and 4,000 out of 32,000 students in 72 private institutions of higher education. African students from 40 countries reach about 74% of the total student population, including 29% Sub-Saharan students (Sawahel, 2017). Arab foreign students coming mainly from Libya, Yemen, Jordan, and Palestine among others make up about 30% (Jamel, 2017). More to the point, Tunisia receives almost 300,000 foreign students per year, 8,000 of them are Africans. Adding to that, the Tunisian government scheme is veering toward increasing the volumes of African students as declared by Mr. Bassem Loukil, the President of the Tunisia-Africa Business (TABAC), during the aforementioned meeting of the Tunisian African Empowerment Forum (“Tunisia to Receive 20,000 African Students by 2020”, 2017). It is also on the 23rd of February 2018 that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Khemaies Jhinaoui, confirmed that Tunisia plans to receive 20,000 African students to register for many specialties in the horizon of 2020. Furthermore, he announced that the total number of African students pursuing their studies in public and private institutions in Tunisia exceeds 7,000 students, not counting the number of those enrolled in professional training centers. He additionally proclaimed that Tunisia accorded 544 university enrolments to 35 African countries during the Academic Year 2017-2018, including 306 enrolments to those granted a scholarship (Chaabane, 2018).

Cultural straddling and the spectra of race, ethnicity, identity and belonging
Carter (2006: 308) defined cultural straddling as students’ capacity to:

- Successfully traverse boundaries between their ethnic peer groups and cultural environments (society, university etc.).
- Understand the functions of both dominant and non-dominant cultures.
- Value and embrace skills to participate and integrate in academic and social circles.
She regards culture, race, ethnicity, and identity as intertwined social variables influencing the academic welfare of students. The notion of culture is described by Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015: 402) in exact terms as "knowledge about how a society works, its values and practices" and "such knowledge is socially acquired: the necessary behaviors are learned and do not come from any genetic endowment. Culture, therefore, is the ‘know-how’ that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living" (p. 10). For Holland and Quinn (1987: vii), culture is identified as a set of “shared presuppositions about the world familiar to the given community”.

There are two basic topical areas that bubble to the surface when referring to culture, which are race and ethnicity and the following quote provides a clear-cut distinction between them:

Race is associated with biology, whereas ethnicity is associated with culture [...] Ethnicity is the term for the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs. To be a member of an ethnic group is to conform to some or all of those practices” (“What is the Difference between Race and Ethnicity”, 2012, n. pag.).

Regarding the notion of identity, Deaux (2001: 1) distinguished between personal and social identities assuming that personal identity refers to idiosyncrasy, while social identity has to do with commonalities with other individuals in terms of their group membership. She further clarified that “our self-definition is shared with other people who also claim that categorical membership, for example, as a woman, as a Muslim, as a marathon runner, or as a Democrat”. Norris (2009) also conceptualized identity as continuously interactively constructed and reconstructed on a micro level in relation to others. Rusinko (2003: 12), in her review to cultural studies, tapped on the meaning of identity quite differently stating that:

[O]ne's identity can be established only in relation to another identity; one social group identifies itself in distinction to another. The politics of identity manifests itself in culture through a device that has become known as ‘othering’, the ‘other’ is represented as inferior to the self.

Zaki and Ahmad (2017) underscored the importance of the notion of national identity and the necessity of fostering its vital components, especially unity and integration, among
students. They discussed how student diversity represents a challenge to form an integrated society able to comprehend each individual’s values and norms. For this reason, they tried to assess the level of integration among students at a secondary school in Limbang, Sarawak through studying dimensions of unity, namely acculturation and assimilation, and the like. In their scholarly work on acculturation, Redfield et al. (1936: 149) expanded on the notion of acculturation stating that it “comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into a continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both group.” This entails that proceeding with integrating into a foreign culture involves cultural adjustment. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) in their acculturation curve positioned the phase of acculturation just after the phase of culture shock, which means “the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar culture” (Hofstede et al., 2002: 22). According to them, subsequent to a period of shock, the expatriate enters into a process of acculturation and starts learning how to cope with the new context. Assimilation, however, is “to assume the cultural traditions of a given people or group; the cultural absorption of a minority group into the main cultural body.” (Labor Occupational Health Program, n. d., n. pag.).

Not only students should be aware of the value of integration, but also schools and teachers for the reason of spreading harmony and shunning problems of stereotype and prejudice and as Zaki and Ahmad (2017: 3288) argued:

Teachers as agents in delivering knowledge and implementing government policies need to have a clear understanding of unity, integration and national identity to understand its importance. The hidden meaning behind the concept of unity and integration itself needs to be taken seriously by teachers and the school in planning and implementing programs related to unity and integration at school and outside the school in general.

More to the point, these authors envisaged integration and unity as a platform for youths to build national identity through enhancing social interaction in multiethnic communities. They also perceived forming national identity as an asset that contributes to generating
civically-engaged young community builders who are dedicated to facing up to challenges confronting the country.

In Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which is a framework in psychology represented as a pyramid classifying human needs, the concept of belongingness is of paramount importance, in that one of the seven basic needs of human beings is the social need to appertain to a group. Another essential need includes esteem or positive self-image (Maslow, 1943). Thus, the compelling needs to be acknowledged as an individual and feel good about oneself within a social group are arguably indispensable for one’s psychological equilibrium. Goodenow (1993) proved the extent to which students’ sense of belongingness in scholastic environments hinges on their feelings of likeability, respect, and valorization by fellow students and teachers.

**On the meaning of language, dialect, and speech community**

Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015: 408) labeled the linguistic system used by two or more individuals to communicate with each other a ‘code’. They depicted language as:

> A system of signs used for communication; in sociolinguistics, one focus is on how to define the boundaries of such a system. This term is usually taken to mean the superordinate category of a variety which includes dialects, one of which is the standard.

Yu (2007), however, typified language as a cultural form from a cultural linguistic perspective and Zugel (2012) likewise characterized it as part and parcel of culture and identity. According to Souto-Manning (2006), the prevailing language and culture pertaining to the majority group are influential. She explained how immigrant students are swerving toward adaption. For her, seeking to adapt leads sometimes to abandoning one’s heritage language and culture. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015: 409) named ceasing to use a minority language and adopting a majority language for in-group utilization as “language shift”. What is meant by an in-group in this context is the “social category or group with which you identify strongly”, while an out-group is the one “with which you do not identify” (Giles & Giles, 2011: 142). But when a person sustains the use of a minority language, this is called by Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015: 409) “language maintenance”.

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As far as the meaning of vehicular language is concerned, it refers to the language adopted as a medium for “communication between members of different linguistic groups. An example could be a situation where an Italian speaker and a German speaker communicate in English. The definition of vehicular language can be said to be synonymous with LINGUA FRANCA” (Bolaffi et al., 2003: 326). Factors explaining the predominance of particular vehicular languages over others are mainly historical, linguistic, cultural, and economic. English and French are identified as the most widespread vehicular languages worldwide. Regarding the issue of exodus to Europe, a lingua franca is at first regularly used to overcome the language barriers hindering communication among immigrants and the structures of the host countries (ibid).

Contextually speaking, the commonly used LF in Tunisia is the French Language as it has been generally known to be the second language of the country for decades for historical reasons, mainly the French conquest of Tunisia. But the official language of the Republic of Tunisia is Modern Standard Arabic (MS hereafter), while the language of the linguistic environment is Tunisian Arabic (TA hereafter). TA is known to be the Maghrebi Arabic dialect, that is to say the colloquial variety, or the everyday vernacular spoken by its citizens. It is tagged as “Tounsi” /tu:nsi/, or “Derja” /derja/ by Tunisian people. Each region all over Tunisia has its own distinguishable specificities and variations in terms of accent, certain letters pronounced, and specific words used (Sayahi, 2014; Turki et al., 2015; Khachroum, 2017).

“[A]ll people who use a given language (or dialect)” are described by Lyons (1970: 326) as “speech community”. For Nordquist (2017), this expression derives from the fields of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology representing a group of people who share a variety of a language as well as specific rules for speaking and interpreting speech. Besides, Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015: 64) tried to plainly demarcate the essence of speech communities through the following explanation: “Speakers do use linguistic characteristics to achieve group identity with, and group differentiation from, other speakers, but they use other characteristics as well: social, cultural, political, and ethnic, to name a few.” In their opinion, such characteristics should be taken into account in order to gain a useful understanding of ‘speech community’.
In the same vein, Giles and Giles (2011: 142) contended that:

An important characteristic of the in-outgroup dichotomy is that groups mark their identities communicatively by the distinctive language and speech styles they create and use, the dress codes they adopt, and the festivals and pageants that highlight their unique traditions and rituals and so forth. In this way, language and communicative features are important devices for creating an *us* and *them*.

Said differently, it cannot be denied that identifying with or even dissociating from a given speech community bears on the linguistic variable for “language can be a critical determinant of whether someone views another as an authentic in group member or an outgroup imposter” (Giles & Giles, 2011: 144), yet there are other criteria worth considering for establishing one’s social identity in a social group.

**Methodology**

This section ranges over sample description, research design, instrumentation, and procedure implemented in this piece of research.

**Participants of the study**

An interethnic, mixed-gender sample of randomly selected 20 international students enrolled in the Faculty of Sciences in Sfax during the Academic Year 2016-2017 constitutes the nexus of this study. The demographic information shows that their age ranges from 21 to 24 generating a mean age that equals 22.5. The number of years they spent in Sfax extends from one to three years. The following table outlines participants’ mother countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ Countries of Origin</th>
<th>Burundi</th>
<th>Chad</th>
<th>Gabon</th>
<th>Guinea</th>
<th>Mali</th>
<th>Mauritania</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
<th>Togo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

As table 1 demonstrates, they belong to eight Sub-Saharan African communities that vary in terms of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic identity. Those students decided to relocate to a North African country, which is Tunisia, for study purposes.
Research design and instrumentation

This study is designed to be twofold: it is exploratory and explanatory. In other words, it tries to delve into three wh-variables, the what, how, and why aspects of the research problem, which revolves around the challenge of cultural straddling that African students are facing involving the query whether LF or language of the linguistic environment is required for getting their bearings in their new social environment.

In fact, this paper relies on a mixed-method approach considering that the semi-structured interview contributes to yielding both qualitative and quantitative data. The interview was designed in French as a vehicular language to assure participants’ better understanding (see Appx. A for the French version and B for the translated English version). It is composed of a total of 10 steering questions meant to solicit students’ views and opinions. For further clarification, the interviews were administered during the Academic Year 2016-2017, exactly in March and April 2017, and the crude data written on the copies of the semi-structured interviews were directly drawn from the participants themselves.

As far as data analysis methods are concerned, thematic and content analyses were used for classifying the findings under major themes encompassing a description, interpretation, and discussion of relevant results. Besides, descriptive statistics consisting of “methods for organizing and summarizing information” (Weiss, 2012: 4) were applied, namely the derivation of numerical information from the database and their systematic arrangement in graphical representations about the sample. This descriptive measure assists in drawing inferences and sound conclusions about the whole population.

Procedure

The researcher tried to get in touch with a cohort of African international students addressing them individually in their faculty then asked for their consent to partake in the study guaranteeing ethicality and confidentiality. No more than 20 participants readily accepted to participate the moment they heard about the research topic. Some apologized, whereas others, unfortunately, were impossible to reach. The participants ascertained that the theme of the study is apt as it spotlights one of the overriding concerns of their quotidian lives.

The language used as a medium for interaction between the researcher and the participants was the French language in order to assure clarity. Hard copies of the semi-structured
interviews were handed to every single participant so as to provide answers to a total of ten questions. The researcher made sure not to interfere with their thoughts giving them the required leeway and time for self-reporting. Clarifications and explanations for their inquiries were exceptionally provided when needed.

**Major findings and discussion**

The data analysis and interpretation section falls into five umbrella themes derived from the questions of the semi-structured interview. Each theme covers and discusses the main findings.

**International students’ ideological profiles**

International students’ ideology includes their convictions, attitudes, and feelings about the new culture. Based on the findings available, they proved to differ in their ethnic ideologies and their cultural predilections. Figure 2 provides a general idea about their belief systems regarding the Tunisian culture:

**Figure 2.** Belief systems as regards the target culture
Most of the African students (85%) revealed that they peer at their interactions with people outside their group through the lens of valuing the importance of integration in socio-academic environments and understanding the workings of both dominant and non-dominant cultures (i.e., cultural straddlers). Some (5%) espoused a rigid ethnic identity not predisposed towards subscription to the codes of the mainstream culture (i.e., noncompliant believers), while others (10%) decided on resisting and adapting remains for them a cultural exigency (i.e., cultural mainstreamers).

The majority of immigrant students acknowledged their adherence to an assimilationist ideology. They reported that they are fully aware of the necessity of adaptation and integration which are according to Zaki and Ahmad (2017), by definition, building blocks of national identity.

Apropos their response to the question about whether their affiliation to a particular ideological profile is optional or by virtue of circumstances (see Appx. A/B, Q. 3), views oscillated from being a choice to being concurrently a choice and an obligation. It is 17 participants who mentioned that it is their own personal preference, while only three pointed out that it is a combination of both. Here is a selection of some of the verbatim responses encapsulating their rationale:

1. “C’est un choix le moment j’ai trouvé des similitudes culturelles”.
   “It is a choice the moment I found cultural similitude”.

2. “C’est un choix parce que j’aime bien embrassé d’autre culture toute culture est un savoir de plus”.
   “It is a choice because I would like to embrace other cultures. Every culture is an added knowledge”.

3. “C’est un choix, parce je pense qu’apprendre d’autres cultures est toujours éducatif et plaisant. Ça te donne une ouverture d’esprit”.
   “It is a choice since knowing other cultures is always educating and pleasant. It endows you with open-mindedness”.

4. “C’est une obligation et choix pour moi car pour qu’on accepte et assimile la culture il faut d’abord accepté et assimilé pour les autres”.
   “For me, it is an obligation and a choice at the same time as accepting and assimilating culture necessitates first of all accepting and assimilating others”.

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5. “Evidament c’est un choix. Ma raison j’aime beaucoup apprendre des autres pour mieux me cultiver”.
“It is evidently a choice for I love very much learning from others to better cultivate”.

6. “C’est un choix car le fait d’assimiler une culture d’autrui c’est un acquis, aussi ça va nous faciliter la cohabitation avec la population tunisienne”.
“It is a choice as assimilating a culture of others is acquired. It will also facilitate one’s cohabitation with the Tunisian population”.

7. “C’est choix car si on accepte on bénéficie des connaissances qu’on ignore”.
“It is a choice as if we accept, we benefit from knowledge of the unknown”.

8. “J’observe, j’écoute, et j’assimile ce qui me semble plutôt bien c’est un choix”.
“It is a choice, I observe, I listen, and I assimilate what seems to me rather good”.

9. “C’est un choix pour moi parce que pour moi, je suis étudiant je dois tout savoir pour m’adapter à tout. Et en plus l’arabe pour moi c’est vraiment une bonne langue que je dois savoir et j’ai aussi intérêt à découvrir les nouvelles cultures”.
“For me, it is a choice since I am a student, I have to know everything so as to adapt at everything. And adding to that, the Arabic language is really a good language that I have to learn. Also, I have interest in discovering new cultures”.

10. Ce n’est pas une obligation en tant que telle, mais on se sent obligé d’accepter les autres tels qu’ils sont”.
“It is not an obligation per se, but we feel obliged to accept the others the way they are”.

11. “C’est un choix du fait que la deracination de la jeunesse s’impose. De nos jours les jeunes immitent la culture occident et dévalorise leur propre culture”.
“It is a choice in view of the fact that the uprootedness of youth imposes itself. Nowadays, youths imitate the occidental culture and devalorize their own”.

(N. B. The excerpts are quoted faithfully as they stand in the original [sic] providing a tentative translation to each quotation.)

The general current of opinions showed consciousness of the merit of assimilation. This is made clear through the recurrence of some words of considerable importance (e. g. accepting, assimilating, benefiting, embracing etc.). In certain statements, some students established a causal relationship between one condition and the other (see e. gs4, 6, 7, 9). In example 9, for instance, the respondent attributed the need for knowing and adapting to
the fact of being a student, given that student life necessitates versatility and networking. It can be understood that African students identified as assimilative entered into a process of acculturation intentionally and changed their cultural behaviors in accordance with the socio-cultural variables. This goes hand in hand with Redfield et al.’s (1936) standpoint that acculturation occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into a constant direct contact with consequent alteration in their original cultural patterns. It is noteworthy, however, that the expatriate starts learning how to cope with the new cultural context after a period of cultural shock (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Figure 3 visualizes the findings recapitulating African immigrant students’ self-evaluation (succeeded, failed, or still trying) of their maintenance of stance (assimilative, resistant, or opponent) toward the target culture.

*Figure 3. Self-assessing*

On the question of self-assessing (see Appx. A/B, Q. 4), no student perceived him-/herself as failing in adhering to a particular ideological profile which means that they are confident about their judgments. On the contrary, 40% conceived themselves as being successful all along their trajectory, while 60% positioned themselves on the threshold of trying. In fact, those who succeeded in maintaining an assimilative outlook can be described in Carter’s
(2016) terms as ‘cultural straddlers’ on the grounds that they were capable of traversing boundaries between their ethnic peer groups and cultural milieu, grasping the functions of prevailing and non-prevailing cultures, and embracing skills to integrate in socio-academic circles. Since they managed to grasp the workings of the new culture, they must have acquired the ‘know-how’ skills enabling them to get through the task of daily living (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Concerning those who are still trying to sustain a cultural stance, this is quite justifiable for they are in the middle of an ethnically diverse environment. Among the possible reasons might be the demanding task of acquiring the ‘know-how’ skills to overcome obstacles along with the internal fear from being subjected to issues of intolerance, stereotype, and prejudice on the basis of their cultural backgrounds and behaviors. This can be explained in the light of Zaki and Ahmad’s work (2017) corroborating that student diversity is a challenge to build an integrated society able to understand each person’s values and norms.

Cross-cultural understanding and appreciation in the groves of academe

Figure 4 illustrates African students’ views about the nature of their relationships with their scholastic entourage and whether their everyday dealings with their Tunisian-born peers and university teachers in particular are proceeding well or not (see Appx. A/B, Q. 2).

**Figure 4.** The extent to which international students’ teachers and peers are considerate and appreciative
The largest number of participants (70%) affirmed that cultural understanding and appreciation on the part of their Tunisian teachers and peers oscillate between presence and absence, whereas a considerable number (30%) asserted that their academic circles are tuning in to their cultural differences through placing a high value on the merit of cultural variability and showing a great deal of sensitivity. Taking Zaki and Ahmad's viewpoint into consideration (2017), teachers are agents of knowledge, and so they need to show understanding of student diversity and seriously consider the important concepts of unity and integration. Grenier and Moldoveanu (2011) drew attention to the necessity of smoothing the integration of recently arrived refugees and immigrant students in multiethnic school settings along with the valuing of the practice of differentiated pedagogy on the part of teachers by tailoring their practices to learners’ backgrounds and needs. Goodenow (1993) as well substantiated the claim that students’ feelings of likeability, respect, and valorization by teachers and students and their sense of belonging in scholastic environments are strongly intertwined.

The fluctuation of feelings of appreciation between presence and absence is quite explicable as this can be related to the notions of in-group and out-group touched upon by Giles and Giles (2011). For them, there are critical determinants to categorize someone as an in-/out-group member such as the linguistic factor and the like. Hence, it can be understood that international students can sometimes identify with their social group, yet there are times they cannot. This is because feelings of appreciation and consideration are notably situational, context-dependent, and bear heavily on human nature, personal attributes, perceptions, the interlocutors’ cultural sensitivities, right or misinterpretation of intentions and the message delivered, or other cultural subtleties that probably both parties are unacquainted with or merely fail to notice.

The language international students most often use

Figure 5 provides statistical evidence on the language international students habitually use on daily basis when interacting with people in their academic or social environments (see Appx. A/B, Q. 5).

Figure 5. Language used as a medium for interaction
The majority of participants (13 out of 20) reported that they use French as a LF, while no one mentioned that they solely converse in English or Arabic. Bolaffi et al. (2003) stated that LF represents the medium language used to communicate between two members of distinct linguistic backgrounds. In this context, French is considered to be the borrowed tongue utilized to establish communication among international students and their Tunisian-born peers as they do not share a common language. In both communities’ case, it is a second or foreign language they claim managing to speak, and thereby they opt for it in their everyday dealings.

No more than seven participants claimed that they have recourse to code switching for communicative purposes. Some would rather intermingle English with French when talking to their friends or teachers, whereas others who managed to pick up a bit of MSA or TA tend to incorporate what they have learnt overtime in their French flow of talk for in-group utilization in order to socialize, amalgamate, and identify with the Tunisian native speakers. Some even recounted that in their attempt to code switch they inadvertently coin some words that make their friends could not help laughing at such a spur-of-the-moment act of coinage. This can be interpreted with reference to Giles and Giles’ viewpoint (2011) that what determines social groups’ identities are the distinguishing language and speech styles they use and create. But for Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), there are other characteristics in conjunction with the linguistic aspect to attain group identity with or
differentiation from other speakers. Such characteristics are unfortunately out of the scope of this study.

**Lingua Franca or language of the linguistic environment for getting their bearings?**

Figure 6 presents numerical data on African students’ standpoints concerning the language they perceive as a requisite for acclimatization within the Tunisian community (see Appx. A/B, Q. 7).

*Figure 6.* International students’ perceptions on the necessity of milieu language to find their feet

![Pie chart showing 95% in blue and 5% in purple]

On the one hand, 95% of the students (19 students) believed in the necessity of speaking the language of the target culture to find their feet and feel a real sense of belongingness. For them, the dominant language/dialect of the linguistic environment (*i.e.*, TA) is the key to traverse the frontiers of culture and society. On the other hand, 5% of the students (1 student) perceived LF as a requirement. According to the greatest part of views, LFs or bridge languages like French, or code switching (French + words of English/MSA/TA) help international students simply get by and pull through their day-to-day encounters.

Most participants avowed that they are bidding to learn the language of their social environment so as to enter the realm of the collective socio-cultural and socio-emotional enterprise. They talked about the strategies and tactics that they use to learn TA and enhance integration and belonging (see Appx. A/B, Q. 6). Among the revealed ways are the following: building vocabulary through taking notes either using the pen-and-pencil...
technique or their mobile phones, asking their peers to give them a hand in finding equivalents to the target words in French, retaining the most frequent words in the target language, and using sign language especially with people who do not understand French. Put differently, they recurrently deploy the rote learning and translation methods for self-learning and gestures for message transmission. This is the handy battery of techniques at their disposal to get by.

In the space reserved for further information, some students suggested that they will be very pleased, if the Tunisian government plans Arabic language training sessions within higher institutions. In their own words, even one hour and a half or two hours a week would suffice foreign students who are interested in learning the language of their linguistic environment. As a matter of fact, there are some useful self-guided English-Arabic courses that need the assistance of a qualified TA teacher like the beginner’s guide designed by Taoufik (1990) for the Arabic language training of Peace Corps volunteers serving in Tunisia. Such a course, as suggested by the researcher of this study, can be modeled on and updated to provide a functional French-Arabic or English-Arabic textbook for international students carrying their tertiary education in Tunisia.

African students’ most frequent answer to the question about their reaction when their teachers use TA during the lesson or side discussions inside the physical environment (e.g., classroom) (see Appx. A/B, Q. 9) is that they tend to draw their attention by raising their hands asking them for providing a translation. Others related that they prefer to merely retreat to silence because they feel offended or simply do not want to bother the instruction provider. It is generally known that French is the medium of instruction and the language of education in Tunisian universities, though sometimes some teachers may opt for disseminating knowledge via TA or MSA for no reasons but to render the information transmitted simplified when need be or to joke with their students to energize them and break the ice among other reasons (information courtesy of African students). The overwhelming majority of African students declared that this situation is embarrassing. Here are some examples of revelatory French adjectives used by almost 16 out of 20 students when reporting on how they feel vis-à-vis such a scenario: “Frustré - irrité - négligée- déconnecté- écarté- aliéné- sans valeur- irrespecté- insatisfait- faché”. The previous
words are translated into English respectively: “Frustrated - irritated - neglected - disconnected - deviated - alienated - valueless - disrespected - dissatisfied - angry”.

This entails that in such contexts the inability to comprehend and speak the language of their speech community, which constitutes people sharing the same language or dialect (Lyons, 1970), damages the face of the addressees and endows them with feelings of discard and subaltern. In other words, they feel rejected and peripheral because they do not understand and participate in the discussion. This situation holds true in case their teachers and classmates talk in TA or MSA. Consequently, three issues of great significance that directly relate to the topical areas of language and culture arise, which are identity, belongingness, and face. As a matter of fact, the needs of feeling part of a group and maintaining a positive-self-image and self-respect are anchored in Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs and said to be vital for sustaining psychological health. Furthermore, as per Rusinko’s account (2003), a process of “othering” comes about when a minority group (i.e., immigrant students) is likely to be ‘othered’ by a majority group (i.e., society including teachers and classmates). In African immigrant students’ case, the process of otherizing happened by virtue of the lack of conjoint awareness on the part of the parties involved in the teaching-learning process (i.e., teachers and peers) in association with the dominance and powerfulness of the language of the linguistic environment. From the angle of in-outgroup dichotomy postulated by Giles and Giles (2011), language and communicative features served as devices for creating an us versus them. All things considered, capitalizing on maximizing cross-cultural sensitivity and CQ, that is to say the capacity to intelligently handle relationships among culturally diverse parties (Christopher & Soon, 2003) is required to shun such predicaments.

**Difficulty in constructing their identity within a new cultural milieu**

Figure 7 puts on view percentages obtained from answers on a yes/no question about whether forming one’s identity in a culture other than one’s own is demanding or not for African students (see Appx. A/B, Q. 1).

**Figure 7.** Intricacy of identity formation in the Tunisian cultural context
As to the question of the intricacy that international students most often encounter to build their identity in a new culture, 75% (15 students) confirmed that it is really an intricate undertaking, while 25% (five students) mentioned that this is not the case for them as it is not that difficult to break through the Tunisian social network. Inquiring into their elucidation, informative justifications were found. A thematic analysis of some salient reasons that hinder their path of cultural straddling to find their feet in the mainstream of Tunisian culture is delineated in table 2:
Table 2. Thematic analysis of the underlying reasons behind the intricacy of identity building

| Constructing one’s identity in a new culture is difficult and this is attributable to: |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Cultural disparities                              | Personal feelings and mind-sets                   |
| Religion                                          | Medium of communication                          |
| Discrepancies in religious convictions and rituals.| - Differences in predilections,                   |
| - Incongruity in terms of taboos.                 | mindsets, and attitudinal peculiarities relative to each culture. |
| - Dissimilarity in the quotidian customs, routines, and even the manner in which people spend their spare time. | - Feelings of estrangement and periphery by virtue of a cultural gap embodied in the inevitability of prejudices and the unintelligibility of milieu language. |
| - Supremacy and unintelligibility of the language of the linguistic environment. | - Feelings of frustration because contact is deemed a sort of uprooting that equals loss of one’s culture of origin for some. |
| - Incomprehensibility of French for not everybody can understand it which poses an impediment for some African students. | - Feelings of nostalgia for their hometowns, displacement and fragmentation stemming from relocation and otherization. |

Those who said that they have not encountered a difficulty in forming their identity correlate this with some reasons of cultural similitude, adaptability of their origin like being Sub-Saharan (*e.g.*, Chadians), or having the right approach. It can be deduced that plurality, versatility, and dynamicity are amongst the eminent characteristics of identity. Norris
(2009), for instance, posited that an individual’s identity is interactively constructed and reconstructed on a micro level in relation to interactions with other people. What is also unveiled in the findings is the overt connectedness between the unintelligibility of milieu language and the development of a sense of belonging. The supremacy of the language of the linguistic environment drove African students to rethink their identity in relation to others leading them to feel down and find difficulties to belong and get their bearings in the Tunisian culture. This is in connection with the perspective of Zugel (2012) who perceived language as part and parcel of cultural identity and Souto-Manning (2006) who described the dominant language and culture of the majority group as powerful. Also, Giles and Giles (2011) who highlighted that social groups mark their identities communicatively. The following are instances of some of what the students disclosed in the space provided for extra information. One participant, for instance, unveiled that “when a person comes to a new culture, there is a tendency to judge the others in relation to his culture, while the others judge him in relation to his/hers. In order to build multiculturalism, the two groups must accept individuals from a culture other than their own”. Another sound view that is linked to the notion of identity was provided which reads as follows: “Self-searching is born from the extension of the idea that cultural identity is a sort of “lost paradise”. This idea is pregnant in this era”. It can be concluded that some of the students’ previous responses demonstrate a great deal of awareness and commonsense knowledge on the following subjects: (1) the unavoidability of prejudices and stereotypes facing an expatriate within a new socio-cultural milieu. (2) The necessity of promoting the values of multiculturalism and inclusiveness, including mutual acceptance and tolerance, among the several distinct social groups to the end of circumventing problems. (3) The puzzle of cultural identity and the uneasy undertaking of self-searching.

**Conclusion**

International students have a tough row to hoe, which is overcoming the formidable hurdles of language and identity among others in a culture different from their own and one of the ways out of this labyrinth according to their views is self-identifying with this culture through learning the language of the linguistic environment to construct their identity and get their bearings. Language shift can potentially be one of the skills at African students’
disposal to get by in their host country as it proved to be a precondition for building strong alliances and a successful intercultural communication between mainstream and non-mainstream groups.

It was shown that the majority of male and female participants expressed their feelings of marginalization before their incapacity to penetrate the language of their speech community when used in class by their Tunisian teachers and peers or even when used out of class by lay people. This substantiates the claim that the linguistic factor affects an individual’s face, identity, and sense of belongingness.

It is noteworthy that in addition to language, the variables of gender, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, region and socio-economy have definitely some bearings on students’ perceptions and attitudes. This investigation regrettably lacks demonstrable explanation for their interconnectedness, though they could be further examined in future research as to their link to the subject matter of this study.

The influx of youths from different walks of life who came to study in Tunisia has considerably risen which calls for advocacy efforts (e.g. sensitization, orientation and assistance sessions, intercultural competency trainings for instruction providers and students etc.) on the part of Tunisian decision makers together with activist community builders to change the status quo and resolve such cruces through working to cater for the needs of this category of students who are Tunisian community members par excellence. The onus is on these parties to stake them to what they need since this will help them become full-fledged members in the Tunisian community. By so doing, Tunisia will be the making of international students in many ways. Assisting them in overcoming the challenge of cultural straddling requires fostering their feelings of belongingness and national identity through planning practical TA courses at higher institutions and sowing seeds of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Such conditions are considered among the prerequisites for helping them strike personal, academic, and social balance in a plural society.

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References


Appendix A: The French version of the semi-structured interview
Entretien Semi-Directif

*Instruction: S'il vous plaît, veuillez compléter complètement ce questionnaire. Vos réponses seront utilisées à des fins scientifiques et la confidentialité est garantie.

 schö Informations Générales:
 - Nom et Prénom: .................................................................
 - Sexe: Mâle ☐ Femelle ☐
 - Origine: ...........................................................................
 - Âge: .............................................................................
 - Nombre d'année à Sfax: ..............................................

 Questions:

1. Est-il difficile de construire votre identité dans une nouvelle culture? 
   Expliquez-vous
   Oui ☐ Non ☐

2. Y-a-t-il une compréhension et appréciation multiculturelle de la part des enseignants et étudiants? Expliquez-vous
   Oui ☐ Non ☐ Parfois oui, parfois non ☐
3. Quelle est votre profil idéologique à l’égard de la culture environnante?
- Opposant(e) [ ] Assimilant(e) [ ] Résistant(e) [ ]
- Est-il une obligation ou un choix ? Quelle est votre raison ?

4. Essayez de faire une évaluation de soi par rapport à votre profil idéologique (opposant, résistant, assimilant) envers la nouvelle culture?
- Réussi [ ] échoué En d’essayer [ ]

5. Quelle est la langue que vous utilisez pour communiquer avec vos ami(e)s Tunisien(ne)s et vos enseignant(e)s ?
- Français seulement [ ] anglais seulement [ ] Standard seulement [ ]
- Alternance codique (= mélange de deux codes linguistiques, ex. Langue Française + Arabe Standard/Arabe Tunisien/Anglais) [ ]

6. Comment réagissez-vous devant la dominance de la langue environnante (Arabe Tunisien) autour de vous ? Quelle sont les stratégies et les tactiques que vous utilisez pour se débrouiller et fusionner dans la société comprenant vos amis, professeurs, et gens ordinaires ?
7. Trouvez-vous qu’apprendre le dialecte Tunisien est une nécessité pour s’intégrer et assimiler ou bien la Lingua Franca/langue véhiculaire (ex. Français, Anglais) est largement suffisante? Expliquez-vous.

8. Quels sont les défis auxquels vous faites face dans la classe en termes de participation et d’apprentissage? Est-ce que votre culture d’origine est une barrière à comprendre?

9. Parfois l’enseignant(e) Tunisien(ne) se trouve devant le choix ou l’obligation de parler la langue de l’environnement ou d’alterner les codes linguistiques dans la classe (mélanger deux codes linguistiques, ex. Langue Française + Arabe/Arabe Tunisien). Comment sentez et réagissez-vous?

10. Y-a-t-il d’autres informations que vous voulez ajouter et ne sont pas mentionnées dans les questions précédentes?
Merci pour votre temps et votre coopération
Appendix B: The English version of the semi-structured interview

Semi-Structured Interview

*Instruction:* Please fill in this questionnaire completely. Your answers will be utilized for scientific purposes and confidentiality is guaranteed.

❖ Background Information:

- **Name and surname:** ...
- **Sex:** Male [ ] Female [ ]
- **Origin:** ...
- **Age:** ...
- **Number of years in Sfax:** ...

❖ Questions:

1. **Is it difficult to construct your identity in a new culture? Explain yourselves**

   Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. **Is there a multicultural comprehension and appreciation on the part of teachers and students? Explain yourselves**

   Yes [ ] No [ ] Some [ ]'s yes, sometimes no [ ]
3.

- What is your ideological profile vis-à-vis the culture of the environment?

Opponent    Assimilative    Resistant

- Is it a choice or obligation? What is your reason?

4. Try to self-evaluate with regard to your ideological profile (opponent, resistant, assimilative) toward the new culture?

Succeeded    Failed    Staying

5. What is the language that you use to communicate with your Tunisian friends and teachers?

French only    English only    Standard Arabic only    Code    Switching (=mixture of two linguistic codes, e.g., French+ Standard Arabic / Tunisian Arabic/ English)

6. How do you react before the dominance of the language of the linguistic environment (Tunisian Arabic) in your surroundings? What are the strategies and tactics you use to pull through and fuse in society including your peers, teachers, and lay people?
7. Do you find that learning the Tunisian dialect is necessary to integrate and assimilate or Lingua Franca/vehicular language (e.g., French, English) is largely sufficient? Explain yourselves.

8. What are the challenges that you face in class in terms of participation and learning? Is your culture of origin a barrier to understanding?

9. Sometimes the Tunisian teacher finds him-/herself in front of the choice or obligation to speak the language of the linguistic environment or code switch in class (mix two linguistic codes, e.g., French+ Tunisian Arabic/Standard Arabic). How do you feel and react?

10. Are there any other unmentioned pieces of information in the preceding questions that you would like to add?
Thanks for your time and your cooperation
The Tragedy of Naming Ireland: Cultural Misunderstanding in Brian Friel’s *Translations* (1980)¹

*By Dr. Nadia Hanana-Marzouki, Higher Institute of Human Sciences Tunis, Tunisia*

**Abstract**

While the incorporation of Ireland into the United Kingdom by the Act of Union of 1800 marks a milestone in the history of Ireland, the language shift from Irish to English—the language of power and modernity—was already well established and irreversible by the end of the 18th century. Brian Friel’s three-act naturalistic play *Translations* (1980) dramatizes this key transition in Irish history when Irish gave way to English, when a culture was forced to translate itself into a different linguistic landscape.

The play, indeed, problematizes the story of linguistic dispossession which accompanied the mapping of the land in the 1830s. Besides, Friel examines the role of language in shaping and expressing personal and collective identity. More specifically, the dramatist attempts to define the specificities of ‘Irishness’ and ‘Englishness’ by placing the Irish and English worlds in direct contrast to each other. Although Friel’s stance in marking off the Irish from his English characters may be seen as a nationalist one, the central image of the English army mapping Ireland and translating the Irish place-names into English, as well as the device of having Irish and English characters speak different languages—or rather speak the same language without understanding each other—clearly indicates what Friel views as the great disparity and the mutual misunderstanding between the two communities.

**Keywords**: Brian Friel - *Translations* - the 1830s Ordnance Survey - language shift - place-names - identity - cultural misunderstanding
The question of language has always been a central and controversial issue in Ireland between proponents of the native language and advocates of English, the language of the colonizer. In the early 19th century, language - together with religion - remained at the centre of the debates on Irish culture, community and identity. Language and religion, in other words, were considered as essential markers of Irishness. With the 1800 Act of Union and the incorporation of Ireland into the United Kingdom, the political fate of the island was definitely linked with Britain over almost the next hundred years. The post-Union state - the British state - was central to the language shift and the politics of language in Ireland. Hence, under the new order, language was used by the colonizer as an effective tool to politically and culturally oppress the indigenous population. Indeed, the language shift from Irish to English as the general vernacular soon reached momentum among those who aspired to improve their condition and/or fully participate in the life of the country. Whereas English was deemed the language of debate, power, and more significantly modernity, the Gaelic language was viewed as the language of the poor and ignorant and largely fell into disuse during the 19th century. Britain’s introduction in 1831 of schools that taught in English further eroded its use:

It is estimated that Ireland in 1800 had a population of 2 million Irish-speakers, 1.5 million Irish-English bilinguals and 1.5 million English speakers. Notwithstanding the continuing language shift, the number of Irish speakers probably increased up to 1845. This was because Irish was very much the language of the poor, and it was among the poor that population increase was greatest in the pre-Famine decades. The Great Famine of 1845-50 decimated Irish-speaking Ireland through death and emigration. The 1851 census (which included a language question for the first time) revealed that the total number of Irish-speakers had fallen to 1.52 million or just 25 percent of the population, and would continue to fall. ²

The massive abandonment of Irish as a vernacular language during the 19th century is a remarkable event in Irish cultural history as well as the ever-deepening penetration of English both geographically and socially.

Douglas Hyde, himself a Protestant scholar, was a pioneer of the cultural Gaelic revival, cofounding the Gaelic League with Eoin MacNeill in 1893. Hyde’s seminal lecture
to the Irish National Literary Society of Dublin entitled ‘The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland’ (25 November 1892) may be considered the manifesto of the Irish-Ireland movement. Hyde became committed to “the extension of our [Irish] language among the people” and was determined to preserve Irish as a living language. Moreover, the primary objective of the League was declared to be “the preservation of Irish as the National language of Ireland and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue.” Yet, it was not only the loss of the language that Hyde lamented but more importantly, the whole process by which Ireland was becoming more anglicized: “I should like to call attention to the illogical position of men who drop their own language to speak English, of men who translate their euphonious Irish names into English monosyllables, of men who read English books, and know nothing about Gaelic literature.” In his speech, Hyde insisted on the necessity to restore the Irish language as the official language of Ireland by highlighting the dramatic cultural effects of the loss of the vernacular language which, according to him, had been making silent inroads upon the Irish for nearly one century. He further drew attention to one of the most intriguing paradoxes regarding the Irish: “It has always been very curious to me how Irish sentiment sticks in this half-way house—how it continues to apparently hate the English, and at the same time continues to imitate them.” The concluding lines of Hyde’s speech have remained famous and still resonate in the consciousness of every Irishman:

I would earnestly appeal to every one, whether Unionist or Nationalist, who wishes to see the Irish nation produce its best—and surely whatever our politics are, we all wish that—to set his face against this constant running to England for our books, literature, music, games, fashions, and ideas. I appeal to every one whatever his politics—for this is no political matter—to do his best to help the Irish race to develop in future upon Irish lines, even at the risk of encouraging national aspirations, because upon Irish lines alone can the Irish race once more become what it was of yore—one of the most original, artistic, literary, and charming people of Europe. 4

Hyde’s insistence on the gaelicization of the nation is reminiscent of Gemma Hussey’s claim that “the failure to restore Irish as a speaking language has left the country in a cultural vacuum.” 5 Thus, the purpose of the language restoration mission is to render the present a rational continuation of the past. According to Hyde,
the massive abandonment of a language, therefore, to say nothing of its enforced abandonment, inevitably involved a disorienting rupture in cultural continuity at several levels; not only an alienation from landscapes (place-names) and inherited historical narratives and communal myths, but also a deep psychological trauma, at an individual and communal level, caused by the loss of a rich inherited matrix of wisdom and knowledge.  

In the case of Ireland, this trauma was obviously exacerbated by the sense that the loss of the Irish language was the result of military and political conquest. The massive abandonment of the native communal language and the subsequent Anglicization of the island were synonymous with “defeat, dispossession, humiliation and impoverishment - the classic condition of the colonized.”

Drawing on the theories of the West Indian social philosopher Frantz Fanon put forward in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)—his seminal work of anti-colonialism—an examination of the various events which took place in Ireland, and more precisely the rise of movements in the late 19th century that attempted to de-Anglicize Ireland and reverse “the process of cultural obliteration” at the hand of the colonizing power, underscores the colonised natives’ fears of being totally assimilated in the culture of the coloniser, in Fanon’s own words, “of being swamped” in a foreign culture. Hence, in the 19th century, language and culture became the driving force behind claims to nation status.

In Seamus Heaney’s ‘Ocean’s Love to Ireland,’ a poem which refers, among other things, to the occupation and invasion of Gaelic Ulster by the Elizabethan army as well as the linguistic colonization of the island, the Northern-Irish poet claims “the ruined maid complains in Irish.” Despite the inevitable erosion of the Gaelic language over the past centuries and more significantly after the 1840 Irish Potato Famine, the ruined maid of Ireland still complains in Irish though her voice remains unheard. The irony, here, is that English is Heaney’s medium of expression and rebellion. If Irish is still alive, however vestigially, the position of the English language can never be wholly authoritative, as Stephen Dedalus recognizes after his long conversation with the English Dean of Studies in chapter 5 of Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916):

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The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master on his lips and mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. 10

In a moment of enlightened patriotism, Stephen sympathizes with the Irish people, whose language—Irish English—is borrowed from the English colonizer. Stephen’s sudden realization of the borrowed nature of his own language has a strong impact on him as he knows that language is central to his artistic mission. He, indeed, uses English, as a tool for expressing the uncreated soul of the Irish race. Though Stephen’s words are highly ironical and cannot be taken at their face value, they nonetheless clearly exemplify the linguistic dilemma which is, to a greater or a lesser degree, the heritage of every Irish writer.

Brian Friel’s Translations (1980)—the play whose production marked the founding of the Field Day Theatre Company11—is set in Ireland’s past, more precisely in a hedge-school in the townland of Baile Beag, anglicized as Ballybeg, an Irish-speaking community in County Donegal, Northern Ireland. Michael Sheridan, in The Irish Press, described the play’s première as “a water shed in Irish theatre. ”12The action of the play occurs over a number of days in late August in the 1830s, a period of great significance and major upheavals in the colonial relationship between Ireland and England. Indeed, the play dramatizes two key transitional moments in the Irish past, namely the initiation of a National Board of Education in 1832—which led to the passing of the old hedge schools and the advent of the schools under the National Board, in addition to the replacement of Irish by English as the sole medium of instruction—and the mapping of the Irish countryside with translations of Irish place-names into their English counterparts. In Ireland, the state-established national system was a powerful, active agent in the colonization process and was a major factor in cultivating cultural assimilation and political loyalty. Thus, issues of linguistic and cultural translation, communication and change are central to the play. Besides, with these two areas of change which are about to

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encroach, the atmosphere of imminent crisis which characterizes the opening of the play, is further intensified by the fear of a potato blight.

In the published extracts from the diary he kept while writing *Translations*, Friel pointed out that language was his overriding concern and was not interested in the intrinsic political implications of the play and the relationship between theatre and politics:

> I don’t want to write a play about Irish peasants being suppressed by English sappers. I don’t want to write a threnody on the death of the Irish language. I don’t want to write a play about land-surveying. And yet portions of all these are relevant. Each is part of the atmosphere in which the real play lurks.  

*Translations* is a language play par excellence in so far as, in the playwright’s own words, “it has to do with language and only language.” However, the language issue is never a neutral one for an Irish writer as language and politics are closely implicated and to my mind, cannot be dissociated from each other. In the history of Ireland, language was used by the British as a social and political weapon when the Irish language was abandoned and by the Irish, in their struggle for independence. However, English was the dominant language of the Irish nationalists’ popular political movements from the early 18th century through to the 19th century. Political leadership was crucial and English was the language of debate and propaganda. For instance, Daniel O’Connell—the leader of the Catholic emancipation campaign and a vehement opponent of the Act of Union in the second quarter of the 19th century—was himself a native speaker of Irish but he held a rather fatalistic view of the inevitable decline of the vernacular language and strongly believed that it was an inevitable process. Besides, the intellectuals of the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s were alert to the message of cultural nationalism and the centrality of the language in its tenets. Thomas Davies, in particular, strongly advocated an essentialist position for the Irish language in the construction of a credible national identity. However, the medium of preaching and propaganda for the Young Irelanders was English, most notably in their influential weekly newspaper the *Nation*. Although the majority of the Irish nationalists were alarmed at the rapid decline of the Irish language, they conducted their political speeches and propaganda—whether in Ireland or outside
the confines of the island—overwhelmingly through English. In the late 19th century, in the struggle for political self-rule and political sovereignty with the establishment of a separate parliament in Dublin, the role of language in the formation of identity was not a central issue.

Drawing on the various issues discussed above, the link between language and politics is quite clear and consequently, the political dimension of the play cannot be overlooked. Besides, since the plays deals with language and cultural translations, at the time of the Irish Revivalist movement—a movement that emerged in the late years of the 19th century with the aim of ensuring that Ireland’s rich Gaelic heritage was not totally eroded—the Irish language became an offensive weapon for Irish nationalists. Brian Friel and his Field Day Company were inevitably part of it. As Declan Kiberd put it, "the Irish Renaissance was essentially an exercise in translation, in carrying over aspects of Gaelic culture into English. At the turn of the 20th century, to translate Ireland was but another way of bringing it into being." Thus, *Translations* is construed as a play that dramatizes and commemorates both a moment in the colonial history of Ireland and colonial cultural subjugation in general. At the same time, the play can be viewed as a celebration of a lost Gaelic heritage, a lament for the loss of the native language and a critique of colonial power. The mapping of the Irish land and the erosion of the Gaelic language—two major events in the Irish consciousness—still haunt the Irish present as they show the effect of the English colonization of Ireland and describe, in my opinion, the more universal issues of the clash between two languages and two cultures.

In the foreground of the play, the audience is presented with the mid-nineteenth British Ordnance Survey, a process of mapping the land and renaming place-names; in other words, a process of anglicising Ireland conducted by the British army. In *Translations*, the Ordnance Survey map acts as a powerful metaphor for the transformation of this linguistic and cultural environment. The main criticism that one can address to Brian Friel is the presence of some inaccuracies regarding historical facts and data. Indeed, the translation of Irish place-names into English, which is at the core of the play, was the exception in the real Ordnance Survey rather than the rule, as Friel seems to imply. Most of the time, indeed, the orthography of the Irish place-names was simply anglicized and not translated. Moreover, the Ordnance Survey was conducted
over the years 1824-1846 and not only in the 1830s as the play purports. The playwright was certainly aware of those little deficiencies and his attitude is conspicuous in the light of Hugh O'Donnell’s words. Indeed, the hedge-school master in the play claims that “it is not the literal past, the facts of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language” (88). The quotation, indeed, reveals Friel’s method of selecting and fictionalizing historical events. In the play, the images which are drawn from Ireland’s past are employed in order to create a clear picture of those inherited dimensions of experience which still impinge on the Irish present. In other words, the past is seen as filtered through the modern consciousness. Friel has turned those nostalgic images from an imagined Irish past into objective correlative of present Irish issues, which themselves have universal significance.

In *Translations*, Friel attempts to define the national distinctiveness of ‘Irishness’ and ‘Englishness’ by juxtaposing the two worlds, or rather by placing the two worlds in direct contrast to each other. Although the dramatist’s stance in marking off his Irish from his English characters may be seen as a nationalist one, the central image of the play of the English army mapping the whole island and the comprehensive re-naming of the localities “into the King’s good English” (30), as well as the device of having Irish and English characters speak English without understanding each other, become Friel’s dramatic device for expressing the great disparity and the mutual misunderstanding between the two communities. Friel’s notion of translation and the meaning which it encapsulates is quite complex as it is closely related to communication. The understanding of the centrality of the concept of translation is mandatory in order to understand, not only Friel’s *Translations* but also the plays he published later, most notably *The Communication Cord* (1983) as both plays deal with the naming of places. Several critics have noted Friel’s debt to literary critic George Steiner and more pointedly to his work *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975) as some of his insights about language and translation are incorporated in the play. For Steiner, “translation or interpretation is what gives language life beyond the moment and place of immediate utterance. As the main instrument of man’s refusal to accept the world as it is, and as the power to ‘un-say’ the world, to image and speak it otherwise, language amounts to nothing less than our escape from time into the past or the future.”

Precisely, it is Hugh, the hedge-school master in
the play, who serves as Friel’s most articulate spokesman for Steiner’s insights. For Steiner, the concept of ‘translation’ has several shades of meanings:

Translation includes transformation, transmutation, interpretation, carrying over, and even removal from earth to heaven. It involves the desire to understand, to find meaning, to make meaning if that is necessary... Discovering meaning through translation often involves changing statements from one language to another. More often, it involves the process of interpretation which takes place within a single language.  

In other words, ‘to translate’ is to communicate or rather, to make communication possible. Steiner further argues that pure communication or true translation is quite impossible as, in his own words, “each communicatory gesture has a private residue” and “all communication interprets between privacies” (90), an idea which is formulated by Hugh himself in Friel’s Translations and which is a direct echo of Steiner’s own views. To further elaborate on this idea, when Yolland for instance yearns to learn Irish and go native, he realizes that he was doomed to be an outsider for ever: “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 hermeneutic, won’t it?” (48). Through these lines, the audience is led to recognize the situation of people of a majority culture faced with the shock of assimilation within a minority, subordinate culture or vice versa, and a minority culture faced with the trauma of assimilation or integration into a majority, dominant culture. In a similar vein, at the close of the play, when Hugh finally agrees to teach Maire English, he tells her: “We’ll begin tomorrow. But don’t expect too much. I’ll provide you with the available words and the available grammar. But will that help you to interpret between privacies? I have no idea. But it’s all we have” (90). In other words, Friel contends that each individual exists in a world of private discourse, where language is private, personal and therefore impossible to communicate. In the act of translation itself, the thing or feeling one intended to translate vanishes all of a sudden as each individual has his/her own language. Translations, therefore, discusses the links between language, national identity and culture. On the one hand, the Irish culture, as embodied in the Irish hedge-school
community, is seen as old and indigenous, backward-looking and traditional, individualistic and spiritual, passionate and imaginative. On the other hand, the English civilization which supersedes it is depicted as new and foreign, forward-looking and progressive, standardized and materialistic; In other words, rational and pragmatic. Although Friel mainly attempts to sketch this divide in terms of language, he also implicitly comments on the current political and social situation in Northern Ireland. Although his message amounts to more than ‘Brits out’, Yolland’s and Maire’s romantic love-affair in the play—though abortive and tragic—points to a yearning for reconciliation between Ireland and England. Though the exchange between the English officer and the Irish girl who love each other is very revealing of the cultural misunderstanding which exists between the two communities, it also suggests that “the heart communicates without language and with a logic of its own, so that the lovers do indeed understand, despite the barriers of language.” In Act II scene 2, at one point, Maire (who understands nothing of what Yolland is saying) tells him: “Say anything at all. I love the sound of your speech.” Later on, Yolland (who similarly does not understand a word of what Maire is saying) tells her: “say anything at all—I love the sound of your speech” (63). In these utterances, the words are similar but our knowledge of the characters reveals the extent to which the meanings attached to these words vary from one person to the other. In other words, Maire loves the sound of Yolland’s language which she is eager to learn, whereas Yolland loves the sound of Maire’s voice which is so enchanting to him that he would like to make Ireland his home. Though the two characters utter the same words, their meanings are totally different as Maire and Yolland come from two different worlds, two different cultures and do not share a language. However, the two lovers communicate beyond the barriers of language and the language of the heart has a universal dimension as it enables communication and communion between the two lovers.

In another famous passage, Maire utters in Irish, “The grass must be wet. My feet are soaking.” Yolland responds in the language which is his, “Your feet must be wet. The grass is soaking” (62). In this second exchange, the repetition of the same words in an altered word order leads to misunderstanding between the two lovers. As Helen Lojek
argues, “translation involves more than movement from one language to another. The term also refers to interpretation within one single language, and ultimately to communication and the shaping of meaning.”20 Despite the lovers’ inability to understand each other’s words, it is love which enables them to communicate with each other. Ironically enough, it is precisely Yolland, who disagrees with the official policy of colonization represented by Captain Lancey, who is killed at the end of the play by the Donnelly twins. Friel’s message is clear: the ultimate sufferers are the innocent and the powerless.

As has been previously mentioned, the play revolves around the subject of names and their relation to identity, culture, and the dispossession that comes with naming. The Anglicization of Irish place-names makes the audience/reader feel the essential ‘otherness’ of the Irish heritage and sense that it is not only place names that are eroded but also the whole cultural tradition contained in them. In other words, the translation from Irish to English entails a change of identity. As Declan Kiberd rightly puts it, “Translations demonstrates, through the conceit of English standing for Irish, that once Anglicization is achieved, the Irish and English, instead of speaking a truly identical tongue, will be divided most treacherously by a common language.”21 Friel attempts to mark off the separate English and Irish linguistic and cultural heritages, which today are embodied in the same language. He clearly expresses the view that “we are in fact talking about the marrying of two cultures here, which are ostensibly speaking the same language but which in fact are not.”22

The fact that the English and Irish characters speak English without understanding each other is Friel’s tool for expressing the divide and the amount of mutual misunderstanding between the two communities, and for mirroring the conflict between these two different cultural and linguistic legacies in the Irish mind. In the play for instance, Hugh’s initial aversion for literature written in English and the statement he makes at his first encounter with the English officers, “English couldn’t really express us” (25) reflects a Heideggerean scepticism about the possibility of cultural transfer from one language to another. In his analysis of Heidegger’s conception of language that dominates Translations, Richard Kearney argues that “Friel’s play deals with the ways in which the
consciousness of an entire culture is fractured by the transcription of one linguistic landscape (Gaelic and classical) into another (Anglo-Saxon and positivist). 23 Hugh, a poet himself, finally comes to the conclusion that he has to accept the linguistic eviction symbolized by the translation of Irish place-names into English: We must learn these new names ... We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home” (88). Here, the dramatist’s views on language are reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus’ in Joyce’s Portrait:

The issue of language is a very problematic one for all of us on this island. I had parents who were native Irish speakers ... And to be so close to a ... different language is a curious experience ... in some ways. I don’t think we’ve resolved it on this island for ourselves. We flirt with the English language, but we haven’t absorbed and we haven’t regurgitated it... The use of the English language, the understanding of words, the whole cultural burden that every word in the English language carries is slightly different to our burden. 24

These lines, definitely, suggest that the controversy over the revival of the Gaelic language which was raging from the times of Douglas Hyde, W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge and Padraic Pearse to the present day has not been, and will possibly never be resolved. The linguistic problem facing the Irish writers can be seen both as a challenge and an asset as they have to forge their language anew and are, in the process, not hampered by the linguistic standardization of modern times conceived in Friel’s play as the legacy of the English tradition. Thus, the linguistic burden of the Irish writers is possibly at the root of their wonderfully flexible language, as is best documented in Joyce’s unsurpassed linguistic creativity in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) or Ulysses (1922).

Friel’s Translations, not only deals with the significance of language for the Irish writers but it more significantly dramatizes the problem of Irish identity caused by the loss of their native language. This idea is best reflected in the exchange between Owen and Manus, two speakers of the vernacular language. Owen, the master’s younger son, a handsome, attractive young man in his twenties, is employed as “a part-time, underpaid, civilian interpreter and his job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King’s good English” (30). His role is to help Lieutenant Yolland and Captain Lancey in their official mission. On the one hand, Lieutenant Yolland, who is
attached to the toponymic department, feels "very foolish to - to be working here and not to speak [the native's] language" (35). On the other hand, Captain Lancey is portrayed as "a middle-aged, small, crisp officer, expert in his field as cartographer but uneasy with people - especially civilians, especially those foreign civilians. His skill is with deeds, not words" (31). Yolland's task is "to take each of the Gaelic names - every hill, stream, rock, even every patch of ground which possessed its own distinctive Irish name - and Anglicize it, either by changing it into its approximate English sound or by translating it into English words" (38). A soldier by chance and a romantic lover of Ireland, Yolland claims, "something is eroded" in the translation of Irish place-names into their English counterparts (53). Thus, in his role as interpreter, Owen is caught between his old Irish self as 'Owen' and his new English one as 'Roland.' Indeed, throughout the play, Owen insists on Captain Lancey to be called by his Irish name ‘Owen’ while he keeps calling him by the English equivalent ‘Roland.’ Besides, the character's attempt to make his adopted English identity merge with his Irish one by jokingly trying to fuse his two names into 'Rowen' and 'Oland' is a futile one (55). A harmonious fusion of the Irish and English identities appears as an illusion, and when he tries to regain his Irish identity by shaking off his English name, it is already too late: “Owen-Roland - what the hell. It's only a name. It's the same me, isn't it? Well, isn't it? / Indeed is it. It's the same Owen” (37).

Another impressive and moving scene in the play is, without doubt, Sarah's inability to pronounce her Irish name in the opening scene of the play: “her speech defect is so bad that all her life she has been considered locally to be dumb ... When she wishes to communicate, she grunts and makes unintelligible nasal sounds” (1). She is taught by Manus, the master's older son, how to pronounce her name and after several attempts, she finally makes it. In Act III, she relapses into silence when the English captain asks her who she is:

Lancey: (Pointing to Sarah. ) Who are you? Name!

Sarah's mouth opens and shuts, opens and shuts. Her face becomes contorted.

What's your name?

Again Sarah tries frantically.
Owen: Go on, Sarah. You can tell him.

*But Sarah cannot. And she knows she cannot. She closes her mouth. Her head goes down.*

Owen: Her name is Sarah Johnny Sally.

Lancey: Where does she live?

Owen: Bun na hAbhann.

Lancey: Where?

Owen: Burnfoot. (81)

The above conversation unveils the character’s inability to say her new name. More precisely, Sarah can neither accept the new name/identity which has been imposed upon her nor the whole cultural burden that every word in the English language carries. Hence, she retreats into a protective silence which prevents full communication. Seamus Heaney has aptly commented upon this fact: “It is as if some symbolic figure of Ireland ... the one who once confidently called herself Cathleen ni Houlihan, has been struck dumb by the shock of modernity.”25 In Friel’s play, the spectator as well as Owen undergoes a process of enlightenment about his shared responsibility in the abandonment of the Irish language and what it really implies. Indeed, the loss of the Gaelic language has also entailed a deeper loss, i.e., that of the indigenous Irish memory and tradition. All along the play, the dramatist expresses intense love for the Gaelic language making the audience feel that love too. Nevertheless, the erosion of the Irish language and the adoption of the English language by the Irish is, according to Friel, an irreversible process. Daniel O’Connell—the champion of Catholic Emancipation—similarly claimed that “the old language is a barrier to modern progress.” (25).

As a final instance, the tender love-scene between Yolland and Maire in Act II is of particular relevance and a key scene in the whole play. Most critics, indeed, describe this love scene as the heart of the play: “[the scene] shows, really, that no amount of philosophy
or language theory can adequately account for a scene where human feeling comes across on the stage. In Drama, it is important that there should be this kind of release of feeling, so that the audience is drawn in and can empathize with the characters’ predicament”.

By listing the Irish place-names of the area together, the lovers achieve a mesmeric aural effect that enables them to move closer to each other in a way that was impossible when they tried to communicate with each other in English. In a way, the lovers use a private and secret language. In a sense, the Irish place-names constitute a kind of ‘erotic’ language that enables the lovers’ communication and communion. The stage direction, “She holds out her hands to Yolland. He takes them. Each now speaks almost to himself/herself” (66) seems to confirm the idea. Yet, although the lovers achieve some sort of communication, the last part of the exchange best exemplifies the central misunderstanding that still separates the two characters:

Yolland: I wish to God you could understand me … Because if you could tell me, I would tell you...

Maire: “Don’t stop - I know what you are saying.

Yolland: I would tell you how I want to be here - to live here always - with you - always, always.

Maire: ‘Always?’ What is that word ‘always’?

Yolland: Yes - Yes; always.

[... ]

Yolland: Don’t stop - I know what you’re saying.

Maire: I want to live with you - anywhere - anywhere at all always - always. Yolland: ‘Always’? What is that word - always’?” (66-67)

The conversation between the two lovers describes their desperate attempt to cross the boundaries of their own selves as they are both ready to give up their inherited linguistic and cultural identities. In the above-scene, Yolland and Maire focus on the word “always” and through the repetition of the word, Friel describes the characters’ orientation towards the future. However, the lovers’ perception and understanding of the word
differs fundamentally. Indeed, Yolland wants to live with Maire “here” - meaning Ireland - whereas Maire wants to live with him “anywhere.” Following the conversation, Yolland disappears all of a sudden and Maire is left homeless, longing to emigrate to America. This can be interpreted as the lovers’ failure to communicate with each other and the inherent misunderstanding between Yolland, the English lover of Ireland and Maire, the Irish girl who is open to the world. Friel seems to suggest that love cannot bridge the gap between two different cultures. All their efforts to comprehend each other are vain because of the differences in culture embodied in language that fall through the gaps of translation.

The originality and greatness of Friel’s *Translations* lies in the fact that the play deals, first and foremost, with the issue of language: the loss of the Irish language, the imposition of the English language and culture on the indigenous community and the mutual misunderstanding between the Irish and British communities. By making his parochial Ballybeg the focus of attention and the centre of the Irish and the modern mind - which is reminiscent of Joyce, who when confining himself to Dublin, he was aware that “if I can get at the heart of Dublin, I can get at the heart of all cities in the world.

In the particular is contained the universal”27. Friel has managed to make of *Translations* a truly unique play of the greatest significance for Ireland and beyond. Hence, the play acquires a universal significance as it transcends all considerations of time and place and the audience can indeed recognize the situation of many a minority culture faced with the trauma of assimilation or integration into a majority, dominant culture. Yet, *Translations* seems to be primarily interested in the soothing power of language, or of language as sound. Although the play shows the destroying power of language, the audience is invited, through the love affair between Yolland and Maire, to envisage a possible alternative to division, conflict and, misunderstanding. In other words, we are left with an impulse towards reconciliation.

References

1 This paper was originally presented in the English Department Second International
Conference of the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis entitled "Mutual(Mis)Understanding: Collision or Collusion between Cultures and Civilizations." 1-3 February 2007.


4 Ibid.


6 Gearoid O Tuathaigh, 47

7 ______, 47.


11 The Field Day Theatre Company is a cultural Arts group founded by the dramatist himself and the actor Stephen Rea in 1980


16 Quoted in F. C. McGrath, “Irish Babel: Brian Friel’s Translations and George Steiner’s After Babel. Comparative Drama, Vol. 23, No 1 (Spring 1989), 31-49.


18 Qtd in Christopher Murray, “Two Languages as One in Brian Friel’s Translations.” Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies, Vol. 5, No 1. Special Issue in Honour of Brian Friel at 70, 89.

19 Helen Lojek, 86.

20 _____, 85.


24 Qtd in F. O'Toole, 21.


26 Christopher Murray, 91.
