



COLONIZATION AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN MAGEE'S *THE COLONY* (2022)

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Abstract

The research study focuses on the thematic exploration presented in Magee's novel *The Colony* (2022) which interrogates the ramifications of colonization on human behavior, particularly focusing on its effects on Irish traditions and language. The overarching objective of this research is threefold: firstly, to unveil the detrimental impact of colonization on Irish culture and traditions; secondly, to scrutinize the mechanisms of manipulation employed during colonization and the subsequent resistance efforts by indigenous populations; and thirdly, to gauge the endeavors of the Irish people in resisting colonization and assess the role of literature in preserving Ireland's customary practices, traditions, and rituals. Questions guiding this research work are multifaceted: they investigate the influence of Magee's novel on grassroots movements aimed at safeguarding indigenous Irish traditions, explore the intricate interplay between politics, economy, and culture during colonialism in Ireland, and probe into the complexities inherent in the era of colonization and the cultural influence wielded by invaders. The significance of this study lies in its illumination of literature's role in catalyzing grassroots resistance against colonization's cultural encroachments and its elucidation of the divisive elements sowing animosity among diverse nations with distinct identities. The theoretical framework employed in this research draws heavily from Frantz Fanon's *postcolonial* theory, particularly as elucidated in his piece of literature *The Wretched of the Earth*. This research relies on secondary data sources, including library resources, journal articles, reports, analyses, and news articles, to contextualize and analyze the impact of colonization on Irish culture and traditions, as depicted in Magee's novel *The Colony* (2022). Through a comprehensive examination of these sources, this study aims to contribute to scholarly discourse on the enduring legacy of colonization on indigenous cultures and the role of literature in preserving cultural heritage and fostering resistance to cultural imperialism.

Keywords: *Colonization, Cultural Resistance, Decolonization, Frantz Fanon, Grassroots Movements, Hybrid Identities, Irish Culture, Linguistic Autonomy, Literature, Postcolonial Theory*

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1.Introduction

1.1.History and background

Colonization has left a lasting impact on Indigenous cultures around the world, often eroding local traditions, languages, and ways of life (Bihari, 2023). Ireland, a country with a rich history of language and cultural heritage, colonization by Britain brought profound social, political, and cultural consequences (Flannery, 2021). Audrey Magee's *The Colony* (2022) engages deeply with these themes, unraveling the ways colonial forces disrupted the traditions, language, and identity of the Irish people (Magee, 2022). Through the lens of a small community on a remote Irish island, Magee explores the complex intersections between colonialism and cultural survival, highlighting the resilience of Irish cultural identity despite colonial encroachment. This study aims to analyze Magee's portrayal of these dynamics and to reveal the broader implications of her work within postcolonial literary discourse (Éigeartaigh, 2023). Drawing on Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory, particularly his ideas in *The Wretched of the Earth*, this research underscores literature's critical role in advocating for cultural resistance and preservation amidst imperialist pressures (Elaref & Hassan, 2021).

As per (Della Porta & de Giorgi, 2020) colonialism is a multifaceted phenomenon that affects all spheres of society that, in the West, would be considered the public and private, civil society, and state. Goal of colonialism is the complete transformation of the colonized culture the removal of its emotional frameworks, the natives' submission to the colonizers' ideas of legitimacy and citizenship, and the replacement of native forms of labor, religion, patriarchy, and government with those of colonial modernity not any of these elements or practices carried out by institutions has an insignificant impact on any aspect of colonized societies. Remember that colonialism is also a rationalizing endeavor that results in the frequent replication of comparable institutions and practices throughout each imperial power's widely dispersed and diversified colonies (Bhambra & McClure, 2022). Finally, colonialism creates strong beliefs that are equally amazing due to the way they are woven and maintained through its quasi-scientific research on historical analysis, racial typology, and development economics.

The Colony (2022) by Audrey Magee is a powerful meditation on identity, authority, and location. It is written in such a way that it veers between stream-of-

consciousness passages and lyrical descriptions of a harsh environment. The story takes place in the summer of 1979 on a secluded island off the western coast of Ireland. Magee's second book, which was shortlisted for the Irish Book Prize and longlisted for the Booker Prize, presents an intriguing cast of individuals who are fighting to define their own identities. They have to balance the political and personal ramifications of their goals and aspirations as the violence of the Troubles intensifies, initially as part of a backdrop yet not much after, interfering with their lives (Magee, 2022).

Mr. Lloyd, the English painter who travels to the island to devote the summer to painting its cliffs, sees the island just as “a large rock” situated “on the edge of Europe.” Lloyd has the colonizer's view. Despite being a landscape painter, Lloyd soon develops an obsession with portraiture, treating “the islanders” (as they are referred to throughout the book) as though he were an English Gauguin, even though he had made a clear vow to his hosts that he was not there to paint people. Concurrently, JP Masson, a French linguist, arrives on the island to finish his dissertation research for the fourth summer in a row, with the goal of saving the Irish language from annihilation. The two guys will inevitably clash since they both feel that their territory has been invaded, and they will fight back. Both foreigners pushing their politics on a group of people who historically have not been given a say in much that affects them are unaware of the irony of their own incursion (Magee, 2022).

Thought to be the most intriguing characters in the novel, fifteen-year-old James, and his mother Mairéad are the islanders whose lives are most significantly changed by Lloyd and Masson's summer endeavors. Everyone is torn between following tradition and feeling compelled to break out from the status quo and forge their own identities. In an attempt to avoid his fate as a fisherman, James enrolls in Lloyd's class with the goal of following him to London to pursue an artistic career: “A wonderful new exhibition showing the work of an English artist and his Irish protégé proves that art is greater than politics, despite all the troubles of Northern Ireland and the tension between Dublin and London” (Magee, 2022, p. 12). Resigned to live out her days on the island, young widow Mairéad discovers ways to buck convention, including slyly showing up nude for Lloyd's paintings. Though they should allegedly be upset at the Englishman's presence on the island and his social and economic supremacy over them, both James and Mairéad wish to seize part of his authority in order to escape the inescapable limits of their given places (Magee, 2022).

The Colony (2022) is a deep, singular, multilayered novel that explores the difficulties of colonization, the subtleties of embracing global culture, the growth of

society, and the meaning of preserving culture and history in a world that is constantly changing. It is an allegorical story. It is a contemplation on language and identity, and how they are frequently related to one another (Magee, 2022).

Specifically, the problems and legacy of colonialism serve as the central theme of the book. In the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, European nations including Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal were infamous for acquiring colonies. They were rivals showcasing not only their superior military might but also the “colonies” they controlled—nations they had taken over under false pretenses of trade and by exploiting their political weaknesses. It's true that there have been advancements in infrastructure, healthcare, and literacy, but there has also been ongoing conflict, widespread exploitation, and identity loss.

The research study revolves around the concept given by Magee in her novel *The Colony* (2022) which raises several queries about the impact of colonization on human behavior and the effects of colonization on the traditions and language of Ireland (Magee, 2022). Colonization, beyond its political and economic repercussions, exerts a lasting influence on the cultural fabric of the colonized, often leading to the suppression of Indigenous languages, traditions, and belief systems (Elaref & Hassan, 2021). Magee's novel presents a nuanced portrayal of these effects, focusing on how colonization manipulates not only the physical landscapes but also the mental and cultural worlds of the colonized (Magee, 2022). At the heart of this research is an inquiry into the effectiveness of literature, like Magee's novel, in preserving Irish culture and heritage, while simultaneously critiquing the imperialist practices that threaten it. The study also seeks to analyze how colonial powers systematically imposed their own cultural norms while subjugating Indigenous traditions, and how, in response, literature becomes a critical tool for resisting cultural imperialism. Through this exploration, the research addresses the broader issue of cultural preservation in the face of global imperialism, offering a critical evaluation of the postcolonial struggle for identity and self-determination.

1.2. Research Objective

- To expose colonization's negative impact on Irish culture and traditions.
- To examine the manipulating elements of the colonization and countering efforts of the Indigenous people.
- To measure the efforts of the Irish people to counter colonization and the contribution of the literature to preserve Ireland's customary practices, traditions, and rituals.

1.3. Research Question

1. How does Magee's novel—The Colony (2022) influence and stimulate the grassroots movement to preserve the Indigenous traditions of Ireland?
2. How does politics in colonialism affect the economy, and does the economy shape the politics in Ireland?
3. What are the basic complexities associated with the era of colonization and the influence of the culture of invaders?

2. Review Of Literature

The review of literature in this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the key concepts, theories, and debates surrounding colonization and its impact on cultural practices, particularly focusing on the case of Ireland as explored in Magee's *The Colony* (2022). By situating the novel within the broader framework of postcolonial theory, this chapter aims to highlight the historical and cultural forces that shaped Ireland's identity under British rule and the lingering effects of colonialism on its national identity, language, and traditions. The chapter begins by tracing the historical context of colonization, specifically the British colonization of Ireland, and its far-reaching implications on Irish culture. Following this, it delves into the spread of postcolonialism, examining how discipline has emerged as a response to the legacies of empire and its role in empowering formerly colonized societies to reclaim their histories and cultures. The review also explores postcolonial criticism, particularly how it gives voice to the marginalized or the 'Other,' and discusses the contribution of postcolonial authors in challenging colonial narratives and resisting cultural erasure. Further sections will focus on colonial and postcolonial writers and their role in shaping discourse around colonization and resistance.

A key aspect of this chapter is the exploration of Frantz Fanon's theories, particularly his insights into the psychology of colonial violence, which serve as the theoretical backbone for analyzing the tensions presented in Magee's novel. The chapter then transitions into discussing Ireland as a colonized 'Other,' highlighting the unique colonial experience of Ireland within the context of British imperialism. Finally, the review addresses the importance of cultural heritage and identity in Irish literature, emphasizing how Irish fiction serves as a medium for representing national identity and resisting cultural domination. Through this critical review, the chapter aims to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding how colonization has shaped and continues to influence, cultural practices and identities, while also underlining the significance of literary works like *The Colony* in preserving Indigenous traditions and countering colonial narratives.

The historical setting is relevant to this investigation. Shakespeare writes, “Whereof what's past is prologue, what to come,” in his play *The Tempest*. In discharge, both of us (p. 51). As a component of the relational matrix, it is necessary to respect the social, religious, political, and cultural realities of Irish heritage. This research is related to the effects of major events in Irish history. Castro (2022) highlights the relationship that exists between political realities and therapists' work: “For me, the first connection between politics and psychoanalysis is the importance of history and the ongoing process of demystifying and assimilating it into people's consciousness and lives as a requirement for mental and societal well-being.” (Fallenbaum, 2003, p. 3).

When contemplating what is still concealed, it is crucial to take into account the major, influential factors shaping Irish society, such as the colonization of the island. The ancestors included in this study migrated to this nation from a colonized land where the indigenous Gaelic-Irish peoples lost their political, economic, and legal authority. As a result, there have been generations of interpersonal and intrapsychic trauma, religious sectarianism, and civil unrest. The Irish people were permanently altered by the experience of colonization, which is portrayed in the history of the island as a "story of Ireland as a narrative of oppression and suffering inflicted on the Irish People by English and British colonialism over eight centuries" (Dawson, 2010, p. 58). (McKenna, 2022).

The word “postcolonial” refers to this period of time when colonies began to expand across the European colonies, resulting in the creation of binary representations that showed the colonized and the colonizers. The term "postcolonialism" refers to the impact of colonialism on the cultures and communities that persisted during the post-independence era, as proposed by (Sawant et al., 2020), since World War II. “The experience of colonialism has molded the lives of more than three-quarters of the general population living in the world today,” according to Ashcroft (1989, p. 1) As Young (2004) has said.

“After achieving national sovereignty, every state transitioned from colonial to postcolonial autonomy. Self-reliance! But in many respects, this was just the beginning—a very small transition from direct to indirect authority, from colonial dominance to a state that was more like in-dependence than independence. It is noteworthy that the major international powers did not significantly alter throughout the 20th century, even after decolonization.” (p.3).

Though there is little distinction between “colonialism” and “imperialism,” postcolonialism addresses the consequences of colonial and imperial powers' legacy on

nations and communities where Europeans predominate. The dominance of Western power over other countries and nations by military, economic, or political methods is referred to as both colonialism and imperialism. There is also an obvious tendency of Western centers, as Adas (1998) argues; “to relate colonialism to European expansion and supremacy on foreign cultures and nations” (p. 371). Similar to this, it might be challenging to distinguish between the two names. Conversely, “imperialism meant to be expanding their empires by invading nearby nations and countries” (p. 371), when the term “colonialism” refers only to the historical process involving European powers or their descendants in distant regions. However, Edward Said distinguishes between these terms: “Imperialism is the dominance of metropolitan power over distant places practically, ideologically and attitudinally, and colonialism is about implanting settlements in the distant places” (1994, p. 9). Therefore, imperialism is more all-encompassing, encompassing both theory and practice, whereas colonialism is primarily concerned with gaining actual dominance over colonies and nations.

In particular, post-colonialists argue that conventional imperialist Western ideals romanticize or degrade otherness in all its manifestations, from exoticized primitiveness to paranoid vilification (Nance, 2003). Its central argument is that Western norms are an illustration of imperialism rather than timeless, absolute, or indisputable and that this calls into doubt the universalist assertions made by Western intellectual legacy (Carrier, 1995). Concurrently, it pays tribute to the Indigenous peoples whose views, practices, and ways of life were marginalized by the colonial authority. Responding to and rejecting the colonial past are two sides of the same coin that is postcolonialism. The most prominent critics of this era include Said (1985), Bhabha (1991), and Spivak (1990). There are many who are opposed to the “native,” “oriental,” and “exotic” stereotypes and would like to see more national, regional, and local forms of expression revived. Conversely, post-colonialist discourse never totally abandons the "mother" tongue, engages in dialogue with the "center," and compels colonizers to reflect on and perhaps even abandon their own colonialism (Boehmer, 2005)

Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee, Franz Fanon, Michael Ondaatje, Li-Young Li, Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and many more are among the most well-known postcolonial writers. "Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak are the four names that keep coming up as thinkers who have shaped postcolonial theory" (Innes, number five). Despite their differences in background, nationality, and socioeconomic status, all of these authors left indelible marks on literature, much of it fitting the description of "postcolonial literature." Chinua Achebe, a writer from Nigeria, explored the tensions between the Indigenous Igbo

people and the Christian invaders in his 1958 debut novel, *The Things Fall Apart*. He was an adjunct professor at several American and Nigerian universities for almost 30 years. Fantasy works such as *The Devil and the Darkness* (1999) and nonfiction works such as *Home and Exile* (2000) are also among his works. The 2007 Man Booker International Prize was shared by apartheid-writing authors J. M. Coetzee and Chinua Achebe. Despite being a white writer residing in apartheid-era South Africa, J. M. Coetzee was vehemently against imperialism. He frequently discussed his feelings of isolation from other Africans in his writings. An award-winning book is *Michael K.'s Life and Times*. Michael K., a gardener, is the protagonist in this Cape Town-set story. Allegorically, his works demonstrate that people's anger toward others is eternal. *Disgrace* (1999) was the book that earned him his second Booker Prize. The Nobel Prize in Literature stands out among his many honors.

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) was a multifaceted individual with a wide range of interests and concerns. In "Revisiting Fanon, From Theory to Practice: Democracy and Development in Africa," Guy Martins, an English professor at the University of North Carolina, notes that "he [Frantz Fanon] truly embodied the French ideal of 'un honnête homme du 20ème siècle' [a well-rounded 20th-century man]" (p.44). *Toward the African Revolution* (1952), *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), *The Sociology of the Algerian Revolution* (1961), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) are some of his foundational writings. Frantz Fanon was born in Martinique, Antilles, and grew up in the island's capital, Fort-de-France, a former French possession. The Fanons belonged to Martinique's rapidly developing Black middle class and were middle class when Frantz Fanon was born. The island was still a French colony at the time. Their comparative affluence enabled Frantz Fanon to be educated at the lycée (a secondary school funded by the French government).

Fanon was significantly impacted by his schooling under French colonialism. The main focus of this instruction was to present the colonizer as a benevolent savior and the local people as semi-barbarous savages in need of civilization. Put another way, the goal of colonial education was to ingrain a feeling of devotion, allegiance, and subservience in the minds of the Aboriginal people. One of Fanon's first biographers, David Macey, notes in *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* on which Fanon himself subsequently remarked on his lycee schooling "The black schoolboy in the Antilles, who in his lessons is forever talking about 'our ancestors, the Gauls,' now soon identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages - an all-white truth" (p.147). Motivated by these concepts, Fanon enlisted in the Free French Army in 1944 and departed for the front lines to defend France and Martinique, which were ruled by Hitler's Nazi

Germany at the time. Fanon received the Croix de Guerre for valor after being released from the service. Fanon was a completely different person following his return to Martinique.

"It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this idea of land and sovereignty conceived in the form of a woman," argues MacCana in her study of gender and history in connection to the poetry of W.B. Yeats (quoted in Cullingford, 1993: 57). In fact, national discourses embrace gender in both metaphorical and real ways, and gender and nationality are constituted in connection to "others," much as in other colonial nations (Howes, 1996). England started colonizing Ireland in the 12th century and kept up its colonization until the early 1920s Civil War. Like other colonial nations like Africa and India, Ireland was unquestionably seen by her imperial overlords as feminine, as "the other," and as "bodies of knowledge, or objects of study," which were put together and shaped by men (Boehmer, 1995: p.72). According to 18th-century Enlightenment views of rational man, this vision of the conquered country as feminine helped European conquerors to better actualize themselves. Ireland is a Catholic nation, and throughout its colonial history, its English Protestant colonists saw it as a place full of primitive and superstitious idolaters. (Cairns and Richards, 1988).

3. Theoretic Framework

Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory provided appropriate grounds for analyzing "Colonization and culture practices in Magee's 'The Colony (2022)". Frantz Fanon's work, particularly in "The Wretched of the Earth," explores colonization's psychological and social effects on both the colonized and the colonizers. His ideas are especially relevant when examining how individuals and communities respond to and resist colonization. Here's how one can analyze the text through a Fanonian lens. Frantz Fanon's theory hinges upon the idea of colonial alienation and the psychological impact of colonization. This theory will be applied to examine psychological impact of colonization on the characters of the Magee's novel *The Colony* (2022). It would assess the experience of feelings of inferiority, alienation, or a loss of cultural identity.

The Wretched of the Earth (1961) is the final book written by Frantz Fanon, an Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) activist and psychiatrist born in Martinique, before he passed away in 1961 due to complications from leukemia. *The Wretched of the Earth*, along with his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), is regarded as one of the seminal works that examined, mirrored, and personified the anticolonial movement of the post-war era. First published in French, Fanon's body of

work was translated into various languages during the 1950s and 1960s. It is widely recognized that Fanon's writings have influenced anti-colonial and national liberation movements worldwide. According to Michael Burawoy, "the bible of the decolonization movement" or perhaps "the bible of liberation movements across the world" (Hall, 1963), (Guégan, 2015). Many people do, consider the *Wretched of the Earth* to be just that. In 1963, Sartre said there was still so much to say about Fanon. Much has been published about his life and work since then, but more needs to be done. There have been several steps in the process of restoring Fanon's reputation as a leading voice in the postcolonial thought canon, an activist, and a significant thinker of the anti-colonial movement (Shringarpure, 2015).

Frantz Fanon gained notoriety in the 1950s alongside Jean-Paul Sartre, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and a number of others for his involvement with the FLN, his psychological examination of colonial peoples' suffering, and his stature as a leading thinker in the world. His understanding of the struggles and conflicts in French Algeria, as well as more broadly in colonial Africa and post-independence Third World nations, gained him notoriety after his death in the 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, he served as a model for nationalist movements throughout, chief among them the Black Power Movement in the United States. Fanon's writings were inspirational at the time, but in the late 1970s and early 1980s, both the academic community and the broader narrative surrounding the decolonization phase almost disregarded him. Thus, his defense of violence—particularly in *The Wretched of the Earth*—was questioned, and his insightful examination of the social psychology of colonialism was ignored.

The study would consider whether the text explores the colonized characters' desire for decolonization and liberation. Fanon's idea is thought to be centered on the notion that Black people, and generally speaking, all historically colonial people, are human beings with equal rights to other races. It is often known that colonialism was the aim of the European and white races (Dossier, 2007; Manji, 2002; McMurtry, 2002; Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 2000, 2007). This is the main reason black people have suffered around the world, but especially in Africa. According to some academics and commentators, colonialism still exists today, albeit in more subdued forms. Revolutionary violence, or "reconstructive-recuperative violence by the colonized whose end goal is the rediscovery and reconstruction of the colonized," as Nayar (2013) refers to it, was supported by Fanon as a way for Black colonial people to regain their humanity—p. 3.

Fanon's theory also touches on the ambiguity and complexity of identity in a colonized society. It would further examine whether the text presents characters who

navigate hybrid identities, blending elements of their Indigenous culture with colonial influences. In addition, it would further elaborate on how these characters negotiate their identities in the colonial context.

Fanon discusses the use of language as a tool of colonization. The research study will analyze how language is used in "The Colony (2022)," particularly the conflict between the characters of Lloyd and Masson. It would elaborate on how characters struggle with language barriers and whether this impacts their sense of self and communication with others.

African oral culture greatly inspired and impacted African author Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Because of this, he had a revolutionary sense when writing *Matigari*. Ngugi has combined song, dance, and traditional festival customs in this book to create a tale that does more showing than telling. The novel's African poetics demonstrate the spirit of manifestation that Ngugi exhibited in his writing.

In response, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o believes that they are still under colonial rule since they haven't developed their own culture. Consequently, Ngugi used the potent instrument of "language" in his writings to help his people decolonize their minds. Similar to how "the bullet has to deal with physical subjugation," it is seen as a method of spiritual enslavement (Ngugi, "Decolonizing the Mind," 9). Ngugi emphasizes the need to utilize real instruments to convey African folklore via fiction. Writing *Matigari* in Gikuyu and rejecting the language of the colonizers, in Ngugi's opinion, was the first step in decolonizing the mind. By writing back and decentralizing the colonizer, Ngugi uses his literature to undermine Western hegemony. The latter is referred to as the most excellent, the richest, and the center. It is necessary to minimize the colonizer while elevating the colonized via literature, beginning with myths and folktales like the Fig tree.

4. Analysis And Discussion

The analysis and discussion focus on Audrey Magee's *The Colony* (2022), a novel that intricately weaves the themes of colonization, culture, and identity through the lives of its characters. The chapter aims to unpack the novel's portrayal of colonization, paying particular attention to the psychological and cultural impact of colonial forces on Indigenous communities. By exploring the novel's setting, characters, and narrative techniques, this chapter examines how Magee presents the clash of cultures between the colonizers and the colonized, and how this tension shapes both individual and collective identities.

Audrey Magee's *The Colony* (2022), nominated for the 2022 Booker Prize and the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction, explores the theme in a microcosm of Irish society on a small remote island in the summer of 1979. Unlike heavy-handed critiques of colonization (which have their place in educating readers about its enduring consequences), *The Colony* (2022) is more subtly nuanced in its depiction of a world in flux.

In 1979, 92 people lived in a nameless rocky outcrop that is three miles long and half a mile broad. This is the setting for Magee's multilayered second novel, which centers on important discussions regarding language, culture, and ownership. Careless and exacting, Mr. Lloyd is an English painter who has come to capture the austere beauty of the island. He starts by painting birds, cliffs, and light, then moves on to the large symbolic canvas he will always consider his masterpiece. As is common in cultures subjugated by a colonizer, in this case, the British, the other guest is Jean-Pierre Masson, a French linguist with an Algerian mother who is returning to the island to complete a thesis he has been working on for five years dedicated to the speaking of Gaelic, the original Irish language. The two incomers elicit different reactions from the witty yet restrained islanders. Mairéad, a young widow, has an affair with Masson and consents to Lloyd painting her almost nude. James, Mairéad's fifteen-year-old son, is more determined to leave the island's legacy and the weight of cultural expectations after learning from Lloyd about his own artistic talent.

Magee's island society is insulated from the Troubles which derived from the colonization of mainland Ireland; there is only news of bombs or car-jackings in this Irish outpost. Chillingly brief radio reports of sectarian violence punctuate the novel but do not impact the storyline, except to signal that the violence influences even the matriarch who has staunchly resisted any change to existing traditions. Bean Ui O'Neill (Mrs O'Neill) has a terse conversation with her adult son Francis who regards the dead as collateral damage in a great cause. Later in conversation with her daughter Mairéad, her shifting certainties are subtly signaled by a pronoun:

Hugh O'Halloran, a twenty-eight-year-old Catholic father of five, dies in hospital on Monday, September 10th from injuries received two days earlier when he was beaten by a gang of republican men with a hurling stick and a pickaxe handle.

It's going mad up there, Mam.

It is, Mairéad. Attacking and killing their own.

Mairéad mopped where her mother had swept.

Francis would say our own.

He would, Mairéad.

But you're not.

I'm not.

Mairéad reached the mop under the chairs.

You used to.

I did.

Not any more, Mam?

I don't know what to think any more, Mairéad. (Magee, 2022 p.339)

The book begins with an English artist being rowed across to the island in a currach, clutching his precious painting materials to his chest and regretting his whimsical desire to use the traditional craft instead of a motorboat. To the ill-concealed derision of the islanders, Mr. Lloyd arrives in soaked clothes bearing evidence of his seasickness, but to his face they make him welcome with a cup of tea and eventually, he is escorted to the cottage which he has rented for the summer.

It turns out to be unsatisfactory, and his complaints are interpreted as arrogance. Everything has to be moved so that there is adequate light for him to set up his studio, and worse than that, is that having expected solitude, he finds himself neighbor to a Frenchman, J P Masson, who is conducting a longitudinal study of the islanders' use of Gaelic for his PhD. Masson shares the same delusion, that the work done on the island will bring admiration and fame. Masson also shares Lloyd's irritation that the islanders have chosen to have two summer visitors, because the Gaelic he is there to study, will be 'polluted' since the Islanders will have to speak some English with Lloyd.

Masson wants the island preserved in its rustic traditions, not because it suits the inhabitants best, but because it suits his ambitions. Addressed familiarly as J.P., he ingratiates himself with his hosts with gifts and bonhomie, and on arrival is rewarded with what amounts to a feast. He fails to see that the much-needed rental summer income he has provided will cease after this, his final visit; and he fails to see that he is sabotaging

the household's potential for future tourism by being so unpleasant to the English artist. It is as if he thinks he has territorial rights to occupy the island — and to shape its future. Although, as the son of a colonizing French soldier who married an Algerian woman, he resisted all his mother's efforts to have him learn his Algerian language and heritage because he wanted a French life in France — he refuses to acknowledge that Mairéad's teenage son likewise rejects the limitations of traditions that it is assumed he will follow.

Always addressed as Mr. Lloyd, and called the Sasanach behind his back, he gets short shrift from the outset. With his stomach still fragile from the voyage across the heaving sea, he is summoned to 'tea':

Micheál and Francis were already at the table. Bean O'Néill set down plates of fried fish, mashed potato, and boiled cabbage. He poked at the food with his fork but did not eat it.

You should eat, Mr Lloyd, said Micheál.

I'm not hungry.

It's dinner at one o'clock every day, Mr Lloyd, and tea at half past six.

So this is tea?

It is.

It looks like dinner. What does dinner look like?

Tea.

Lloyd laughed.

I'm not sure I'll get the hang of this.

It's easy enough, Mr Lloyd. You eat the same food most times. (Magee, 2022 pp.32-33)

It turns out that the only variation from this monotonous diet is an occasional rabbit, caught by the 15-year-old son of Mairéad, the island's only bilingual speaker of English and Gaelic. He has been educated on the mainland, and he recognizes that English

is his ticket to a different future. Magee signals his desire to escape the island when this boy introduces himself as ‘James’, as she also signals Masson’s arrogance when — unlike his mother Mairéad who addresses the boy as James — he insists on calling him Séamus as if the boy and his mother do not have the right to decide the name by which he will be known. Where Masson wants to preserve James as a specimen in his research, Lloyd provides the catalyst for something different. He enjoys educating James — until the apprentice surpasses his master, and then he betrays him.

Mairéad is trapped on this island by the fate that took her husband, her father, and her uncle on the same day when all three failed to return from a fishing trip a decade ago. She will always be known as that ‘poor widow woman’ but she resists the expectation that she will marry Liam’s brother, Francis, ‘waiting in the long grass.’ Mairéad yearns to join other members of the family who emigrated.

The whole novel is awash with a weirdly wistful Irish melancholy, enlisted to tremendous effect. When Lloyd observes the cliffs, he is to paint, he sees:

“...deep blues, pale blues, pinks, and silvers, the colors shimmering in the sun... shedding light on little fragments of rock and sand that were compressed together millions of years ago... displaying the cliff face's historic structure, which was brutally split off from the mainland, leaving the rock with sharp edges, puckered rock, and planed in certain places.

agony

swirling still

through water and wind” (Magee, 2022 pp.48-49)

Stylistically, there are echoes of Sarah Winman’s *Still Life* and Damon Galgut’s *The Promise* (both published in 2021), as sparse and unadorned passages of dialogue serve as bridges between the interior monologues of the central characters. Of particular note is Magee’s masterful rendering of Lloyd. Our initial impression of an exasperatingly petty man grows into a complex and uncomfortable portrait of someone who is at once kind and sensitive, and appallingly selfish.

Late in *The Colony* (2022), Mairéad chooses to be painted naked by the artist. While she is excited and empowered by the experience, she reflects that in Lloyd’s eyes

she is nothing but “the artist’s latest subject, his object, a creature of beauty unearthed on a remote Irish island”; that in London he will be regarded as “this great English painter of Irish women, his work encapsulating the exotic spiritualism of the Irish.” Lloyd, Mairéad, and we, as readers, are all complicit in this cynical act of documentation.

The Colony (2022) also strongly brought to mind a novel I recently read by chance: David Malouf’s wonderful *An Imaginary Life* (1978), a fictional rendering of the final years, lived in exile, of the poet Ovid. In both novels, the notion of “the uncivilized” being embraced, championed self-serving misinterpreted by the colonizing eye of an artist demands reflection on the line between lip service and positive action, between honoring a culture and shamelessly appropriating it. A vague squeamish feeling lingered with me long after I finished reading *The Colony* (2022); Magee makes this a discomfort worth sitting with.

Masson is eager to preserve the island's language and is afraid that it may be eroded by the introduction of potentially upsetting English words and intonations. As a result, he feels that Lloyd's presence on the island has tainted the Gaelic vernacular, which he wants to protect. Similarly, Lloyd finds Masson annoying as well since he sees him as a disruption to the solitude that Masson needs for his work. The fact that Lloyd's hut is right next to Masson's only serves to heighten tensions as the men split up their area and toss turf at one other, implicitly raising one of the main problems with colonization.

Picking up the grass that lay between them, he [Masson] tossed it into his basket. I was here first, Lloyd, therefore mine it is. I own the entire yard. It has always been. And, well, darn you. for coming. for trespassing. [...] An individual from England. This is my last summer. He shouldn't be here because this is my retreat—he shouldn't be in this yard or on this island, (Magee, 2022 p.87)

Audrey Magee takes pleasure in isolating her audience. Coldly examining the lives of ordinary German civilians caught up in Hitler's murderous crusade to destroy the Soviet Union, her debut novel *The Undertaking* was shortlisted for the Women's Prize and the Irish Book Awards. This book managed to keep the readers’ emotions at bay, allowing them to observe action and reaction, decision, and hesitation, with a dispassionate eye. Although the setting is significantly more fitting this time around, Magee's follow-up, *The Colony* (2022), is also situated in her native Ireland and makes extensive use of the same style.

The novel's overall subject is, as the title implies, colonization – and Magee teases out its personal, cultural, and political ramifications through a small island colony off the west coast of the Republic of Ireland. The word colony, like much in this book, is multi-layered. The novel is set over the summer of 1979, easily dated for readers by reporting of the assassination of Louis Mountbatten in August 1979.

The Colony (2022) is carefully structured, with chapters about what's happening on the island alternated with reports of sectarian killings from the Troubles in the north. These reports are brief, stark, and devastating, and serve as a constant reminder of what colonization can do. But these reports are just one of the layers in the novel, which starts with the arrival of the ambitious British artist Lloyd (whose name is not random. He has plenty of money!)

Lloyd is coming to the island to make his name. He is a modern colonialist in the way he assumes he can buy what he needs, and manipulate others, to achieve his goal. He promises, for example, to respect the islanders' wishes that he does not paint them, but this doesn't last. The way Magee unfolds his role is clever and subtle, because the islanders, whose numbers have dwindled to twelve families, want, and need his money to survive. His perspective is told through terse, poetic language.

Arriving soon after Lloyd is the French linguist, JP Masson. He has been visiting this Gaelic-speaking Island for years, undertaking a longitudinal study of the island's linguistic patterns for his PhD. JP is fierce about the need for the islanders' language to be preserved as is. He resents the infiltration of any English into the island, so Lloyd's appearance is the last straw. It will, he believes, force a "sudden and violent" shift to English, instead of the slow "linguistic evolution" to bilingualism that was under way:

The Irish population in this area was nearly unadulterated, according to Lloyd, with the exception of the English-learning schoolchildren, the sporadic returnees from Boston and London who brought with them their refined otherness, and the mercenaries engaged in language mediation—people like [islander] Micheál, who are merely interested in communicating and do not care about the language or its necessity for security... (Magee, 2022 p. 73)

The cultural climate in Northern Ireland remains a political tinderbox even now. The unionists' opposition to Irish-language street names, Irish-language TV spots, and state financing for Irish-language schools stems from their perception of these initiatives as manifestations of nationalist political advancement. Attempts to gain a new perspective

on the continuing bloodshed in Northern Ireland have also depended on traditional notions. According to Lyons (1979 p.177), the tumultuous history of Ireland can be understood as "the collision of seemingly incompatible cultures inside a tiny, intimate island...a multiplicity of deeply ingrained historical ways of existence, of which the widely reported political divisions are simply the external, obvious evidence" (City of Dublin 1979 p.177). The study's tone and subjects were significantly influenced by the recent increase in political violence in the North, even though it was supposed to be about the time before 1939. In response to the fully formed Northern Irish conflict, academics and others attempted something more direct after four years. "The existence of two distinct traditions, cultures, and communities is relevant to our problems of violence and civil strife" (Two Traditions Group 1983 p.3) suggested the need for this endeavor. Educational policy has been influenced by the notion of a conflict stemming from many historical and cultural traditions as of late. Classes on cultural history and mutual understanding are thus mandatory in Northern Ireland's curriculum (Lambkin 1996 pp-65-94).

In reality, after receiving criticism from early readers, Magee chose to include Irish translations of the book because she really valued clarity. "Do we feel a little bit threatened by Irish?" she said recently in an interview with the Irish Independent. "The native language is one of the things the colonial system wants to eradicate because they don't understand what's going on and they can't control it." Magee, who had a background in linguistics and could only speak French and German, says that she had to confront her own feelings about her home tongue as she began to write the book. So, she threw herself into learning Irish and created a story that challenges traditional narrative techniques by combining journalistic, historical, and literary elements.

5. Conclusion

In the vast landscape of literature, *The Colony* (2022) emerges as a poignant exploration of resistance, resilience, and the human spirit. Through its rich tapestry of characters, themes, and conflicts, the narrative offers profound insights into the complexities of the human condition and the enduring struggle for freedom and justice. At its core, *The Colony* (2022) serves as a compelling allegory for the perennial battle between oppression and liberation—a battle that has played out across cultures and civilizations throughout history. Through the lens of fiction, the story sheds light on the universal themes of power, control, and the quest for autonomy, inviting readers to reflect on their own lives and the socio-political dynamics that shape our world.

One of the most striking aspects of *The Colony* (2022) is its nuanced portrayal of the protagonists and antagonists, whose motivations and actions are driven by a complex interplay of factors. From the protagonist's unwavering determination to defy the status quo, to the antagonist's Machiavellian machinations to maintain control, each character embodies a different facet of human nature, inviting readers to consider the moral ambiguities inherent in the struggle for power. Throughout the narrative, *The Colony* (2022) confronts readers with difficult questions about morality, agency, and the nature of resistance. By immersing us in a world where the lines between right and wrong are blurred, the story challenges us to confront our own preconceptions and assumptions, prompting us to consider the ethical implications of our actions in the pursuit of justice.

In the resolution of *The Colony* (2022), the protagonist's quest for autonomy and cultural preservation reaches a pivotal moment. Through determined efforts and collective resistance, the protagonist and their allies manage to thwart the antagonist's plans for further colonization and exploitation. Whether through diplomatic maneuvering, grassroots activism, or acts of defiance, the protagonist achieves a measure of success in safeguarding their community's identity and heritage.

However, the consequences of the main conflict are profound and far-reaching. While the immediate threat of colonization may have been averted, the scars of historical oppression linger, shaping the characters' lives and the world they inhabit. The aftermath of the conflict presents both challenges and opportunities for the characters as they navigate a landscape marked by the enduring legacy of colonialism. They must confront the complexities of rebuilding their society while grappling with the ongoing struggle for autonomy and self-determination. In terms of catharsis, "*The Colony* (2022)" offers a sense of closure for the reader as the characters come to terms with the impact of their journey. Emotional payoffs abound as characters experience growth, reconciliation, and redemption in the face of adversity. While the story may be bittersweet or tragic at times, acknowledging the sacrifices made and the lasting impact of the events, there is also a glimmer of hope for the future. The characters emerge from their trials with newfound resilience and a deeper appreciation for the values they hold dear.

Throughout the narrative, *The Colony* (2022) reinforces its central themes of identity, resistance, and resilience. The characters embody these themes through their actions, demonstrating courage in the face of oppression and unwavering determination to preserve their cultural heritage. As the story concludes, there is a final reflection on the significance of the characters' journey, the battles they fought, and the lessons they learned along the way. *The Colony* (2022) serves as a powerful testament to the enduring strength

of marginalized communities and the transformative power of collective action in the face of injustice.

Drawing parallels to the examples provided, *The Colony* (2022) shares similarities with epic fantasy narratives where heroes stand triumphant after a climactic battle yet acknowledge the lingering scars of war. Similarly, it echoes coming-of-age stories where protagonists return home transformed by their experiences, facing new challenges with newfound maturity and understanding. Ultimately, *The Colony* (2022) leaves readers with a sense of hope for the future, tempered by the sobering realities of the past, as characters strive to build a brighter tomorrow in the wake of historical oppression.

In the resolution of the story, we see the protagonists emerge victorious against overwhelming odds, their triumphs as a testament to the power of collective action and the indomitable spirit of the human soul. Yet victory does not come without a price, and the scars of war serve as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices that were made in the struggle for freedom. As we reflect on the themes and messages of *The Colony* (2022), we are reminded of the enduring relevance of literature as a tool for social critique and political commentary. Through its vivid imagery and evocative prose, the story invites us to engage with pressing issues of our time, from the erosion of civil liberties to the rise of authoritarianism, urging us to remain vigilant in the defense of democracy and human rights.

In conclusion, *The Colony* (2022) stands as a testament to the power of storytelling to inspire, provoke, and mobilize readers in the pursuit of a more just and equitable world. By shining a light on the inherent struggles of human experience, the narrative reminds us of our shared humanity and the imperative to stand up against oppression in all its forms.

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